If while I'm here you could let me have a corner of a bench....

WHEN THE SIRDAR SPEAKS: I'll be going on-line soon, if things work out as planned. I'll be acquiring a fancy new computing machine, a much faster and nicer printer, and starting an account with some sort of online service. I often mention this fact at fannish gatherings, such as the North Seattle Mob's Thursday bowling festival, or the great dim sum bouffe in honor of the visiting Jean Weber last Sunday, then offer as a caveat, "But don't expect me to spend all my time in useless online chatter." And the assembled nod and smile knowingly then titter to one another, "I remember when I said that."

The reason why I Am Right about this particular prediction is that spending endless hours connected up to alt.uselesshacks or the Freddy the Pig topic on Genie would take time away from my obsession with receiving real, as in delivered by a postal employee, mail. While there are dozens of possible motivations behind written fanac, the one which runs through all of my efforts as letterhack, faned, fan writer and collating dogsbody, is the desire to receive more frequent and greater variety of mail. It matters little that one can receive a greater volume and, for all I know, quality of material in a relative instant on-line; the attraction of getting "real" mail is in the elements of ritual that sending and receiving it have come to possess. Removing the mysterious and maddening interventions of the post office from the receipt of written communication is as bad an idea as was conducting mass in the vernacular (see how the church has gone down hill since then! I'm sure that people called upon to speak fluent Latin on a regular basis were far less likely to attempt to bugger their altar boys than is currently the fashion).

So it should come as no surprise to anyone that the most portentous moment of the day for me is opening the mailbox and releasing the bounty within. Many days, what follows is the height of ecstasy; letters of comment from trusted and admired correspondents, amusing and entertaining fanzines from three continents, even the occasional prozine or mail-ordered CD. Other days, the results are less-heartening. Hateful screeds and high-toned chiding. Dull and offensive fanzines from dull and offensive people. Large, fancy-looking envelopes that turn out to contain duplicate FAPAzines from people that haven't figured out that I've been a member of FAPA for almost three years now. And there are days when there is nothing in the box but dunning notices for bills paid last week, or single-sheet coupons with the doleful faces of kidnapped children on the back.

Then there's the sort of mail which affects one in deep and complicated ways. For me, these are usually fanzines, although sometimes a personal letter arrives that takes hours to puzzle out—like the letter I got last fall from a Croatian fan, whose English was so poor that I couldn't decide if his comments were meant to be antisemitic, or to ridicule anti-semitism. Last week, I received a fanzine which affected me so strongly that in the space of the past six days I have gone from planning to irrevocably gafiate to a kind of bemused reacquaintance with the fundamental absurdity of status in fandom. At this point, I feel quite refreshed for having received it; it has put something of a period to my consideration of the purpose and future of TAFF, as well as some other fannish institutions and ideas. This remarkable document is Rastus Johnson's Cakewalk # 6, from that singularly dedicated British fan, Greg Pickersgill. I hesitate to suggest that you pester Greg with a request for a copy of your own; He

prints each issue on his own laser printer, so one presumes that his current output strains his capacity as it is. I suggest you contact someone who receives one of the relatively few copies which reach this country to see if a Xerox copy can be secured.

I've seen a few previous issues of this sterling fanzine, including the one in which Greg mildly slagged my writing in Blat! # 2, but this is the first one sent directly to me. Apparently sending a thick sheaf of issues of Spent Brass his way was insufficient effort to warrant a trade -- it wasn't until Abi Frost (ever-helpful she) sent him a Xerox of the first ten APAK that he saw fit to send a copy round here. In this he takes the chance to ridicule my title, and to pillory my hubris in making reference to British attitudes in regard to TAFF, American fandom, Worldcon and other issues, without having direct comment from British fans to support them. There's a certain justification to his indignation at this, as a recent TAFF boffin like himself might well expect to be included our little conversation about the fund, and it is pretty damn presumptuous to talk about a whole nation of fen behind their collective back. But I want to state my case as strongly as I can; the things I have said about and attributed to Britfandom were the product of conversation and correspondence with a dozen British fans and based in some cases on the printed opinions of TAFF candidates themselves. I may have been bad and above my station to say anything in the first place, but I feel pretty confident that I didn't get the issue entirely wrong.

