

NUMBER TWO

FALL 1993

40th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

BLA!





¡Apague Esa Mierda!

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FORTY YEARS? That's how long it's been since I published my first fanzine, and I'll refrain from adding, "That's not too many."

I got my first mimeo in the late summer of 1952, and I used it that fall to publish a couple of booklets about Superman (which may have been the first publications of comics fandom) and some pamphlets for my high school's mock-Presidential election, which I called *The Republican* — but those weren't real fanzines. They were warmups, trial runs, basically attempts to learn the mimeo process: how to cut decent stencils and run them off. My mimeo was a Sears Tower postcard mimeo. It cost me ten bucks.

I'd become a fan in late 1951. I read *all* the prozines, a number of which had fanzine review columns, and most of which had chatty lettercolumns from which I learned the fanspeak of the day. I got my first fanzine at the end of 1951, and the fact that it too was published on

a postcard mimeo (producing a fanzine that looked almost like a paperback book) helped justify in my own mind my purchase of the Sears postcard mimeo.

I was fifteen in August 1953. I had by then read a lot of fanzines, including Joel Nydahl's *Vega*, which ran a column of advice to neofans by Marion Zimmer Bradley, in which she counseled us young fans to consider carefully our first venture into fanzine publishing. We should not be hasty, she said. We should not rush out there with just any old thing; we should exercise care and judgment and wait until we had material for our fanzine *which was worth publishing*.

I understood her point; already I'd gotten some fanzines which were pretty slap-dash, hastily thrown together and sloppily mimeoed. I'd not make *that* mistake, no sir!

Indeed, I spent much of the time I was working, doing chores, garden-work, yard-work, mowing the lawns (acres of lawns), planning in my head the fanzine I would *some day* publish. This was a natural extension of my daydreaming about the prozines I would some day edit, the logos and contents-page layouts of which I had already designed, filling pages of my notebooks. (Thus it was perhaps inevitable that one day I *would* edit prozines, the logos and contents-page layouts of which I *did* design. . . .) Instead of writing brilliant prozine editorials in my head as I followed the lawnmower, I started writing brilliant fanzine editorials. Like the brilliant letters I wrote in my head to my fan correspondents and the occasional prozine, these editorials were far better than any I ever

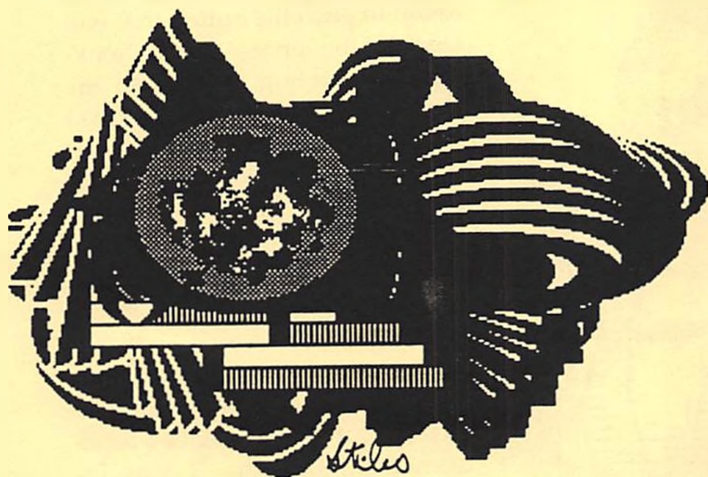
UFFISH
THOTS
EDITORIAL

committed to paper.

In fact, I was well aware of the gap between my fantasies and reality, and for a long time I simply accepted it as unbridgeable. I knew I could not yet produce the fanzine I longed to do. Putting out my own fanzine was something that lay in the mythical future of When I Am Grown Up.

But one day in August 1953, that changed.

I was sitting in my room on a hot summer afternoon, beams of sunlight cutting through shimmering



dust motes from my west window. I had been going through a batch of old (early- and mid-forties) and obscure fanzines I'd bought as an unsorted bunch from Dick Witter's F&SF Book Service on Staten Island (from whom I also bought old *Doc Savage* magazines). Most of them were from the early days of the N3F. One was a Redd Boggs newssheet. Another contained Damon Knight's manifesto, "Unite or Fie!," which launched the N3F. Most of the fanzines were forgettable.

A synaptic switch closed somewhere in my brain. Perhaps it was a Corticothalamic Pause. A light bulb lit symbolically somewhere over my head.

"I can publish a fanzine!" I said to myself. "I can start doing it right *now*!"

So what if I had very little material — a few ultra-short stories I'd written myself, a number of cartoons and drawings (mostly of rocketships) I'd drawn in school notebooks — and virtually none of it *worth publishing*? I had all those old fanzines, filled with forgotten material, *some of which must be worthy of republishing*.

Typically, the first thing I did was to design a logo for my fanzine, and cut the first stencil for the (multi-color) cover on the dining room table. The fanzine would be published on my postcard mimeo, with a page size of 4" × 6" and I decided an appropriate title would be *Zip*. Yes, my first fanzine was a zippy little zine.

It took me a week or two to design and cut the stencils for that first issue, and it was a time of heady

excitement for me. *I was really doing it!* I was putting out a fanzine of my very own! Wow!

I think I ran off about fifty copies, of which I mailed out a little over thirty-five. It wasn't easy. Paper did not come cut to that 4" × 6" size; nor could you cut down a lettersize sheet of paper to that size without wasting nearly a quarter of it. I bought 9" × 12" sheets of construction paper, and legal-length white mimeo paper, and laboriously cut them to size with my father's cutting-board (which he used in his photography studio). If I tried to cut too many sheets at once the edges would cut messily and the paper would squirm and cut unevenly, which of course happened frequently since I was impatient and always pushing the limits on the amount of paper I could cut. The Sears inks were messy too — runny and blotchy, easy to over-ink. It's almost amazing that *Zip* #1 was even readable (in the technical sense; in the literary sense it was borderline-readable).

But I did it. I put out a fanzine! I culled a mailing list from the lettercolumns of my favorite fanzines. That list did not include Walt Willis or most of the major BNFs of the day. I did not think *Zip* was worthy of their attention. Mostly I sent it to the fans of my generation, most of them still in high school as I was: people like Don Wegars (*Fog*), Dennis Moreen (*Spiral*), Ron Ellik (*FANTastic Story Mag*), Bhub Stewart (*EC Fan Bulletin*), Stu Nock (*Cosmic Frontiers*), and Terry Carr (*Vulcan*).

Looking back on that August of 1953, I marvel at myself. I was younger than most of my friends in fandom, and still very shy and insecure. Making that decision to Pub My Ish that August day was a major turning point in my life. It was my decision to stop being a part of the passive audience in fandom, and to become an active creator. It was the First Step toward what became my life's career as a professional writer and editor. And it was intensely liberating and exhilarating. I had to throw away my preconceptions about the "perfect" fanzine I wanted to publish and had no chance of publishing, and realize that right then, at that moment, I *could* publish a *real* fanzine, warts and all.

I've published a lot of fanzines since *Zip* #1, and *all* of them were, viewed objectively, better fanzines than *Zip* #1, but that fanzine was the first, and therefore the most important, to me, of them all.

BLAT! GOES TO THE MOVIES So Lynda and I finally saw *Jurassic Park*. We waited until the crowds had thinned and saw the movie in late August. Lynda had read the book, liked it a lot, and had been faunching to see the movie since its opening. I haven't read a book that was written to be a Best Seller in many years, but I'd heard all the hype and looked forward to the movie.

Jurassic Park has been out for more than two

months. So *why* did no one warn us of the disaster this movie truly is? Why all the talk about how scary it is to kids, and no talk about how abysmally *stupid* it is? Where were the reviewers on this one? Out to lunch? Permanently brain-damaged by all the forced viewings they endure? In league with Steven Spielberg — or in his pay? Why has no one stated the obvious: that this emperor has no clothes?

Years ago I realized that Spielberg has deliberately manufactured his “hit” movies the same way Crichton creates his bestsellers: cynically and manipulatively. If you make a graph of the moments of peak excitement in, say, *Jaws*, and another graph for *Close Encounters*, you will find that one can be superimposed over the other without changing either: Spielberg used a common template. It has certain recognizable features. For example, after the first moment of excitement (the first shark kill; the first “close encounter”), there follows a hoax-moment of excitement, with a resulting anticlimax (the hoax shark-fin; the “close encounter” that turns out to be helicopters).

The same template is still in use in *Jurassic Park*. The movie *opens* with a moment of excitement — the apparently inexplicable violence in which a man is killed by an unseen monster (which shines light out the chinks of its fortress-like cage). The anticlimax comes when our protagonists, well-prepared with talk of live dinosaurs, are sent on a guided-rail tour of the Park — and see nothing. But soon thereafter Spielberg abandons his old methods — in which moments of tension or excitement alternate with more reflective or bucolic scenes — in order to pile event atop event, nonstop, as though directing some Jean Claude van Damme action potboiler. At this point, an already unbelievable movie becomes hard to watch. (Lynda said she almost walked out. But, “You keep hoping it’ll get better, and you don’t want to walk out on that chance.”)

I have always been impatient with manufactured suspense. You know the kind: the reader sees the train coming down the tracks, but the poor schlub whose car is stalled on the tracks can’t. Will he get his car started in time? Will he jump out of it in time? Oh, the suspense!

