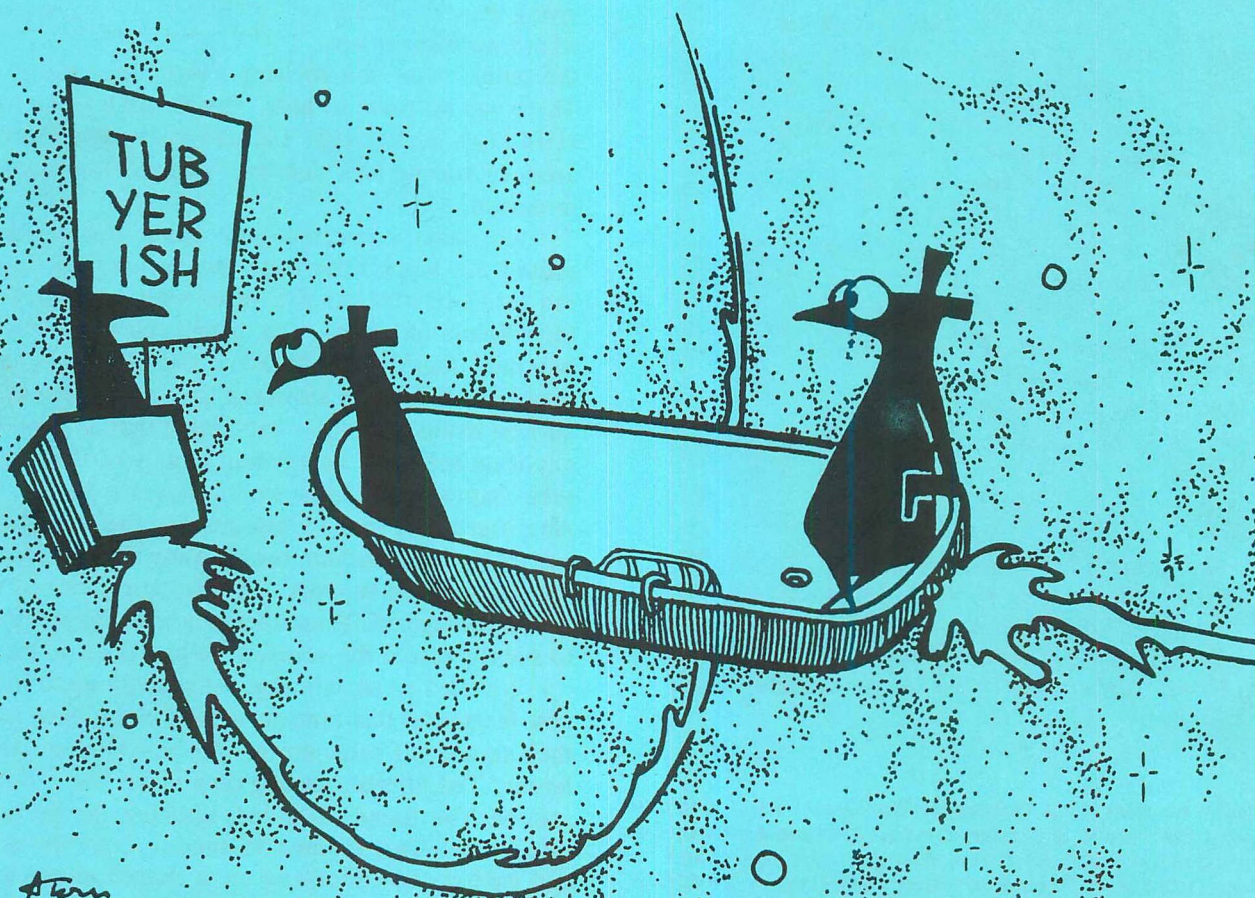
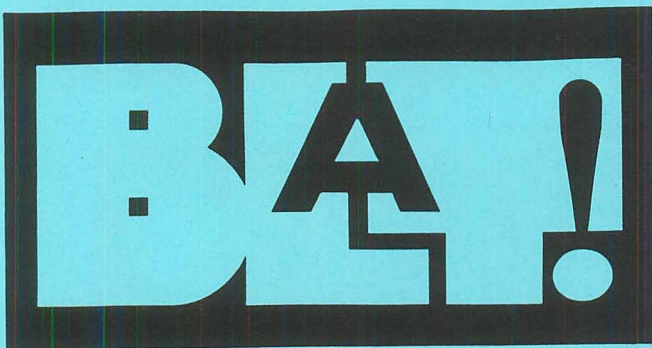


NUMBER ONE

SPRING 1993

BLAT!





Tradittore, traduttore — "Translation is betrayal"

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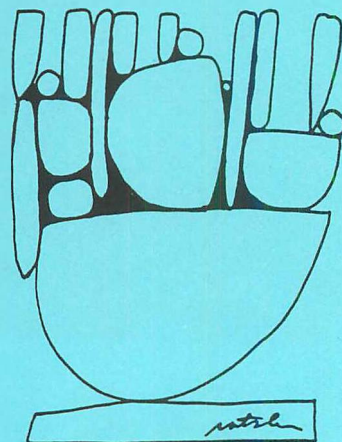
ARTWORKS

Jay Kinney: 24; William Rotsler: 2, 23, 31, 35;
Dan Steffan: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 36, 37, 38,
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WELCOME BACK MY FRIENDS, TO THE SHOW THAT NEVER ENDS!

The reaction to the anniversary issue of *Pong* was overwhelming. Ted and I had no idea that you people were so damned needy. We pubbed our ish just before the Worldcon to give the fans in Orlando something to talk to us about — a fannish conversation piece, if you will. (Instead of the usual party chitchat: "So, whatcha been up to for the last few years, Big Guy?" or "Were you this fat the last time I saw you?" or "Say, old timer, are those eyebrows real?") Frankly, we were a little worried that we had been out of the fannish loop for too long. Instead, because of our good efforts, we were attacked by hoards of pathetic fanzine fans with just one thing on their minds: "Are you reviving *Pong*?" Everywhere we went it was the same. "Are you reviving *Pong*?" they would shout. There was no place to hide. It was like a scene from "A Hard Days Night," with Ted and me running from hundreds of fanzine fans chanting "Are you reviving *Pong*?", in unison.



We never suspected how much our readers had missed our zippy little fmz. Everywhere we turned we ran into sensitive fannish faces with hopeful looks in their Keane-like eyes. "Oh, please tell me that wasn't a oneshot," they'd say. "When's the next ish due out?" they'd ask. When we answered that, alas, there would be no new issues of *Pong* — explaining that we could never duplicate the time, energy and quality of the original — their happy little faces would fracture like a Nebula Award in a cold snap. Upon hearing the news, some began to cry, while others turned away silently, looking to the heavens for support. A few others cursed us and vowed revenge, while another psychotic fan simply chose to silently reveal the revolver he had stuck in his belt.

We tried to explain that we were going to publish a new fanzine — this fanzine — Real Soon Now and that they should all calm down. "It will be New and Different," Ted offered, putting on a brave face. "But it will also be The Same," I added, noticing the murmurs of discontent. This seemed to subdue them momentarily and gave my co-editor and me a chance to sneak out of the convention hall. It had been a close call. We knew we were on the spot and that we would have to publish another fanzine, if we ever wanted to show our faces at a worldcon again.

Once we got home the pressure to publish was unrelenting. Letters poured into my mailbox every day

asking us that question over and over again. I didn't really want to publish a fanzine again, but found myself powerless to stop it. The letters we received demanded to be published and, before we knew it, had formed themselves into a lettercolumn. At first we hoped that this nightmare would blow over and life, as we knew it, would resume. But then, after a month or two, we started getting postcards from the Fan with the Revolver. They were simple and straightforward and consisted of nothing but a computer-printed label and the words,

BULLSHIT ARTIST

DANOTATIONS

"You're on my mailing list. I know where you live," scrawled in green crayon. All was lost.

There is nothing much else left to say now, except: Here is our new fanzine. It isn't *Pong* but it isn't *Laan's Laantern*, either. Enjoy and, please, don't kill us.

THANK YOU, BATMAN I had been talking about attending the Orlando Worldcon for a couple of years, fueled by my desire to meet the Willises, but I never actually thought I'd get to go. Lynn and I had discussed it on several occasions and she was always supportive of the idea but, in my clearer moments, I knew it wasn't too probable. Sometimes when we spoke of it she would say, "Well, if nothing else, I think *you* should go." Which wasn't a statement of disinterest as much as it was an acknowledgement of our precarious financial standing.

Even under *normal* conditions we live a pretty underfinanced existence, but this year was even tighter than usual because we had already done some travelling. In March we made our second visit to Holland, spending a week exploring Amsterdam and enjoying the excellent two-to-one exchange rate. Lynn had gotten us a deal on airline tickets to Europe eight months earlier and we were committed to using them — they were non-refundable — though we thought we might end up sleeping on park benches once we got there. We had tried saving for the trip but, as our departure date approached, found ourselves with a lot of nothing in the bank, and the usual bills piled up on the table.

I knew how important the trip was to Lynn — she'd fallen head over heels in love with the country during our

first visit in 1990 — and didn't want to let her down, though I hadn't a clue about what to do. Finally I came up with a solution. It was painful, but it would generate enough fundage to pay some bills and finance our vacation plans. I combed my collection and sold forty boxes of books to a local book dealer and a generous friend. And we went to Holland.

After that, a trip to Orlando seemed like an impossibility. I didn't have anything left to sell, except my blood and my fanzine collection, and Lynn refused to allow me to part with either — though I did offer Frank Lunney the chance to plunder the latter (fortunately, he passed). We simply resigned ourselves to staying home.

Ordinarily my career would be no help in a situation like this. Though I have had some success as a designer and art director in the past, I have never been able to really break through as an illustrator and cartoonist — despite my talent and love for the medium — and getting regular work can be quite difficult sometimes. These days my art assignments come in spurts and *never* when I need them the most and *always* with a deadline of yesterday. It is frustrating, but par for the course. Besides, I told myself, the con wasn't *really* going to be all that much fun anyway.

But then the Caped Crusader came into my life and I was saved.

I had been in casual contact with Bhub Stewart at DC Comics throughout the year, occasionally making inquiries about the odd art assignment. At first he thought I had great potential for producing illustrations for Warner Communication's *Tiny Toons* magazine, which was devoted to Steven Spielberg's TV bastardization of the Bugs Bunny characters. At his request I put together a pile of xeroxes and tearsheets and sent them up to the magazine's editors in New York. The week they arrived Warner decided to cancel the title. *sigh*. . . . But good ol' Bhub promised to watch out for other opportunities, ghod bless him. Then, around the end of May, he called back with what sounded like a great opportunity: Would I like to draw a Batman coloring book?

"Holy Crayons, Bhubman!" I screamed into the phone. "I think that would be Bat-a-riffic."

Despite my outburst, Bhub took a chance on me and started the wheels in motion. The book itself turned out to be a "coloring/activity book" prepared by DC Comics and published by Western Publishing's Golden Books. I had expected it to be part of the wave of merchandising that accompanied the release of the second Batman movie, but was pleasantly surprised to find out that, in fact, it was to be part of the wave of merchandising that would accompany the debut of Warner's new daily animated Batman TV series. That was a relief, as I didn't welcome the task of trying to capture Michael Keaton's likeness on paper, but it still didn't prepare me for the amount of work I was facing.

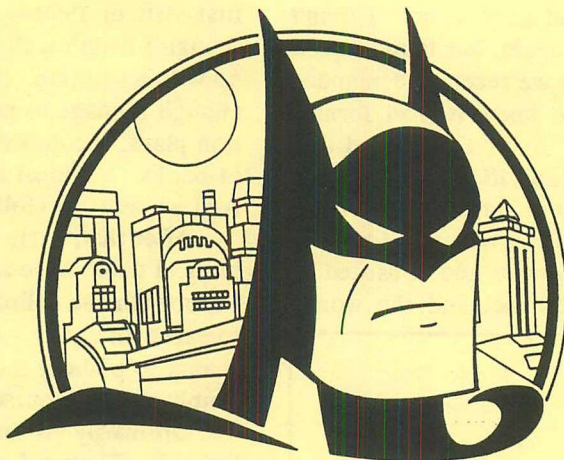
On closer inspection we discovered that the page rate for the project really sucked (far less than what they pay

their comic book artists — so much less, in fact, that the comic guys wouldn't do it) but I took it gladly because, as I told Bbob, *Beggars Can't Be Choosers*. Fortunately, the book turned out to be 100 pages long which compensated the bad rate with a decent lump sum. Decent enough, in fact, that Lynn and I started talking about going to Orlando again. And all I had to do was draw *only* 100 pages of the "Dark Knight" before Labor Day.

But that proved to be no easy task. First of all, the artwork in the book had to resemble the artwork in the cartoons which, of course, hadn't been seen yet. This meant that there was very little room for my own style and ideas and forced me to adopt the look chosen by the animators out in Hollywood. Bbob sent me hundreds of pages of xeroxes of character sheets and what are called Style Guides to work from and I was inspired by some of the brilliant designs of head animator, Bruce Timm, an obvious devotee of Alex Toth and Forties/Fifties Batman artist, Dick Sprang. Fortunately it was a style that suited me and I dove into the work.

Unfortunately, producing the artwork was a lot more complicated than simply drawing lots of pictures of Batman. It became a bureaucratic nightmare. The art had to be checked at every stage of the game. All of the roughs had to be approved by editors at both DC and Western, who often made conflicting changes. Besides drawing pictures of Batman and all his evil villains, the book also included a bunch of puzzles and mazes meant to entertain the kiddies, which is not my forte — especially when it comes to deciphering some nitwit writer's vague idea of a Really Fun Game. Then the pencilled artwork had to be approved by both companies' people, in addition to the producers in California, before it could be inked. I had to submit several cover design roughs for them to choose from and then produce the finished artwork. And then, finally, I had to ink all the pages by the deadline. The problem was, of course, that the project was already behind schedule when I got it and the deadline was looming impossibly near.

Needless to say, we did not make the deadline. I was furiously drawing around the clock and sending faxes to Bbob every couple of days for approval. Then he would send the corrected faxes back to me via Federal Express and I would start all over again. One editor would approve a page without changes, while another editor would object to Batman's knees and yet another would



complain about the way Catwoman's face looked. After fixing everything I would again fax them off to Bbob, where the first editor would now object to what I had done to Batman's knees, the second would like it and the third would still poo-poo my Catwoman, adding that now she wasn't too sure about the length of Batman's ears, etc. Around and around we went, trying to get everybody to agree, so I could finish the damned thing. Finally the project

was done around the end of July — only about three weeks late — and I, in between extended periods of sleep, started planning ways to spend my Bat money.

[For those of you who are interested, my coloring book is called *Batman, The Animated Series* (#3276-92) and was published by Golden Books in early 1993. Watch for it at a toy store or drug emporium near you.]

When the Batcash finally arrived I considered my options. I knew I had to pay off some of my debts, the hard part was deciding just how frivolous I could afford to be (I mean *besides* going to the con). After using part of the money to pay bills (and its incredible to me that, despite the fact that I paid far more bills than I cared to, there are still far too many bills *left*), I put my car in the shop to be worked over by Ted's (and now my) mechanic, Larry. Ted had recommended his services to me and I was pleased to finally find somebody competent to work on my car. My last mechanic did a miserable job and was so incompetent that I later found his leftover lunch on top of my engine block when I opened the hood for inspection.

Larry performed routine maintenance for me and then discovered that my entire air filter system had ceased to function, with one valve having burned through to another allowing carbon monoxide and other nasty stuff to run back into the engine, reducing my power and efficiency. This was a formidable problem for me because my car, a 1986 Chevrolet Sprint, has only a three cylinder engine and power is



at a premium. Fixing the problem became complicated. You see the Chevy Sprints were only around for (I think) three years and it is now difficult to get some of the parts. (Other parts are easy to get because the Sprint is really just a proto or neo version of their current Geo series — why they changed the cars I don't know, but whatever the reason was one thing is certain: *It wasn't to make parts for the Sprint any easier to get!*) Mostly it has to do with the fact that the Japanese designers of this car originally figured that servicing would be a lot easier if

the engine was built in larger sections instead of individual little parts. If there was a problem, they figured that they'd just yank out the whole unit and replace it with another. This meant that we couldn't simply replace the two damaged valves, but had to buy an entire new filter system. And therein lay the problem. Since the car has been discontinued the replacement unit was not readily available and Larry was forced to order it FROM JAPAN! It took five weeks to arrive.

While all of that was going on, Lynn and I made our last minute plans to attend the convention. Fortunately our timing was good and Lynn managed to catch Continental Airlines during a momentary discount period which, when combined with some travel coupons we had, made our airfare almost reasonable. I called the convention's booking hotline and got a listing of all the available hotels — they were all still available — and chose the Quality Inn Plaza where the room rates were only \$35 a night, which seemed almost too good to be true.

Frank Lunney and Catherine Jackson were planning to stay in the same hotel but, like us, were worried about the cost of the rooms. They were just too damned cheap. There had to be something wrong with the place.

"Maybe there won't be any locks on the doors," said Lynn.

"I'll bet you there won't be any air conditioning," I worried.

"It probably means that they won't have a pool," moaned Catherine.

"I can see it now," growled Frank. "We're staying in the only hotel in Florida without a pool or air conditioning. Typical!"

"I gotta have a/c, man," I shouted. "I gotta have it. Understand?"

Finally, out of desperation, I called the Quality Inn in Orlando and asked a few pointed questions and got some blunt answers. Yes, they had locks and air conditioning and they had, if I must know, *three* swimming pools. It sounded okay after all, though I never was totally convinced until after I had paid the bill. Later I figured out the reason for the inexpensive rate. It had a lot to do with volume, volume, volume. I had forgotten that Orlando is a family vacation mecca — I had no intention of going to any of the theme parks, or anything — and, apparently, the Quality Inn is set up to accommodate as many folks as possible, which brings down the price. That and the fact that the place is really just a glorified Motel that features five hundred rooms, all of which open out onto a balcony. There wasn't a corridor in the entire place. In the end our fears were unfounded and the rooms were perfectly nice, if a little plain. But that didn't really matter because the air conditioning was

superb.

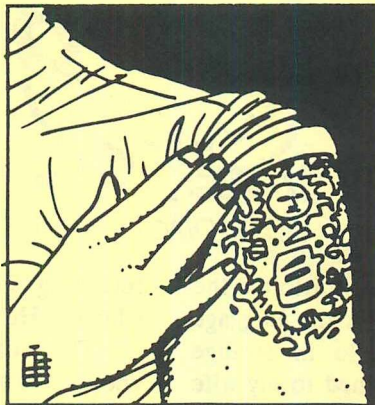
By this time the Batbank account was getting low. I had paid the bills, I had had major work done on the car, I had paid for our room and airfare in advance and put a proper amount aside for food and fun in Orlando. If I wasn't careful the Batbucks were going to be gone before Lynn and I got a chance to be frivolous and irresponsible. And that was something I would *not* put up with.

Naturally we bought some books, including several new Leo & Diane Dillon children books and the latest kid's book by William Joyce. Then I decided to treat myself to something really extra-special and bought a 1930 second edition copy of Melville's *Moby Dick, or The Whale*, illustrated by Rockwell Kent. (The first edition, published by Lakeside Press the same year, was limited to 1,000 sets consisting of three volumes in an Aluminum slipcase, and is extremely rare.) The book is one of Kent's masterworks as a book designer and features 280 stunning illustrations.

After some arm-twisting, Lynn agreed to allow herself to be pampered a bit and got her hair and nails done for our trip to Orlando. She also brought home lots of bottles of special girl stuff that I, a mere male, am not meant to understand. And then, as a final indulgence, I went out and got myself a new tattoo.

I made an appointment for a couple of days after my 39th birthday and began trying to figure out what to get. I'd wanted a second tattoo since February when Lynn got a tribal armband for *her* birthday present (I am weak and jealous), but picking the right image can be a bitch. My first tattoo was purely decorative and I wanted this one to have some personal meaning. Eventually I decided to incorporate my signature block — it's that pseudo-japanese symbol I often use to sign my artwork — into the design and later paired it with a primitive woodcut picture of the sun, which has, inexplicably, fascinated me for years. When it was finished, those two elements had been surrounded by an aura of swirling waves and I was glowing with satisfaction.

The aftermath of a tattoo can be really invigorating. I guess it's a kind of high — afterwards you feel a great deal of personal gratification and a sense of accomplishment. Often people are really surprised and aren't prepared for these feelings, but as soon as they *do* get used to them you can usually find them in a corner somewhere, planning their next bit of skin art. (In that sense, they are a lot like potato chips.) In my case, however, some of my satisfaction was from knowing that my arm would be completely healed by the time we got to the Worldcon. Even though I ended up sitting in a middle seat between Lynn and a 400 lb. Samoan guy, our flight to Orlando went pretty smoothly, unless you want to



count the ridiculous route the airline forced us to take to and from the convention. Apparently Continental routes all of its East Coast flights through a central hub located in Newark, New Jersey — including flights from down south, like ours. That meant that our plane had to fly north from Washington to Newark before we could fly south to Florida and vice versa. Yeah, that's right. On our return trip home we also flew via Newark — even though our plane flew right over Washington on the way. No wonder the airline companies are in such trouble.

We arrived in Orlando early Friday afternoon during a violent downpour and spent a few minutes wandering around the airport before seeking a cab. The airport itself was big and modern and included a transport train that ran through a tube for part of its journey. It was very sfnal indeed and an appropriate beginning to a week of sci-fi fun. In fact, I was soon convinced that the convention had already infiltrated the airport. As Lynn and I made our way to the Baggage Claim area I kept noticing odd people in strange costumes. I groaned loudly and complained to my wife about my need for time to acclimate myself to the notion of being surrounded by fans for the next several days. "You'd think they'd at least have the common decency to wait until I got to the hotel before assaulting me like this," I growled.

It was only after Lynn had smacked me upside my head and forced me to focus that I realized that all the costumed weirdos were actually representatives of the local theme parks like Disney World and Sea World, and not a hoard of fan bozos. "Well, that's a relief," I said. "I was having real trouble remembering any great sf stories that featured miniature whales and gigantic mice."

Our cab driver was quite pleasant and completely unphased by the torrential rainstorm that we were driving through. "It does this every afternoon about this time," he said. Then he asked us where we were from and why we were in Orlando and some other stuff I didn't hear because I was too busy looking for funnel clouds and tidal waves.

We checked in at the Quality Inn Plaza with a minimum of hassle. I had brought every confirmation letter, receipt and cancelled check I might need with me to back up my right to a room. So I wasn't the least bit bothered when the clerk told me, "We already show you as checked in, sir." And it only took 15 or 20 minutes to convince them that I wasn't already checked in and that they should give me my keys *Right Now!* Fortunately, Lynn was already in vacation mode — and dreaming about the pool — and blissfully led me to our room, which proved to be a mere ten minute walk from the lobby.

We met up with Catherine a short time later and started hiking towards the Convention Center. She and

Frank had checked in the previous night and had already registered and figured out where most things were and acted as our guide. Our first big hurdle was registration.