So, I'm prepared to come back all humble and apologetic in the face of this, when I see the line "Maybe one of the subsequent issues will gloss the origin of Andy's little joke about the 'Sour humor and poor character of British fandom' on page 37 of the new ish of BLAT. Damned odd thing to say. Can't decide whether to take offence or not. Is the man mad?" And ah, the mercury begins to creep slightly skyward in the gauge. I can't say I've ever liked being quoted out of context very much. And in this instance, it seems as if Greg has chosen to present me in as Anglophobic a light as possible, and leave me open to an interpretation diametrically opposite from the idea I was trying to communicate in my review of Thingummybob for Blat!. The paragraph of mine from which Greg has selected his quote reads as follows:

"There's another piece of anti-critical theory in # 10, 'Xenophobia' by Chris Bell. This is one of those 'Trufen are such monstrous snobs' articles, decrying the discrimination which fans direct at mundanes, costumers, filkers and other long-suffering minorities. It's full of irrefutable generalizations like 'WE ARE ALL PEOPLE,' as well as the ever-popular attack on 'the mass of lit'ry fans by the bar.' When this, and other whiny, mealy-mouthed drivel like it has finally forced all those degenerates by the bar to finally piss off, who then will the author blame for the sour humor and poor character of British fandom?"

Now, I suppose I could have inserted the word "putative" prior to "sour" to make it clear that the characterization was a paraphrase of that made in Chris Bell's article, but I really thought that the tone of the paragraph, as well as the entire article it was drawn from, would have sufficed to distance it from my own opinion. And it's hard to see, precisely, why one would choose to conclude anything about my relative mental health from that single excerpt, even if it represented my deepest-held belief. But then, Greg loves to call the sanity, or at least the intelligence, of people he doesn't agree with into question. In this issue of RJC alone, one can find:

"Bloody hell Bell, have ye been basted daft?";

"Does he know what he's talking about at all or is this just received wisdom?";

"You must be fucking daft."; and "Yes you are a confused bunny aren't you?

It would be most attractive to dismiss this all as a series of thrown-away remarks, but I quickly developed a series of elaborate conspiracy theories to fit them in. In the other cases where Greg calls people mad, he often does so in defense of a specific agenda. Much of the meat of the issue is made up of a report by Ken Brown on Mexicon 6 (RIP) and subsequent on-line chatter in response to it, most of that commenting on the formation of "The Mexicon Foundation." The latter is an organization formed to supervise the dispersion of leftover revenue accrued by Mexicon, with aspirations toward becoming a self-sustaining non-profit foundation for the benefit of various fannish projects. All well and good, but the text reprinted seems to have been stripped off the net without the permission or knowledge of its authors, and then supplemented with Greg's often derisive refutations of many of the opinions expressed therein. One can see how my rogue commentary on the nature of British fandom would have so thoroughly offended his sense of fair play.

Anyway, I began gnashing my teeth and wondering why this seemed particularly worthy of his attention and what purpose it would serve to seek to publicly humiliate me in this fashion, when my eye lit upon a cluster of smiling suns near his backhand mention of APAK, surrounding the legend "DAN STEFFAN is up for TAFF." Of course, I thought, he has made note of my desire to stand for TAFF, and is herewith beginning a careful program of abuse and character assassination to destroy my chances in favor of Dan's! The bastard! As if things weren't bad enough, with people alleging on various networks that I physically attacked a fellow panelist at Potlatch, that I tried to bribe Langford into rejecting his Hugo nomination, and have committed sundry other crimes. Clearly, my candidacy was dead in the water, and gafiation was my only honorable option. I comforted myself with brief fantasies of traveling to Haverford West on a suitably grim and stormy evening, tapping heavily on the front door, delighting in the shocked countenance of Pickersgill as he answers, and growling "Remember me?" Drawing back the slide on the heavy Browning, I sneered as he began to beg for mercy in a puddle of his own effluent. "You made one mistake with that FIAWOL stuff, Pickersgill -- Fandom is a way of DEATH, too! My roscoe sneezed, "K-chee, K-chee!"

Just like a damn American, trying to solve a problem with a

handgun. Just say no to violence, kids!