In *Jurassic Park* the most offensive example of this occurred as the movie intercut between two scenes. In one the protagonist and the two children are climbing over a fence which is normally electrified with 10,000 volts. In the other, his girlfriend is unknowingly

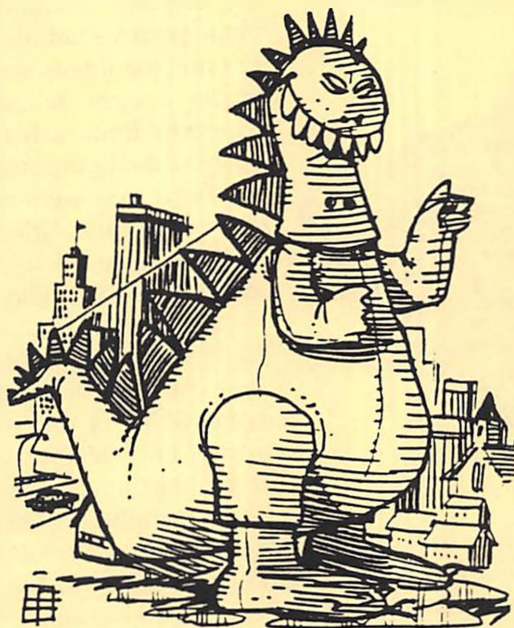
reactivating all the systems, and — any moment now — about to turn on the juice to that fence. I nudged Lynda. “Will they make it in time?” I asked sardonically. As they climb the fence the intercuts get shorter, and the girlfriend gets closer to pushing the button that will turn on the fence (she pushes a dozen other buttons first). Then — and this is where it became truly offensive — the little boy, already over the top, balks at climbing down. At this point alarms — appar-

ently *sensing* that someone is about to push the button that will electrify the fence — begin honking and hooting, adding to the characters’ (and the audience’s) sense of impending danger. “Jump!” they shout at the boy. But he clings to the top of the fence, suddenly ashen with fright. Cut to the girlfriend’s finger, pushing *that* button. . . .

I was insulted.

But not the first time. I was insulted by the contempt shown for my/our/the audience’s intelligence throughout. I was insulted by the way the helicopter approached the island on which *Jurassic Park* has been built — skimming the waves — and then cut low through the steep and narrow valleys in the island’s mountains . . . all because this made for such spectacular shots, and nevermind the suicidal insanity of such a route. I was insulted by the cardboard characterizations — and the actors’ inability to bring *any* of them to life, save that of the putative villain. I was insulted by the anti-science message implicit throughout the movie (who are we, ordinary men, to challenge God?), and made explicit by Jeff Goldblum’s character, who actually mouthed incredible inanities about Life and Its Way, although his character is supposedly a scientist, who ought to know better. (But he spoke for Spielberg.) I was insulted by the unresolved red herrings that littered the movie. (One example: the sick tricerops, and the mystery of its periodic illnesses, which might be caused by poisonous vegetation — but who knows? Apparently that scene existed for sentimental reasons — the protagonist all but has an orgasm as he flings himself upon the smelly hide of the recumbent beast — and to titillate us with the sight of someone thrusting her hands into a steaming pile of dinosaur shit, incredibly outsized for the size of the creature that supposedly produced it . . . but why go on? Few of the details in this movie relate well to each other. . . .)

However, I *will* say that the effects were good: the dinosaurs were entirely realistic and believable: they did not look like lizards with cardboard spines, shot on



a tabletop miniature; they did not have wavery lines around them showing how they'd been matted in. They were modern, state of the art, special effects. That's where most of the money, and all of the thought, went.

Damon Knight once described an "idiot plot" as being a story in which there would be no plot if all the characters were not idiots. *Jurassic Park* is the ultimate in "idiot plots" — and Spielberg is an idiot himself if he thinks he can go on treating his audience as idiots. (On the other hand, perhaps he subscribes to the dictum about never overestimating the audience, which may well be composed largely of idiots, since most of them apparently swallowed *Jurassic Park* whole and without complaint.)

In *Crank #4*, reviewing Spielberg's brief-lived TV show, *Amazing Stories*, I said of him, "Spielberg . . . I am convinced, wouldn't know a good idea from a cliché, even if it bit him in the leg. One senses that in a less kind world he would have found a more appropriate niche: hacking out scripts for second-line Marvel comics."

With *Jurassic Park* he confirms my judgment, but that comes as no surprise to me. What *does* surprise me is that everyone has let him get away with it: there have been no critical ("bad") reviews at all.

Let this be the first.

AND, ON THE NEWS TONIGHT. . . It's odd how old acquaintances can pop up in unexpected places. Some years ago, for example, I was startled to find a letter from Charlie Artman Brown (who had by then dropped the last name) in *Newsweek*. (In the late sixties he came to FiSfA meetings and bragged about giving his cat LSD.)

But that is nothing compared with the media stir Howard "God" Lotsoff is making. I saw him on the NBC Nightly News tonight.

I met Howard through Robert Bashlow, whom I met, in turn, through Walter Breen. I worked for the better part of 1962 as Robert Bashlow's personal secretary, a remarkable experience in itself, since Robert was a virtuoso violinist and a concert-quality pianist, who used to entertain us both with his afternoon performances on those instruments. (He had also made — and lost — his first million dollars before he was 25.) Howard — known to us far better as "God" — was on the cutting edge of the early-sixties drug culture. I knew him in 1962 and 1963, and he says now that he was addicted to both heroin and cocaine in those days. I suspect he turned Bashlow onto both drugs, but neither did them in my presence, and I was largely unaware of their usage.

What interested them about me was my experience with peyote, which I'd tried first in early 1959. Both Robert and Howard questioned me about the psychedelic experience (although the word "psychedelic" had either not yet been coined, or had not yet gained much of a toehold in the language), and led me to believe they'd sampled some Sandoz acid.

Then one day Robert was wildly excited. Over the weekend he'd tried a new drug. It was a psychedelic, but after a long and intense trip, he said, it left one for the final third of the trip in a state of extreme clear-headedness. The drug, he said, was derived from the roots of an African plant, the tabernanthe iboga, and was called ibogaine. He had, he said, ordered a shipment of the roots from Africa, and he awaited them with great anticipation.

"Where'd you get this stuff — the stuff you took?" I asked him.

"Lotsoff," was the reply. "Trust God to turn it up, I don't know how."

When Bashlow's shipment of roots arrived, it turned out to be a tangled mass of short, barkless, yellow sticks. They smelled a bit like sassafras. He gave me some of them. We were supposed to prepare a tea from brewing the roots. They produced an aromatic tea, but nothing in the way of a buzz that a placebo couldn't duplicate. Bashlow had been had: the Active Ingredient was in the bark, which had already been stripped from the roots. He'd gotten the shaft.

Howard doesn't call himself "God" any more — at least not to the media — but he is flogging ibogaine as a cure for heroin and cocaine addiction. He claims that the first time he took it — as a drug experiment in 1962 or 1963 — it cured him of his addictions. Permanently.

He takes addicts to the Netherlands, where ibogaine is legal, and treats them with it. He claims a high success rate. Now the FDA is looking into the drug, and holding hearings about it. In laboratory experiments, mice dosed with ibogaine lost brain cells to a significant extent. But who knows how heavily they were dosed? The FDA is considering minimal doses in the first human tests — as though no humans ever took the drug before, and Lotsoff's clients don't exist for study — and I'm sure the fact that the drug is a psychedelic is a factor. What-ever else happens, you don't want a patient getting high!

Ibogaine is not a much-used (here) or well-understood drug; there isn't a lot in the literature, as they say. When I used to tell people about it, back in the sixties, none of them had ever before heard of it. It was exotic enough that Hunter Thompson was able to



IN GOD WE TRUST!

use the mention of it to considerable effect in his *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail: 1972*. He said that it was Ed Muskey's use of ibogaine that had led to his publicly breaking down and crying (when his wife's reputation was assailed in New Hampshire); the drug, he implied, caused emotional instability. (He was, of course, making all of it up.)

So there, with Tom Brokaw doing a voice-over, is Howard "God" Lotsoff, walking down a street on my TV screen. He's older, sure. His hair — like mine — has gone grey. But I'd know that angular face anywhere, that sharp gleam in his eyes under jutting brows.

"Hey," I said to Lynda, "look at that guy — I used to know him."

"A friend of yours?"

"Not really. But I knew him."

"WALTER BREEN IS DEAD," rich brown said to me. "I saw his obituary in today's *Post*." Actually, rich did not speak those words directly into my ear. He spoke them to my answering machine, which relayed those very same words — indeed, in a faithful replica of rich's own rich brown tones, *as though* he himself were *at that moment* speaking those very same words *into my ear* — but now I find myself trapped within the floridity of rich brownian prose, which forces me to: *(but I digress!)*

Oddly enough, there was another message on my machine, this one from Andy Porter. Andy too had news of Walter's death (about which I had heard already; he died half a month earlier), but added that Avram Davidson had died of a heart attack, and the next day Lester del Rey had died. Deaths in threes.

Walter's obituary was in the May 12th *Washington Post*. "Numismatist," it called him. That's probably the kindest thing he *will* be called, too. He died — although the *Post* didn't mention it — in jail.

Dave Rike had been keeping me up to date on Walter's troubles with the law, and it was that same old story, pederasty. Ironic isn't it, that after all that fuss in 1964 — over Walter's exclusion from the Worldcon because it was feared he *might* sexually molest a young fan, over the protest that he *hadn't* seduced any young fans to date, although one may have seduced him — that in the end it was exactly that predilection that caused his downfall, his arrest, his incarceration, and his death while incarcerated?

The *Post* ran his obituary in a small exclusive section of "Deaths" Out Of Town. Companion obituaries marked the deaths of a "California Cardiologist,"

a "CBN Vice President," a "Dancer," a "Society Leader," and Dame Freya Stark, a "Traveler" who was 100 at the time of her death. Not bad for a man whose reputation had, by the time of his death, withered considerably. The two-paragraph obit recorded Walter's age as 64, and stated that he "died of cancer April 27 at a hospital in Chino, Calif." "His works included the 1977 book *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Proof Coins, 1722 to 1977*, and the 1988 *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*."