Since we had not preregistered — hell, by the time we decided to go to the con preregistration was already over — we had to pay the full At The Door price, which came to about \$7,000 each, give or take a buck. But, because we had arrived on Friday, instead of Thursday, we got a special discount rate of only \$6,995, leaving us the difference to spend on an elegant dinner that evening at Chez Stuckey's.

Our next stop inside the Convention Center was the function room where a panel was underway about Irish fandom. When I walked in the door I recognized a bunch of friendly faces and finally accepted that I was really there and that the con had really begun. At first things seemed a bit frantic on the dias and someone (who was later introduced to me as Jim White) kept

repeating into the microphone, "Has anybody seen Chuck? He's supposed to be here for this panel."

Then somebody in the audience asked, "Does Chuck know he is supposed to be on this panel?"

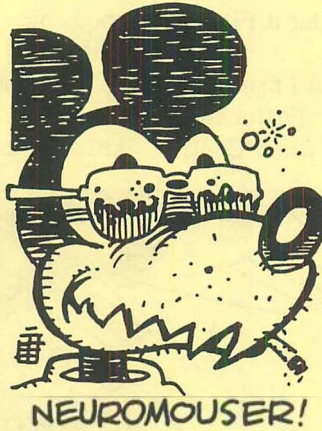
"Of course he does," someone else answered affirmatively, "but I'm not too sure he knows what time it's scheduled for."

"Chuck may be deaf," added another voice. "But I'm fairly certain he can read the hands on a clock. Are you sure he knows he's supposed to be here?"

"I thought he only read lips," said another voice in the crowd and everybody chuckled.

A few minutes later somebody asked a question about Ghoddminton and Chuck's name didn't come up in conversation again. Nor did he ever show up for the panel.

While all of this was going on I had noticed Walt Willis sitting several rows in front of me, listening to his old friends. Meeting him was the primary reason I'd come to this Worldcon and as soon as there was a lull in the activities I made my move. I quietly walked up and sat down in the seat next to him. We had never met, but had exchanged notes over the years, including one a couple months before the con, and had been quasi-collaborators on *The Enchanted Duplicator* comic strip I produced in the Eighties. I put my hand on his shoulder to get his attention and, when he had turned to face me, said, "Hello Walt. My name is Dan Steffan. It is a great pleasure to finally meet you." He looked at me with that Irish face of his and said nothing, but furrowed his brow. "I know this isn't the best place to chat," I added, "but I just wanted to introduce myself." He shook my hand tentatively, but again said nothing. It was suddenly obvious that he didn't have the slightest idea of who I was. He looked at my name badge for a second and then turned back to the panel discussion. I withdrew quietly and



returned to my seat.

After the panel, Frank and I walked out into the Convention Center's main concourse which was jammed with people standing in lines for munchies and gathered at circular tables. Lynn and Catherine had exited the room earlier and had found seating in two shoe shine chairs that sat on a pedestal along one side of the concourse, looking to all the world like a couple of Royal Bitches on their Thrones. We genuflected accordingly and, for the rest of the con, whenever we lost track of Catherine and Lynn, we knew we could usually find them on the throne.

"I just met Willis," I said softly.

"Really?" asked Lynn. "Was he nice?"

"I'm sure he was," I answered tentatively.

"But?" asked Catherine.

"But he didn't have a clue about who I was," I explained.

"Did you introduce yourself, dummy?" asked my loving wife.

"He even looked at my nametag," I whined. "And he still didn't know me."

Frank, in typical fashion, got a real kick out of my little story and laughed until he had to sit down. "You came all this way and he didn't know you," he kept repeating. "Ahahahahahahaha."

By this time Ted had joined us. "What's so funny?" he asked. I told him what had happened and Frank started laughing all over again. Then Ted explained that, apparently, Walt's stroke had been a little more debilitating than we had known and had, among other things, effected his hearing. "He's wearing a brand new hearing aid that he just got from National Health and he's having a lot of trouble with it," Ted added. "I'm sure he knew you, even if he had trouble understanding you. It's probably just as frustrating for him as it was for you."

This was born out later that day when I entered the Fan Lounge for the first time. Walt was one of the first people to approach me and softly say hello. Smiling, he pushed a photograph into my hand. It was a picture of the small painting of Jophan on a mountain top that I had sent to Walt when I first heard about his illness. I was pleased to get the photo and even more pleased by Willis' obvious enjoyment of my artwork. A little while later I noticed a dynamic looking little woman with beautiful white hair talking to Walt, "Who's the big bruiser?" she asked him, pointing towards me. Walt spoke into her shell-like ear and a big grin spread across her face and, before I knew it, Madeleine Willis was throwing her arms around me. She took my big paws in her strong hands and squeezed them together. "What a delight," she said. And I had to agree. Madeleine Willis' handshake was one of the highlights of

my Worldcon.

Unfortunately I never got another good chance to engage her in conversation. She was always much too busy being unofficial Den Mother to everybody who came across her path. She seemed to have an enormous amount of energy and good will and it seemed, somehow, wrong to slow her down for a chat with me. But it really made me regret that I wasn't going to be at Geri Sullivan's Minnesota relaxacon the following week. I'm sure that, under those less intense conditions, it would have been completely enjoyable.

After that first afternoon things start to blend together into a collage of faces and jokes and food and parties. Trying to put things into their proper chronological order now would be impossible, so you'll have to settle for random highlights.

At the far end of the concourse were multiple sets of doors that opened into the convention facility proper. This huge room housed the majority of the convention's displays, activities and gathering space. It was kinda like hanging out inside an aircraft hanger that was jammed with people, paintings and book dealers (you'll notice I did not include the latter in the same category as "people"). The enormous space was split in half (long ways), with the front part laid out with all the publisher booths, including one for the wretched Sci-Fi Channel, as well as many displays devoted to costumes, fanzines, fan and pro photos, etc.. And in the middle of all of them was a miniature golf course, with each hole based on an event out of *The Enchanted Duplicator*. The rear half of the facility was divided equally between the huckster area and the art show and, in the dead center of the giant room, was the Fan Lounge.

This year's Fan Lounge was everything I hoped it would be and more. I've always used the successful British Fan Lounges as a yard stick for measuring this kind of fan space — though, I must admit, I've never actually been to a British convention I have nonetheless developed a plausible fantasy based on what I've read in fanzines — and thought that Orlando's candidate fulfilled most of the criteria. There were several large tables with lots of chairs for group interplay and several comfortable sofas for more intimate conversations. There were tables filled with fanzines and other effluvia and, perhaps most important, a fully staffed bar that was open whenever the Lounge was. There was no need to leave the area except to take a piss or visit the Vile Hucksters. And there always seemed to be at least one old friend lurking about at all times.

Reuniting with old friends is always one of the most enjoyable parts of a Worldcon. As much as anything, it is the reason that I keep coming back to conventions and this year was no exception. I thought that the Willis



would act like a faan magnet and drag lots of interesting people out of their dark corners. I was particularly curious about my reunion with Arnie and Joyce Katz. We had been friends more than 15 years ago and they had played an important part in my early fanhood and manhood. Unfortunately, by the mid-70s, we had become estranged in the same unpleasantness that had severed fannish ties with several other old friends and led, eventually, to their gaffiation.

Earlier in the year major relationship repairs had taken place between the Katzes and my coeditor, marking the beginning of a new era of abnormalization, and I hoped the same would happen in my case. Though I was kinda nervous about it, I knew that the worse that could happen was that nothing would happen. Nothing ventured, nothing . . . well, you know.

The first time I spotted them, at the panel about Irish Fandom, I was shocked by their appearance. Joyce looked very different from the way I remembered her (she is now, among other things, a blond) and it took me a few seconds to be sure it was actually her. But perhaps even more shocking was Arnie's appearance: He looked exactly the same as he did the last time I saw him seventeen years ago. It was an incredible sight that had me contemplating cloning theories or the possibility of some kind of computer generated hologram hoax. Or could there be a hideously aged portrait of Arnie (hand-stencilled by Ross Chamberlain, of course) lurking in a dark closet somewhere in Vegas? It wasn't until later Friday night, when I actually got an opportunity to talk to them, that all my worries were put to rest.

It was the sound of their voices that did it. I can't really explain it, but as soon as I heard Arnie and Joyce speak I knew that our meeting was right. Their voices were so pleasantly familiar that I realized that I had missed hearing them speak for all these years. This was especially true of Joyce. Not to belittle Arnie or anything, but I found myself feeling really compelled to talk to Joyce and took every opportunity to do so. We ended up having several complex conversations each night about things like art and writing and personal fulfillment. It was just like the Good Old Days when Joyce used to sit down and talk to me like I was worthy of her attention. I appreciated it then and I appreciated it now, but what was really great about our discussions at Magicon was that I was actually able to talk back to her now — the passage of time having given me a brain to go with my voice.

When I was in my late teens and early twenties I was often guilty of talking without having anything to say. It wasn't that I loved the sound of my own voice, or any-

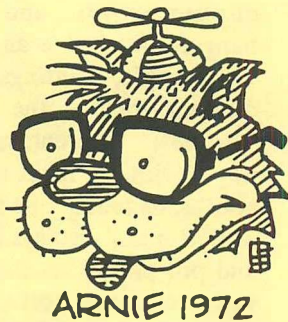
thing, but that I just didn't know how to be silent and calm. To me, a lull in the conversation was my companion's chance to notice that I was an empty vessel. To prevent that I often used to fill up the silences with jokes, sound effects and other useless blathering. At the time it never occurred to me that these antics were actually demonstrating my lack of substance, instead of proving myself. To the Katzes everlasting credit, they put up with it all and still managed to find something about me to like. It was a very validating experience that came along when I really needed it. The passing years have educated me and given me something to put inside my big ol' head besides teen angst and it was a pleasure to finally talk to Joyce as a peer. Nowadays I only make sound effects and blather uselessly on weekends and holidays.

Geri Sullivan was another omnipresent part of the con's fannish gestalt. If Madeleine Willis was the fan Den Mother, then Geri was definitely the Queen Bee. She was everywhere. During the day you could usually find her buzzing around the Fan Lounge and in the evenings she could be found organizing her workers in the "Minneapolis in '73" suite. Also impressive was her frantic but devoted lieutenant, Jeff Schalles, who always seemed

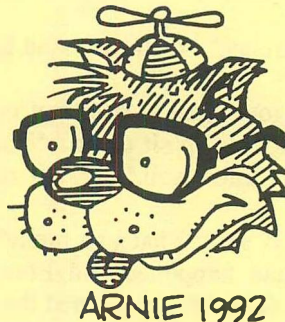
like he was supposed to be someplace else important — but couldn't quite recall where. It didn't matter if he was running around the Convention Center or standing guard at the door to the Smoking Lounge, Jeff's eyes never stopped darting from side to side — in anticipation, no doubt, of a police raid or an attack by a rabid Sciencology Swat team.

There were parties every night in the "Minneapolis in '73" suite, which also seemed to be serving double duty as the off-hours Fan Lounge. One "morning" (I arrived after noon) Jeff used the room to host a "Non-Con" party to celebrate the seventeenth anniversary of a minicon hosted by Fabulous Falls Church Fandom in 1975. (The con itself was an early experiment at creating a Corflu-like fan weekend. Our fatal mistake, however, was our decision *not* to inform the hotel management of our intentions — choosing instead to have a whole bunch of people just show up in the same place for a party. After the first night, half of the attendees went home because of a police threat from the fascists at the front desk, who were pissed because we wouldn't let them join us.) Needless to say, the reunion was a bit subdued because of the hour, though we did have a good laugh recalling the sight of Andy Porter sprinting down the "Non-con" corridor in fear for his life. Mostly we just sat around quietly eating bagels and reading the newspaper.

Another night Geri organized a "Tower of Bheercans



ARNIE 1972



ARNIE 1992

to the Moon" party and got everybody frantically guzzling brews for the project. I seem to remember her sitting on the suite's balcony with a roll of duct tape waiting for Jeff to bring her another batch of empties. "Drink more Beer!" she was chanting. "Drink it now!" Everyone in attendance did their best to oblige her. Unfortunately I couldn't stay for the project's completion and am unable to say if Geri's "Tower of Bheercans to the Moon" was an unqualified success. But I can say, without fear of contradiction, that Geri Sullivan's "Tower of Bheercans to the Top of My Head" was without equal. Bravo Geri!

Quite possibly the silliest moment at Magicon happened on Sunday afternoon when Ted, Frank, Steve and I decided to try our hands at the *Enchanted Duplicator* miniature golf course. The course proved to be a lot more difficult than it looked — leading to some frustration, especially when we had to stop to let a couple of 10 year olds play through. "Oh come on," the boys grumbled. "This is the easiest hole in the game. You guys really stink." We tried to be good-natured about it, dammit, because we're Faans and afterwards took the little tykes out for ice cream as proof that we were good sports.

Later that evening, after our return, Frank said, "They'll be finding pieces of those kids along the interstate for months," and we all had a good laugh.

The artshow is always of interest to me and this year's was no exception. In fact, I think it was generally above average in quality. The con had put together a very comprehensive exhibit of paintings by Artist GoH, Vincent Di Fate, that showed him to be a talented professional worthy of such attention. Seeing all of his work together like that really made me appreciate his excellent technique as a painter. His images are modern and yet pay homage to some of the artists who have preceded him into the field. Unfortunately I think there is sometimes a bland sameness about his work, but the exhibit succeeded in keeping that to a minimum.

Michael Whelan continued to stun me with the lush sensuality of his artwork, as did my good buddy, J.K. Potter, who had several fine color pieces in the show. Potter stands out from most other genre artists because of his unique techniques and subject matter. The fact that he has yet to win a Hugo is a real shame and further supports my long-standing theory of Hugo worthlessness. In Potter's case I think that the casual viewer fails to recognize his excellent design, composition and color sense because his works start out as photos. They somehow think he's cheating or taking the easy way because they don't see any brush strokes. I just wish they'd all Wake Up.

Without a doubt, though, the cream of the art show was the historical exhibit of fantasy and sf illustrators. The exhibit occupied about a quarter of the entire show

and consisted of cover paintings and illustrations by everybody imaginable. There were paintings by Frank R. Paul, Virgil Finlay, J. Allen St. John, Frank Frazetta, John Berkey, Leo & Diane Dillon, Richard Powers, Alex Schomberg, Kelly Freas and (my favorite) Hannes Bok, and many more. I spent a considerable amount of time looking at this exhibit and marvelling at the incredible range of talents and styles that have passed through the sf field. This was a presentation that could teach all future con committees about the potential they have at their fingertips, if only they're clever enough to use it.

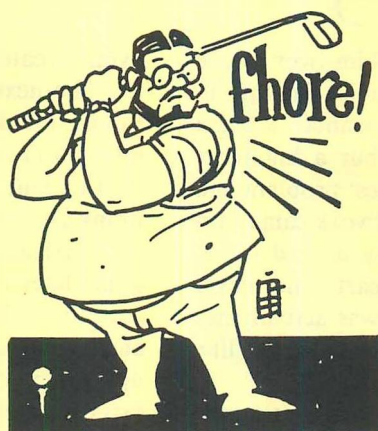
After touring the art show or the huckster room, I usually returned to the Fan Lounge for a cold bheer and some conversation, while I rested my tired feet. On one of these pit stops I finally got a chance to meet and "talk" a bit with Chuck Harris. I'd heard many stories from Avedon and Theresa Nielsen Hayden about Chuck's impish wit and the hours they'd spent scribbling down

jokes and snide remarks on slips of paper that they passed back and forth. And after observing other people's technique, I decided to give it a try and handed Chuck a piece of paper that served to introduce myself. He greeted me warmly and I started to make "conversation." Unfortunately, I hadn't considered how difficult it might be to express myself succinctly, legibly and quickly without using my mouth. My fingers just wouldn't move fast enough and my brain wouldn't slow down — which resulted in a couple of messy notes that made far too little sense.

Soon I realized that if I wanted to do this properly I had better learn to think and write in interlineations. I felt totally incompetent and withdrew as gracefully as I could. But at least I tried, unlike Frank, who just stood next to Chuck and shouted. Somehow I don't think either of us made much of an impact.

Sunday was our last night at the convention and, as usual, we ended up alternating between the Smoking Lounge and the fabulous "Minneapolis in '73" suite, where we found the best party of the weekend. By Sunday, apparently, everybody had had a couple days to relax and get in sync with each other and were partying intensely. The rooms were full of friendly faces and the bathtub was full of drinks. I finally got a chance to talk at some length with Andy Hooper and Jeanne Gomoll, who introduced me to Steve Schwartz and Nevenah Smith. Nevenah had attracted my attention earlier in the evening when I noticed her showing off a large tattoo on her leg and knew I had to meet her.

It turned out that her tattoo was a stylized dinosaur skeleton that stretches from her ankle to her knee and had been done by a talented newcomer in Madison. After a few minutes we realized that we had a lot of interests in common and spent most of the next hour



talking about our various obsessions. Later we went into the suite's back bedroom to show her tattoo to Lynn and Catherine, who were busy smoking cigarettes at the time. Lynn rolled up her sleeves to show Nevenah her tattoos and everybody oohed and aahed. Unfortunately I had to turn down requests to show my artwork because of the way I was dressed that evening (I had worn short-sleeve shirts all week for easy tattoo access but had decided to wear a long-sleeve, button-down on Sunday — which would have meant disrobing completely, and I wouldn't wish that sight on a room full of strangers, let alone friends) and missed out on my share of the egoboo.

At one point James White came in to the room to visit and got immediately swept up in the tattoo frenzy. Jeanne Gomoll brought him over to see Nevenah's skeleton, but he had trouble finding it. Gripping the rim of his glasses, James leaned in for a closer look but couldn't see anything but a big fuzzy bruise. Then somebody figured out James' problem and gently pulled him backwards until the artwork came into focus. He had been leaning in expecting to find something small, like a little rose or a heart, and never considered that the large bruise he saw was actually her tattoo. Once it came into focus he oohed and aahed like everybody else.

Nevenah and I talked for quite a while about tattoo philosophy, fandom, Wisconsin winters and writing. As we spoke she would occasionally mention her boyfriend, Barnaby, who lived in Connecticut and published a fanzine called, *Let's Fanac*. Then it sunk in; she was Barnaby Rapoport's significant other. The same Barnaby Rapoport who had agreed, only two days before, to become *Blat's* first columnist. *Whoa!* She's interesting, got a tattoo and she's a faan. Barnaby is a lucky man: he's got a great girlfriend and a great gig as a columnist for this fanzine. What more could he want?

Our last night at the con included party-hopping to John Douglas' Avon suite — where I watched a touching, but manly, reunion between Frank and former *BeaBohema* columnist Piers Anthony — and the Tor party, hosted this year by the Nielsen Haydens. Though both Theresa and Patrick were hosting the party, Patrick was nowhere around — in fact I don't think I ever laid eyes on Patrick during the entirety of our visit to Orlando. But it didn't seem to matter, as Theresa was in a warm and generous spirit that night and throughout the convention. I mourn their loss to Prodom and GENie.

The evening ended up in the Smoking Lounge, where everybody was feeling very mellow. Hell, even Jeff finally sat down for a while. Before long our group included Steve and Elaine Stiles, Geri, Arnie and Joyce, Ted and

rich, and several others whose faces were obscured by the haze. Though several people were staying until Tuesday there was a finality about the gathering. (Not to imply that I'm the life of any party or anything, but I felt a pang of loss when I considered my return to Mundane.)

Our flight home was due to leave around noon the next day, which meant we wouldn't get to see folks in the morning, so we said our goodbyes and started walking the three blocks back to our hotel.

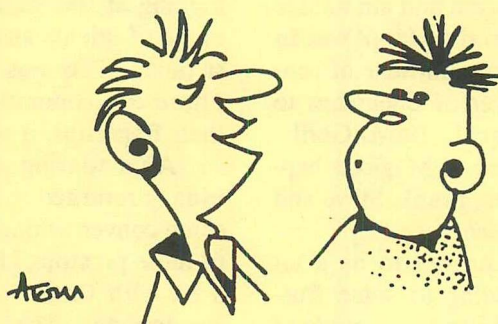
Naturally, once we had breached the polar ice flow by our door and got inside our room, I was too geared up to go to sleep. My body was definitely tired, but my brain was still having conversations back at the Peabody. So I packed my clothes and looked at some fanzines and watched TV until

Lynn threatened my life and I finally went to bed.

The next morning we met Frank and Catherine for a quick breakfast in the hotel restaurant and talked wistfully about it all being over so soon. They were scheduled to rent a car and travel south for a brief visit with Frank's sister, who had survived living right on the edge of Hurricane Andrew's destructive path, before flying home later in the week. I envied them that little bit of adventure. I had originally envisioned a leisurely drive to and from Florida for Lynn and myself, but had to give it up early in our planning because Lynn couldn't get the extra time off from work. Instead, all we got to see of "The Sunshine State" was through the window of a taxi.

After I got home I had some time to think about conventions and the cynical attitude that I'd developed about them over the years. I realized that I had been enjoying cons less and less throughout my fan career. In the '70s they seemed so much more intimate and enjoyable — especially Worldcons. There seemed to be so many of us then and we seemed to have so much fucking fun. I look back fondly upon my infamous Toronto hotel room in 1973 and the twelve friends who shared it with me. I remembered the group exploration of the countless cellars beneath the DC Sheraton and the sight of John D. Berry sliding past mundane hotel guests on the escalators in 1974. Or the amazing nitrous consumption that took place under the noses and in the faces of the Kansas City fascist elite in 1976. Or the 98° nights at the '78 Phoenix Worldcon with the Void Boys watching skinny dippers on the hotel roof or trying to escape the Hugo Awards with too many chemicals in my system.

The '80s were much more cynical and, as they progressed, so was I. I was appalled by the way conventions started paying more and more attention to the media fans and their wallets. Personal disappointments had corrupted me and "fun" became harder to find. For a while *Pong* filled the bill. As cons became crappier I tried put-



"Hey...Remember Dan Steffan"

ting most of the fun on paper — which made sense because of the new interplay with faraway British fandom. But, in the end, I couldn't keep it up — it was just too damned much work — though it did get me a Hugo Nomination. But by then my cynical worldview was well formed and I was convinced of the award's general worthlessness. After a last spurt of energy was put into the Falls Church Corflu things really seemed to sour. Career mistakes and events like the whole Bergeron mess, Ted's imprisonment and Jerry Jacks' death just took the joy out of fandom for me. Life became complicated and mean and fandom and conventions seemed pretty irrelevant to me.

I started feeling a hunger for fandom a couple of years later but couldn't get myself motivated to even draw a few simple cartoons. It was like I knew too much about too many people and events to find that simple joy again, though I wanted to. Then I went to the New York Corflu a few years ago hoping to find some kind of spark of fannish humanity that would kickstart me, but came away depressed because of the hostility and indifference I encountered. But somehow I had a gut feeling that Magicon would be different. And it was.

Sure, there was still all that media bullshit — I couldn't get into the Dracula presentation because they ran out of seating — but it was still an intrinsically fannish convention. People were genuinely glad to be there and took advantage of every chance to enjoy themselves. I think that, somehow, Willis' humanity and pure fannish heart cast a spell over the con and allowed a return of good fellowship and simple fannish joy. For that I want to thank Walter and those who, in his spirit, contributed to that joy and fellowship: Geri Sullivan, Andy Hooper and, most importantly, Joe Siclari — probably the first trufan to chair an American Worldcon in more than a decade. Together they have, like Jerry Lewis, given me hope to carry on.