Anyway, I knew it was a mistake to send any copies of APAK over to Britain. I only make 60 of the damn thing in the first place, remember? Did they send us copies of all those fanzines in which they said every zine printed in America was a load of utter, steaming shit? Certainly not: After a while, I sighed listlessly, and decided to read the rest of the zine. After all, Greg is a terribly entertaining writer, even when he is offering quasi-Olympian pronouncements.

Well, the really surprising thing is the degree to which I agree with him, in almost everything he says. There's a lot of good sense here, about the feasibility of putting fanzines on CD-ROM, the proper way to disperse the large profits made by modern conventions, and the modern self-image of fandom. In answer to a letter by Rhodri James (And doesn't the name sound like a character in a space opera?), he perfectly crystallizes the feelings I have about the place and function of fan rooms in modern conventions:

"I'm really fascinated by this whole business of inhospitable fanrooms. The only thing more baffling than the fact that they are claimed to exist that no-one ever identifies when and where they had these awful cold-shoulders applied so dispassionately to them. I mean, has this really happened to you, or is it just an idea that is

Believed, because it, or something assumed to be it, happened to someone else (in some other Galaxy, far away in space and time... Joel Townsely Rogers where are you when we need you?). As the person who more or less cut the pattern for the traditional British Fanroom at the 1977 Eastercon I can say that more than half the point is to provide a Gateway through which the neofen can pass and pick up fanzines, knowledge about fandom and conventions, and anything else necessary to enable a person to involve themselves in fanactivity if it seems to their liking. Of course a lot of what might go on in a fanroom is directed to the established fan -- there's usually fuck-all aimed right at fannish fans in the rest of the convention after all -but it ought to be carried out in a way that makes it accessible to any interested observer. For some bloody reason there's a pressure on the fannish fans to be all-welcoming and all-encompassing that would be thought of as immediately ideotic if applied to any other area of fandom. I honestly can't imagine what you're describing, unless it is something gone completely wrong; which I might be inclined to believe as I get the feeling very few genuine fanrooms have been run in recent years.

"And this idea of the Fanroom as a 'safe' place away from the rest of the con is **bizarre**; it's supposed to be an **open** venue, accessible to anyone. Obviously if you want to go in there and play charades or sing songs it won't go down well as these activities are not appropriate in the context, but apart from that there's no problem. And the idea that fannish fans can't cope with conventions is plain outlandish."

A trifle biting, perhaps, but justly so and straight on the mark. Greg doesn't mention the other main function of fan rooms, a dependable place where one can plan to meet friends without wading through thousands of bodies trying to touch the hem of Terry Pratchett's robe (He just came to mind; this is in no way an indictment of Terry Pratchett, his wardrobe, or anyone who has ever dreamed of dressing up in Terry Pratchett's wardrobe). And the rest of the zine is consistently of the same quality, excellent writing in expression of clear and intelligent thought, standing above the muzzy meandering of most fanzines like a vast termite mound above the fannish desert floor. I like Greg Pickersgill, Sam-I-Am! He even feels that "TAFF is still important, still valid, should still Go -- but like so many other fannish devices is perhaps long overdue being stripped down for a severe inspection along first principles lines."

Just so -- but it will take people of Greg's stature and standing as former administrator to perform that inspection. Out of all my meandering self-examination in the face of his remarks, the one firm resolution which has emerged is that I am not fit, and neither do I desire, to stand for TAFF. I am still somewhat dissatisfied with the administration and employment of the fund as it stands, and it is clear that something tantamount to civil war will be required to change TAFF in any regard from its traditional format. I do not wish to administer the fund under the current conditions, and I have severe doubts about my fitness to act as an ambassador for American fandom in any event. It's a big job, and I just don't think I'll be up to keeping up with it for two or more years.