The San Francisco *Chronicle* offered a much more complete story in its 13-paragraph obituary, "Coin Expert, Author Walter Breen — Inmate at Chino," a copy of which Don Fitch sent me. The *Chronicle* piece, published on April 29th, said Walter was 65 (*controversial — even in death!*), and "orphaned at birth in 1928 in San Antonio, Texas." Beth Deisher, the editor of *Coin World*, is quoted as saying, "I can't think of anyone who has written so many authoritative works or done as much original research in the 20th century. His name will stand among the very greats. He was unequalled in the scope of his writings."

Balancing this recitation of Walter's numismatic accomplishments (which were in fact without rival), Dan Levy, who wrote the obituary, added this: "Tarnishing these accomplishments was his past as a twice-convicted pedophile who lived his final days behind bars as punishment for molesting young boys."

"In 1991, he was arrested in West Los Angeles when a 13-year-old boy told police that he had been repeatedly victimized by Breen over four years. Mr. Breen was already on felony probation for a similar child

molestation charge in Berkeley a year earlier."

The *Chronicle* piece concludes, "Mr. Breen is survived by his son, Patrick Breen of Berkeley, and daughter, Moira Breen of Los Angeles."

"There will be no services."

And no mention of the mother of Patrick and Moira Breen, Marion Zimmer Bradley.

So just how do I feel about it all? Almost ten years ago (in 1984) I wrote an article about Walter Breen, the Boondoggle of 1964, and all the rest. It was finally published in the final issue of *Izzard*, in 1987, and I've never seen any of the responses to it which the Nielsen Haydens may have received. In the piece I said this: "With this piece I have said all I intend to say on the subject."

But I was wrong. There was one thing more to be said.

Walter disappointed me. I imagine Les Gerber felt the same way. We were his friends, and we supported him (Les and I published *Minac* during 1964, and used



it to mount his defense). In a lot of ways we used up our friendship for Walter during the Boondoggle. We supported him and that was easy because of the nastiness, meanness, and dishonesty of the attacks against him. We supported him because it was the morally correct thing to do. But somewhere along the way we lost a lot of our *liking* for the man.

The Boondoggle diminished Walter, and as I said in *Izzard*, "he strikes me these days as a sad shell of the man he once was, with virtually all his potential as a genuine genius unrealized." (To the extent that he continued his research and writings in numismatics, I was wrong about that. But, overall, I had summed him up.) His contributions to fandom became foolish and crackpot, arguments for astrology and the like. And somehow in his later years he became that which he had always been accused of being: a dirty old man.

How sad. How pathetic. And yet some fans find it within themselves to gloat: *You see? We were right about him all along.*

There is no gain.

AVRAM DAVIDSON & LESTER DEL REY I knew both men well back in the sixties, and I valued the friendship of each of them.

I'm not sure how or exactly when I met Avram, but I recall running into him on the streets of Greenwich Village in the early fall of 1959, and excitedly telling him, in burbling tones, about my first "professional" sale — to *Playboy*, at 50¢ a word. So I must have known him then, if only just barely. Avram was more than polite to me on that occasion: his congratulations were warm and heartfelt.

I got to know Avram better over the course of the next few years. After I opened Towner Hall (on West 10th Street, in the Village, a block up Seventh Avenue from Sheridan Square) and it became a notable fan hangout, Avram was a frequent visitor. It was at Towner Hall that Avram announced with pride and gusto that he had *just* been made the new editor of *F&SF*. (And it was there, at Towner Hall, that Terry Carr immediately pulled out several short stories on which he'd been working, and sold them to Avram on the spot.)

Andy Main had been staying at Towner Hall after the 1961 Worldcon, and he moved from there to Avram's apartment uptown, which encouraged us all to visit both Andy and Avram there. On one such occasion I met for the first time Grania, who married Avram soon thereafter, and who remains a dear friend to this day.

As one of the few people Avram knew who had a

car, I found myself pressed into his service on many enjoyable occasions, driving him or Grania up to Milford, making late-night runs from one of the big New York airports to mysterious parts of Yonkers (where Avram's mother then lived), and, later, transporting his stuff from Damon Knight's basement in Milford to Berkeley, California in my van. During the period in which Avram and Grania lived in Milford I was a frequent weekend visitor. (Although I know the Blishes, the Knights, Virginia Kidd, and Judy Merrill — all of whom lived in Milford then — I was never invited to a Milford Conference, although I was allowed to drive Terry Carr up to them, and I never felt any friendship from those other Milfordites, who looked down their noses at me and at one point changed the rules of their Conference to exclude me. But Avram was a genuine friend and always welcomed me into his house.)

On one such weekend Les Gerber had driven up with me, and at an appropriate moment he asked if Avram had seen a recent story he'd submitted to *F&SF*. Avram said he had not.

"I'm not surprised," Les said. "I didn't think you could've. I mailed it from Brooklyn on Monday and I got it back in Wednesday's mail."

Avram nodded, consolingly. "Yes," he said, "we had a problem with the guy who was reading our slush pile. He was stuffing rejection slips into all the submissions and

returning them unread. I heard he was doing this down at the mailbox at the corner of 53rd Street." That's just down the block from what was then *F&SF*'s office. "We had to let him go."

My ears pricked at that. "Hey Avram," I said, interjecting myself into their conversation. "Are you looking for a new slush-pile reader? Do you think I'd be qualified to do it?"

"Sure, Ted," he said, launching my professional editing career in sf. "I'll give you a recommendation to Joe Ferman."

That was in the spring of 1963. After a brief trial period to be sure I'd work out, my name was added to *F&SF*'s masthead as "Assistant Editor" with the November 1963 issue. You remember that issue: it had a lovely wraparound cover by Hannes Bok, illustrating Roger Zelazny's "A Rose for Ecclesiastes."

I saw a lot less of Avram after he and Grania moved to Mexico — but we stayed in touch. We were all members of Apex, also known as Apa X, the first private apa in fandom. (For more about that apa I refer you to Teresa Neilsen Hayden's editorial in the final, 1987, issue of *Izzard*.) When I was in the Bay Area in 1964, I recall helping Avram move a huge desk



Bok sketch for his 1964 *F&SF* cover.

into his present apartment there. And I saw Avram on his visits back to New York City, often picking him up at the airport, sometimes accompanied by his young son.

The last time I saw Avram face to face was more than ten years ago. He was in residence for a year at a college in Virginia, and came up to the DC area for a visit. He spent an afternoon at my house, meeting my daughter and several of my friends. He was physically not well. He walked with pain. I was troubled to see him so, but in conversation he was the Avram of old. More tired, a little cranky about matters he could not control, but full of the old wit.

For me, Avram was always the Dutch Uncle. It was Avram who took me aside and gently corrected my solecisms, always without anger, and taking care not to cause embarrassment. He was a gentleman of the old school. He was a man of letters and a man of principle. Although not raised particularly religiously, he decided as an adult to abide by the rules of orthodox Judaism, to keep a kosher household, and he did this despite the occasional hardships it caused him. A man who conscientiously objected to war, he served (in Korea?) as a medic. It was Avram who first told me what a "short arm inspection" was.

I have not remarked upon his professional career because it seems to me that it speaks for itself. Suffice to say that Avram was one of the most gifted writers in the English Language with whom I have ever had dealings, and it was always a pleasure to receive and publish his work. That a man of Avram's talents and skills and reputation lived, for most of his life, a hand-to-mouth existence, rarely much above poverty, kept afloat largely by the benign patronage of various colleges and universities throughout his last two decades, does not speak well of the way our society treats its major creative talents. He wrote voluminously throughout his life: hundreds of short stories and a surprising number of books. Yet these works did not provide adequate financial support: their royalties were meager; too much was out of print. Contrast that with the obscene success of a Jack Chalker, and I think you get my point.

I certainly did not know Lester del Rey nearly as well, nor was our friendship as deep, but I shall miss him too, albeit I hardly knew him at all during the Del Rey Books period.

I knew of Lester long before I met him, of course. I was a fan of his, actually, in the mid-fifties. I followed his prozines — *Space*, *SF Adventures*, *Rocket Stories* — closely, and particularly so when he was serializing one of his own novels, whether under his

own name or that of one of his many pseudonyms, like Eric Van Lhin. I enjoyed the Winston juvenile sf novels he wrote, too — under a variety of names. (And later I discovered he'd plotted *most* of that series of books, in addition to writing three or four.)

Lester was a *storyteller*. He had an instinctual grasp of what storytelling *is*. This infuses everything he ever wrote, and made all of it distinctive and memorable, even the least of it.

I met Lester at a Philcon in the late fifties or early sixties. He was in person every bit as distinctive and memorable as his stories. He was short, wore thick-lensed glasses through which his gaze could pin one inexorably, and had for most of the time a billy-goat goatee. I think he wore the beard because without it he had — even in his forties — an implausibly youthful face . . . which I saw only once in a beardless state.

Some short men compensate for their lack of stature with what has been dubbed a "Napoleonic Complex," and I think we can all recall at least one notable example whose initials are "H.E." In retrospect, I wonder if a little of Lester's fearless forth-

rightness might not be attributable to such a Complex, but it never occurred to me at the time, because I never thought of him as lacking in stature. Lester could command a room's attention without raising his voice, and when he *did* raise his voice even a Sam Moskowitz would shut up. Lester had *presence*.

This was born, obviously, of his personality, and his intellect. Lester was one of the smartest, sharpest men I've ever met. A conversation with him was stimulating and exciting. If you mentioned a weak story idea to him, he would tug and pull at it until, within fifteen minutes, he had refashioned it into a concept of jewel-like brilliance and returned it to you, gratis. (I dedicated one of my juveniles — *No Time Like Tomorrow* — to Lester, who, after he'd read it, wrote me a letter in which he gave me, on a silver platter, the perfect idea for its sequel. Had I continued doing juveniles I would have almost certainly used his idea, with gratitude.)