And, of course, I have to thank one more fellow, without whom I would never have been able to go to Florida in the first place. Thank you, Batman!

THE BURBEE OF THE NINETIES What do you call a fannish ghod? How do you address an insurgent hero?

Lee Jacobs once called Charles Burbee "a living legend," Bill Rotsler said he was "one of the two funniest men I have ever known," at MagiCon Willis referred to him as "the perfect fan," his pal Fran Laney used to call him "Meyer" (and sometimes, "Sammy"), his wife Socorro calls him "Charlie," and a famous Terry Carr publication once confidently proclaimed that Burbee was "incomplete." However, to most of us, whether we've met him or not, he's just plain, old "Burb." And that's what I called him in a recent postal exchange.

For a while I thought about being formal, but quickly realized that nobody has gotten away with calling him "Mister Burbee" for years — at least not since E. Everett Evans did — without getting laughed at. So Burb it was.

I wrote to him after we'd gotten his postcard of comment on *Pong 41*. It bothered me that our ish had

been one of only "four fanzines I've received this year." It just sounded absurd. How could this have happened? I decided it had to be one of two things: All the hoohah about a fanzine revival is a bunch of crap, or, fanzine fandom has a short memory. Sadly, I've decided it is the latter. (Though I also think the revival theory is crap.) Fandom has let Charles Burbee — the man who invented sex, for Christ's sake — slip through its fingers.

I was and am pissed about this. I doubted this disaffection was Burbee's own choice, so I wrote to him to inquire, among other things, about his current interest in fanzines. I didn't expect the reply I received:

"I'm sorry to say," The Burbee of the Nineties answered, "my health is not so good. In 1992, I broke a hip. I had several strokes and I had emergency prostate surgery. (No malignancy.) Because of the strokes, my left side went haywire and I can't type, my wife Socorro (Cora) is my typing fingers. Oh, I can talk OK! Cora calls me Chatty Charlie. Around the house I can manage with a walker. When long, tiring distances are involved, I have to use a wheelchair or a plane — we're flying to Silvercon."

"It's ironic," my coeditor said after hearing Burb's letter over the phone. "Fandom's two greatest fanwriters are both recovering from strokes. It just doesn't seem fair, does it?"

"Definitely not," I replied. "Especially when you consider that people like Jimmy Swaggart and Jesse Helms are still out there, roaming free."

Despite such cultural inequities, Burb's letter was oddly reassuring and told me all I really needed to know. Charles Burbee will be fannish to the end. Confronted with a drought of fanzines The Burbee of the Nineties has started going to conventions. Egad! Back in the sixties and seventies, when convention committees tried to get him to attend their cons he did everything he could to avoid them — except maybe joining the witness relocation program. Now, just because you people have abandoned him, Charles Burbee Living Legend has been forced onto the dreaded convention circuit. Poor Burb. Anything but that. . . .

But you can help. Now is your chance! All of you forgetful faneditors — whose neglect has stuck wheels beneath The Burbee of the Nineties and pushed him, defenselessly, into the land of the costumed geek and the pear-shaped nerd — must make things right, before it's too late. Before *they* get him. Before they put his wheelchair up on blocks, force a sword into his belt and make him sing Filksongs for the rest of his life. *Oh, the humanity!*

Now is your chance to save a Living Legend from a fate worse than death — which, as we all know, won't release you anyway. Put The Burbee of the Nineties on your mailing lists. Send him your fanzines and learn, finally, the one true way to address an insurgent hero:

Charles Burbee, P.O. Box 2284, Temecula, CA 92593-2284

Remember, a Sensitive Fannish Face is a terrible thing to waste. Right, Meyer? — *Dan Steffan*

RAPTOR

r a p o p o r t

I had thought Richard Brandt's *Fanthology* '87 was continuing the tradition started by Mike Glycer, but I guess I was wrong.

Glycer initiated the current series of fanthologies with his year end survey of 1986's fanwriting in *File 770*. With a few modifications, his best-of list became the table of contents for Pat and Dennis Virzi's fanthology.

Several years later, in 1991, Brandt decided that a follow-up would be a good project for Corflu Ocho. Now Glycer has edited a third volume for Corflu Nine.

This series has been especially interesting for me because it parallels my own entrance into fandom. Glycer's "Dream Fanthology" was in one of the first zines I read, and it was my first overview of current fandom. Brandt's fanthology was the first to include anything I had seen in its original appearance. It's been strange to see the transition from a representation I accept on faith to one I can match against my own perceptions, from one I devour with pure curiosity to one that evokes an editorial agenda.

One thing I see is that the content of a fanthology has more to do with the editor than with the state of fanwriting that year. A 1987 fanthology edited by Glycer would have been very similar to his 1988 one, and equally different from Brandt's.

Picking up *Fanthology* 1988, your first impression is of brutal functionalism. The 73 pages of ugly typewriter print are harshly xeroxed. Like *Fanthology* '87, it is illustrated by a single artist, and William Rotsler must have seemed a perfect choice, but the art, too, is ugly. The heavy lines on cold white paper are crude and jarring. Perhaps it would have benefitted from mimeo and colored twilltone, or at least careful layout.

I groaned when I saw Marty Cantor credited for the typing — that sounded like an essential component of the *Fanthology* from Hell — but the only major problem was the dashes that frequently appeared at random in the middle of words.

Fanthology 1988's appearance is oddly representative of its spirit. The characteristic tone of its contents is a dull, pedestrian functionalism.

There is some excellent writing. Dave Langford's "The Trillion-Year Sneer" is a crisp, entertaining survey of SF bloopers. Judith Hanna's "Airfixation" is a witty look at Joseph Nicholas and some of their friends, whose anti-militarism coexists with a hobbyist's enthusiasm for military hardware. Skel posits an amusing fannish conspiracy in "The LoCgate Scandal," which takes off from

a couple of pieces in *Fanthology* '87. (They all first appeared in *Holier Than Thou*.) Sherry Coldsmith's "Mein Infinity," an essay on how her perceptions of fiction have changed and how SF has evolved, or regressed, is good, if a little defensive, a little preemptively anti-intellectual.

Two more pieces, though not as well done, have good subjects and honest writing. T.L. Bohman's "Friday, 8-5," a section from his personalzine *Airglow*, doesn't have the "polished and dramatic prose" or "insight into human psychology" that Glycer claims in his introduction, but it is gripping as Bohman, a volunteer fireman, gets pushed to the edge in a burning house. Elinor Malin's "I Can't Read Your Lips When Your Back Is Towards Me" is a thoughtful essay on her hearing-impaired husband that leads to general observations on communication. The personal writing is best; the generalizations are too abrupt, too starkly abstract, like veins of inorganic material.

Other pieces are mediocre. Graham P. Collins' "States of Gray: Unreal Shapes of Arachnida" is a surreal, occasionally labored jumble that mixes increasingly weird resolutions to improve his life with comments on the behavior of the spiders in his apartment. He sounds very sleepy or very stoned. "Rock of Pages" by Marc Ortlieb is substandard fanfiction about a supernatural apa contribution. Andy Hooper's "Where the Water Ends" is intermittently interesting as it recounts several summers' worth of adventures at a national forest in Minnesota, but it's too long and somewhat overwritten.

But the majority, the pieces that give *Fanthology* 1988 its pedestrian tone, are just colorless bits of journalism and editorial matter. Some are sensible and clarifying, like Suford Lewis' "Masquerade Goals" or Jean Weber's two linked pieces on the ethics of opposing fan fund candidates, and only Bruce Gardner's rant about franchise novels, that clichéd target, is outright bad, but all of them are totally functional. Guy McLimore and Jodie Offutt provide affectionate obituaries for Robert Heinlein and Clifford Simak that are adequate but nothing special. Mark Leeper offers a reasonable but plonking look back at *Star Wars*. There's Chuq Von Rospach listing his editorial policies for book reviews, Dr. Bill Breuer's whimsy-jacketed support for the space program, and Andy Hooper's "The Fan Who Would Be King," standard complaints about fanzine Hugo nominations under a layer of Kiplingesque contrivance.

The contrast with *Fanthology* '87 is striking.

Fanthology '87 was simply a collection of the best individual pieces of fanwriting. It was skewed towards variety, but any ordinary moments it may have had were effaced by the general luster. *Fanthology 1988* is different by design.

Before publication, Glycer and Corflu Nine asked their members for recommendations. This is the list I came up with:

"I got your progress report and noticed your request for suggestions for your 1988 *Fanthology*. Instead of nominating obvious selections from the likes of *Outworlds* and *Pirate Jenny*, I thought I'd mention a few items you might have overlooked.

" 'Report From Silicon Valley,' Rudy Rucker, *Science Fiction Eye* 4.

"Every year it seems some pro puts together a powerful non-fiction collage for a zine. In 1987 it was Greg Benford and 'Mozart on Morphine.' In 1988 it was Rucker.

" 'My Alphabet Starts Where Your Alphabet Ends,' Paul Di Filippo, *New Pathways* 11.

"This appreciation of Dr. Seuss as a SF writer would merit inclusion in any year; this year it's especially appropriate.

" 'The Roach God,' Mark L. Van Name, *The Green Pages* 2.

"Maybe it's just because I was living in a roach infested apartment when this came out, but I've always enjoyed this twisted memoir.

" 'The Trillion-Year Sneer,' David Langford, *Thrust* 31.

"You're probably on to this already, but I thought I'd at least add another vote for its inclusion.

" 'Nomads,' Genetic Lunarian (Glenn Grant), *Edge Detector* 1.

"I don't know if you're interested in fiction, especially in comics form, but if I've piqued your interest with my other suggestions, check it out.

" 'The Mid-Life Crisis Bookstore and Delicatessen,' David R. Haugh, *Outworlds* 58.

"I said I wouldn't include anything from *Outworlds* but I couldn't resist.

"And if you're interested in a real long shot, don't forget that I published two issues of *Sadie Mae Glutz* in 1988."

I had to end with a punchline, of course.

The results were interesting. Only the Langford piece was included or listed in the honorable mentions. There is a second list of pieces recommended by outsiders, but only the Haugh is included. Rucker, Di Filippo, Van Name, and Grant all vanished, even though my name was listed as one of the contributors.

They probably just lost my letter, but seeing that was a paranoid moment.

Glycer says, "Another rule I generally followed was

not to reprint articles done by pro writers for semipro-zines. I wasn't about to ask for rights to reprint such materials for free." But all the pieces I listed were originally written for free — except for the Langford, the one he used.

I knew I was limited. I don't see enough fanzines. In fact, of the twenty-four pieces in Glycer's honorable mentions, I've only seen five. But I thought I could suggest things they hadn't seen, or hadn't thought of including. I thought a fanthology should be fresh and eclectic, and include things that people might not have seen. Aside from the Langford and Haugh, where I was seconding familiar material, the idea was to lead them to things that were intrinsically fannish but unfamiliar, not just recognized fanwriters in standardized fanzines.

Yet *Fanthology 1988* seems calculated to evoke fandom at its most standardized and familiar. It is an overview of fandom was a whole, rather than a selection of the best. As Glycer sees it, "A violent distortion of history is forced upon *Fanthology* editors who define their mission as culling out the greatest feature articles of the year."

Fanthology 1988 avoids that "violent distortion."

This excludes not just my deliberately offbeat suggestions, but the high-quality fannishness of *Fanthology* '87; it's as if the contributors were a "cultural elite" oppressing mainstream fandom. This is the fanthology as a political institution.

It isn't enough that Coldsmit's "Mein Infinity" is good; Glycer's introduction has to argue that it's somehow representative of fandom: "Those not content to remain as Heinlein shaped them actually began their mourning in some past year, when they realized his vision for their lives was more juvenile than they cared to remain."

Where Brandt's goal was literary variety, Glycer seeks political balance. His inclusion of Hooper's "The Fan Who Would Be King," which criticizes the gray mass zines that dominate *Fanthology 1988*, is generous, but it seems less like its quality overcame his biases, and more like he conscientiously included a minority point of view.

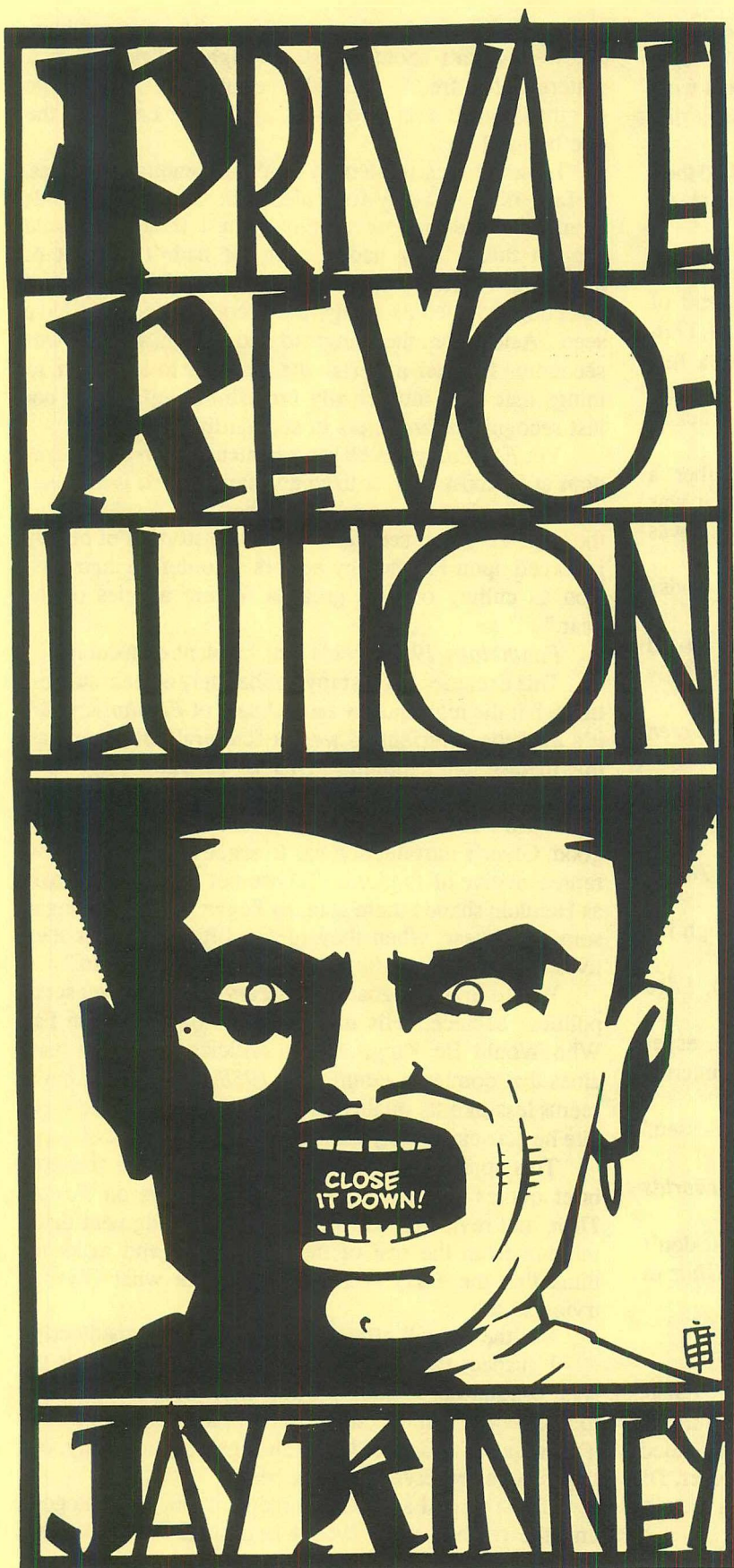
This approach has some good points. The scattered brief quotes are enjoyable. Glycer's essays on *Fosfax*, *Then*, and reviewers have the intelligent judgment that's missing from the rest of the fanthology, and make me think that the essay is a better form for what Glycer is trying to do.

But the overall effect is institutionalized mediocrity.

I suspect the problem isn't Glycer's editing but the state of fandom. I think it's reasonable for a fanthology to aim for not just excellent parts but an evocative whole. That requires a fandom that's an organic community, one that can be represented by its best.

If this virtual agora flickered back on, then the good and the representative would be united. We wouldn't have to choose between Brandt's approach and Glycer's.

Until then, Brandt's approach is better. — *Barnaby Rapoport*



A Brief Auto-biographical Introduction

I've long had a theory that my life ratchets along in five year phases, bouncing between the polarities of a fascination with radical politics on the one hand and esoteric spirituality on the other. During the high school and college years of approximately 1965 to 1970 my perspective was largely shaped by the New Left. However, about the time that SDS imploded and my consciousness exploded with the help of certain "recreational drugs" I began to give up on politics and turn my attention inward.

This next phase lasted until approximately 1975 when my astral body began to itch and I took up radical politics again for another five year bout. During this stretch I was the political cartoonist for two years for In These Times, an independent socialist newspaper, co-produced the conspiratologist comic Coverup Lowdown in 1977, and edited Anarchy Comics from 1978 through 1981 or so.

And then the wheel turned and I began to get fed up with radical politics all over again. My spiritual inclinations once more claimed my attention. I made a brief stab at balancing the two polarities (out of which grew the special issue of Co-Evolution Quarterly on "Religion and Politics" in 1983) and then went over full time to mystical pursuits (typified by founding Gnosis Magazine in 1985). But somewhere there in the '80s this neat system of five year phases began to mutate and stretch. My interest in the spiritual lasted longer than five years this time and my political concerns arose again simultaneously.

And thus the stage is set for the following bit of journalism. It was originally written for Paul Krassner's iconoclastic The Realist, which has been up and running again for several years in compact newsletter form. (\$12 for 6 issues from The Realist, Box 1230, Venice, CA 90294.) Unfortunately once I got into it I kept writing until the piece ended up twice as long as would fit into that publication. To make matters worse, the L.A. Riots broke out a week after the event chronicled here, changing everything. And there it sat (except for an appearance in a private apa) until Ted and Dan called. So, herewith my chronicle of the world's stupidest protest and my reactions. . . . —jk

Yeah, go ahead, forget the L.A. Riots in the wake of the Rodney King decision. Forget the looting and the fires in San

Francisco, Berkeley, and Atlanta. Sure these events were tragic enough to keep pundits and political candidates busily opining for months thereafter. But like all unusual outbursts of sentiment and action, the Riots were the exception not the rule. To cite a typical Boomer example, consider: the *real* face of the opposition to the Vietnam war wasn't the big Mobilization marches in D.C. and N.Y. but the lame, half-assed and unsung demonstrations out in mid-America where a few dozen awkward friends hung around in the Student Union or Shopping Center holding signs and garnering precious little media coverage.

Just so. If you want to contemplate the hardcore reality of political power and impotence — of the day-to-day effectiveness of demonstrations as a means to get a point across — you must focus on the non-events, the demos that crop up repeatedly and go nowhere. I assert this not only from a deep conviction about the greater scheme of things but — more importantly — because I had just finished writing up such a non-event when the L.A. Riots exploded onto the stage of history. Was I going to let the biggest outbreak of domestic violence since the Civil War get in the way of letting you read about this much more typical exercise in futility? No way!

It was an existential kind of assignment from the very beginning, even before the Rodney King riots hogged the limelight. I got a call from Krassner the Sunday night, April 26th, 1992: would I be willing to be the *Realist's* man on the scene at the demonstration in downtown San Francisco to shut down the Pacific Stock Exchange scheduled for the next morning? Sure. The catch? It's scheduled for 6 a.m.

I immediately had two options. I could get up the next morning at 5 a.m., stumble into the shower, grab a bit of breakfast, and take BART downtown to the demo. Or, in the best tradition of *Realist* journalism, I could sleep in, skip the demonstration altogether, and write up a fanciful account out of whole cloth. Who would know the difference?

Previous demonstrations against the Pacific Stock Exchange had been the scene of civil disobedience, street theater, small-scale rioting, broken windows, and mass arrests. Would this "third annual" shut-down, sponsored by the Earth Action Network, be more of the same? Ultimately my curiosity won out over my desire to sleep in and I nightailed it downtown. As I soon discovered, instead of a riot we got possibly the most cliched demonstration in years. And that, perversely enough, made for an interesting anthropological study.

I attended the demo (details to follow) and went back home to write up the experience. Three days later the Rodney King trial verdict was announced and all hell broke loose, more or less spontaneously. Although on a much smaller scale than in L.A., rioters and looters in downtown San Francisco managed to plunder several dozen stores along Market St. and its side streets, causing millions in business damages and losses and over \$750,000 in police overtime alone. However, such an explosion was almost unimaginable on Monday.

Flyers announcing the demonstration told supporters to gather at the Pacific Stock Exchange (P.S.E.) at 6 a.m., Monday, April 27, in order to block employees from entering. The stated goal was to stop, if only for a day, the buying and selling of the earth for profit. An honorable enough goal, I suppose, but one that it is very hard to generate much enthusiasm for at sun up on a Monday.

I arrived at the site at Pine and Sansome about 6:15 a.m. after walking a couple of blocks from BART past dozens of cops stationed in front of every major office building entrance in the vicinity. At the P.S.E. a small crowd of maybe two dozen protesters stood on the sidewalk in front of the building while barriers and more cops sealed off the entrance. Another couple of dozen demonstrators and observers hung around across Pine St. and down at the corner, waiting for something to happen.

As luck would have it, the P.S.E. employees, alerted in advance about the demonstration, had been told to come in early and were already merrily working away buying and selling the earth for profit. In short, the demonstration was already a failure before it began. What follows is a blow-by-blow diary of the subsequent exercise in futility.

6:20 — Girl with long frizzy brown hair and body painted day-glo green in Deadhead dress screeches poetry into a tiny loud speaker system. Refrain: "What happened to the green?" There are four others sporting the same bodypaint. The rest of the demonstrators look like spare change artists swept off Haight St. and teleported to the demonstration en masse.

6:30 — Green girl announces, "We are asking people to come forward and make a physical link with the green." Disheveled bum rushes up and catches green girl in bear hug. Wait, he may be a demonstrator too. Hard to tell. Green people all hold hands and urge others to do same. Few do. One demonstrator dressed in suit and tie comes forward and dramatically rips his tie off. Two women and two men, all painted green, disrobe and make a circle. They invite others to surround them. This sparks a little more interest but not much.

6:40 — The naked green people line up for a group photo in front of the P.S.E. A loud truck arrives to pick up a dumpster from across the street. This drowns out the demo for five minutes until it drives off.

6:50 — The green men and women put their clothes back on. More people gather. Man waves the earth flag. Guy in stylish red and white striped Dr. Seuss hat walks around. Two guys with guitars, another guy with a conga drum, woman with straw hat covered with play money make the scene.

7:00 — Six motorcycle cops and 35 riot police in military formation march down Pine St. past the demonstration. Demonstrator in rainbow hat, red bandana, and "One Less War" sweatshirt gives the Nazi salute and heckles the cops.