But all of these reasons pale beside my sure and passionate conviction that DAN STEFFAN is the man who should be our delegate to The Scottish Convention in 1995. Dan has achieved much through his more than twenty years of fan activity, and he has more than earned the right to travel to Britain as our ambassador. Without the assistance of the fund, it is very unlikely that he would be able to make the trip to Scotland, and I know that I will have a much better

time with him there than I would without the benefit of his good humor, quick wit and active imagination. The fund, first and foremost, ought to go to a fan who needs the money; and I will most likely be able to make the trip without any such subsidy. I am, in some ways, growing very weary of the whole issue of TAFF, and would in fact like to talk about something else for a while, but I pledge whole-heartedly that I will do whatever I can to help Dan's candidacy and to facilitate his trip in 1995. Some people have suggested that I should stand simply to offer Dan some opposition, at least on paper. I don't understand why it should be necessary to oppose such a well-qualified and deserving candidate. The moment I saw mention of his intention to stand, it seemed so right and appropriate that it became difficult to imagine any other acceptable result.

And his recognition of this, among many others, is a good reason to listen to what Greg Pickersgill has to say. I look forward to being favored with future issues of RJC. After all, the only thing worse

than being talked about

Now they only leave me with a half-enchanted grin.

[Now to your correspondence. Not too many letters this time around: Oh, what a fool I was to say anything about the length of your observations! Go ahead, send those eight-page single-space monographs on the poetry of Roger Ebert; I'll find a way to squeeze them in. Let's start this out with: -- aph] DAVID THAYER, 701 Regency Dr., Hurst, TX 76054-2307 observes: "Corflu sounds as exciting as the fanzine lounge at Worldcon. Individuals who need personal hosts to entertain them should stay at home for fun."

[This is both illogical and beside the point of my observations on Corflu. If you need a personal host to have fun, how are you going to find one if you stay at home? And the point isn't that I need someone to personally welcome me to Corflu and make sure that I have fun; it's that Corflu works best when a a fan or group of fan's personal vision is reflected in the way it is organized and presented. I think this is the best way keep Corflu from having the rather generic quality I thought it possessed in Arlington. Of course, we can make sure the organizers of future Corfloi personally ignore you, if that's what you want. — aph]

"Your legionnaire's t-shirt simplifies a complex issue. Soldiers who discover they are good at killing have trouble forgetting the skill while occupied in any other trade. Many wish they could forget."
[Well-said -- aph]

"Giant Bees? Ha! Anyone who knows how insects breathe refuse to suspend disbelief. But I did see a scorpion frozen in ice return to life."

[David leads a full life, doesn't he? Now we'll

hear from another Texan on other scientific phenomena: -- aph]
RICHARD BRANDT, 4740 N. Mesa # 111, El Paso, TX 79912 writes:
"Ah, the eclipse. Big Cheerio in the sky. Here in El Paso, the phenomenon reached totality (so to speak) at, by my watch, precisely 11:17 a.m., or just as it was supposed to. I set my watch by the solar system! God's in his heaven, all's right with the world.

"'Actually,' I says to Michelle, 'it's only an annular.'

"'Well,' she replies, 'we should go see it even if it is once a year.'" [I'd be careful about making an Al Ashley/Martin Smith figure out of someone I sleep next to if I were you. -- aph]

"One of the best viewing locations was 1.7 miles north on Judge Woodrow Bean Transmountain Road. However, I, like most of my building, merely strolled outside and viewed the effect through one of several ruses: through bits of 'smoked' plastic sold for \$2 a pop by local merchants, through pinholes in cardboard or magnifying glass, projected through a pair of binoculars, and through the shadows cast

by the leaves of trees. Towards the end, I noticed people apparently trying to project the image of the eclipse through a tunnel formed by clenching their fist. I tried this, and by crackey, there were perfect little eclipse pictures formed in the interstices of my fingers. Richard Brandt, Human Projector. The money I could have saved my campus film society.

"Len Bailes hallucinogenic slideshow reminded me of the slideshow preceding the Hugo ceremonies at Magicon, and how heartwarming the applause was that greeted the slides and books and magazine covers of

the past Hugo winners...."

[That <u>is</u> a pleasant memory isn't it? And I found it a real treat to see the front page of an issue of <u>Spent Brass</u> projected twenty feet high when my name was called. This eclipse business seems to have caught a lot of imaginations: -- aph]

GEORGE FLYNN, P.O. Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Station, Cambridge, MA 02142: "APAK looms over us once again, not unlike the shadow of of an eclipse swooping over the landscape. Once more unto the computer....