I knew Lester best in the latter half of the sixties, when my wife Robin and I socialized frequently with Lester and his wife, Evelyn. He was my choice for Guest of Honor at the NyCon3 in 1967. I regret only that his speech at that convention was deliberately sabotaged by Sam Moskowitz, who dragged out the presentation of a minor award for what seemed like forever.

Lester and Evelyn were driving down to Florida for a small invitational convention when they had a horrible accident in Virginia, and Evelyn was killed.



We were all shocked by that, and I at least felt another shock when, soon after, Lester married Judy Lynn Benjamin.

I feel I can write about this now because both of them are dead; it was not something I would have done as long as Lester was alive. I held Judy Lynn in dislike virtually from my first meeting with the woman. It was of no consequence to me that she was a dwarf, but I found her personality obnoxious from our first meeting — at a Lunacon, well before her professional career took off. Perhaps she too had something of that "Napoleonic Complex"; whatever the reason, she was loud, opinionated, and pushy about it — and her opinions were too often hastily formed and worthless.

One example will suffice. Before her rise to books and bestsellerdom, Judy Lynn was Fred Pohl's assistant at *Galaxy* and *If*, and later she served in a similar position under Pohl's successor. As such, she functioned as a managing editor and secretary, dealing with much of the day-to-day work on the magazines. At that time Vaughn Bode was doing a lot of work — both covers and interior art — for *Galaxy* and *If* (these were the magazines in which he was first professionally published). Vaughn was a young man, but obviously up-and-coming. More important, he had a personality (and ego) every bit as strong as Judy Lynn's. It was inevitable they'd clash, but the manner of their clash says much about Judy Lynn's competence — or lack thereof.

Vaughn received a story to illustrate, and decided that he wanted to do it in "half-tones," washes of gray rather than black and white lines — something that had been common in the *Galaxys* of the previous decade. Knowing that *Galaxy* was no longer equipped to handle this kind of art, Vaughn had it "screened," Veloxed, into half-tones, so it could be printed as a black and white linecut, as all *Galaxy's* art then was. Now *Galaxy* wasn't paying very much for this piece of art — at a half-page, it was probably between \$15 and \$25 — and Vaughn spent almost all of it (\$10 or \$15) getting his illustration Veloxed. He felt justifiably proud of the result when he delivered it to the *Galaxy* offices.

He certainly wasn't prepared for Judy Lynn's reaction. She had a hissy-fit. She screamed at him.

She told him he was "unprofessional" and that his illustration was, for production reasons, "unpublishable." She threw him out of the office, and vowed he'd never again work for *Galaxy* or *If*.

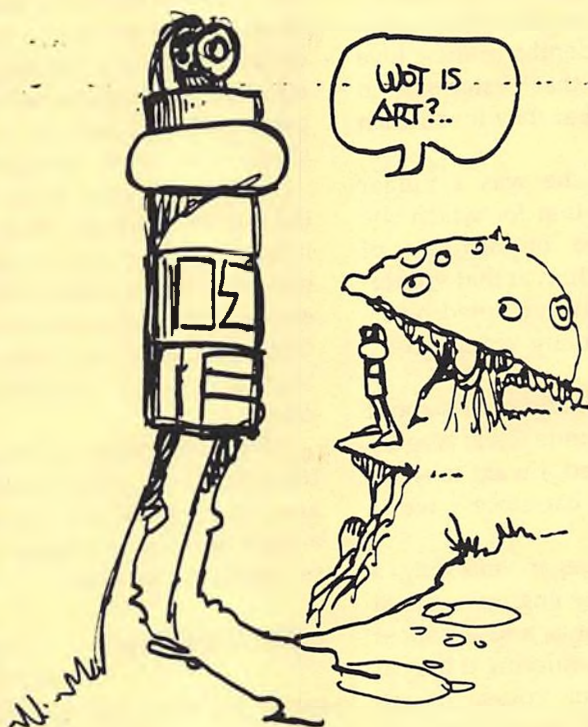
I know this because I heard this story from both Vaughn and Judy Lynn. She told me her version at a Disclave, while Lester sat beaming at her side, agreeing with every word she said. She told me herself what an "unprofessional" artist Vaughn was, and how much trouble he'd caused her — "I had to get another artist to illustrate the story at the very last minute," she fumed. "That's the last time he'll ever work for me!"*

It never, ever, dawned on Judy Lynn that it was *she* who was wrong, and that Vaughn had turned in a fully competent, professional job. In her ignorance of production and printing, Judy Lynn had rejected something she didn't need to reject, and *created* the crisis she later complained about. What got to me was the smug way she crowed about how she'd screwed Vaughn, and intended to sabotage his career in the future.

I hardly expected better of Judy Lynn, but I was unprepared for the sycophantic way Lester backed her up. He knew better. Lester had been around publishing and printing for all his adult life. He knew what a Velox was if Judy Lynn did not. He surely must have known how wrong she was. But he said nothing. I looked at him and he evaded my eyes. My friendship for him began to erode with that event.

Over the years I followed their new careers at Ballantine — pardon me, *Del Rey* — Books. I saw them on television once, looking very pleased with themselves. The smug, self-satisfied people I saw on my screen were not the Lester del Rey and Judy Lynn Benjamin I'd once known. They had built their fortunes on meretricious best-sellers and junk-authors like Jack Chalker. The dictums of honest story-telling Lester had once believed in and lectured to others about went out the window.

By the time of his death, Lester was the object of expressed contempt from many people in the sf field — although, doubtless, not from those authors who



* A year or so later, upon learning that Vaughn was going to do "Sunpot" for *Amazing*, she relented, and stole the strip from me . . . only to butcher it and piss off Vaughn again. * Sigh * . . .

found success through him — who saw him as a pathetic sell-out, a hypocrite, and a foolish old fart. That pained me, even as I saw the justice in it, because Lester was a man for whom I once had enormous respect, and who always treated me fairly and with friendship.

We can never know what goes on in the private and intimate relationships between any two people; we can never know what they “see” in each other, what they value in each other, and the depths of their love for each other. I have to assume that Lester saw in Judy Lynn things I could not see, that they loved each other.

But from my point of view, she was a vulgar woman with less intelligence than that for which she credited herself, who seized the opportunity of another’s misfortune to move in on him at that vulnerable moment, and who subsequently corrupted him.

I did my mourning for Lester many years ago.

HONDA UPDATE Because I occasionally obsess about my car, a 1986 Honda Civic Wagon, the best of the twelve cars I’ve owned, I want to share with you my adventures with the car since I wrote about it last time.

Last August, you’ll recall, it began suffering a mysterious malady which caused the engine to die at odd (some of them very odd) moments, and we spent the several weeks before Magicon wondering if the car would be drivable in time. In due course it was revealed to us that the engine had blown its head gasket, and this required the removal of the engine head, at which time the valves were redone as well. At that time the car had a little over 150,000 miles on it.

Soon after our return from Florida I began noticing a couple of things. One was that the automatic transmission was becoming reluctant to upshift until the car was warmed up. I had to pull the selector down to “2” to get it to upshift from first, and eventually I had to drive a mile or more in first and second before it would begin shifting to third and fourth. Ultimately it began to refuse the upshift between third and fourth, forcing me to drive on the Interstates at a higher engine rpm than made me comfortable. This led in turn to the other problem: clouds of blue smoke that came at irregular intervals from the exhaust pipe. I had to start adding first one quart of oil every week, and then sometimes two. I began to doubt that the engine would pass its next emissions test (due this coming October).

I nursed the car through the winter, but this spring the problems were becoming more pronounced. When Sandy Cohen came out for this year’s Disclave (and a family reunion, coincidentally in DC that same weekend), he had to put up with them while I drove him about. Sometimes the car would *downshift* from fourth

to third, at highway speeds. And it often shuddered going into first or second, its clutches clearly badly worn.

At about 170,000 miles I had both the engine and the transmission rebuilt. It cost a lot — twice what I’d originally expected — but I rationalized it by considering the alternatives: the same amount of money would buy a decent used car, but one which might need the same kind of work in a year or two. By keeping my car and replacing the engine and transmission, I was effectively setting the odometer on the most important parts of the car back to zero. The body is in excellent shape — no dents, no rust — and hardly shows its age.

Driving the car again was a great joy: it had all the pep of its youth. But less than a week after I got it back, a mysterious ailment again struck. With symptoms that eerily duplicated those of a year earlier, the engine began faltering and then dying at odd (some of them most odd) moments. I had it towed back from Maryland to my mechanic, who was starting to feel jinxed.

Piece by piece he began the laborious task of tracking down each element of the ignition system, after tests established that a second head gasket (only a week old) had *not* blown. When he replaced the coil, the problems stopped.

DOING THE MADISON I would liked to take full credit for this year’s Corflu . . . but I can’t. I’d enjoy taking credit for it because it was, in my opinion, the best Corflu yet. And I *can* take *some* credit, sorta, for the convention, in a sense, because it was I who started nudging Andy Hooper in New York, in 1990, in smoke-filled rooms, with suggestions that Madison bid for a Corflu. (Of course Andy *lived* in Madison then. Had Jeanne been at that NY Corflu, I’d have nudged *her*. I wanted to see a Corflu in Madison.)

So I can maybe take credit, kinda, for the fact that Madison hosted a Corflu, even if I can’t take credit for it being the best Corflu yet.

I wanted to see a Corflu in Madison because I wanted to see Madison. I’d been hearing about Madison fandom for fifteen or more years, and although Madison fandom had known about me for an equal period of time, it did not appear likely that I’d ever be invited to be a Guest at a Wiscon, which was about the only other way I’d be likely to get there. (I go to few non-local cons but Corflu; it has replaced the Worldcon in that respect.) (I *will* be going to next year’s Silvercon in Las Vegas, as a Guest of that con, and I’ll voice my appreciation to Woody and the Silvercon Committee right now. Thanks, people.)