7:05 — Small bald guy in blue worksuit passes. Asks me what the demo is about. I say the environment. He says, "Well, they have a point, but peons like myself have to go to work. Don't they have a job?" I feel myself beginning to drown in cliches.

7:15 — Middle aged man with sharp looking fedora makes short speech about the destruction of the ecosystem. Demonstration has reached maximum strength: maybe 85 people. After his speech is over he and the green paint crew disappear, leaving the

demo in the hands of blowhards with bullhorns.

7:20 — Fellow with white fairy wings, green cap with pink knit octopus on top, blue lower-face mask, and shorts cusses out the cops declaring that they're "nothing but pieces of shit." This sets off another young man in shorts with long blonde hair who demonstrates convincing emulation of Tourette's Syndrome, waving the finger at cops and yelling "fuck you" repeatedly. Cops do not take up the bait.

7:30 — I talk to a bored young woman with a Sony Super VHS camcorder. She's there to film the demo if "anything happens," meaning violence. She complains that these demonstrations always look the same with the same people at them.

7:40 — Nothing much is happening. Bearded fat guy with Silence = Death sweatshirt takes the microphone and announces that the demonstration will be back tomorrow and every day until the Earth is saved or whatever. I seriously doubt it. Woman with camcorder gives up and splits for work.

7:50 — Three cops confer across the street. Ranking officer with mustache announces jauntily, "We're going to try a new tactic — assign each protester their own personal cop. Build a one to one relationship." Demonstrators begin to march off. Flotilla of motorcycle cops and several dozen cops on foot escort the march, keeping it on the sidewalk.

8:00 — Demonstrators cluster in front of Charles Schwab office. Chant: "Stock Market Crash! Go! Go!" over and over. Dow Jones drops 7.6 points according to the moving electronic sign.

8:10 — Demonstrators, now down to less than forty bodies, march around the block taking particular pleasure in leading motorcycle cops down one-way street and then suddenly doubling back.

8:20 — Demonstrators gather in front of Citicorp Center. Cops rush into courtyard entrance and giant motorized glass gates close off courtyard from the street. Demonstrators amuse themselves with pounding on thick glass for a bit and making faces at cops on other side. However, their attention soon shifts to the BART exit nearby from which people are emerging on their way to work. Demonstrators attempt to build support by hooting at secretaries and office workers in suits. Does not appear to work.

8:30 — Ever-thinning crowd moves across Market St. to front of Chevron Building. This proves even more boring than Citicorp. Crowd soon moves on again accompanied by dozens of cops. Demonstrator declares, "Hey, maybe we can walk around doing nothing all day!"

8:40 — Gather in front of a McDonald's on Market St. Same place that got trashed in last year's demo. Some demonstrators go inside. Cops increase alertness. Two people from Office of Citizen Complaints on hand in O.C.C. jackets. However nothing untoward happens. Crowd contents itself with muttering about the rain forests. Passerby asks me "What's the demo?" I tell him and he says, "I thought maybe it was for good deals on Fajita Breakfasts."

8:50 — Young woman in black leather jacket, with red and white braids hanging from the shoulder, walks by McDonald's and ignores demonstration. Blonde surfer-looking demonstrator in black Utah t-shirt screams after her, "Nice leather jacket! Everyone has to have their 15 minutes of rebellion, right bitch?"

9:00 — Crowd walks up to corner of New Montgomery and Market and mills around outside Sheraton Palace Hotel. Every now and then chants, "Earth First, Profits Last." While cops are still catching up, a dozen demonstrators charge into the Sheraton Palace. Two minutes later they pop out the back of the hotel and walk around the block to the front again. Tanned fellow in beard yells "Earth First over here!" Crowd moves to him. Guy with bull-horn yells "Revolutionaries over here!" and crowd, including the bearded Earth First guy, shifts over to him. After short conference crowd runs off around the corner hooting and hollering. Police doggedly follow. Demonstrators stop in front of Kuppenheimer's Men's Clothing, ponder the conservative men's suit bargains in the window, abruptly reverse course and march off back across Market St. Busload of cops drives by.

9:10 — The demonstrators, now down to under two dozen, pause in front of the American Savings Bank at the corner of Market and Kearny. Cops rush to block the entrance. Crowd moves on down Kearny St. And so on and so forth. This saving the earth business sure does drag on.

9:20 — I finally lose interest and take the BART back home to 16th and Mission. As I leave the station, two cops on the beat are questioning a Chicano leaning up against the ticket machines.

What conclusions can be drawn from this travesty? What was most clear in the wake of the subsequent King riots on Thursday — and more significantly, with the mass arrests of 300 peaceful demonstrators on the next day as well as 500 marchers a week later — was that this pissant stock exchange demo was a trial run for the S.F.P.D.'s new police chief's labor intensive approach

to crowd control. No one was arrested Monday, despite hundreds of cops being mobilized, because it would have looked too much like shooting fish in a barrel. However, at the much larger follow-up demonstrations against the King decision and against the cops themselves in the weeks following, those lines of cops went toxic, scooping up innocent bystanders, journalists, tourists, and anyone in the vicinity into waiting police buses. In a city like San Francisco, where there's commonly at least one demo per week, this didn't bode well for freedom of speech. And in fact, once the smoke cleared, the new police chief was fired for having his cops swipe stacks of a local free paper which had dared to show him on its cover sporting a billyclub erection. Score one for free speech.

On the other hand, the travesty of the Monday demo was not merely in the low turnout or the meandering focus. Rather it was there in the ease with which the protesters fell into pat postures. Office workers were cast as sell-outs and accomplices in the earth's destruction. An ostensibly progressive male succumbed to the temptation to harass a female passerby because she didn't appear to fulfill his notion of how someone wearing a black leather jacket should act. Cops, who in this particular instance were guarding the peace in an unprovocative manner, got the finger and "fuck you"s in their face. In short, the Monday demo was also a trial run for the mob psychology that ran amuck in Thursday's looting.

Did the stock exchange protesters have a valid point? Sure. Undoubtedly the lives that many people settle for in the workaday world entail their connivance in the environment's destruction. Then again, what doesn't? Merely buying a daily paper or a rap cassette reinforces the consumption of natural resources. Given a chance to choose the path of least destruction, most people would prefer to follow it. The irony is that I suspect that more than a few of Monday's diehard demonstrators against work were busy in Thursday's melee looting the fruits of someone else's work.

In the wake of the riots and Bush's electoral defeat, I have friends who wonder if the sixties are finally "back," if things are finally heating up again. Such a prospect leaves me with mixed feelings indeed. Because if we revert to yet another round of oinking at "pigs" and straight-baiting; of marking our dissatisfaction with the way things are by settling for lame protests and riots; then those who complain that "it's twenty-five years since Watts and nothing has changed" will be closer to the truth than even they imagine. — Jay Kinney

DON'T

START ME

TALKING:

OUT OF THE SERCON CLOSET



BY ANDY HOOPER

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVE STILES

have a dark secret.

In the past few years, I've been carrying on like the consummate modern trufan, regaling fanzine readers with stories of baseball, travel, con-going, con-running, fan-parties, graveyard tours, canoe trips, and a lot of other properly diffuse interests. I've written my share of Brandonizations and other fan fictions. I've waxed poetic on the state of fanzine fandom and the crisis in the modern fanzine. I've looked down in disdain at neofans, costumers, neopros, gamers, trekkers, all people occupying lower places in the fannish food chain.

But I'm here to tell you, it's a sham. Under my dissolute exterior, I am secretly sercon. And that's not a euphemism, folks; I read and enjoy science fiction. Once in a while, I read the odd work of fantasy masquerading at being magical realism, but my first love is the hard stuff. Space Opera. Clarke, Pohl, Bear. I even got hooked on Cyberpunk for a while, but a few weeks at the Bruce Sterling Center cleaned me up. I go to other people's homes and see the shiny rows of hardback history, or paperback mystery, or gardening books, and pretend to peruse a volume of interest to me . . . but all the while, I'm dying inside, thinking of the shame that would follow the revelation of my own library, full to bursting with books with Kelly Freas or Michael Whelan covers.

People would be surprised to know how many of us there are. Sometimes, when I'm at a party, standing in a knot of people discussing Thai food, I'll catch a certain sort of gleam in someone else's eye, and we'll slip away to a dark corner together. There we discuss the latest Pat Cadigan novel in hushed tones, always glancing over our shoulders to see if anyone has spotted us.

The thing that makes being an SF reader in today's fandom such a lonely prospect is that the rejection of Sfnal literacy goes beyond the fashion of the faanish or the ignorance of the media fen. Many of the people I meet who have a wide experience of the field have turned their backs on it as well. "There's nothing worth reading

today," they proclaim, "and there's *been* nothing worth reading since *Gravy Planet*." Others have developed their reading sensibility, explored other genres, mainstream forms of literature, and now condemn SF for the simplistic, escapist elements which the pulp readers still venerate. Both varieties of "fallen trufan" have grown away from the kind of fiction that excited them in their teens, and place the blame on the genre for their latter-day lack of interest.

In my dreams, I long to discover a Sfnal Rosetta stone, work capable of translating the tastes of all these groups and attracting them back to the field. Rationally, I know that this is impossible, but it doesn't stop me

from considering the work of various authors I admire, and whose style seems to bridge the gap between the pulp sensibilities of the past and the new literary respectability of the genre today.

Take Howard Waldrop, for example. People who like quality science fiction often become wildly enthused at the mere mention of his name. Yet, Howard is one of those writers who seem to have far more admirers among his fellow professionals than in the reading public. Part of this is certainly due to

erratic print history of his work, which has often been difficult to find. In recent years, some mass market editions of his books have finally become available again, which presents the reader with an opportunity for reading which I heartily recommend.

Waldrop might be an ideal point of conjunction between new readers of SF and fans of the old pulps, his style speaking to both worlds. He is fond of tried-and-true conventions of pulp fiction: giant ants, living dinosaurs, mad scientists who plant the protagonist's brain in a gorilla's body, and so forth. He loves to work with cultural touchstones, modern archetypes and famous personalities: Hemingway, Tom Mix, Elvis (that's Senator Presley to you and me), even Mickey Mouse and Goofey, have been the subject of his deft interpretations. At the same time, his treatment of his subjects is deeply human,



turning what might honestly be called cartoon characters into compelling, believable people. He never really veers off into the kind of psychological maundering that old time fans seem to hate, but the internal landscape of his stories is always as interesting as the external trappings of plot and setting.

It's important that I note that Howard is capable of a lot more than stories about comic book characters and famous people with different jobs. Sometimes people forget about his award-winning style with classic "straight" SF ideas. His "Mary Margaret Road-Grader" remains just about the best post-collapse story I've ever read, and that's even got romance to recommend it. There are a lot of people who have started writing in what they think is the "Waldrop style," juxtaposing historical characters and weird quasi-SF plots, but few of them can make you suspend your disbelief as he does. Maybe the best of this lot are Eugene Byrne and Kim Newman, whose "In the Air," and "Ten Days That Shook the World," appeared in *Interzone* a few years ago. They have the giddy pleasure of playing fast and loose with history, but their characters lack that quality of dimension. Newman's novel *The Night Mayor* made good use of this by making the hundreds of characters he lifted from classic film noir into imperfect computer constructs, but they just won't stay with you for an hour after the movie is over.

Somehow, I link Terry Bisson with Howard Waldrop in my thoughts about modern SF and fantasy. Most people would say that this is because Bisson also has Waldrop's fondness for the rural south and historical references. But the real reason to compare them is Bisson's touch with character, which is so polished that the reader just skips over premises like thousand-year-old wizards farming tobacco in Kentucky, or composite-fiber airships floating over a Carolina where the buffalo still roam, in order to follow the protagonist's next thought. Bisson writes books ideal for both the lost pulp fan and the modern literature reader; the sense of wonder and the sense of humanity are equally engaged. Try out his fine novels *Talking Man* and *Fire on the Mountain*, then pass them on to a Bobbie Ann Mason reader. They'll appreciate the favor.

Maybe it's that contemplation of the human condition that's critical for attracting the post-modern SF fan. Or maybe they just need to approach the genre from a more oblique angle. Back in the sixties, the new wave authors fought tooth and nail to admit such considerations to science fiction. Today, most of the SF fans I know have embraced their agenda so thoroughly that they won't even read things that are frankly marketed as SF. One of the best examples that I can think of to illustrate this is Karen Joy Fowler's fine novel *Sarah Canary*, which was

definitely SF or fantasy or alternate history or some weird, cross-genre mutant of a book. But the publisher slid the manuscript into the nebulous world of the "mainstream," where it achieved great critical status . . . especially among SF critics, who are always eager to glom onto a mainstream writer who has been "unknowingly" writing in the SF idiom. These people conveniently forgot about Fowler's fine collection of SF short fiction *Artificial Things*, which has been brought back in print as if to illustrate the mistake.

One writer who has made a considerable move towards a more "literary" sensibility in recent years is Greg Bear, although he would almost certainly fight such as assertion to his last breath. Bear may be the ideal modern SF writer; his grounding in scientific principles is beyond reproach, but at the same time, his characters show greater depth and complexity with each new work. His *Queen of Angels* was an extended consideration of the definition of consciousness, interwoven with a nightmare future that could give Tom Disch the cold sweats. This was followed by *Anvil of Stars*, a superior sequel to *The Forge of God*, wherein breathtaking stellar vistas and amazing aliens to eclipse Van Vogt were presented as the background to amazingly complex meditations on the morality of revenge. It felt like what you might get if you let Ken Kesey and Bernard Malamud collaborate on their version of *The Stars My Destination*, inventive, passionate and exhilarating fiction.

Yet, people who cut their teeth on *Amazing* profess to find Bear boring or cruel. They cite the dystopian context of *Queen* or the ambiguity of the conclusion of *Anvil*, and say they long for the days when science solved problems rather than made them. This, I think, may be the one insoluble conundrum in reconciling the new and old sensibilities of fandom. History itself has betrayed the pulp reader; the world of the personal helicopter and the transatlantic bullet train has failed to materialize. Instead, we live in a world of ethnic cleansing and heavy metal poisoning. The best science fiction being written now takes that context for granted, and does what it can to create excitement, innovation, and adventure, in spite, or sometimes because, of the social consequences of scientific advance.

An excellent example of this is Pat Cadigan, whose novel *Synners* was a superb science-fantasy that postulated a raft of new social conventions created by the culture of information-processing. It is a great mystery of recent SF that this novel was not nominated for a Hugo award. Cadigan's world of the future is an honestly corrupt and brutal place, where poverty and injustice are merely made more efficient by progress. Her gift is in the way that she is able to portray interesting and believable characters, who find reasons to strive and

struggle toward happiness, or success, or mere survival, in a world at least as hard and unforgiving as our own. Most science fiction has historically been willing to present settings where the problems come in a handy sequence, easily fielded by the competent and capable protagonists. Cadigan gives us worlds that explode in chaotic directions, twisting her plots into fractal origami, and leaving the reader winded and happy to be among the survivors. I plan to tackle her new novel, *Fools*, as soon as I feel I have the emotional reserves.

Cadigan seems to go out of her way to leave the reader with some sense of justice and safety at the end of her books, although she'll turn you upside-down several times in getting there. This is not true of Iain Banks, who is perfectly willing to leave the reader full of angst, or even depression. Look for the name Iain M. Banks when considering his books; the middle initial is added to the science fictional offerings in this versatile author's canon.

Banks is a Scot, born in physically and economically bleak country, and his fiction reflects what we might call a European attitude toward SF; there's a little more guilt, and little less goshwow, in his vision of stellar utopia. Yes, stellar utopia! Banks' best SF works are set in a galaxy-spanning society of wonders known as The Culture, where everything is permitted and no one has to struggle to make the monthly fissionables payment. Yet, having set up this marvelous background, Banks sets out to poke holes in it, portraying people on the edge of The Culture, hired or coerced into doing the dirty work of their alien contact service.

Perhaps it has to do with living in a community that has survived two world wars in close proximity, but Banks seems to have lost all of humanity's illusions about the honor of duty. His *Use of Weapons* in particular stands as a solid antidote to the jingoistic and simplistic wave of military SF that is swamping the field today. In that work, his protagonist's story moves in several directions at once, illustrating all of the physical and psychological cost of a career in the business of killing; the ending has one of the more horrifying twists in any

novel I've read in the past decade. Give a copy to your favorite ROTC cadet.

Of course, while we might hope for a more socially involved definition of science fiction than the pulps once presented us, I think the classic SF reader is justified in asking for a happy ending, or at least one in which the possibility of happiness is lurking. There's a lot of SF that doesn't end in the destruction of the world . . . many books still essay to prevent it. Bradley Denton's bravura alternate history novel, *Wrack and Roll*, is great fun, full of punks on the moon and evil Gurkha assassins, but everything comes out all right in the end. Pat Murphy's lovely *The City Not Long After* is a pretty rare bird, a

happy post-collapse novel that shows the triumph of art over war. What more can you ask for? It doesn't necessarily follow that depth, humanity, complexity, have to be synonymous with doom and misery. Just because it works that way in real life is no reason to assume we have to endure it in fiction as well.

To be honest, SF has fragmented and evolved to such a degree that there really isn't any kind of ideological or formal agenda that could not be pursued through reading it. And I could

fill page after page with authors and works which are well worth exploring. It's just regrettable such polemics seem necessary to me, and in an SF fanzine.

My fondest wish would be that some of the people that I count as friends might be willing to open a few of these books, to consider some of these authors, and see if there was some path for them to take back into science fiction after all. It is a lonely life, in the sercon closet. Now and then I allow myself to hope that the day is coming when I might be able to leave the fan lounge at a Worldcon and walk with my head held proud to a reading, a signing, or even a panel discussion of modern SF authors or stories. Until that day, I will continue to babble about baseball, rock and roll, Indian restaurants, even fannish politics, as all the while my mind wanders toward the books with the garish covers waiting for me on the shelf at home. — Andy Hooper



WELL, READERS, HERE I AM AGAIN, REVELLING IN YET ANOTHER SELF-INDULGENT COMIC STRIP WHERE I WORK OFF MY FANTASIES, MY FRUSTRATIONS, MY...

HOLD IT, PAL!!

WHAT TH'!?

GUERRILA GIRLS?!

GASP!

YEAH, AND WE HEREBY CONFISCATE THIS PAGE!

SO GET OFF YER NIXON AND GET OUT OF THE WAY!

WE "GUERRILA GIRLS" PROTEST GENDER EXCLUSION IN THE ART WORLD!

AND THAT INCLUDES FAN ART!

HOW MANY WOMEN FAN ARTISTS IN THIS FNZ?

HEY, DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT IT!

ZILCH! --THAT'S HOW MANY!

I'D BETTER HANDLE THIS WITH "KID GLOVES"!

WELL, YOU GIRLS CAN COUNT ON ME ONE THOUSAND PER CENT!

NATURALLY, STEVE! WE BOW TO YOUR HIGHLY ADVANCED SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS!

YOU ARE A SHINING EXAMPLE TO FANKIND AND ALL MEN EVERYWHERE!

BRING ON THE "CONCEPTUAL FAN ART" PROTEST!

PSSST, HEY, IS THAT YOU, JEANNE?

WAK!

YOU ARE DEALING WITH ARTISTES HERE!

steve stiles

2/22/93

Our letter column this issue consists of the comments we received in reply to Pong #41. I know that first issues usually don't have lettercols, but frankly we were overwhelmed by the responses our zippy little fmz got and thought that this would be a great place to publish some of them. Besides, we both learned a long time ago never to throw away perfectly good fanzine material, especially if it means we don't have to write anything. Enjoy! — djs

ROBERT BLOCH

Thanks are in order for *Pong 41* and, in particular, that **WHATEVER BECAME OF...**? update and commentary. Ten years is a long time ago, even in mundane terms, but in the world of fandom it seems like a decade. Which only goes to prove, as Ted Sturgeon once told Albert Einstein, "90% of relativity is crap." (I resist saying, "Hoping you are the same!") [2111 Sunset Crest Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90046]

I believe that time flows like a metaphor. And, as everybody knows, you can't step into a metaphor twice in the same place without getting your shoes wet, no matter how fast you can type. Or, as I once said to Madame Curie, "90% of my relatives are crap." — djs

ANDY HOOPER

I communicated some measure of my delight at receiving a new issue of *Pong* to you and Ted in person, but looking over the pile of fanzines which needs response, your joint effort has risen to the top rather precipitously. I'm getting a lot more fanzines these days than in recent years, but there still isn't all that much that elicits comment. *Pong 41* is an obvious exception. I received it about three days before heading for Florida, and had only a little while to skim over it; I had hoped to

see that you were undertaking another 40-issue run, but there's only so far that convenience and whimsey can sustain a person, I suppose.

Still, I have no complaints at being able to write a letter of comment on a new issue of *Pong*, something which I never thought I would be able to do. I was moved to get out my collection of the older issues, and I asked Jerry Kaufman to lend me his copies of the ones which I didn't have. A half hour at Kinko's copies, and I have a complete run.

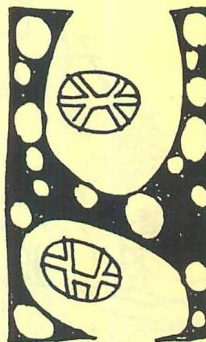
Pong is probably the only title with more than ten or twelve issues of which I can say that.

The ten years since you published last rather neatly encompass my career as a publishing fan to date. I started actively reading fanzines about 1982, started apa-hacking in late 1983, and published my first fanzine in 1986. If these times have seemed difficult to you guys, imagine what it has been like trying to become established in fannish pursuits during the period. Many times, I establish contact with a fan to find they are ceasing publication, through gaffiation or lack of interest, or even death. And hovering over everything is the fact that half of the people I know resent the other half, because of what they did to one another during the Topic A war. It's easy to see why some people feel driven to look outside of fandom for new members of our interest group.

It feels as though some of that is coming to an end now; this has been the biggest year ever for me, in terms of letters and fanzines received, and I find time to allow myself a little optimism now and then.

Back when I was just getting started in fannish fandom, *Pong* was an invaluable glimpse into areas which were new to me. Out of the vast numbers of fanzines which the Madison club received in trade for

Janus/Aurora, yours was one of perhaps three or four with an attitude that wasn't painfully sercon. The club certainly received others, but they were probably held onto by members who prized them as well. Anyway, it was from *Pong* and a few other titles that the whole, brawling, Brueghelesque panoply of fandom (nice, huh?) was introduced to me,



W. J. J.

BLATher

LETTERS

and so I owe you and Ted some debt of gratitude. *[We'll accept cash. — djs]*

I'm happy to see that the essential quality of *Pongishness* translated almost perfectly through whatever software you used to create #41. In my experience, it seemed at first like using the machine actually took longer than waxing and laying out copy by hand. But at this point, anything involving actual paste-up seems painfully clumsy, and the results always look awful. But whatever method one uses to put a zine together, I think there's a sense of design, an eye for what a fanzine ought to look like, that one either has or doesn't have.