"Re Corflu: So that's why I couldn't stand the smoking room for more than ten seconds at a time! 'The most important job of the committee is to provide a grain of sand around which the pearl of Corflu can eventually form.' Well, I've known some irritating concoms, but that's probably not quite what you had in mind.

"I find Lenny Bailes' idea of turning TAFF over to the Worldcon to be terrifying, being one of the Usual Suspects who'd probably get stuck with administering it. (I speak as two-time Hugo administrator and Worldcon Business Meeting Secretary in 1990, 1992, 1994...)

"Greg Pickersgill is the Lord Kitchener of modern fandom? Does that mean we'll be seeing of posters of Greg scowling at us and proclaiming "I WANT YOU FOR TAFF"? [Well. I would presume that Greg is more likely to stump for his current plans to endow other fannish good works, having done his bit for TAFF already. But The Sirdar's various commentaries and proclamations do occasionally seem to possess a similarly thunderous quality (although I doubt Kitchener had any real affection for American Bluesmen). One would hope that he will avoid boating excursions in the North Sea... Now, let us welcome and note the COA of: --aph]

ART WIDNER, P.O. Box <u>5122</u>, Gualala, CA 95445-5122:
Dear Mr. Starliter: Since I like making up words that have never been used before & are not likely to be used again, I that this loc would help me get denined. I've been in deninal too long. Besides, I cd use a nice trout deriver dinner.

The other day I was down in Gualala, shooting the breeze withe postmaster, & something went by --fwoom! 'Whut wuzzat?' I said. 'That was the month of May,' he said. I didn't believe him at first, but he led me by the hand over to the calendar & proved it. So bi-weekly

APAKs are okay by me.

"However, I don't understand a bit of this angst over TAFF. It ain't broke; don't fix it. Just give the winner the money & let hir decide when & where s/he wants to go. Worldcon has become irrelevant to trufen and vv. The basic deal is to cement old friendships and make new ones. Con(s) are just the icing on the cake. When I won DUFF & the Oz Natcon appeared to be going belly-up, everyone flew into a tizzy & started blathering about cancelling my trip or postponing it. I said. 'Hey, screw the con; I won this thing, and I'm going, con or no con. I've made my plans to see a lot of people, they've made plans to see me, & just bcoz somebody screwed up on a con, doesn't mean doodley --I'm outta here. Besides, Qantas wdv chargd a severe penalty, imperilling an already shaky treasury. So I went, & it was wonderful. The gratitude of the fen in NZ was very warming & moving that somebody had at last come to visit them. I then went up to Brisbane, not knowing wch end was up, & lo&behold, some trufen cobbled something together weh turned out amazingly like a Corflu. All the mediafen went

to some exploitacon in another part of the city & everybody was happy. Ozzies are cool & I lovem. Next YHOS (54) I'll start my trip report.

"Speaking of cool, I think Brits are cool too, with a few exceptions. I sent out my Brit & Oz mailing way late (even with yr help!) thinking theres all this Anti-American feeling (from the pp of AC) -- why bother? I was amazed to get a ton of great lox & superior artwork in short order. So much for the Frosting on the cake. I think v'all have been Frosted to no purpose."

[And I think I'm prepared to agree with you in part. I'm sorry if I gave the impression that I thought Britfandom disliked American fans and fandom on the whole; if that was ever true, it has probably been a number of years since it was. Rather, British fans I have talked with and corresponded with are fairly united in their dislike of American Worldcons, and since many American fans have the same attitude, it seems inappropriate to castigate the British for it. All of this was merely meant to illustrate some unhappy feelings which seemed to be flying around in regard to TAFF, and I think some of those still exist, regardless of whether or not TAFF is "broke." All of these concerns will probably fade like smoke in the face of the muchanticipated and hoped for TAFF candidacy of Mr. DAN STEFFAN, Huzzah! -- aph]

"You say WHAT?! 'Stf seems to be such a forward-looking discipline that it flies in the face of people's automatic assumptions to get them to look to the past...' Ever since I returned from the Glades of Gafia in 79, I've been kvetching about how fandom had changed from forward-looking to past-looking. The problem is not with forward or past in themselves, but what purpose do we put them to. Forward-looking people study the past to improve the future, not to escape into all this medieval garbage that has inundated the field. If you don't believe me, just look at any issue of <u>Locus</u> or <u>SFChron</u>, or the huxter's room at any large con." [Point well-taken, Art. Maybe the essence of fannishness is an interest in both past and future? this is an interesting topic for further discussion, yes? -- APH]