So what made the Madison Corflu the Best Yet? The confluence of a lot of separate things, I suspect, but it certainly didn’t hurt that the Committee did all the important things right. Oh, I’ve heard the usual

rumors of last-minute problems, etc., but that didn't *show*, and whatever problems there were behind the scenes (as inevitably there always are) *stayed* behind the scenes, where they belonged.

There was a really good mix of people at this Corflu, and I think that's the real core of a great con. I'm very glad Bob Tucker was there; it's astonishing to think that this was his *first* Corflu. I hope we'll be seeing him at many Corflus to come.

A lot of really great fanzines were handed out at this convention — in the convention packet. Attendees passed out lots, too. Arnie Katz had at least as many as the con committee did, and there were fanzines from Geri, Barnaby, and, umm, well, yes, Dan and me too.

The idea was to have a little fanzine to pass out at the con. Dan came up with the idea about a week before the actual convention. I liked the idea. A simple four-pager, something the Big Machine could kick out, collated and stapled, just like that, bang-bang-bang, the night before we left. At one point we thought rich brown would be part of it too, but he had no access to his computer at that point, and had lost the ability to write on a simple typer.

We decided to call it *Group Mind* (well, Dan picked the title and of course I went along with it), and my contribution to it — subsequently all but lost in the dust of the scuffle — was a piece on the death of Walter Breen, which I rescued for an earlier portion of this very editorial. Dan's contribution, well. . . .

It was little more than a week before Corflu that we heard, in a roundabout way, via Andy Hooper in both personal letters and *Spent Brass*, that the following year's Corflu was going to be held right here, in Northern Virginia, in Our Area. The Committee, we heard, were Alexis Gilliland and the Lynches.

The fact was that the Desk Set (rich brown, Dan and Lynn Steffan and yours undersigned), hosts for the third Corflu in 1986, had begun talking among ourselves about bidding for another Corflu. We had a hotel in mind, one which was built over a Metro station in nearby Arlington, in which Dan and Lynn had held a Tenth Wedding Anniversary party in 1991 (you couldn't hear the party noise in the hallway!). But we didn't want to push things; we felt we should allow those who had yet to host their first Corflu the opportunity to do so.

So we were all a bit taken aback to hear that a Corflu was planned for our area, and we'd not been

consulted, even as a courtesy. It wasn't like we were on Bad Terms with Alexis, or Dick and Nikki. Dan and Lynn live literally around the corner from Alexis Gilliland. I've been on friendly terms with the Lynches for years, recently contributing to *Mimosa*, and spending hours going over old fan photos with Dick, trying to identify those pictured, for their possible use in the republished *A Wealth of Fable*. (Dick put an enormous amount of time and energy into that book. Just indexing it, essentially without the aid of any computer, was a Herculean task.)

Dan took our confusion and bruised feelings and wrote them up as "Corfluenza," in four parts — his contribution to *Group Mind*. Rereading his piece, I think it's brilliant: somewhat bitterly funny, but not at all mean or nasty; a kvetch more than an attack. It's one of the best pieces Dan has ever written, and in that sense it's a shame that you'll never see it here — indeed, if you didn't get a copy in Madison, you'll never get one.

Because the reaction to Dan's piece was not at all what either of us had expected. We had unwittingly created a situation for the Lynches that was uncomfortably close, for them, to a previous experience which they had no desire to repeat. We had blundered into something. The Lynches were upset — mostly with Dan, but with me by proxy too — and they were both angry and willing then and there to dump their Corflu bid, although there were no other bids and Alexis had already signed a contract with the hotel he'd picked out.

All we had really been saying was, "Hey, give us a little respect here," and we'd gone and upset the apple cart. It wasn't that we were *against* them putting on a Corflu so close to home — why, it would be cheap and easy to attend, and this time around we could enjoy the con as just attendees, no work required of us. We had just wanted a little acknowledgement. "Hey, Godfather, look at this thing we've got going." Capisce?

Instead, I found myself mediating, between Dan and Dick and between Dan and Nikki — and ultimately the four of us sat down and talked it out.

I am a great believer in Talking Things Out. I am convinced that most disagreements occur because of misunderstandings. Certainly this one did. They hadn't been slighting us; in their minds everything was still tentative, still in the process of becoming. "We don't have a Committee yet," Dick said. We had



considered Alexis and the Lynches the de facto Committee; they did not.

The ultimate irony is that in order to maintain and support their bid, Dan and I joined it. We have been put on the Committee. We get to work at next year's Corflu. Weren't we clever? Basically we're responsible for (at least some of) the publications, and programming. We've begun our planning on the publications end, and have that moderately well covered, thanks to some excellent suggestions from Rob Hansen, to whom we are indebted (or will be, assuming it all works out). But we are wide open to suggestions for programming. We liked the mix at the Madison Corflu, and we like the idea of thematically coherent programming (like, but not duplicating, the Living Fanzine at Corflu 3), and we'd like to incorporate both. And, hey, another Andy Hooper Players play would be swell.

We didn't exactly suppress *Group Mind* — and the Lynches did not ask us to — but we withdrew it from general distribution at the con, and we're not going to mail out any, so don't bother requesting a copy. It was never our intention to hurt our friends, and since the Lynches found the piece hurtful, it's best to bury it.

DIGGING UP OLD FANZINES In our quest to continually reinvigorate our not yet stale editorial policies, we have added a new department to this fanzine, the first installment of which immediately follows this editorial — on differently colored paper, so it'll stand out a bit.

The idea is to dig up old but unpublished fanzines — or their remains — and put them on public display. We have several tentatively lined up, of which I'll mention only one: Frank Lunney's *Syndrome*. We hope next issue to publish its final issue here.

In the meantime, we're republishing *Spung*.

Spung does not quite fit the definition of "unpublished," since around 200 copies were printed and roughly half that number was distributed at the Worldcon in Brighton in 1987. Most of the remainder were placed on a freebies table at the New York Corflu in 1990, from which they disappeared. I have no idea who took them. None were ever mailed out, so a great many of you will be seeing it here for the first time. As an added bonus, I have collected all the letters of comment I received on *Spung*, and they appear (for the first time) immediately thereafter — allowing the rest of you to read all at once both a 1987 fanzine and the response it received.

I had not intended for the first issue of *Spung* to be

its *only* issue. I did not plan it to be a one-shot. Indeed, I wanted to amend the name slightly with the second issue to "Spung!" I liked the title: it conformed to my desire for a short, punchy, four- or five-letter title, and I'm sure you all recall its origin in Robert A. Heinlein's *Friday*, where it was used to describe the sound of a woman's nipples erecting, or, in Heinlein's coy phrase, "standing at attention."

As I say, I intended further issues, but another issue of another sort got in the way: the birth of my son, Aaron. This fall he begins public kindergarten (after two years of three-day-a-week preschool), and I will begin to get my days back.

Had I done a second issue I am certain that it would have included the final postscript to my "Letters From Prison" series, which concluded in the first issue. I have to look back six and a half years, now, but I can still vividly remember my departure from jail:

THE POSTSCRIPT They release their prisoners from the Fairfax Adult Detention Center at about 4:30 a.m. — or at least begin the procedure then — and the scuttlebutt was that this is done to save feeding them a final meal. Breakfast is brought to the cells between 5:00 and 5:30 a.m.

I woke up some time before that — maybe 3:30; I couldn't see a clock — and couldn't go back to sleep. I had done all my packing the night before. There had been a lot of kidding with Mike and Phil about my getting out. "I'm gonna have to pop you one," Mike told me. Being involved in a fight — even as a victim — would put an end to my release and get me thrown in The Hole (solitary). Of course, popping me one would get Mike thrown in The Hole, too, and we both knew he was just joking; jail joking. They were glad for me, and envious.

With nothing else to do, I turned on my light and read a book, a series Western that I never finished and have since forgotten. And around 4:30 they came for me — me, and another fellow, a big guy in for just the weekend, who had held himself aloof from us common criminals, refusing to play cards with us. As we waited, he told me his car was parked several miles away, and he wondered how, at this hour of the morning (no buses running yet), he'd get to it. He obviously didn't want to walk it.

I had a different problem. I had too much stuff. Even leaving behind many of my books, I had all I could carry just leaving my cell. Property had another couple of boxes of books which I would have to pick up when I got to that point, and I just wouldn't be able



to carry it all.

On the other hand, my friend Matthew Moore was coming to pick me up with his car. "I'll give you a ride to your car if you'll carry some boxes for me," I told the big guy. He agreed. His car was parked along the route we'd take home, so I wouldn't be forcing Matthew to go out of the way.

The two of us joined a short line at Property, where we were given back our own clothes and quickly stripped off our jail garb (old, threadbare blue shirts and pants, once worn by service-station attendants and owned by a commercial linen service before they were sold or donated to the jail). I was given the remaining boxes of my books being held by Property. Then we joined the line again and were led downstairs.

This was the first time I'd been back to that level since my own days in solitary (though which one passes before being placed in the general population). I'd forgotten the smell, which made my stomach turn. We were taken back to one of the holding cells in which I'd first been held. We were a group of about half a dozen, and they kept us separate from the newcomers in adjacent holding cells. One by one we were taken out of the cell and up to the main desk, where we were again photographed, our paperwork checked and completed, and then it was back again into the holding cell. Since I'd left my cellblock at 4:30 it had taken about an hour to process me to this point. But that was just about it.

They took us into a small square room just a little bit bigger than a large elevator car, locking the doors behind us before unlocking a different set of doors in an adjacent wall, and ushering us through them.

That was it. Once we stepped through that second set of doors we were free. We were in a public hall. And at the other end of the hall, beaming to see me, was Matthew.