I am probably one of the few people in the world who feels crestfallen at Ted's judgment that *Spent Brass* differs in tone and execution from *Pong*. I like to think that we strike a good balance between homage and original material. As to it being too semi-regular, is it ever. I wish that I had the material and the wherewithal to be able to publish twice a month, but for now, a monthly schedule seems most equitable. Any more rapid than that and we would be putting pressure on our contributors that I think they have no desire to feel.

Of course, we have a serious disadvantage, in that we don't have

anyone approaching the talent of Dan on call, ready to crank out little square cartoons at a moment's notice. Other artists seem to have a hell of a time just fitting inside any box, let alone one 2" by 2". Und so, we remain hopeless wannabes, ever appreciative of the real thing when it comes our way. I just hope we don't have to wait another ten years for some morsel from the *Pong* fanzine bund.... [The Starlitter, 4228 Francis Ave. N., #103, Seattle, WA 98103]

On a good day I believe that desktop publishing is a wonderful tool that was obviously designed Just For Fanzine Editors. But, like every tool, it isn't worth very much if you don't know how to use it. Anybody can buy a shovel and dig something that could pass for a hole, but it takes some experience and ability to properly slice open the earth and excavate a ditch down to the virgin soil. I don't believe that simply buying "Page-Maker" software and picking one of the available formats is the same thing as designing a publication using your skill, taste and talent — regardless of whether it's a fanzine or a professional magazine. Without those prerequisites you might as well be using a shovel.

Nonetheless, I have wrestled with the problem of how to use desktop software for producing a fanzine that actually looks like a fanzine. I worried that the access to design grids and typefaces, etc., would leave us with a world of zines that looked like little magazines, devoid of the homemade quality found in "old fashioned" fanzines. After some meditation, I finally decided that the true essence of a fanish fanzine is the tone and personality of the writing and art, not the style of type it's set in. There's no way a fanzine that featured (for example) contributions by Gary Hubbard, Bill Rotsler, Ted White, Avedon, ATom, Arnie Katz, Walt Willis or Stu Shiffman could be anything but fanish. It doesn't really matter if the fanzine was printed on a laser printer or was cut into antique stencils, its soul is still

intact — though the above mentioned skill, taste and talent, can still help a lot.

As for your Captive Cartoonist Complaint, I must disagree with you.



Isn't that fabulous Hugo winner, Stu Shiffman living in Seattle? Surely a big guy like you can intimidate the needed artwork outta a little ex-New Yorker like Stu. Actually, all kidding aside, you do have the very able talents of Craig Smith to call on. I don't know how far he lives from Seattle, but at least he's in the same state. Craig is one of my fave "new" fanartists and I know that if I lived as close to him as you do I would have him in some kind of servitude, for sure. — djs

As I sat in that room at the El Paso Corflu and listened to you read a piece you'd written (immediately after I'd read one of mine — a piece destined for Spent Brass), I was struck by how good a writer you are (and how much I wanted to tear up and rewrite my own piece). So if I say to you "I knew Pong. Pong was a fanzine of mine. And Spent Brass is no Pong," don't take it as a putdown. Just accept the fact that in some respects our talents, abilities, aptitudes, whatever, do differ and that this difference does not imply "better" or "worse," but just difference. Pong wasn't dependant upon those two-inch squares of art; Dan could have come

up with a completely different format and Pong would still have been Pong. As my own post-Pong Egoscan proved, Pong was a unique product of the combination of Dan and myself, something neither one of us could duplicate singly. But Pong was then, and this is now, and we'll see how we do with this kind of fanzine. . . . — tw

CHARLES BURBEE

My son Ed, who reads all my fanzines says Pong is the most readable of the four fanzines I've received this year. I think Stet is. [PO Box 2284, Temecula, CA 92593-2284]

Yeah, but what do you think about Zombies of the Gene Pool, Burb? Ask Ed to read it and drop us a line. — djs

JAY KINNEY

Pong 41 arrived like a bolt out of the blue, just in time for me to lounge around reading it while thousands of other less lucky fans were whooping it up at the world-con. I believe I had the better time of it. . . .

My reflexive egoboo scanner beeped twice, which obliged me (under federal law) to drop you a line of thanks. Pong looked better than ever — and kudos to Wally "the snake" Mind for a rollicking Wodehousian report. Do you guys plan to make a habit of this, or is this just a pleasant fluke? [PO Box 14217, San Francisco, CA 94103]

Gee, I don't think I've ever had a pleasant fluke before. I'm pretty sure that I've had loquacious salmon on a couple of occasions and I've always enjoyed disturbed halibut but, for my money, nothing beats a steaming plate of paranoid bluefish, garnished with a side-order of buttered psychosis. — djs

AVEDON CAROL

Well, I'm not sure whether I believe it. I mean, it's a pretty big surprise, all right, getting a Pong — but then again, the final illo saying "Pong bye-bye number 2" suggests it's just a one-shot, and the contents give the

impression that this is some sort of group letter-sub, like an Xmas letter or something. But I sure would like to believe you were actually gonna revive the zine. West is right about someone having to publish rather than just moan because no one is publishing. . . .

I think Michael Ashley could be good if he would just write about sex and himself and his friends instead of having to throw in his gratuitous insults to anyone whose fanzine failed to give him a hard-on. Oh, and also if he'd drink less. (I was pretty astonished to see his Novacon reports in which he quoted me saying just about the opposite of what I'd actually said. He asked me what I thought of some fanzine and I said, "I didn't see the point," — but he reported me as saying this about the MC5! He asked me about meeting the Doors, and I told him, and then he asked about the Seeds, and I said I'd never run into them — but in his version, I said I had heard of the Doors, but not the Seeds!) I don't know if he deserves to win TAFF — he's probably one of the more interesting active fanwriters around here right now, but he's a bit of a boring drunk in person and anyway, I don't have much patience with people who [a] are standing only because they want to stop someone else from winning and [b] talk about standing in terms like "... even though it means I might have to go." I firmly believe that if people don't want to meet fans on the other side, they should not stand for TAFF.

Yeah, I guess fandom is like a doughnut lately. There's some good writing around, but it isn't being distributed well — I mean, there's the stuff Rob's been writing, conreports and such that are pretty funny, but it's all in apas, just like most of the good stuff I've been seeing. I still think a lot of the talent is being sucked up by GENIE, but by all reports the quality hasn't gone with it — the stuff just isn't as good, even when it's by the same people. Or so I'm told. I don't really have the option of getting involved and finding out. (Given that GENIE production is now getting people onto the Hugo ballot, this may be the first

time Brits have had a *legitimate* reason to complain about the Hugos being closed off to them.) Meanwhile, the fanzines that do come out seem to lack a sense of cohesion with the rest of fandom. I don't really feel like I'm being invited to join in, even where the fanzine comes accompanied by a note begging me for material. I dunno, the ingredients are mostly all there, but they don't seem to mix up right. I enjoy reading most of the fanzines I get, but *Spent Brass* is really the only one that gives me that *rush*, y'know?

But I get kinda bored talking about fandom as a single entity. I think I like fandom best when it talks up people. RB was more interesting because of the way *Pong* talked him up than he was for anything he actually did himself during this period, with the sole exception of *Warhoon* 28, which was still more notable for Willis than for the the editor. Rick Sneary was a loveable creative typist rather than some illiterate guy who didn't know much, because *you* said so. People got interested because you didn't let them just flounder on their own, but you helped myth-make them. That made things exciting. It was a little nerve-racking when you talked people down rather than up, but over all, you created an impression of lots of interesting people doing interesting things, which I think energized us all. [144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, England]

From your (ahem) lips, Avedon, to ghod's ear. — djs

DAVE LANGFORD

As I write, the worldcon is happening and I am sulking at home. However, there is some slight consolation in reading Avedon's bit in the new *File 770*, which finally exposes us British fans for the vile scum that we are. Not being in Florida does presumably mean I escape being taunted by the *File 770* readership, or even having to defend the concept of TAFF exchanges to such despicable place as Britain is now revealed as being. So it goes.

I always wondered about the fans who said that Sharyn

McCrum's *Bimbos* was a truly hilarious and insightful look at sf conventions. None of the cons that I ever attended involved more or less the entire membership getting together for a climactic session of fantasy role-playing games (unless we count the worldcon business meeting under this heading, which is at least arguable). I've just had to assume that Great Cons I've Missed, such as Corflu and Ditto, conform to the McCrum archetype.

Have just had a fine fannish week with Aussie visitors Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown, now departed to stay with Chris and Leigh (formerly Kennedy) Priest and their young twins. "Does Chris look the same as 15 years ago?" asked the Aussies. "Well," I allowed, "he's bald now, and all his teeth have fallen out, but you'll recognize him by the suit of denims because he hasn't been able to afford another since the 70s." In an exclusive later interview, Mr. Priest added: "Thanks a bundle, Langford."

Yes. Twins. [94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, U.K.]

You should have been in Orlando, Dave. The whole convention was one enormous fantasy role-playing game that went on endlessly. Everywhere you turned there were people dressed in Mickey Mouse costumes, while others seemed to prefer dressing like killer whales — and that was just AT THE AIRPORT! In fact, by the third day of the con, things had lost touch with reality to the point where I swear I saw long lines of people waiting to get Spider Robinson's autograph. Now that's what I call fantasy role-playing! — djs

With this letter Dave sent copies of Ansible 62, with surely the first in-print response to Pong: "Pong 41 is a surprise Ted White/Dan Steffan revival, bewailing inter alia an absense of UK fanzine activity — well, chaps, if you will fall silent for ten years or so you do tend to drop off mailing lists." But hey, uh, Dave: that was D. West bewailing inter alia an absense of UK fanzine activity. . . . — tw

LEIGH EDMONDS

This issue of *Pong* was waiting for us when Valma and I got back from a two month trip in Europe. While we were away we did a totally improbable thing like stay with Dave and Hazel Langford for a few days. I have hoped for many things in life but expected few of them to happen — this was an exception. Actually, although I had read much of the amazing Dave Langford's writing I had no idea what he looked like. So when we walked into the 'tun and this stranger, quite ordinary looking really, shoved a copy of *Ansible* into my hands I wondered what he was doing handing them out for Dave Langford. My trouble was that I really had no idea what a Dave Langford would really look like.

While we were in Reading Dave (I recognized him by this time) mentioned that he had received a new issue of *Pong* and went on to describe in slightly reverent tones what was in it. He said that we could even read the copy, except it seemed to have gone AWOL just at the moment. I thought this was a bit of a pity because, as far as I can recall, I never saw a copy of *Pong* when it was first being published. "Such is Life," I thought to myself, as Australians are prone to do at such times. But to my surprise and delight my first copy of *Pong* was waiting for us when we got back.

[6 Elvira Street, Palmyra, WA 6157, Australia]

Gee, our first mobius strip letter of comment. I love symmetry. — djs

ALAN DOREY

There's definitely something in the air, a whiff of insight swirling around in the ether and landing in the backyard of fandom.

Wow! A new issue of *Pong* — and, in the very same month, I've churned out an issue of *Gross Encounters* (even now winging its way to you) and there DOES seem to be some kind of fanzine renaissance going on over here.

And what else have we seen? Harry Bell producing D. West. And there hasn't even been a conspiracy — it's all sort of tumbling out of thin

air, and there we have it. The terrific thing (from my perspective) is that the elements which were damaging British fandom ("Hey, let's hold the convention right here!"), such as the huge proliferation of cons and special interest groups, has begun to collapse in on itself, like Stephen Hawking believes the expanding universe will do. It's just that fandom (as usual) got there first. And just in time.

We're actually talking and communicating, but having to re-learn the skills of writing and publishing and Locs and all the rest of that stuff. This means that the best bits of fandom are coming out again.

I have to say that reading the opening comments about 1980 and 1992 shocked me: particularly the reference to the lack of thriving fanzine fandom in the UK. There have been little spurts of interest from time to time, but too much fragmentation has taken place and it almost seemed (almost) that at one stage, fannish fanzine fandom had been shunted into the sidings to rust away in pieces, thus allowing the shiny new models to steam by and take centre stage. Whilst they might have had the technology with desktop publishing kits and all the rest, whilst they may have had an interest in some obscure facet of SF, they certainly did not have the skill, the writing ability or indeed the Shock Factor to take fanzine fandom's place.

Ted's so right in his piece about *Trap Door* and its ilk: It is true about this "bland unwillingness to involve (itself) in controversial issues." I am acutely aware of the requirement to be controversial, or to stir things up or champion a cause. This — to me — is one of the principal reasons why I started my own fanzine in 1976. Indeed a tranche of correspondence with Joseph Nicholas (initially at cross-swords with me and then in total agreement) led to my suggestion that we do a joint fanzine — and this was to be his first experience of production. It was all hyped to death (and of course subject to a witty spoof edition) and *Another Bloody Fanzine* only actually saw two issues.

It stirred things up though — and Joseph has carved out a very important niche for himself (and Judith) in the current state of UK fandom.

And who got me into producing fanzines? None other than D. West, who for some perverse reason took me under his wing when I first moved to Leeds in 1976. My initial stab at writing was with the Leeds University SF magazine, *Blackhole*. Don soon put me right, and although I turned a cruddy fiction fanzine into something approaching a proper fannish fanzine, it was only when I started my own, that the bug really hit and the rest became history. So, reading Ted's piece on D. was very appropriate — it's all his fault. He is the guilty party.

Rochelle bumped into D. the other day and told him it's about time he did some new stuff again — none of this money making jive with *Deliverance*: the usual grunt and the usual enigmatic half-smile followed by the usual reminder as to what *Daisnoid* stands for — "Do As I Say, Not As I Do." That's okay by me!

[9 Haywards Farm Close, Verwood, Dorset, BH31 6XW, U.K.]

Is there really a revival happening or is it all just some kind of weird coincidence?

I have been trying to get my fannish wheels in gear for the last two years or so, and I think the recession has had something to do with it. I know that I started missing fandom's unique qualities about the same time that jobs and money were becoming harder to find. As I became more miserable, fandom started to look better and better and I think the same might be true for many others, as well.

*Several of the letters we received mentioned how tight things had become in the last few years and spoke longingly about a fanzine revival. I may be imagining it, but I get the distinct impression that a lot of fans have become kind of sad and wistful about *The Good Old Days* — and I don't mean goddamned Sixth Fandom. Still, some kind of vague revival does seem to be underway. Let's wait and see. — djs*

RAY NELSON

Of course the first thing I looked for in the new *Pong* was my name. I found it all right, in a list of "fannish ghosts." I took my pulse. Yep, still beating. I looked in the mirror. Yep, I was still visible. I was scared for a while there, but now I feel okay. I'm still alive, contrary to the conventional wisdom.

I've written articles for fanzines and letters of comment and gone to conventions, particularly on the West Coast, and even been on convention panels fairly regularly. It has seemed to me that I have been sustaining my presence in fandom as well as I have at any time since the late '40s and early '50s, and no mere mortal could have sustained that level of fanac indefinitely.

Nothing would suit me better than for you guys to get *Pong* going again as a focal point, so if a letter column figures in your plans, here it is, my first letter of comment to the new *Pong*. [333 Ramona Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530]

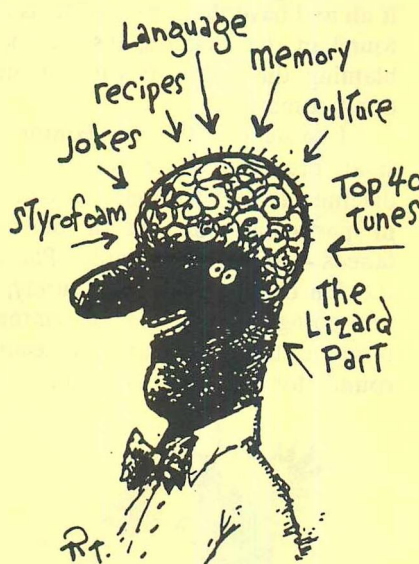
You are not alone, Ray; my "fannish ghosts" reference was misunderstood by several people. I didn't mean to imply that you or any of the others on that list are dead and gone. Instead, I meant to imply that you folks were relatively inactive or fannishly dormant at the time Ted and I started *Pong*. And, ironically, I was taking credit for your modest revival. I guess I wasn't being very articulate when I wrote that bit, but I'm not sure how I could have improved it. Don't you agree that you've been more active in the last ten years since we folded *Pong* than you were during the '70s? I thought you were, but if I was wrong please straighten me out. Compared to you, I'm the goddamned spectre. And the same goes for the Wizard of Wendover Way, too. — djs

VINCENT CLARKE

Well, I'm honored to be on the *Pong* mailing list again, and an official fannish ghost. That hurt, just a teeny bit, but it's true. Except for putting out a limited edition Brit Fanzine Checklist for the '70s last year (what have you been doing lately, anyway?) and being a member

of Pieces of Eight, the British APA, I've been pretty misty lately. The old feelings vibrate the bones but don't lead to action. And, as you say, UK fanzine fandom is just limping along.

Half-a-dozen explanations spring to mind, all of which have been discussed to the point of exhaustion in the fan press. Now that the terrible three of the late '70s have all more-or-less subsided, there *should* be scope for some new talent to emerge. D. West, in spite of your blurb, more or less fulminates to himself these days; Greg, after depositing seven boxes of fanzines here



a few weeks ago, has retired to a cottage in Wales, next door to his birthplace. (Not literally — actually). [Huh? Aren't they the same thing? — djs] And Joseph N., tho' ready to explain his viewpoint at great length to anyone who opposes his views on anything, remains too nice a guy in person for one to take him seriously in print.

So the field is wide open. And it's mostly inhabited by old timers. Harry Bell just published a fanzine that he started several years ago. Ian Sorenson has ventured into the field with fannish fanzines, after Smoffing Cons for 10 or 12 years. Ken Cheslin, who came into fandom in 1959, is putting out more fanzine wordage than any two other editors, tho' a lot is in PoE. The Glovers, Stephen and Jenny, who would be my favourites for a TAFF nomination, are handicapped with young-

sters. Nigel Richardson puts out stuff which shows talent but little friendliness. Chuck Connor puts out *Thingumy* (sic), but only when he's on leave from the Navy. Derek Pickles, who's been out of fandom for a mere 36 years, has re-activated, started to LoC again and is threatening to produce a genzine.

And there are a few others (Tommy Ferguson and Eugene Doherty in N. Ireland and David Bell, who's a honest-to-Ghod British farmer, etc.), but on the whole it's a pretty disparate scene. One gets the sense that there's a loss of cohesiveness, that with a few exceptions people are Doing Their Own Thing without having a sense of time-binding ("Like any other civilization, fandom depends on timebinding — the passing on from generation to generation of accumulated knowledge and experience." — Walt Willis, 1956).

There is one interesting phenomenon you may not have come across. John D. Rickett appeared a couple of years ago. Reading SF since the '50s, but only discovered fandom as he was taking early retirement from his banking job. He promptly bought a computer to enable himself to fan more easily, and constantly regrets he didn't find us earlier. He's currently official editor of Pieces of Eight and seems to LoC everything received. Mexico was his first con. He still has an attitude of respect for us tattered old-timers. I'm trying to break him from it, lending him *Warhoon* 28, etc.

Pong 41 was an unalloyed delight, from the passing reference to *Quandry's* crumbling pages (did they have some sort of built-in self-destructive capabilities?) to the philosophic speculations of rich brown, the Stephen Hawking of the fannish cosmos, and the casual "from whom I don't think I've gotten a letter in at least the last twenty years." Great stuff. [16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN, U.K.]

You're right to say that the fanzine field is wide open. But I think that it is a lot harder for a curious newcomer to start producing an interesting

fanzine without good solid examples to guide him through the bullshit. Not every new fan has a friend who'll loan him Bergeron's *Willis* book, which can lead to a lot of reinventing the wheel, if you know what I mean.

When I got really involved with fanzine fandom in 1970 there were lots and lots of interesting fanzines around to inspire me. And it wasn't just fannish zines either, there was lots of everything. Big genzines like SFR, BeaBohema, Energumen, Granfalloon, SF Commentary, Crossroads, Algol, Starling and Warhoon (to name a few) glutted fandom and offered every point of view. The only hard part was picking from the many inspirations. I feel really sorry for modern fanboys who come into fandom without that, don't you? — djs

BOB SHAW

I enjoyed seeing *Pong* again after such a long time, but I'm not going to let that be known. Instead, I'm going to be harshly critical and point out that you don't know the meaning of the word "donut." A donut, or doughnut as it is known here, is a roughly spherical object which has been sprinkled with sugar after baking. The best ones have had some raspberry jam put inside them by means of a syringe or something similar.

The above correct definition of a doughnut is known throughout Ireland, but oddly enough the English make the same mistake in terminology as you Yanks. The comestible you both describe as a donut or doughnut is in fact a *gravy ring*! If you doubt my word, just check with some people who really know about these things, people like Walt Willis and James White.

Just remember, I'll be scanning future issues of *Pong* for any further draft mistakes — and I will be merciless. [Leigh Villas, 66 Knutsford Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 2PB, U.K.]

Yeah, right! Promises, promises.
— djs

ABIGAIL FROST

I'm so delighted to see *Pong* back it just isn't true. I and all around me

having slipped seamlessly from post-election gloom to pure and simple recession gloom, with the added spice of the monthly London meeting being on the move again (of which, perhaps *More Later*), anything remotely cheering gets geared up into pure euphoria.

Anyway, Ted wonders what I and various others might have had to say about small presses. Alas, I can't really remember myself. My own impression was that the panel ended up being a touch boring, same-old-stuff-again, but the audience (West and co. apart) seemed to like having the chance to go through it all and have their say. Well, as we found in the election, it's no good blaming the public if your dreams don't come true.

I wonder if the burgeoning of small press stuff over here and the decline of the traditional fanzine — in particular, the dearth of new faneds — aren't interrelated. Part of the fun of doing fanzines, surely, is just doing it, regardless of content; trying out various formats, asking round for material, whooping or



groaning at what actually comes in, laying it all out, getting it printed, all of that. Some of us (me, certainly) just like mucking about with words, artwork and print. And those pleasures are available in the small press, just as much as in fanzines. Add to this the facts that, in this country, the "business ethic" has been heavily promoted; young people are far more CV-conscious

than they were when I was their age in the 70s (they need to be), and may see "starting one's own magazine" as more positive than the traditional, amateur, hobbyist image of fanzine fandom; and that small press zines are currently more visible and accessible than fanzines (so it's easier to learn that style, that ethic, than learn "fanzine.") and I begin to think that perhaps the small presses are getting the potential fanzine editors and writers before fanzine fandom does. So what do we do about this? Do we need to do anything?

I wrote to D. about all this ages ago; adding that I'm bored with this idea that "inbred concerns" are what distinguish true fanzines, giving several examples from the more inbred end of the professional press (such as art magazines). Actually, I think it's the distribution system as much as anything else. D. talks of free distribution, but actually fanzines, unlike *The Plain Truth*, aren't free. They're paid for in a variety of currencies, one of which is other fanzines. Things have picked up a little since I wrote to D., but there still aren't that many around here. So anyone starting up a fanzine rather lacks incentive; you can stay on the mailing list of those there are much more easily by sending off one identikit LoC a month, or less. It all begins to look like a declining spiral, which I, for one, think is a crying shame. [95 Wilmot Street, London, E2 0BP, U.K.]