And finally, a note from WALTER A. WILLIS, 32 Warren Rd., Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 OPD: "It was quite a surprise, a pleasant one to find ten issues of APAK on my porch. It was a bit like some country vicar discovering he has personally been sent a new volume of The Bible. I fully understand why you didn't send me them as they came out; the revised U.S. postal rates seem to me as dangerous for the future of fandom as any internal development. Reading the ten issues en bloc they are imposing and impressive."

[Oh, Walter -- it's this sort of praise that swells my head and leads me to get into trouble, you know. Having made the error of sending some sample copies overseas, I'm now going to have to continue to do so, and probably more often than once every ten issues, too. Of course, certain parties, like The Sirdar, and others kind enough to respond to the copies they have received, ought to expect to see an envelope every month or so. --aph]

It's an interesting idea that feuds are predictable, but I don't know of any evidence for it. As far as I can remember, they have always come as a complete surprise to me. I can only offer my own experience as evidence. When I came into fandom I regarded it as an opportunity to remedy my own character faults, in which I included a degree of 'softness' in inter-personal relations. So I inclined to aggressiveness in response to what I regarded as slights. It wasn't until Vince Clarke accused me of having a chip on my shoulder that I realised I had over-compensated. I looked over my shoulder and there it was -- a chip.

"In APAK 3 you use an expression which is new to me -- 'anime' fans. It makes me realise how out of touch I have got, that I don't even recognize categories of fans.

"About TAFF, I agree with Ted White and Robert Lichtman that it

would best be left the way it is. every defect about it is selfcompensating, including the alleged defects in the quality of a recent TAFF candidate. Those defects have surely received sufficient publicity to deter such a candidate from standing or being nominated again. And there is increasing evidence of the need for more people to use the Hold Over Funds option if they have doubts about some or all of the candidates. I have used it myself against certain candidates, with no regrets." [But one does shudder to think of what would happen if Hold Over Funds actually won some year -- It could have the effect of making fans try hard to find a more worthwhile candidate next time, or it could alienate them from participating at all in the future. Hmmm -- while I don't really count Walter's comments in this continuum, I say we've heard enough of this veiled (and not so veiled, in other gossip-laden forums) slagging in the direction of that "recent TAFF candidate." If we're talking about Abi Frost, I personally enjoyed her visit to Seattle, and from all reports she is working extremely hard to help TAFF's cause in Britain. If she was, as is widely believed, unprepared for the realities of the trip, the only person she really seems whave hurt is herself. By the way, anime fans are those mostly interested in fantastic animated films from Japan. There are some things I wish I didn't know. I'll have a few more notes from Walter's letter in the next issue, but I must close for now; there's a limit to how many pages can travel on one stamp!

[APPARATCHIK IS THE MELTON PRIOR OF FANDOM, lingering at the rear of the column and keeping an eye out for the Jezzailachis, pausing now and then for a quick tipple from a crate marked "drawing materials." You can get three months worth of it for \$3.00, or a vear's worth for \$12.00, or a lifetime supply for \$19.73, or in exchange for a few published LoCs or some of the really cool tinted poctsarcds that people have been sending me lately. Lifetime Subscribers to date: Don Fitch, Janice Murray, Alan Rosenthal, Geri Sullivan and Art Widner. One new sub per issue, that's all I ask....

FANZINES received since last issue: Hildisvin # 2, Holger Eliasson; Joe Wesson Magazine, dated 5/25/94. Joe Wesson; MarkTime # 30, Mark Strickert; Plush # 1.2, Taral; Rastus Johnson's Cakewalk # 6, Greg Pickersgill. Thanks for making the mail worth waiting on.

...regardless of weather conditions. (Sails were used for steadying...

APPARATCHIK # 12 C/O Andrew P. Hooper 4228 Francis Ave. N. # 103 Seattle, WA 98103

DCR 6 SEATTH D7-Q1-91

Address Correction Requested

Joe Siclari & Edie Stern 4599 NW 5th Ave. Boca Raton, FL 33431