It was early December, and I was dressed as I had been three months earlier, in early September. It didn't matter. We dropped off the big guy at his car (without even mugging him — but he seemed grateful to see the end of us even so). Dawn was lighting up the eastern sky as I walked into my house, and thanked Matthew. My car was parked in the drive; Michael Nally, who had kept it for me at his place out in the country, had brought it back the day before. I was home.

I couldn't decide what I wanted to do first. I skimmed through a huge stack of mail. I turned on the TV set — every set in the house — to NBC's Today show. I took a Pepsi out of the fridge and drank it (my first in three months — and the only thing to which I am truly addicted). I undressed and went to

bed. I couldn't sleep. I got up and took a bath and trimmed my mustache and beard. (My facial hair had grown untrimmed for three months: I looked like Santa Claus). I bounced from one thing to the next. I came back to my mail and read some of it. I turned off the TV and put on a CD. The clean sounds of well reproduced music that I liked filled the room. I went back to bed and got back up again. It was mid-morning by then, so I dressed and began to get back into the rhythms of a normal day. Later I wrote a letter to Lynda, my first as a free man.

I went back to the jail only once, a few days before Christmas. I wanted to leave ten dollars, as a Christmas present, for Mike, whom I knew had little money in his commissary account. But they told me Mike was gone, "down the road" already, to a downstate prison. He was a state prisoner (as I had been) with more than a year of time to do, so his stay in the Fairfax jail had

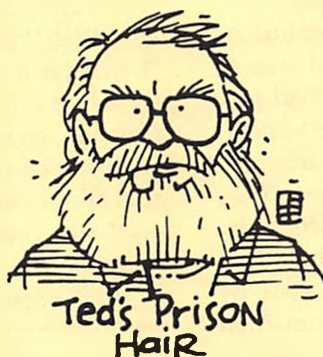
been temporary. Wanting to leave the money for someone, I asked if Phil was still there, and when they said he was, I put it into his commissary account. Later I wondered if that had been a good idea. Phil had been moneyless — his was a heartbreaking story of continued bad luck that included losing a house he had built when pest-exterminators poisoned it with chemicals which caused nerve damage to his entire family — and prisoners with no money in their

commissary accounts were given certain items like toothpaste and toiletries free. Would my gift of ten bucks jeopardize his situation? I never found out.

I had been turned in to the police by two neighbors — the people who lived next door, across my driveway, and the people who lived diagonally across the street. They had tipped the police almost a year before my arrest; I had been under police surveillance since May of 1985 — virtually the beginning of my Life of Crime as a Dealer. The police report left in my house after my arrest was missing its first page, but detailed the relentless demands of my next-door neighbor to "do something" about me. He wrote down the license number of every car that pulled into my drive. Since virtually none of my customers parked in my drive, the numbers he turned in were those of my mother, members of my band, members of my writers' group (The Vicious Circle), and associated other friends, like, say, Avedon. Maybe that's what slowed the cops down.

That missing first page named my other neighbors and probably was omitted at their request. But they foolishly smoked dope (!) with, and bragged about how they'd "gotten" me, to a friend of a friend, and of course I heard about it.

It must have freaked them all when I showed up again after only three months in jail, and they must



have wondered what revenge I might take upon them. I'd seen them in court; they knew I'd seen them.

I'd had time to think about the situation during those three long months. Naturally I resented them. I resented their dishonesty — pretending friendship with me while trying to have me arrested — more than anything else. I didn't exactly hold it against them that I *had* been arrested — that after all was because I'd broken the law — but their *eagerness* to have me arrested and their gleeful reaction to my arrest, when I had never been anything but a good neighbor to them (my customers, mostly middle-aged, middle-management types, although I did have a defense analyst from the Pentagon, and a member of the Redskins coaching staff, did nothing to annoy the neighbors) certainly pissed me off. While I was in jail, friends suggested they might indulge in some high-spirited Halloween pranks at my neighbors' expense, but as far as I know, nothing actually occurred.

Well, I wanted some sort of revenge or retribution, but I was keenly aware of the disadvantage I was at. I was then on parole, and when that ended I had nine years of probation — a suspended sentence which I would have to serve if I got into any further trouble.

My neighbors knew this too, apparently. They tried to get me in trouble with my parole officer by complaining first to the City of Falls Church that I had derelict, junked cars on my property, and then by trying to use this supposed infraction of a municipal law to have my parole revoked. I know this because I had to deal with the City about it and my parole officer told me about their attempts to revoke my parole — which failed. I went over the head of the petty city official who was trying to get me (as a favor to my neighbors), and had the case against me dropped, while my parole officer took one look at the actual situation and laughed at the absurdity of it.

So here were nasty, still vengeful neighbors, maybe frightened by and certainly annoyed by my return and my continued presence next door to them, plotting to have me put back in jail again. What *could* I do?

I knew that whatever I did I could not escalate this situation. If I did something to them, they'd just do something else back. That would be a karmic trap. What I needed was a Karmically Correct solution — something that would not rebound to harm me, something which would keep my hands clean, both morally and legally.

I found it. They thought the worst of me, they feared the worst of me. That was what was eating them. They *knew* I'd take revenge on them. They would, in my shoes. They had guilty consciences.

So in February I sent them valentine cards. These were "joke" valentines, the slightly nasty kind, but nothing specifically threatening. I signed them, "the White family." I planned to send similar cards on each appropriate occasion — Easter, Mother's Day, the

whole lot.

The day I intended to mail the cards I noticed a "Hagar the Horrible" strip in that day's paper. It was a two-panel strip, and I shall have to try to remember it since I no longer have it. In the first panel Hagar is instructing his son, and is saying something like, "There are two ways to look at revenge." In the second panel Hagar, gleeful, says, "And I'm for it!" or something like that.

I cut out the strip, separating the two panels. I put one panel inside the card to one of my neighbors, and the other panel inside the card to the other neighbor. And then I mailed them.

Their reaction was considerably greater than I expected, satisfyingly so. Three days later I answered my door to find two uniformed Falls Church cops standing there. One of them had both of my cards in his hand. "Did you mail these?" he asked.

"Sure," I said. "What's the problem?"

"Well," he said, in a not-unfriendly tone of voice, "I wonder if you could tell me why you sent them."

I told him. I told them both the exact truth of the situation, straight-up: just why I'd sent them and what I had hoped to provoke. "I wanted to feed their paranoia and let them do it to themselves," I said, "and I'd say I was pretty successful if they called *you*," I concluded.

Both cops laughed out loud. "That's pretty good," the one who was holding the cards said.

"I got no problem with it," the other cop said, grinning. "Have a good one," he added, as they left, still laughing.

The cops' visit told me several things, or confirmed them. It confirmed my neighbors' collusion: they had obviously compared cards and put the two panels of the "Hagar" strip together. And they were alarmed, indeed fearful enough to call the police — although what they expected the police to *do* is hard to guess. My cards had gotten a bigger reaction than I'd expected, and it was obvious that there was no reason to send more.

I don't know what the police told my neighbors, but a few months later my neighbors across the drive sold their house at a loss and left. I hear she left him at the same time. They'd never been married; only pretended to be. As for my neighbors diagonally across the street, the ones who also smoked dope but were so self-righteous about my dealing it, he died horribly a few years ago of cancer (I hope he used marijuana to cope with the chemotherapy) and she has tried to suck up to me in an attempt to resume the apparent friendship we'd enjoyed before my arrest. I am polite to her, but distant. And the people who bought the house across the drive turned out to be the nicest people and best neighbors I've ever had.

And there it ends. — Ted White

This is the first issue of SPUNG, The Fanzine That Stands At Attention. It is published when I feel like it and sent to those whom I wish to receive it, by Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046 USA. This issue is published and distributed in August, 1987. QWERTYUIOPress.

LET'S TALK: It's been a year and a half since I last did a fanzine, and even had I not been arrested in March of 1986, my collaborative fanzine with Rob Hansen, CRANK, would have folded soon thereafter. It hadn't been working out; our editorial styles clashed. If we'd been living in the same area we might have been able to work our problems out, but the Transatlantic Gap made it too difficult. The only issue of CRANK with which I was modestly happy was #2 (my first) -- and Rob hated it. More precisely, he hated what I did to his material, which he felt I ruined. That depressed me a lot, so I deliberately refrained from the necessary editing I felt his material wanted when I did #4, only to be told that he wished I had. I, in turn, had my own problems with his issues (#s 1, 3 and 5) -- especially the quote from Reagan in #5. So, despite our continuing friendship, it had become obvious to me that coediting a fanzine together would only cause friction between us.

My arrest, on March 20th, simply sped the process up a little: it left me depressed and with no remaining heart for fannish frivolity. (In passing I should remark upon the latest of a series of rumors emanating from a fan in Michigan: It is not true that members of the 1986 Corflu conspired to keep my arrest secret -- that Corflu occurred in February, a full month before said arrest. *Sigh*....)

In the months following my arrest I had a number of court appearances which culminated in my appearance for sentencing (I pled guilty) on September 5, 1986. I went directly from the courtroom to jail, without leaving the building. I did not pass Go.

I served three months in jail before receiving a mandatory parole. For the next six months I was on a minimally-supervised parole (I mailed in a form once a month to my parole officer, whom I saw face to face only three times during that period). Since June 4th I have been a Free Man.

The period between my arrest and sentencing was one of considerable depression: it was hard to watch the news on TV when someone was shown being arrested, under arrest, or incarcerated -- no matter what his crime I empathized with him the experience he was undergoing.

My arrest began with a knock at the door at around 7:30 on a Thursday evening. I had been preparing to go out for an evening of cards with Dan and Lynn Steffan and Rich Brown. Instead, I opened the door to be confronted by two men in suits with drawn guns, which they pointed at me. I was backed into my dining room and handcuffed, while uniformed police poured into the house to begin searching it. After only a few minutes I was taken, coatless, outside to a police car. The temperature was around freezing.