I have very mixed emotions about the topic of small press publishing. I spent a couple of years in the late 80s putting out *Science Fiction Eye* with Steve Brown and learned many valuable lessons in the process. One of the things I learned was that small press and fanzine publishing are not the same thing. In my case, doing *SF Eye* was a logical next step after fanzines. That style of publishing has a completely different set of problems than a fanzine does and, for a while, solving them proved to be quite a challenge.

However, it eventually became clear to me that small press is not nearly as personally satisfying as

fanzine publishing. It has to do with the difference between having a readership and having an audience. By and large, a fanzine editor knows who his audience is and how they will react to his fanzine; while a small press magazine's readership is much more anonymous. The percentage of reader feedback is much smaller with a magazine like *SF Eye* and I felt progressively more disconnected from those faceless masses. Hell, we had over 100 subscribers in Japan and never got a single letter from any of them.

Having had those experiences I'd say that most small press editors go into it because they don't know any better. — djs

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Gosh. Wow. Bloody hell. And other expressions of mild surprise with which we reserved Brits traditionally greet even the most astounding events. Such as, in this case, the apparent relaunch of *Pong*. (I say "apparent" because *Pong 41* gives no indication whether there is intended to be a *Pong 42*, and indeed the second of the two cartoons on the rear page suggests that the editors may not be actively contemplating a further issue.) [*Bingo!* — djs]

I do feel the urge to say something in response to Ted's praise for D. West's *Daisnoid 7*, in particular D.'s comments about my letter in Robert Lichtman's *Trap Door*. (I should add that we now routinely pass on all our fanzines to Vince Clarke, so I'll have to rely on memory for what was said in both *Daisnoid* and *Trap Door*.) Underlying West's comments, it seems to me, is a fundamental error of both reasoning and fact: that every amateur publication which is not an SF fanzine is a Little Magazine. One need not spend much time investigating the wider world of amateur publishing to prove the falsity of this assumption, and to recognize the range of publications available — from Little Magazines at one end to personalzines at the other. The suggestion that SF fanzines can be distinguished from other fanzines because they have a recognizable tribal identity which all others lack is also

false; football fanzines, for example, demonstrate a far more pronounced tribal identity than any SF fanzine. (West also complained about the "misappropriation" of the term "fanzine" by such publications, which in his opinion did not merit the description because they were available principally for money. The complaint strikes



me as pointless: this "misappropriation" has happened, and there's nothing anyone can do about it. Arguing against it is like arguing for a better yesterday.) Finally, the argument that "the test of an authentic fanzine is whether it includes some material which could be found nowhere else but in a fanzine" is so tautologous as to be almost meaningless. What is this material and how may it be defined and identified? Unless West can establish some clear parameters for this material, he'll find it difficult to exclude a rather broader range of the amateur publishing spectrum than he obviously desires — never mind the quasi-Stalinist import of the phrase "authentic fanzine," which almost suggests that any SF fanzine not devoted explicitly to the discussion of fanzine fandom should be ruled out of consideration. Self referentiality and recursiveness is one thing, but that would be something else altogether! [5A Frinton Rd., Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH, U.K.]

Wow. Gosh. It has been a long time since I typed a Joseph Nicholas para-

graph. I'm glad to see that some things in fandom haven't changed.

I agree with you that D. has no right to complain about the misappropriation of the word "fanzine," but not for the reasons you state. For years it has been my understanding that the word "fanzine" has had a life outside of fandom. For instance: in this country during the '30s and '40s the word was used to describe movie star gossip magazines. That means that it has been in use by the mundane world pretty much from the beginning of our using it, maybe before.

I don't think the word belongs to anybody, [Though it has been registered as a trademark by Fiorucci. — tw] but surely it is the appropriate label for any little publication fueled by fanatical enthusiasm, no matter what subject it is devoted to. Even football. However, I think your reference to West's "quasi-Stalinist" agenda is a little over the top. I think D. has a point because, when you consider it, nobody else called their little magazine a "fanzine" until SF fandom started calling them fanzines. I think that entitles us to be a bit possessive about the word. — djs

P.S.: There's a small grammatical error in your rendering of my name in the final line of the third paragraph on the first page. Reference to "Joseph Nicholas' mailing list" implies the existence of a number of people surnamed Nichola, who all share the same mailing list. What you meant (and should have written) is "Joseph Nicholas's mailing list!"

Actually, that's not a "grammatical error" — or any other kind of error — in this country; I dunno about British rules. Here, the rule used to be that the possessive apostrophe followed any word ending in "s" and only recently has a second "s" become optional. Thus, either "Nicholas'" or "Nicholas's" is correct. Your example is wrong, however, and would require "Nichola's" — which Dan did not write. — tw

ROB HANSEN

"I've just finished loccing a zippy, little eight-page fanzine," Avedon told me when I rang her from work

yesterday, "you'll never guess which one." I reeled off four or five names and then, in jest, said "Pong?" To my astonishment and, it must be said, disbelief, it was. I knew *Pong 41* would be a fine fanzine before I saw it, a view confirmed when I came across the reference to "Rob Hansen's brilliant *Then*." Ah yes, the same refined taste and discernment we came to expect in those golden days of the early 1980s. Those were the days my friend, we thought they'd never end. But everything ends eventually, even Hugo Award ceremonies.

The nostalgia in *Pong 41* was so thick you could chew it, but there was one bit that, in me at least, provoked only feelings of guilt. Dan wrote that:

"...we had one thing going for us in 1980 that seems to be absent today: a thriving fanzine fandom in England ... that really inspired Ted and me to pub our ish. We wanted to be part of all the fun they were having over there. ..."

If only it was so. I've kept quiet for far too long, but now I think it only right that the terrible truth finally be told: there was no fanzine fandom in Britain in the early 1980s. It was all a gigantic hoax, one I am wholly responsible for. As with many things back then, it all started with SEACON '79, the worldcon that finally finished off 1970s British fandom. Oh sure, you knew that people like Pat and Graham Charnock, Peter Roberts and others gaffiated in its wake but you never knew that it also claimed virtually everyone else who was active then. Malcolm Edwards quit to start a Blake's Seven fan club, Leroy Kettle took up morris dancing, John Brosnan extolls the virtues of temperance on TV ads, Dave Langford became a champion wind surfer, Greg Pickersgill founded a nursery school, Peter Roberts is now a night club bouncer, and D. West got into exercise videos. What happened to others is even more appalling. So it was that as the 1980s began I found myself virtually the only fan from the 1970s still pubbing my ish. One fanzine

alone wasn't going to keep fanzine fandom alive in Britain, but what was I to do? I soon had my answer.

In February 1980 I inherited a sum of money, from the estate of a recently deceased relative of hitherto unsuspected wealth, sufficient to keep me for the next five years. In a flash I knew what I had to do. After quitting my job I spent all my waking hours writing fanzine articles, many of them convincing pastiches of the work of the gaffiated greats of the 1970s. I began churning out fanzines, passing myself off as Malcolm Edwards, D. West, Leroy Kettle, and the rest. I convinced a friend in London's Mount Pleasant, the sorting office that handles all incoming overseas mail, to set the Post Office machines to recognise the return addresses of a whole list of North American fans and to divert any mail so marked into a sack that would then be delivered to me. Oh it was a crazy time, I can tell you, my half-crazed determination to keep British fandom alive leading me to excesses such as "Joseph Nicholas." So I want to apologize to you both, with particular apologies to Ted for waking him up with the call from "Paul Turner" that time, and for the outrageous hamming of the actors I hired to fool him on his visits to the UK. [144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, U.K.]

I can't tell you what a relief it was to finally know the truth. So many things make sense now, especially Jackie Lichtenberg and Chris Priest. I stand in awe of your talents, sir, in particular I enjoyed your phoney Harry Bell cartoons. However, I find that I am completely unable to forgive you for "Joseph." Shame on you. — djs

DAVID HARVIA

Having known the Lynches for almost 15 years, I am convinced that whatever editorial voice *Mimosa* has (third person or first) is that of Dick. In my last telephone conversation with them, Nicki confessed that he often edited the letter column contrary to her suggestions without consulting her.

But I'm not sure two editorial

voices is better. Your alternating articles seemed to drain punch away from each by being too similar. A little controversy piques more interest than agreement. Ted's exchange with Lan Laskowski in his fanzine several years ago was a great read.

The true lament of fandom is that individual fans often have little lasting identity in its history. Old fans who do not remain active become mere names to new fans. Fandom's vague sense of the past does allow a sense of wonder though, with each neofan's reinvention of the wheel.

I think you have your analogy backwards. A donut is like fandom. It grows stale if left undunked and unconsumed. Pardon me while I go dunk my head. [PO Box 905, Euless, TX 76039]

The original issues of Pong were a gathering place for several fan generations; allowing them to keep in touch and occasionally even participate in fandom's rich banquet. The fact that we also served some of the Eighties' best pastry had nothing to do with it. I think it's a shame that there isn't a fanzine that currently serves that purpose — or comes with free coffee refills. — djs

CATHY DOYLE

I appreciate Dick and Nicki's style with *Mimosa*, they make a real effort to get artwork that fits with the story, instead of just getting whatever came in the mail that day. They have standards, and send material back when it doesn't meet them. Some fanzines I've been getting lately seem to have an editor who's really just someone retyping things in a uniform format, without any editorial input at all (and didn't I just read something you'd written in *Spent Brass* on this subject, Ted?) I started out editing a professional newsletter like this until someone complained about something and I realized that I was going to get most of the complaints, not the so-called authors. And I just hate people complaining about things like that, so my editorial style suddenly became much more visible. [26 Copeland Lane, #D, Newport News, VA 23601]

I firmly believe that editing is a lot more than retyping and, by the same token, criticism is a lot more than complaining. — djs

You're right about Mimosa having art "that fits with the story," but as the "beneficiary" of illustrations by Peggy Ranson, I wish Dick and Nikki had picked someone (like, say, Steve Stiles or my coeditor) who knows what I look like. I resent being pictured as Dan Quayle, whom I have never even remotely resembled. This has been a complaint. — tw

GEORGE "LAN" LASKOWSKI

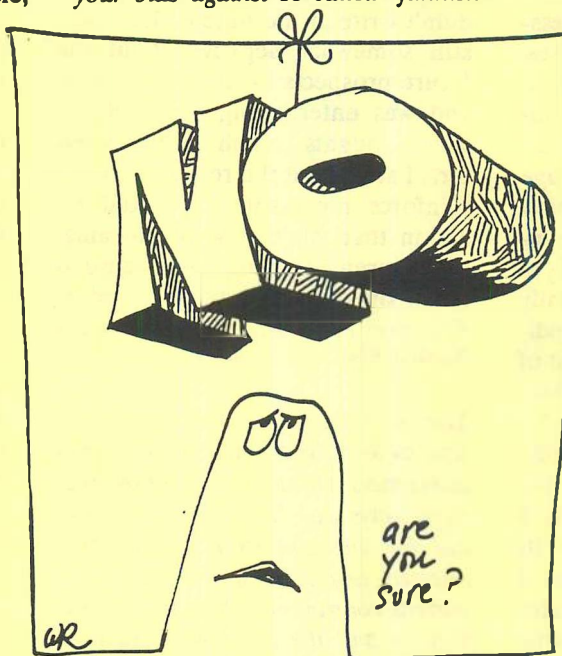
Your comments about the state of fanzines seems to be echoed by many — it is a dying breed, i.e., the fanzines you knew are few and far between. The fanzines where the editor's hand is felt in every article, where every piece was focused on a single topic or contributed to an overall statement, is indeed a rare publication. Mostly, however, I think this is a function of editorial philosophy, and the wider interests of fans nowadays.

When I publish articles in my fanzine *Lan's Lantern*, I want the writer's work to come through, not process it through my prejudicial sieve. And I choose articles which reflect mostly my variety of interests, as well as what I think my readers would like. Yes, I reject things which do not fall into those two broad categories (unlike what some people accuse me of: that I publish anything that comes into my mailbox), but my overall interest is that the material deal with science fiction, fantasy, fans, and fannish interests. Thus I publish books and film reviews as well as articles about SF&F, interviews with authors, fan adventures (which include travelogues), and material about fandom. And occasionally I put together a special issue about an author who has passed his or her Golden Anniversary in the field.

You and Ted prefer fanzines about fans and their activities.

Writing them creatively and humorously is a plus in your estimation and I agree with that. I like reading about fan activities also, but I prefer to read more about the literature of SF. Thus we differ philosophically. Is either of us wrong? [55 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304]

The short answer is, Yes. You are wrong — wrong in your assessment of what a fannish fanzine is, how it is put together, and the relative quality of such a fanzine vs. yours. "The fanzines where the editor's hand is felt in every article, where every piece was focused on a single topic," etc., could more easily be a description of Lan's Lantern. You have run "theme" issues, and I detect your editorial hand in everything you publish. Your prejudices come through loudly and clearly: your bias against so-called "fannish-



ness" is so great that you don't even attend any of the fan programming at Worldcons, and you've never attended a Corflu (scared?). To go to Brighton in 1987 and ignore the fan programming there was amazingly foolish of you — you missed by far the best part of the convention. (And I speak as an occasional participant in the "pro" programming as well; with rare exception the pro panels are a waste of time, revealing only the egotistic preening of the newly-published.) Your fanzine is much like the more boring aspects of "pro" programming:

the fawning on Big Name Pros, the reams of paper devoted to the latest Jack Chalker or Piers Anthony clunker, and those endless "reviews" of bad TV shows, movies and books. Those of us who have actually written SF are not nearly so obsessed with its permeation of the media. But those who can't. . . — tw

EDD VICK

Nowhere in this do you mention any intention of carrying on with future issues, but I hope this 'uns only a precursor of things to come, especially cuz I'd like to see less material about fandom 10 years ago. Either stuff from further back or more recently or even — about today. Ten years ago I was stuck in a dead end job (Radio Shack), a nowhere-ville marriage (we broke up a year later) and a boring fandom (letters to *Holier Than Thou*, whoop-de-doo) that was, nonetheless, my only escape.

Now I publish comic books! Which is kind of a step sideways — hobby wise — since I'm only doing the stuff I like and losing mucho bucks as a result. But at least I'm having fun. [5014-D Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105]

Edd is the publisher and editor of MU Press, a line of comic books that specializes in quirky, hard to sell titles like The Desert Peach and Lesbian Foxes in Hovercrafts. Most of the poor sod's other titles are focused on funny animal characters, including Wild Kingdom, an erotic anthology and a humor book called ZU, which includes a story by yours truly. — djs

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK

How strange to receive *Pong* 41 today. It most certainly startled me, since I was never on the old *Pong* mailing list. Still, much thanks.

I am now a recovered (not recovering) alcoholic with 8½ years sobriety, I am active in RSCDS (Royal Scottish Country Dance Society), still have a FIAGH attitude rather than FIAWOL, and I

have nominated and voted for *Fosfax* as best fanzine Hugo. My last worldcon was 1988, and I have no real interest in attending huge cons anymore. Well, maybe the 1995 worldcon if and only if Glasgow wins the bid. [*Start packing your kilt, Harry.* — djs] My last actual con was Conflu 9. Lots of fun.

Which is why I am still a fanzine fan. For the fun of it, not a desire to be faaaanish and hip (hep?). As long as it is fun, I'll stay. [P.O. Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309]

The more things change, as Papa Hugo was wont to say, the more things stay the same. Andy, you had letters (not unlike this one, actually) published in Pong 32, 33/34, 35, 36 and 39 . . . so you must be hep. — tw

ROBERT LICHTMAN

I generally agree with Ted's assessment of present-day fannish fanzines, even with his comment about *Trap Door's* "bland unwillingness to involve itself in controversial issues, or, indeed, even to acknowledge their existence." Except that I think of it not as the *Mainstream Syndrome*, but as the *Spaceways Syndrome*. His comment isn't totally true, though. In *Trap Door 3* I editorialized about Topic A for most of my space. I led off #4 with Gary Deindorfer's "Handkerchief Man," a short off-take on the same subject and let in a certain amount of discussion of Topic A in that issue's lettercol. Since then I haven't written about controversial stuff but I haven't just spun old Farm tales either. I published a special issue commemorating Terry Carr. I started strongly suggesting that instead of spending so much time publishing for apas, consider starting one's own fanzine and sending it directly to your favorite people in those apas, as well as others. Andy Hooper is one who acknowledges being influenced by this.

As you may know, it was *Pong* that dragged me back into fandom. Hell, it was the first fanzine I saw since its appearance coincided with my leaving The Farm and going to work for Paul Williams in Glen Ellen. When I began *Trap Door* in

1983, *Pong* was my main inspiration, but of course it was gone by then.

Like Ted, I agree that *Daisnoid 7* would be "a good read in any year" and was very much on point about the particular topics he chose to discuss. As the person who chose to put Joseph's comments about Amateur Journalism into my fanzine's lettercol, I have to admit that I was operating under Ted's old theory of "giving enough rope" when I did so. I knew his letter would stir controversy (see, Ted!) and it certainly did. I made it clear in my comments at the end of Joe's letter where I stood — essentially that over time some fanzines have clung close to the edge of that line separating fandom from amateur journalism. (I cited *Habakkuk* and *Kipple*, some of Dick Geis' zines, and more recently Joseph and Judith's *FTT* as examples.) What I didn't write at the time is that I was still somewhat negative about the future prospects for fanzine fandom and was entertaining many of the same thoughts Joseph did in his letter. I suspected the response would reinforce my instinctual initial reaction that fanzines were not amateur journalism in the same sense as much of what used to be listed in *Factsheet Five*. And it did. [P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442]

You're right, of course, and "the Spaceways Syndrome" it is. (For latecomers we should mention that Spaceways was Harry Warner's original fanzine, and its editorial policy rejected any reflection of the then-current controversies between the Futurians and the Moskowitz-reactionaries which led to the once-famous Exclusion Act, barring Futurians from the first Worldcon. I disagree — in retrospect — with that editorial policy and even more with the smugness with which Harry has defended it all these years. That editorial policy was born in an era in which many people were ignoring Hitler's impolite policies in hopes they'd go away and I see the Spaceways Syndrome as another aspect of such ostrich-headedness.) In any case, I hope my quick assessment of a few current fanzines aren't taken personally; I was distressed to hear that Jerry Kaufman was offended

by my passing reference to a "Mainstream Syndrome." We must all learn to separate criticism of our fanzines (and editorial policies) from that of ourselves. — tw

GARY S. MATTINGLY

Thanks for *Pong 41!!* It doesn't seem like ten years, or then again maybe it does. Just recently I read Ted's article in *Mimosa* about Harlan Ellison, the record collections and running up and down stairs. Then I read *File 770 94* and Ellison is undergoing angioplasty for coronary artery blockage and Rotsler has a heart attack. I don't think I like this aging process very much.

Getting fanzines from Joseph Nicholas is a good reason to publish. Speaking of which, I either better write him or publish something since I haven't seen anything from him in a long time. Your talk of British fannish rites of vomiting brings up my own recollections from ten or more years ago and a certain British fan who was visiting the US at the time. Having imbibed a certain amount myself I mentioned, purely in a friendly and jovial manner, his lack of carrying through with this almost folkloric rite. He became quite angry at me, saying something about it being none of my business and basically telling me to sod off. I never did fully understand his attitude. [7501 Honey Court, Dublin, CA 94568]

Announcing the first ever BLAT! readers contest. The first of you to correctly guess the identity of the above nameless Britfan will win a fabulous prize (to be decided later) that will shock and amaze you. Persons named Gary S. Mattingly and all employees of Mattingly Enterprises, Inc., makers of Mattingly's Marvelous Vibro Vaginas, are prohibited from entering. Enter Now! Act Without Thinking. — djs

GARY DEINDORFER

Damn. Hot damn. It is damnfine that you are publishing *Pong* again, one of the best famn danzines ever to appear in our involuted microcosmic goddamned hobby. It's Jumpin' Jack Flash, and it's a gass

gass gass.

Dan's little illoes to go with the text were inimitable as always. I especially was amused at your portraying you and Ted in the throes of geriatric senility, since from what I hear about you guys, you are the same party animals and sex athletes you always were.

Hmmm, "Ballad of a BNF" is not really a bad piece of pastichery. But it seems to me that these neos Arnie Katz has recruited view him in an unduly prominent, glorious light as a present-day BNF and in the context of fanhistory. But Folly is one of the things that had made fanzine fandom more fun in the past year or so. You can't help but be caught up in his enthusiasm. [447 Bellevue Ave., Apt. 9-B, Trenton, NJ 08618]

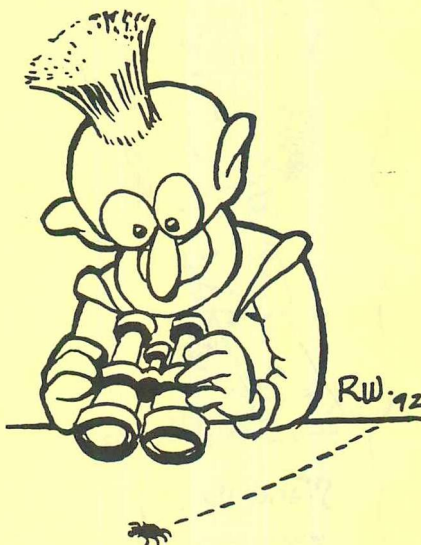
You're too nice a guy, Gary. I thought the "Ballad" was, at worst, a classic example of neofan brown-nosing and, at best, embarrassingly silly. But I understand the origins of this kind of behavior all too well — having been guilty of it myself — and the reason for it is mentioned in your last sentence: Arnie's enthusiasm.

I think enthusiasm is what Arnie does best in this world. He seems to have an unlimited supply of energy and enthusiasm that allows him to champion his sincere obsessions. It is a special quality that has enabled him to focus on something like fandom, wrestling or computer games and elevate it (and himself) to new heights and then, somehow, sustain it.

In fandom, that enthusiasm has served Arnie quite well. He has always been able to surround himself with people he could pump up and encourage along the path to Trufandom, by passing along his infectious Sense of Wonder. In the '70s, Arnie and Joyce's Brooklyn Insurgents was a gathering place for a lot of young, talented fans that offered acceptance, guidance, humor and large free meals. I was one neofan who was lucky enough to be invited into that circle and, believe me, I was more than happy to be there and get caught up in Arnie's fannish whirlwind. I'm sure the same is true today for his latest group of fan friends.

The result, of course, was that I

(like the "Ballad"'s author) did a lot of gloriously stupid and neofannish things that, in retrospect, would never have happened without Arnie. That is his true talent and, in my opinion, it far outstrips his skills as a Faneditor or Fanwriter. — djs



BOYD RAEBURN

I was interested to see your review of *Zombies of the Gene Pool* — a good title, but not as good as *Bimbos of the Death Sun* — but both sound like boringly rotten Fifties "SF" films, along the line of, say, *Fire Maidens of Outer Space*.