I was held in the police car for perhaps twenty minutes, then taken to the Falls Church police station -- the basement of City Hall. There I was placed in one of the two holding cells to while away the next six or eight hours, interrupted (not often enough) for fingerprinting and an interview. The cell, typically, was a concrete-and-tile room big enough to contain a concrete shelf (three feet wide and seven feet long) and a combination toilet and sink. I spent most of my time sitting or lying on this concrete shelf.

Around 3:00 am, after a magistrate was brought in to sign six charges

(all counts of drug possession) against me and set my bond at \$50,000.00, I was taken to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center, and put in a drunk tank. It was only Thursday, but the large cell held over twenty men. The room was long and had narrow concrete-bench seats running down each wall, with a waist-high tiled-concrete partition across the far end, beyond which were a sink and a toilet. Men sat or sprawled on all the available bench-space; more were lying on the floor amid cigarette butts and general filth. There was little conversation; most were dozing. I found a spot on the floor and tried to sleep.

At 5:30 in the morning they brought us "breakfast," which was passed in through a slot in the barred door. Breakfast consisted of a tin cup of "coffee" (actually, I learned later, chicory), a half-pint carton of milk, an individual-size box of cereal (I got cornflakes), and a bowl at least one-quarter full of white sugar. I was able to eat relatively little before my gag reflex overcame my appetite.

The open end (barred, of course) of the cell faced the receiving desk, and people came and went noisily. It was hard to sleep in the cell, but there wasn't much else to do. I was asked what I was in for, and when I said "possession with intent to distribute," I was immediately asked what I'd had. "Oh man, I wish I'd of known you when I was Out," one man told me. And they told me some hash had been smuggled in and smoked earlier that night, before my arrival.

I spent only until the middle of the afternoon in that cell before I was released on bail. (The deed to my house and property guaranteed bond.) I had been confined for less than twenty-four hours. But in many ways that first brief period of confinement was worse than the three months I subsequently spent -- the more so because I had not expected it, was not emotionally ready for it, and was both frightened and discomforted by it.

It does something to you when you're chained together with twenty other men and taken to a courtroom in which your gallery is divided from the rest of the room by bulletproof glass. It tells you that the life you've lived and the attitude you had about yourself no longer apply; now you are in the charge of the state.

When I got home I had to wash my hair to rid myself of the stink of that cell.

* * *

TERRY CARR: was my friend for almost thirty-five years, and I am still not fully adjusted to the fact that he is no longer there -- I keep finding myself thinking, about something or other, "I should tell Terry about this," or "I need to discuss this with Terry." Most recently, when I finished my long-overdue chapter ("The Negative Side of Fandom" -- 35 manuscript pages) for Joe Sanders' Science Fiction Fandom, I wanted to send Terry a copy for vetting -- as rich brown had with his chapter (recent fanhistory). I'd had to rewrite a part of it when he died; I'd used an argument we had in Atlanta (over the most appropriate strategy for dealing with the latest WIZ) as the centerpiece for the section on feuds.

I'm sorry I missed the May 30th "Celebration of the Life of Terry Carr" in Berkeley -- as well as a smaller gettogether for the same purpose, on the same day, in New York City. It was financially impossible to attend either. But I needed to, for the most traditional of reasons: to put to rest my own feelings about Terry and his untimely death, to exorcise myself of his ghost.

Despite my absense, or maybe because of it, I asked Greg Benford to write a short piece for this fanzine about the Berkeley gathering.

CALVIN DEMMON HAS GRAY HAIR

by Greg Benford

"A Celebration of the Life of Terry Carr," the invitations said, and so we all gathered on May 30, 1987, in Berkeley's Tilden Park. It was a sunny day and picnickers dotted every set of tables and grills, but as my brother Jim and I approached it was easy to tell the party. "It's their fannish faces," Jim said, and indeed, there was an odd star-spanning sense to them, calling up memories of Laney's ascerbic descriptions.

It felt strange, meeting again people I hadn't seen in perhaps a decade. There was some food and drink, marvelous bright cherries and a cutting chardonnay. But unlike the mundane groups hidden by artful rises or stands of oak, we didn't throw frisbees or play awkward softball games. Like fans everywhere, we talked.

Sid Coleman's droopy moustache twitched as he regaled us with stories of famous theoretical physicists brought up short by life's quirky turns. Debbie Notkin talked about recent great works of modern skiffy. Marta Randall conferred and managed the amiable herd of about sixty fans, all a little pensive and subdued. Dick Lupoff got the formal part going and several Bay Area fans spoke of how Terry had done simple, perceptive things that made his memory so sharp and clear to all of us. I got up and sang the Void Boys Song, remarking that until the day before I'd never realized that there were only a few lines:

We sing songs of fandom,

Hitting out at random,

For we are all coeditors of Void!

--ending with a little root-toot-toot. All these years I'd assumed that in the dark bowels of NYC, Ted and Terry and Pete Graham had dreamed up intricate, amusing putdowns that finished out the song, but were too biting to actually put into the old VOID cartoon covers. Nope -- Ted told me on the phone that they'd never gone beyond the introduction. (The "song" was used to introduce corny vaudeville jokes, like "Why does the rooster wear red pants?" "To keep his pecker up!" -- most of which were used on the cover of V28. After each joke we'd sing the verse of the song...-tw/ Then I read a few paragraphs from a letter of comment Terry had written to an Eric Bentcliffe fanzine (pointed out to me by Dick Ellington). Terry had doubted that 6th Fandom really abounded with fannish love of one's fellows, but I remarked that Terry himself had inspired more respect and love than anyone I knew in fandom, save possibly Willis.

Rebecca Kurland followed with some witty comments on Terry as grammarian, Dick Lupoff led into Sid Coleman, and Sid described a few small incidents that underlined perhaps Terry's greatest gift -- the ability to extract the best from a situation or a person, to see potential rather than error.

This lifted the mood. After the brief remarks, people started laughing more and reminiscing about Terry in a lighthearted way. Some started waging chemical peace fare in observance of the patriotic nature of the Memorial Day weekend (though the holiday itself had been deflected to the Monday before by bureaucratic anti-timebinding fiat of Congress). I met Dave Rike for the first time. Coming upon a knot of earnestly talking fans, I suddenly realized that here was Calvin Demmon, and he had gray hair. He was as funny as ever, and we ruminated about the article we'd written for Terry twenty years before, still to appear in INNUENDO. Redd Boggs was talking about great fannish figures cut off before their time and started, "Well, there was this fellow in 1958--" whereupon others

said, "C'mon, Redd, we all knew Vernon McCain. Died on the operating table in, lessee, March? No..." Timebinding.

Tom Condit, the Silverbergs, Harlan with his new wife Susan, Lenny Bailes, Jan Finder...it was a rich association, warm and casual and different from any fan occasion I've ever attended. Bob Lichtman and I talked extensively about the catalog of Terry's fmz collection he and Carol were nearly finished assembling. SFTIMES and SHAGGY and BURBLINGS and the missing HYPHEN #1.... It's a truly fine collection, and I had been working inside the University of California system to get the Eaton Collection at UC Riverside to buy it. It's time fandom's best work of the last fifty (!) years was assembled where it will last. I'm still working on this, and will report in future. In the long run, we live in the memories of those who will come after...but having your work kept in good conditions can't hurt.

The crowd gradually dwindled as the late afternoon grew cool. Jim and I were among the last, and when we reached his house we had a swim and a toast to Terry. Something had been bothering me all through the afternoon, I remembered; I'd kept looking around, studying the faces. Only later did I realize that I'd been following my old patterns whenever I visited the Bay Area. I'd been looking for Terry, waiting for that gentle chuckle, wanting to tell him a few stories and hear a few back. I suppose I'll be looking for quite a while, still.

--Gregory Benford

* * *

THE LITTLE THINGS stay with you the longest, sometimes. I can no longer type an elipsis ("...") without remembering Terry's admonition to add a fourth period if it concluded a sentence (an example occurs above).

One time Terry and I were reminiscing about the words we learned from reading, but which we'd never heard pronounced -- and which in consequence we mispronounced. "Chaos" and "outré" are two words which many people had this problem with, but Terry had a unique one of his own: "misled." "Oh, I knew the actual word, 'misled,'" Terry said. "I mean, I'd heard it used, all right. But I just didn't connect the word I'd heard with the one spelled 'misled.' I thought that was a separate word, pronounced 'mizzled!'" He broke up. "Can you imagine me going around, saying 'mizzled?'"

* * *

LETTERS FROM PRISON: During my three months in jail I wrote twenty-one Letters From Prison for circulation to many of my friends in fandom. The first fourteen were published (by the Nielsen Haydens, Victor Gonzalez, Mark Kernes, Lucy Huntzinger, and John D. Berry) before my release on December 4th. The Nielsen Haydens and Tom Weber typed up the remaining seven (I'd hand-written them), but once I was out the pressure to publish them diminished. I decided I'd eventually publish them myself, but a variety of other things (like marrying Lynda and integrating her two children with my daughter into a family) seemed more immediately important. Recently Lenny Bailes volunteered to publish some of them in his fanzine; I sent him #15, #16 and half of #17.

The original purpose of the Letters was to maintain communications with my friends and to let them know what life was like in jail. The only remaining purpose in publishing them now is to put into print material already written. Thus, I have edited some of what follows, deleting material which no longer strikes me as of much interest. Space is also a consideration.

LETTERS FROM PRISON

by Ted White

LETTER #17 (continued), October 28: Bill left us this morning -- at about 4:30 am. The guard's voice woke me up: "Lee-may?" Bill's last name is Leamey, pronounced "Leemy," but all the guards habitually mispronounced it and often couldn't find it on their lists when Bill pronounced it correctly for them. By now he was used to it.