When many years ago our small group of Toronto fans acquired some Francis Towner Laney material, including *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*, we were quite intrigued. "Wow! Look what the man is saying about people in the L.A. fan scene." Skillful vituperation can have its own fascination. But when I reread *ASI* many years later, I saw it in a new light ... a bitter man railing at some people over the petty politics of a small hobby club. Although I have never had it directed at me, I quite dislike the admonition, "Get a life" — generally used as a patronizing putdown — but it seems fitting in the case of F.T. Laney. [189 Maxome Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario M2H 3L1, Canada]

*Oddly enough, I think Laney saw himself having more of "a life" than those whom he criticised — whom he saw as obsessed with the tiny pond of fandom — and he wrote *ASI* to divorce himself from fandom. (Naturally, his best*

fanwriting came after that "divorce.") — tw

JIM CAUGHRAN

I saw F. Towner Laney's death certificate some 30 years ago, in the company of Elmer Perdue. I would be very surprised if Laney turned up again, in or out of a drained lake. Perdue — that's another matter. [24 Prestwick Crescent, Willowdale, Ontario M2H 1M9, Canada]

At the Orlando worldcon, Walt Willis was asked his opinion of Laney and his buddy, Chas Burbee. Walt expressed the feeling that Burb was and is the perfect fan and somebody he always admired, but Laney was quite the opposite. Without putting words in Walt's mouth, I think that he felt nothing but distaste for FTL and his bitching and moaning and came damned close to trumping up a feud with him — just so he could cut Laney down to size. I got the distinct impression that, in Willis' eyes, Laney was a Cancer in our midst. Kinda like Richard Nixon.

Personally, I think that if there ever was a fan who could come back from the dead just to annoy his old fannish cohorts, it would be Francis Towner Laney. Elmer, on the other hand, is probably too busy getting high to bother with all of us — though I'm sure he considers it every time a FAPA deadline rolls around. — djs

MARC ORTLIEB

Pong 41 was a delightful little piece of nostalgia. I'm interested in seeing what direction it takes now. I particularly enjoyed your look back at where your old contributors are now. (I'm taking the liberty of passing your comments on William Gibson to the programming committee for Constantinople, the 1994 Australian NatCon, who have chosen him as their GoH.)

And how has Australian fandom changed since 1982? Hell, I hardly recognize the place. Of those I'd suspect were *Pong* readers, few are left active. Andrew Brown we see on alternate leap years, and Irwin Hirsh has disappeared into the morasse of life as a father and accountant. Bruce Gillespie con-

tinues to produce state of the art fanzines that he can never afford to publish. Leigh Edmonds visits Melbourne every year or so to plumb the depths of the Aeronautical archives for aviation history articles. Otherwise fandom is run by a delightful crowd of youngsters who have only vague memories of Aussiecon Two. Fanac in Sydney seems to consist exclusively of slinging bricks at Melbourne and Eric Lindsay. Jean Weber and John Foyster publish every now and then, Eric and Jean exploring their own interests and Foyster stirring Melbourne from his Adelaide exile. [P.O. Box 215, Forest Hill, Vic 3131, Australia]

I'd say Bill Gibson has an interesting (like the Chinese curse) trip ahead of him in '94. — djs

GEORGE FLYNN

I find it encouraging that I've actually seen all the recent zines Ted commends on pp. 2-3 (though I haven't yet gotten copies of them all). And thanks for the information on *Deliverance*, for which I rushed off an order. By the way, here's an intriguing example of, ah, dialog among fanzines. In *Daisnoid 7*, as quoted in review in *Pong*:

"Being devoted to inbred concerns is the whole fucking point."

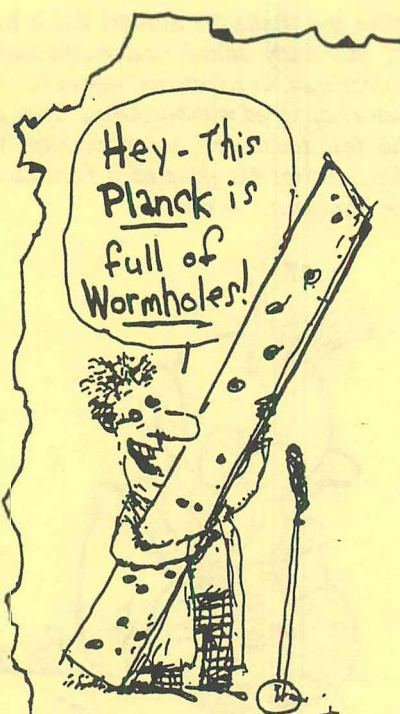
And the same passage, as quoted in review in *Astromancer Quarterly*:

"Being devoted to inbred concerns is the whole point."

No Comment. [P.O. Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Station, Cambridge, MA 02142]

No Comment, indeed. — djs

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Derek Pickles, Ned Brooks, Pamela Boal, Michael Ashley, Mark Manning, Jim Benford and Craig Smith.



Stand Up Physicist

BY RICHARD THOMPSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Follow-Up:

We can't quite shake this question of "Why is there something rather than nothing?" In our previous stab at it, we argued that the universe might be infinitely old, because it would be impossible, under the laws of physics, for something to emerge out of absolute nothingness. So simple! If this doesn't win the Nobel Prize, then we know the vote is rigged.

Still seeking further insight, we spoke to Sidney Coleman, a revered theoretical physicist at Harvard, someone who thinks about pretty far-out stuff, like whether our universe is connected to innumerable others through "wormholes." (Sounds right, doesn't it?) He pointed out that our statement that

*"After a while ...
'back' ceases to have
any meaning."*

—physicist Sidney Coleman

something could not emerge from nothing is pretty stupid, because "emerge" is nonsensical in this context. "Emerge" implies causality, which requires a dimension of time, but everything we know about the universe suggests that long ago it was in a condition in which *there was no time*.

"You go back and back and back and after a while you find you can't go any further back, not because you hit a barrier, but because 'back' ceases to have any meaning," Coleman says.

This is, admittedly, a dense subject. (Uproariously funny physicist joke.) See, the scientists think they can trace the history of the universe almost all the way back to Time Zero, when the infinitely dense and hot universe suddenly began to expand and cool, a moment known as the Big Bang. But it's impossible to draw a time line that includes Time Zero.

The reason is that time and space do not exist independently of objects, but are merely *dimensions* that describe those objects and how they move about.

Unfortunately, there is this annoying theory of quantum mechanics, which says that no distance can be shorter than something called the "Planck length," and no period of time can be briefer than "Planck time." (Length and time are related, you know, because they're part of the same thing, the "space-time continuum.")

These are the rules. And when we look back in time, we see, early on, a universe that was no larger than the Planck length—a universe so small it had no "time" dimension.

The initial moment after the Big Bang is, nonetheless, sometimes expressed in terms of a fraction of a second, but "there might have been 30 billion years before that," says Coleman.

He doesn't really mean "before." If there is no time, there can be no "before." So the question of what happened before the Big Bang is a bit like asking how tall a year is.

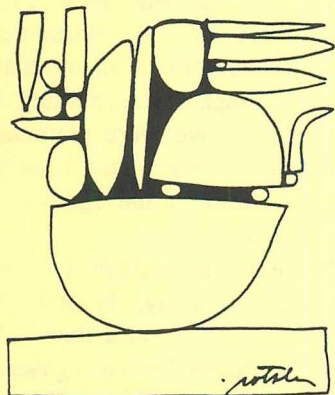
HELLO, HELLO! And here we are again. You knew we would be: you got *Pong 41*. But let me tell you how it *really* is. There are two levels (at least; maybe more, even) to Pubbing Your Ish. Level One is basically conceptual, although there is the Actual Work of writing whatever one writes oneself. Level One is getting material and assembling the Ish. Level Two is the scut work: typing stencils (or, in Modern Day Terms, inputting the material), getting the pages printed by one means or another, and collating, etc. (The "etc." includes addressing, stamping, and all that stuff; zipcode-sorting if you bulk-mail.)

I bog down on Level Two. I've been doing this fanzine thing a long time, now (forty years, as of August, 1993), and I long since grew tired of the scut work. What fun one can derive from mindlessly collating fanzines I had and used up maybe thirty years ago.

But I learned at Towner Hall that even scut work is more enjoyable if it is shared. Two (or more) people doing mindless collating not only cuts in half (or more) the actual time it takes to do it, but the concurrent socializing makes the time go by much more easily. And for that reason since around 1960 I've been sharing the joys of Pubbing My Ish with my friends. *Void* was, in the Towner Hall days, a group effort. After *Void* I did *Minac* with Les Gerber in Brooklyn. Then *Egoboo* with John D. Berry. (You may have noticed that I was also learning how to tap into the boundless energy and enthusiasm of the Younger Fan.) *The Gafiate's Intelligencer* in the early seventies was another group effort, this one by Fabulous Falls Church Fandom. And then, in 1980, *Pong*.

Dan was by then a ten-year veteran in fandom, but from my jaundiced point of view he was Younger, and he still brimmed with unfocused energy and enthusiasm. Just what I needed: raw talent to be molded by my experienced hands. We set out to do a small, frequent, unpretentious little zine in the model of those done decades earlier by Andy Main and Calvin Demmon. What we ended up with was something entirely different: *Pong*.

Our energies meshed well; better I think than either of us had expected. But kicking out a new Ish every two or three weeks is Intense. By *Pong 40* we were burned out. Only the sight of the finish line just before us (we'd planned on forty issues a year earlier) kept us going at the end.



Subsequently I did *Egoscan*, *Crank* and *Spung*, but not easily. The Level One work was no problem, but when I got to Level Two, malaise would set in. Avedon used to come over and help me collate *Egoscan*, but she deserted me (and our country) for the decadence of Britain. Terry Hughes — who was making my electro-stencils for me by then — volunteered to come over and help me with my collating on *Crank*, and I enjoyed that (it was almost the only time I would see Terry, despite

UFFISH THOTS

TEDITORIAL

our living just a mile or so apart). But Terry has become increasingly committed to his career and I couldn't count on that continuing.

Then Dan proposed last summer that we do a *Pong 41*, just to celebrate the tenth anniversary of *Pong 40*.

It was an amazing experience.

We "desktop published" *Pong 41*. Dan did the inputting on his MacIntosh and Lynn took the disc to work and did the formatting to Dan's direction. But that was the *least* of it. That's still more or less Level One.

Level Two was done by a machine.

We put our original-copy printouts into a Big Machine and it did *everything* else. It copied our originals on both sides of single sheets of paper, collated those sheets, stapled them, and kicked out *finished copies* of *Pong 41*, one at a time, in rapid succession.

"Why, this is marvelous!" I said to Dan and Lynn. I was impressed. "This takes all the scut work out of Pubbing An Ish!" I exclaimed.

A light went on over my head, making Dan squint.

"We can do this again!" I said. "We can put out More Fanzines!"

"But not *Pong*," Dan said.

"No," I agreed. "Not *Pong*. Something more reasonable. A bimonthly or a quarterly genzine, maybe."

"Not too big," Dan said, looking worried.

"Once it's typeset, it'll squeeze down a lot," I said. "Like *Cube*."

"It's an idea," he said, dubiously.

So we've been kicking it back and forth since then, writing bits of our editorials and showing them to each other, responding to the letters that came in on *Pong 41* (we got a lot of letters; thanks), and badgering our friends

to write something for us. Dan's been steadily inputting everything.

It's starting to shape up. No doubt future issues will show some refinement, but the basic zine is here, now. I'm kinda excited.

I want to watch those whole, complete copies come out of the Big Machine. Pubbing Our Ish is fun again.

MAGIC(con) MOMENTS Part 1 The last Worldcon I'd attended was Brighton in 1987; the last American Worldcon was Atlanta in 1986. While I've attended every Corflu in the interim, I didn't feel I could take off for a Worldcon (the better part of a week) without Lynda (whose income currently supports us both) — and she couldn't go without bringing at least our youngest child (who was four this year). But Lynda started talking, earlier this year, about going to Orlando. She missed the Worldcon. And with Disney World so close by, it made sense to take the younger kids (Aaron and his 13-year-old brother, Spencer).

So we kicked the idea around. Orlando would be the focus of a number of interests for us. With the Willises as Fan Guests of Honor (and rumors of attendance by Chuck and Sue Harris as well) there would not only be a special reason to go, there would be all those others who might feel the same special draw. Tropicon, which had also had the Willises as Guests of Honor, had drawn people from as far away as Seattle and the netherparts of Canada, all of whom I'd been glad to see at what would otherwise have been a small Florida regional con.

Then, in mid-spring, Andy Hooper, who was organizing the fan programming, asked me if I would interview Walt at the con, in lieu of his giving some sort of speech.

It wasn't a new concept, nor was my involvement in such an event. When Lee Hoffman was picked to be Fan GoH at the 1982 Chicago Worldcon, she was uncomfortable with the idea of giving a speech, and I suggested I interview her instead, to which she readily agreed. (Having known and admired Lee for many years, I felt I could ask questions which would evoke some good stories from her, without putting her on the spot.) Unfortunately, a member of the Chicago concon, Yale Whosis, decided that I was not fit for the job, and installed Terry Carr in my place. Terry lacked my comfort with a microphone, and was an awkward interviewer, confessing to me afterwards that he wished I'd done it.

So here it was, ten years later, and Walt shared Lee's discomfort with speech-making, so another interview was

in order. Naturally, I agreed to do it. And that cinched it: I had to go. We would go. Lynda started checking guidebooks to Orlando, to Disney World, Sea World, Universal Studios. We started making plans.

But the month of August was cruel to us. My car, a 1986 Honda Civic Wagon with, at that point, a little over 150,000 miles on it, started behaving mysteriously. The cooling system became erratic. And, on some occasions (but not others) the car would suddenly stall, only to start right up again moments later. (You have not lived until you have driven from Baltimore to Washington D.C. along the shoulder of I-95, alternating between the speed limit and 25 mph or less, stalling out every three minutes or so.) Since we were planning on *driving* down to Orlando, this was a matter of no small concern. One by one every item in the ignition system was replaced, without effect.

By the middle of August we were watching both time and money slip away. Finally my mechanic spent \$150 of his own money on a device that tested the cooling system for traces of exhaust gases, and turned up positive traces: signs of a blown head gasket. That would account for all the mysterious symptoms: coolant was getting into the first and second cylinders, turning to steam, and shorting out the spark plugs, shutting down the ignition system. What followed was two weeks of nail-biting, after my mechanic had pulled the engine head and we waited for certain parts from Honda. I got the car back *one hour* before we were scheduled to leave.

But that wasn't the worst of it. A little over a week before we intended to leave, I got sick. It wasn't anything big at first: I felt tired, as though I was slogging through molasses. Then I got feverish. Dan came over with the printed copies of *Pong 41* and the address stickers and the hour and a half that we spent preparing the *Pongs* for mailing knocked me out completely. I collapsed in bed immediately afterwards, shivering with cold despite the heat of the day and the electric blanket turned up high and the fact that I was still fully dressed under the bedcovers. Lynda took me to the doctor the next day and he prescribed an antibiotic, but it took several days to kick

in, and I spent half a week in a state in which I could not read, watch TV, or listen to music (I tried, but got headaches), and did not stir from bed. I drank juices, but ate no solid food for nearly a week. I lost twenty pounds, only ten of which I have since regained. (So there is some good in even the worst of experiences, I guess.) I was still getting my strength back when we left for Florida.



But the day before we were to leave I had a job interview in Baltimore. My mechanic (who is also a good friend) loaned me his wife's '85 Honda Accord for the trip, and I spent several hours that afternoon talking with Eric Dot and his son, Jack, the owners of Avalon Hill, the strategic games company, about starting up a line of comic books. I thought things went well, and I left with the offer of a salary and stock options, feeling pretty elated.

(But I should have seen the warning signals: Eric asked me what I thought of *Classics Illustrated* comics, and I told him that *CI* was one of only two uncollectible comic titles — comics *no one* wanted to collect or keep. He probably didn't want to hear that, since it turned out he wanted to do "biographies" — and had even trademarked the name "Famous Comics" for his new line of comics.) (The other uncollectible comic? *Treasure Chest*, published by the Roman Catholic church.)

When I got back from Orlando, Eric told me he wanted to hire someone who lived in Baltimore, "Someone I can drop in on whenever I want, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week." I'm not sure I believe that, but if he wasn't kidding I'm glad I didn't get the job. (He later told Steve Stiles — who had originally recommended me to him — that while he knew I was "an editor," he wasn't sure that, despite my experience editing *Heavy Metal*, I was "a comic book editor." Mr. Dot apparently thinks in categories. When I told him he should consider Steve for the job, he told me, "I know Steve can *write* comics and I know he can *draw* comics, but I *don't* know he can *edit* comics." *sigh*. . .)

So life, before we left for Magicon, was something of a roller coaster, full of unexpected ups and downs.

We budgeted two days for the drive down and two days for the drive back — and were grateful we had, since the boys got pretty antsy during the long hours they had to endure in the back seat. We arrived in Orlando Thursday afternoon, and that evening's dinner with Frank Lunney and Catherine Jackson and Sandy Cohen, was almost the last Lynda saw of the convention. She and the boys did Disney World Friday, Epcott Center Saturday, Universal Studios Sunday and Sea World Monday. They got up around 8:00 in the morning and left within the hour, returning in the mid-evening. I, on the other hand, got up around noon, the exact time depending on the programming I wanted to see or was on, and I partied deep into the night, getting back to bed at some point between 3 and 5 ayem. We hardly saw each other at all. (My

daughter, Kit, was also there, a member of the con in her own right. She shared our room, but usually got to bed and up several hours earlier than I. I did run into her at the con from time to time, often in the company of rich brown's daughter, Alicia — they've been friends since early childhood — and on one day with her cousin Elaina, who lives in Florida. Kit and Elaina look like sisters.)

I had a busy schedule at the con. I'm grateful to the concom for, among other things, supplying a computer printout on labels of my program schedule, which fit on the back of my badge and gave me an easily accessible reference. I had three items Friday, two Saturday, and one each on Sunday and Monday. One of the Friday items was a rehearsal of the play, "This is your Life, Jophan," the script of which I'd received a half-week earlier, and one of the Saturday items was its actual performance, which went over pretty well, to judge by the audience reaction.

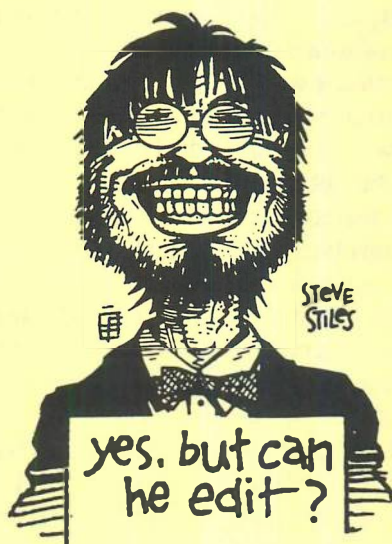
The panels were a mixed lot. One panel consisted of Andy Porter, Bjo Trimble and myself, and the topic was fandom in the 60s. As moderator, I had to deal with an interesting situation: When last we'd brushed up against each other, Bjo and I had been at some odds over the

promotion of one of L. Ron Hubbard's garbagey works for a Hugo. I think I accused her of being a prostitute for the Scientologists or somesuch, and you might imagine how that went over with her. But she did not seem inclined to bring the matter up, and, taking my cue from that, I ignored the Sixties completely and discussed with her what it was like to be the Cutest Gurel in fandom in the Fifties. We young and semi-virginal male fans in that era were in awe of Bjo. She was not only extremely attractive, she had talent, was smart, and could hold her own in any conversation. "We were scared of you," I told her. "Gosh," she replied, "I was scared of *you* guys." It was unexpectedly pleasant to talk about it, thirty years and more afterwards.

But of course the Big One was the Fan GoH Interview: Sunday at 11:00 ayem. A ghodawful time, but despite that we had a good audience.

Well-meaning people had been coming up to me throughout the convention, to offer suggestions for the interview, and some of them dismayed me.

I've known the Willises for many years. I feel I actually got to know them as real people during their visit here in 1962, during part of which time they stayed in my Brooklyn apartment. With the Carrs, I visited them in Donagadee for the better part of a week after the 1965



London Worldcon, enjoying their excellent hospitality (and that of the others then in Belfast fandom: George Charters, the Shaws, and the Whites), and I'd had a chance to renew acquaintances with them at Tropicon a few years ago. I never had any qualms about the interview.

But Walt was not in the best of health, recovering from a series of problems that included a stroke, and it appeared that at times he did not recognize certain people who felt they should have been recognized. So they came to me with fears and warnings. They offered well-meant but dismaying advice.

In fact, the only real problem we encountered in the interview was intelligibility: Walt spoke softly and occasionally his Irish accent (which has the effect of softening even the most forceful of statements) might cause a word to become inaudible, or not instantly recognizable to an American ear. And once I realized that this was going to be the only problem, I relaxed. Walt Willis did not need me to play nursemaid, despite what some had feared. His mind was as sharp as ever, and we quickly involved the audience with questions and answers — a far better tactic than me interviewing him alone and setting us above the audience, which might indeed have been a disservice, given Walt's expressed feelings on the subject.

Someone asked Walt who he'd been inspired by in fandom, and he replied that he'd looked to Charles Burbee as many of us subsequently looked to him. Someone else asked him how he felt about F. Towner Laney, Burbee's co-conspirator among the LA Insurgents of the late 40s. "The Anti-Burbee," Walt responded.

This jolted me a bit, because there was a time when, if Terry Carr was my fan generation's Burbee, I was considered its Laney (which I enjoyed, actually). But I understood Walt's position: it was Laney who expressed the anti-homosexual jingoism of the day, who seemed to be the lightning rod for the darker side of Insurgentism. These are aspects of Laney with which I am not comfortable. Yet, it is impossible for me to read *Ah, Sweet Idiocy* (which I have done at least three times in as many decades) without identifying strongly with Laney's basic attitudes: he was a self-taught intellectual with a great impatience with fuggheadedtry. He may have been wrong about homosexuality as a character defect, but he was dead-on in his reading of his contemporaries' character. To meet, say, Walt Daugherty in modern times is to encounter the same "great bag of air" whom Laney excoriated so often in the Forties.

And what I most admired about Laney was his skill as a writer. This was and is less evident in the book-

length, and serially-written (perhaps hastily at times; he was meeting FAPA deadlines) *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*. But some of his shorter pieces, in *Masque* and the Insurgent *Spacewarps*, have a gem-like brilliance and perfection. Humor came less naturally to Laney than to Burbee, but seemed to rub off Burb and onto Laney, to Laney's advantage. I identified with that too, in the Towner Hall days when I tried to get some of Terry's ability with humor to rub off on me. So I am unable to agree with Walt's characterization of Laney, but I can understand it.

RICHARD E. GEIS has been publishing fanzines longer than I have (maybe by a year; he started in late 1952 or early 1953; my first fanzine was published in August, 1953) and for much of that time they were better ones, too. What amazes me is that, despite the harrowing medical conditions he must deal with, he's still at it!

In *The Geis Letter* #10 (November 1992) he remarks that "My spine — with its bone spur pressing into my spinal cord — is hurting me more and more. The weakness in my legs, especially the left, is becoming marked, and I fear the inevitable may happen: one day I may be forced to utter those awful words 'Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!' Oh, the *shame!*"

The Geis Letter is the latest in a long series of fanzines which started with *Psychotic* (in the early Fifties) and has been known as *Psychotic* or *Science Fiction Review* several times over the years. Although Geis was more or less gafia for almost ten years (starting in 1958 or so) during which time he devoted his writing energies to becoming an early porn king of sorts (a story in itself: the early quasi-porn business of the late Fifties and early Sixties was dominated by former sf writers and editors like Jerome Bixby, and Geis easily made his way among them), from the point in the late Sixties that he first revived *Psy* and then again mutated it into *SFReview*, Geis has remained active as a fan

publisher right up to now. Several times in recent years his health has threatened to shut him down as a faned, but each time he has risen, yet again, phoenix-like, with a new newsletter or fanzine.

I think it can be fairly stated that Geis showed the way to those who put out genzines in the Seventies and Eighties, with his fat *SFReviews*, full of opinions — both Geis's and those of a wide variety of pros. (Who can easily forget Darrell Schweitzer's harangues against Barry Malzberg?) I contributed to some of those zines, as both a columnist and letterhack. It was in the pages of a Geis fanzine that Harry Harrison and I first had at it (he was



steamed that I had exposed a shabby hoax of his — and it fairly burst his balls when, a couple of months later, I succeeded him as an editor at *Amazing*; he predicted I wouldn't last three months and threatened an SFWA boycott to achieve that goal) and many other feuds followed ours. It made for a lively fanzine. The Geis formula consisted of a long opinionated editorial, followed by as many as half a dozen columns (by the likes of Poul Anderson or John Brunner), an article or two (by the likes of Poul Anderson or John Brunner), a long letter-column (full of lively arguments by people like Poul Anderson or John Brunner), and, larded in everywhere, book reviews. As time went on, the lively columns were less often in evidence, people like Darrell Schweitzer took over the lettercolumn and many of the book reviews, and then ultimately, Geis surrendered himself to Orson Scott Card, whose incredibly long and worthless book review columns came to Geis pre-edited and pre-typeset, from Card's computer. It amazes me that Card had the time to read so much when he was at the same time writing very prolifically (and, thanks to Ben Bova, selling every bit of it), but it hardly mattered: his reviews were boring to read and revealed no insights. (Thus Card paved the way for the reviewers in *Laan's Laantern*.)

Health problems caused Geis to fold *SFReview* a few years ago, along with the personal/newszines he had also been doing. But you can't keep the man down — and we should all be grateful, although I often find myself skimming over his latest conspiracy theory. *The Geis Letter* is subtitled "Thought Crime, Dogmacide, and Intellectual Heresy," and although there's an element of bragadocio to that motto, it's basically an accurate description of the contents. What fascinates me is how Geis has managed, in his iconoclastic way, to be wrong in his predictions about nearly every major political event (and its consequences) in the last thirty-five or so years. He will acknowledge this when pressed, but persists in offering up new gloomy predictions of doom and disaster. ("I want this operation before Medicare gets trimmed by the Demos next year," he says, ignoring the reality that *Bush* wanted to cut Medicare, and "the Demos" are likely to give us our first national health care package — although I fear it won't go far enough and will fall into the compromise of a "pay or play" scheme.) His politics are somewhere off in the left field of the right wing; Heinleinian perhaps. "It was disgustingly clear during an interview on CNBC in October, that Jessie Jackson expects a payoff for helping direct the black vote to Clinton: he will be a senator in the new state of Columbia created from the District of Columbia." *Sigh*. . . Jackson was not a major player in "direct(ing) the black vote to Clinton," and he's already been elected a Shadow Senator in D.C. (And some of us see Clinton as the best thing that's happened to this country in twelve years.)

In any event, it's good to see a letter from Poul Anderson in the latest *Geis Letter*. We may hope to see John Brunner in a future issue. And applause to Geis, for Keeping At It.

Part 2: MEET THE EDITOR Picture it: Saturday night at the Peabody Hotel in Orlando, Magicon 92. I am wearing a red *Fantasy and Science Fiction* t-shirt which I bought maybe ten years earlier from Alexei Panshin in the hucksters' room at another Worldcon. It seemed appropriate; I had just played Profan in the play Andy Hooper had produced a little earlier that evening. And, as Assistant (later, Associate) Editor of *The Magazine* in the mid-Sixties, I felt I had more right than most to wear such a shirt.

So now I am heading down the corridor of the 27th floor of the Peabody, my destination the Tor Books party, held in the David G. Hartwell Memorial Suite, a duplex with interior stair, balcony, jacuzzi, and bidet. (All of these elements *must be* present in order for the suite to be a genuine David G. Hartwell Memorial Suite.)

The corridor on the 27th floor of the Peabody hotel (known internationally for its ducks) widens at one point into a lounge area, with soft chairs and a bar. The lounge was darkened and the bar closed, but as I headed through it a big fellow with a lot of hair called out to me: "Hey! Like your shirt!"

Since I have been known to say this to others myself upon occasion (and most often, it seems, to Roger Weddall), I paused.

The fellow with the hair pointed to a woman sitting in one of the soft chairs, talking with someone else. She was wearing a broad-brimmed hat that shielded most of her face from my view. "Show her," the guy told me. Then he called out to her, "Hey Kathryn, look at his shirt."

The young woman tilted her head up, giving me a bare glimpse of her face.

"Hi," I said, thrusting out my hand. "I'm —"

She automatically shook my hand. "Nice shirt," she said, and dismissed me completely.

And that was my meeting with the current editor of *F&SF*, en toto.

Part 3: A MANY-RIBBONED SPLENDOR There is a picture of Bruce Pelz in the Magicon issue of *Locus* which amply demonstrates an ultimate extreme of Ribbon Mania. Bruce is wearing no less than twenty-one differently-colored ribbons in a broad three-tiered array under his badge.

Magicon handed out a variety of ribbons, each one six inches long and two inches wide. The most common identified one as a "Program Participant," a huckster, a con-runner, or somesuch — common enough at many

recent conventions. But there were *many* others, and to get them one had to qualify for the designation in question and track down the person handing that ribbon out. It was only by studying the array on Bruce's chest that I discovered several ribbons for which I qualified, and it must be noted that Bruce himself did not have a *complete* array, since he did not qualify for some categories, like "Artist." I ended up with four ribbons overlapping each other under my badge: the ubiquitous "Program Participant," "Past Worldcon GoH," "Past Hugo Winner," and "Past Worldcon Chairman." I wanted a "Dave Kyle Says You Can't Sit Here" ribbon — I felt that I, as one of the original Balcony Insurgents at the 1956 NyCon, deserved it more than anyone else I saw wearing one in Orlando, but they were gone before I tracked them down. Oh well.

As the latter ribbon demonstrates, the Magicon ribbons were, ultimately, a spoof on convention ribbons in general, and as good a way as any to deflate the pomposity of those who place too much value on the ribbons they wear. All in all, a very fannish concept, and symbolic of the fannish thinking which underlay much of Magicon. Truly, this was the most fannish of Worldcons in many years.

Kudos.

EMBARRASSING CLOSEUP In my early years as the editor of *Amazing* and *Fantastic*, back when I still lived in Brooklyn, I had frequent lunches with my employer, Sol Cohen. At least once a week I'd drive out to Queens, to his house, and he'd drive us to a restaurant just over the border on Long Island, for lunch. I enjoyed those lunches, at least until the government decided to ban swordfish for a time, and I'd get Sol to recounting his youthful adventures in the comics business, which entertained us both. But one thing I did not like: Sitting that close to Sol, across a small table in a restaurant, I could not help but notice an odd thing about him. The corners of his mouth were white. The points where the upper and lower lips meet, when his mouth was open, were a startling dead white in color, quite unlike the surrounding flesh. He was even then an old man, suffering from both diabetes and a heart condition, and I assumed this was just another symptom of his age and poor health.

A couple of weeks ago I noticed that the corners of my mouth, slightly ulcerated already, had turned a similar dull white color. I do not have diabetes or a heart condition, and I am not yet, (despite the, ahem, premature whitening of my hair) old. So this condition caused me a mild concern — mostly of what others might think if

they noticed it.



But it was not until I was flat on my back in a dentist's chair, nitrous oxide (at a federally mandated dosage almost too mild to be felt, *sigh*) being fed into my willing nose, that it occurred to me to ask someone about it. I called my dentist's attention to the condition of the corners of my mouth. "Izz there a sssalve?" I queried before he'd had a chance to install a "rubber dam."

"B vitamins," he replied cheerfully. "Sign of deficiency."

"Bee vit-a-mins," I said to myself, nodding mentally. "Uv course. . . ."

I used to take a multi-B cap every day; someone told me they were good for hemorrhoids, which as a sitting-down kind of person I'd had to deal with from time to time. The multi-B had one side effect: It made my pee a bright yellow. At some

point in the eighties — maybe when I was in jail — I gave up vitamin supplements. Apparently I erred.

So that same day I bought a bottle of multi-Bs and resumed taking them daily. It's been less than a week since then, but the white areas where my lips meet disappeared almost immediately, and the ulcerations with them. That's nice, but it's less nice to think that I'd been deficient in B vitamins before resuming the supplements; I'd considered my diet rich enough and varied enough to give me all the vitamins I needed.

And it's a shame I can't give Sol a call and share this information with him; rumor has it that he died years ago, after moving to Florida. But I can share it with you. If you've noticed this condition in yourself, a loved one, or a friendly acquaintance, take this advice:

B vitamins.

Part 4: AT TUCKER'S FEET So there I was, sitting on the foot of a bed in the Minneapolis suite at the Peabody. It was Friday night and a bunch of us had retired to the Inner Sanctum to get sercon and party. Teresa Nielsen Hayden sat on the floor facing me. Next to her was her friend Maggie, and also sitting on the floor, leaning one arm on the bed to my right, was Arnie Katz. They formed a sort of semicircle at my feet, and suddenly I had a flash:

It's a Midwestcon, in the mid-sixties. Bob Tucker is sitting on the end of a bed, telling stories. Several of us Fanoclasts are sitting on the floor, arrayed in a semicircle around him.

It's a powerful memory. We're laughing together, and there's a camaraderie, a sense of generations joining together. It's like being at a family gathering where the favorite uncle is telling his stories. Some of those stories are well-known, but our favorite uncle knows how to tell

mentors. . . ." " . . . Ted, no doubt, gets zines from his old friends, but I question whether he sees even a scant majority of what's being produced." — Leah Zeldes Smith in *Astromancer Quarterly*

"Good to see Dan Steffan at [MagiCon] — he didn't seem to be quite as far over the hill as his column in *Pong* would indicate! I don't know about Ted White, if he was there I didn't see him — perhaps he has changed so much I didn't recognize him. Perhaps he was the kindly gentleman helping a wheelchair-bound fan across the whizzing traffic between the convention center and the Peabody. Nahhh. . . ." — Ned Brooks in *The Olaf Alternative*

In fact I was one of that ski-masked gang dumping helpless fans out of their wheelchairs in order to commandeer them for the 5:00 a.m. wheelchair races in the convention center — in which I placed a close second behind Andy Hooper. Frank Lunney was heard to mutter "I was robbed!" after Ned Brooks wandered into his path and forced him to crash and ditch. Brooks appeared to be oblivious to his surroundings. After the race, Dick Smith covertly passed me a file of the missing *Stets*. "Don't tell Leah," he whispered. I said I wouldn't, but I had my fingers crossed when I said that.

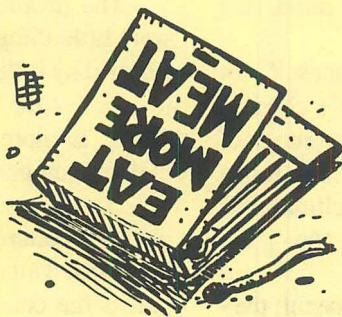
Part 6: ALONG THE WAY A few years ago rich brown and I drove down to Fort Lauderdale for a Tropicon — the one at which, by no coincidence at all, the Willises were also guests of honor. It was an odd but enjoyable little convention. During the day attendees did all those gaming and star-worshipping bits which people (not fans) do at modern regional conventions . . . but at night *they* went home, leaving the hotel to those fans who had travelled hundreds, if not thousands of miles to meet the Willises. Suddenly it felt like a late-fifties Midwestcon, with the Busbys, Gina Clarke, Lee Hoffman, Shelby Vick — people like that — lounging in the halls. (An added treat for me was seeing Will Eisner again. He'd been a GoH at a previous Tropicon and enjoyed himself so much that he came back. I'd last seen him in New York in 1980, when I'd interviewed him for *Heavy Metal*. He is one of a very few men in the comics industry whom I still idolize, and it was a bonus that he actually remembered me.)

Lynda had intended to make the trip with us, but her father's ill-health required that she use that weekend instead for a trip to Oregon. So just rich and I drove down, making a two-day trip of it (Lauderdale is several hundred miles further south of Orlando), albeit we started the first day in mid-day.

Somewhere in South Carolina we decided it was time

to stop and look for a motel. It was dark and we were tired and hungry. At about the same time the brightly-lit signs advertising gas, food and lodging disappeared. We were, it seemed, driving through a black hole. All signs of civilization had vanished.

Then, ahead, finally, lights. We took the exit and found several motels almost at the end of the off-ramp. They were all cheap, and we ended up checking into the first one we came to. "Can you recommend a local restaurant?" we asked the young woman at the check-in desk. "Sure," she said. "There's a Western Sizzlin' just down the road."



I was dubious. I did not want to eat my one substantial meal of the day in a cheap-steak-chain-restaurant. I enjoy a good steak and I can tell the difference. But she insisted, so rich and I drove down the road and discovered that unlike, say, the "Sizzler" chain of restaurants, Western Sizzlin' served good steaks. *And* a well-

stocked salad bar. *And* a potato-toppings bar. *And* a dessert-bar, where rich found heaven, but which I had no room for. "Wow," we said to each other. "Good food, and it's relatively cheap!" We made a note of the place and resolved to return there on our trip back.

(There is more to the story of our stay there, but I'll condense it: It was when rich and I tried to share a room that I discovered something his lovers have known about and tried to deal with for years: rich is by far the loudest snorer I've ever heard. And I'm a light sleeper. By the middle of the night, rich got himself a room of his own, and we did not share rooms for the remainder of the trip.)

On the way back we stayed at a different motel (they all cost the same, so why not try them *all* out?), but returned to the Western Sizzlin' for another excellent meal. And when we got back home we told people about the place and discovered two in our own area, both of which we have been to a number of times since. (It's a good "family" restaurant, meaning that we can take even our youngest — who was only two on his first visit — along without embarrassment, and the entire family without going bankrupt. . . .)

So naturally it occurred to me that since we were making a two-day drive each way again this time, we ought to stop once again in that little town in South Carolina. "What was its name, do you recall?" I asked rich one night, not long before we were to leave. "Ummm," said rich. Neither of us could remember.

I scanned the map, but couldn't even recall whether it was in the northern, middle, or southern part of I-95's route through the state, and none of the names on the map rang any bells with me.

We had one possible advantage: In August the days are much longer than they are in December; we wouldn't

be driving through a pitch-black night. But I didn't recognize any of the exits we sailed past, nor was recognition likely, since I'd seen the place in the daylight only upon leaving it. We drove through much of the state and it was getting late. Lynda, the boys and I were all tired and hungry. For a long time we saw nothing suitable, much less recognizable. "Let's just stop at the next place we come to," Lynda said. She got no argument.

Then, ahead, motel signs. We rolled down the exit ramp into St. George, South Carolina.

"You know," I said, "this looks awfully familiar. Yes! That's the motel where rich and I stayed the first time! And — over there — the motel we stayed in, coming back!" And so it was. We checked into a motel and drove down the street to the Western Sizzlin'.

But it didn't look exactly the same. And, inside, the layout was completely different. Was this the same town where rich and I had stopped before? It didn't matter, but . . . Eventually I asked a waitress. "Oh yes, we completely redid the place a year ago," she said. She confirmed for me the details I'd remembered. I was right: St. George was in fact the same place.

It's well-positioned for a stopover for anyone driving from Florida to northern Virginia who doesn't want to do the drive non-stop. It worked perfectly for us on both trips, and we stopped there again on the drive home.

But this time Lynda didn't want to eat a Western Sizzlin'. "I'm burned out on the place," was about the way she put it. "Let's try to find something else. Maybe Mexican."

I didn't mind, so after we'd checked in at the motel we decided to take the Full Tour of St. George, South Carolina. It was still daylight.

The Full Tour was a bit of a disappointment. St. George proper is built around a crossroads a mile or two east of the Interstate. It's an old southern agricultural town, that looks as though developers and speculators brought by the Interstate interchange had come and gone. If a boom had been expected by the locals, they must have been disappointed: It was confined to the area immediately surrounding the exit ramps. That Western Sizzlin' was close to the *only* restaurant in St. George.

Oh, we saw a building that had obviously gone up in the seventies as a restaurant of some kind, in what passed for downtown St. George: very Californian exterior design of stained wood and narrow vertical windows. It was now a gift shop, and didn't appear to be thriving as that, either. Much of that three-block "downtown" looked old and abandoned, the buildings dating to the twenties and thirties, and sidewalks crumbling and the curbs non-existent. But intermixed were buildings with at least facelifts, and new sidewalks and curbs, often running for only a fraction of the block, signs of some optimism at least, and maybe a little belated prosperity.

Most of the people we saw walking were black. The whites seemed to be, like us, passing through. There were no Mexican restaurants, no Chinese restaurants, and in fact the only place we saw that might have been called a "restaurant" was a local diner that looked rather decrepit, and in which we might have been trespassing, had we tried it.

We ate at the Western Sizzlin' that night. The following night, back home, we went to a Mexican restaurant.

ROLL THE PRESSES! It's taken us a lot longer to put this issue together than we'd expected — particularly in comparison with the blitzkrieg that produced *Pong 41* — but then, we didn't write everything in this issue. Looking over the issue now, I'd say it was worth the wait.

It's not like I haven't been busy anyway. Much of last fall was taken up with another impending job that didn't pan out, but hasn't completely disappeared either. (Hope springs eternal. . . .) I cranked out a final "My Column" for the final issue of *Quantum*, and I've been writing a number of items for the new *Comic Book Week*, culminating (thus far) in a 10,000-word item on my time at *Heavy Metal*. And, hey, I wrote a *long* LoC to *Stet*. 1993: The Year of Fanac. You betchum, Red Ryder.

ROGER WEDDALL The news reached us just as we were wrapping up this issue. Roger Weddall is dead.

Roger wrote us a note, requesting *Pong*, back in 1981. Subsequently he wrote us frequent LoCs, few of which we published, but all of which we enjoyed. He has been on our mailing lists ever since.

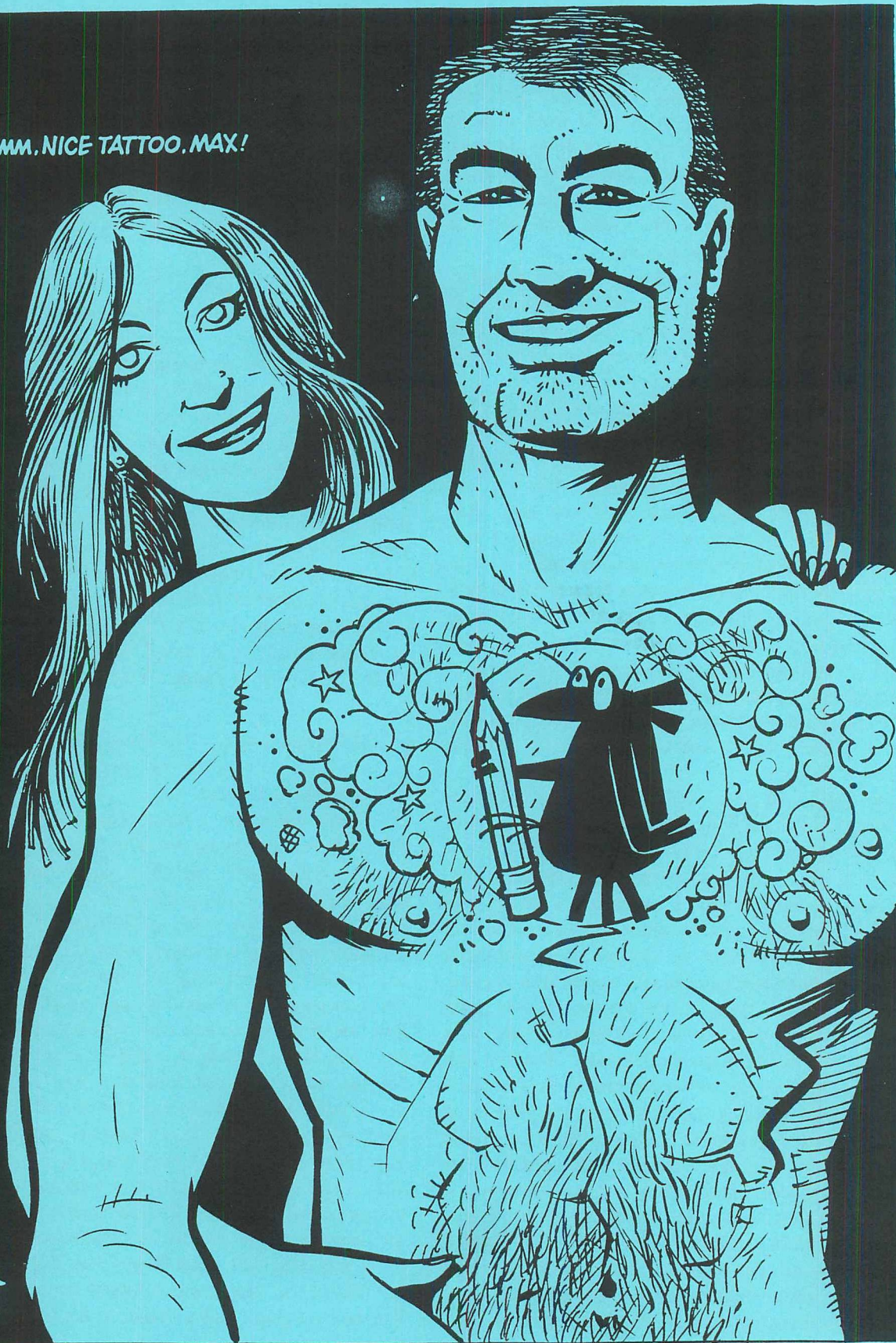
I met Roger in 1985, in Melbourne, and found him instantly engaging and enormously friendly. I admired a tee-shirt he was wearing (put out by the Fitzroy Legal Services people, it enumerated one's rights under Australian law, if arrested) and two days later he handed me a shirt just like it, which he'd left the convention to obtain for me. Roger was that kind of a guy.

While I was in jail Roger was one of several Australians to write me. It wasn't easy to write back, since I was allowed to send out only letters with domestic postage. I had to mail my letters to a friend to be remailed overseas. But Roger put up with such nonsense, and was an enormously encouraging correspondent.

I was delighted when Roger won *Duff*, and I told all my friends that Roger was someone they'd want to meet. I'm damned glad I had a chance to see him again one last time.

Roger Weddall will be missed by a great many people. — *Ted White*

MMM. NICE TATTOO. MAX!



GOON BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

• 1990 •

—Liam STEFFAN—