"Leamey?" he asked.

"Get your things," the guard said.

"All my things?" Bill asked. "Where am I going?"

"I dunno," the guard said. "Maybe you're going home."

"Oh, I doubt that," Bill said. He had a five-year sentence.

"He went 'down the road,'" is what we told the guy from Commissary when he arrived later that morning with our orders and asked for Bill.

"Give me his candy bars!" Mike demanded. Bill owed candy bars on the outcomes of both the World Series and the Giants-Redskins game the night before. But Sgt. Thompson, who runs the Commissary, just laughed at him.

"Down the road" means a downstate prison or camp. Bill was 62, and had colitis (which caused him to make almost liquid-sounding farts, to everyone's amusement but his), so it's likely he went to a "medical camp" where the duty would be light.

He didn't like to discuss his case, but revealed that he was a retired federal employee who had gotten into real estate speculation. Like those pitchmen on late-night "television seminars," he tried to do it without using his own money -- he mentioned having six mortgages on one piece of property -- and had extensive landholdings. But he cut it a little too close, and was found guilty of fraud. While he was in here half a dozen civil suits were filed against him. I suspect he'll be stripped and financially ruined before he gets out (a matter of a year or so), as a result of those suits, but he was almost unfailingly cheerful.

He sometimes annoyed me with his chirpy good cheer, and he was notable for his absent-mindedness in card playing ("You mean I still had the Queen of Spades? I thought I gave it to you!"), but he was a civilized man, a rarity in here, and I find I miss him.

October 30: Chester finally got a look at Susie today. "Who is that?" he asked. "That a girl or a boy?"

"That's Susie," Jackson said.

"That's a he-she," Mike said.

Chester shook his head. This was totally beyond his comprehension.

A-4 is the gay cell, and today they were getting their hair cut in the barbershop across the hall from us. I heard noise in the hall and wandered to the door to see what was going on. One looks for diversions.

"Susie's getting her hair cut," I announced.

"Come on, Chester, you gotta see this," Mike said, laughing.

"Why do I want to see some goddamned queer?" mumbled Chester.

"Come on, man, you ain't gonna believe this," Mike said. He nudged Chester.

And Chester didn't believe was he saw, either.

Susie is amazingly androgynous, with a small (five feet) body and an almost pretty face. "She" has a feminine voice, chats animatedly, sometimes wears a ponytail, and acts girlishly. I was told "she" had performed a grisley surgery upon herself, cutting off her testicles, and that "she" wanted to be a transsexual.

I was introduced to Susie when I was in A-5, which faces the psychologist's office across the hall. One day Susie was in that office, the door

open, chatting away with the female psychologist, and the guys in A-5 noticed. "Hey, there's Susie!" they said. "You gotta see this, Ted."

I was astonished to see someone so blatant in a jail. "That must take guts, to come on like that in a place like this," I commented.

"You kiddin'?" was the reply, "she loves it."

Apparently that's true. Despite the fag-baiting talk one hears so much of here, Susie seems to inspire admiration and perhaps even lust. One day when I went up to gym "she" was holding court in the hallway outside the volleyball area, surrounded by five or six men, and chatting away animatedly as usual.

Susie gets along well with the guards -- who sometimes have late-night parties in the hall with her, parties which used to keep me awake when I slept out on the floor. One wonders about the sexual favors dispensed at such parties.

"That looks like a girl to me," Chester said. "You sure that ain't no girl?" For once his confidence in his own ignorance was shaken. He couldn't take his eyes off Susie. He shook his head. "If that don't beat all!" he said. "She pretty!"

November 1: Last night I dreamed about jail. This is the first time in more than a month that I did. I dreamed I was out for the day, but had to go back, or I'd be considered a fugitive. To get back, I had to find my way through a fundamentalist Christian encampment of some sort -- very gaudy, almost circus-like. As I got closer to the jail I had to take my belt off, roll it up, and find a place to hide it where it would be safe. I don't think I ever got all the way back to the jail, but in a later episode of my dream I recall explaining to a friend my sleep schedule: "It's all supervised," I said. "I have no choice!"

LETTER #18, November 4: We had a cellblock shakedown today. No particular reason -- just "routine."

The tipoff occurred, had I but recognized it, at lockout. "We're taking that extra mattress today," the asshole guard said as I started to get out of bed.

I've had two mattresses since I moved into this cell, and for a good reason. The mattress I had, out on the floor, was relatively new, and relatively thick, but short and narrow. The mattress in the cell I acquired was longer and wider, but worn very thin in the middle. I'd gotten Wayne's cell, and Wayne weighed over 350 pounds. Wayne had slept on that mattress since March -- more than six months. I put the smaller, thicker mattress under the bigger, thinner one. Together, they were fairly comfortable, relatively speaking. I slept almost well, considering that I was sleeping on mattresses with almost no "give" lying on a concrete shelf.

The morning before the shakedown did not pass without event. I was in the middle of a game of Hearts when the door opened and a guard called, "White! You got a visit!" It wasn't visitor's hours, so when I went out I asked what kind of visit it was. "Professional visit," I was told. That meant my lawyer.

As I went upstairs I wondered why my lawyer was visiting me now. Today marked the day on which exactly one month of my time was left. Was there a new charge? (I'd heard "noll prossed" charges were not truly dropped, but just tabled, and could be revived. I'd had three charges noll prossed. Could they have been revived? Was the state playing games with me? It had happened to others. Some prosecutors are sadists -- they like to let you get close to freedom before slamming the door in your face again. I've even heard of inmates being re-arrested upon their release.)

The professional visitation area is just beyond the (new) regular visit-

ation area. It consists of six or eight little bare "office" cubicles, separate rooms, furnished with a desk and two chairs. I guess lawyers don't feel comfortable without a desk to sit behind. I was put in an empty room, to await my lawyer. Another inmate, who had come up with me, was shown into a room where a young curly-haired lawyer was waiting for him. "Your lawyer will be coming along shortly," the guard who'd put me in the room said. So I waited there.

After ten minutes the guard came back. "He's not here," he said. "I guess he didn't show." He ushered me back to the hallway outside the regular visitation area. I trudged back down the stairs to A-floor, and my cellblock.

"False alarm," I said, picking up my hand of Hearts. The game resumed.

A hand later, the cellblock door again opened. "White! Professional visit!"

"Again?" I asked, as I left the cellblock. "They found him," the guard said.

So once more I climbed the stairs, went down past the row of B-cells; nodded at the guard at the desk in the hallway ("I'm back," I told him), and headed down to the professional visitation area.

The guard who'd been there before met me again. "He's the same one," he said, nodding his head toward the curly-haired lawyer I'd seen before. "He's got both of you. You should've waited."

"What for?" I said. "He's not my lawyer."

The lawyer, in turn, gave me a blank look and asked the guard, "Where is he?"

"This is White," the guard said.

"Geoffrey White?" the lawyer said.

"No," I said, "I'm Theodore White."

"This is the wrong man," the lawyer said, displaying a brilliant grasp of the obvious.

Once again I trudged back to my cellblock. Lunch was being served. The hall guard made me sit on a bench in the hall and wait until all the A-cells had been served, and then gave me two sandwiches (cheese and liverwurst), a small bag of potato chips, and a metal cup of "juice." Once I had these all in my hands, he had the door unlocked and allowed me to fumble it open. Inside, everyone else was nearly finished eating. "Another false alarm," I told them. "They wanted a different White."

Jack chuckled. "They really on the ball, ain't they?"

Less than half an hour later came the shakedown.

The door banged open. Five or six guards swarmed in. "Get your shoes and blues on, and go out in the hall!" one announced in the same tones he might have used to say, "This is a bust!"

"This is a routine shakedown," another explained in a calmer voice.

I had my shoes on already -- one must put them on for any trip out into the hall, including classes, gym, or visits -- so I went out into the hall. There we were lined up, braced against the wall (you know "the position" -- you've seen it on TV a thousand times) and searched, hands running up and down our bodies. Some of us were told to take off our shoes and socks and show the soles of our feet, but I was not. As each of us was searched we were told to go up to the gym, which was empty. We played basketball there -- and Mike and I each ran a hundred laps around the room -- while our cellblock and individual cells were searched. After about half an hour we were returned to A-7.

Things were missing. Sandwiches saved from lunch were gone. The day's Fairfax Journal was gone (small loss). A box in which Jack kept his things was gone, everything that had been in it dumped unceremoniously out on the floor. But left-over potato chips still in their bags remained in plain

sight. I'd noticed my smaller mattress in the hall. Peering through the window in my cell door, I could see my room was disordered, but not what might be missing.

Jack had worn his shower shoes out. They'd taken his tennis shoes -- but did bring them back. The dayroom looked emptier.

After our cells were unlocked, I inventoried my room. My books were all there -- in a pile on my bed. My Commissary goods -- candy, cookies -- were still there. So, amazingly, was the bag of hard-boiled eggs from breakfast (saved for a night-time snack). But the bag with folded up paper bags (in which things had come from Commissary) and a foam cup (rare contraband, left by Wayne) was gone. My letters were mixed up, those I'd kept separate because I'd not yet answered them, and those from Lynda, mixed in with the others. The neatly folded sheet of newspaper Wayne had left as "shelf paper" on the top of my tiny "desk" was gone. So also was the folded-up chunk of newspaper I used to keep my cell door from locking (when I wanted privacy in the evening without locking myself in).

My bed is now hard as a rock -- or, more accurately, concrete.

Joe /a new man, whose arrival I edited out/ still refuses to sleep after breakfast, but bangs around and keeps the rest of us, except Chester, awake. "What do I need with all that sleep?" he asked belligerently. "Ain't nothing to do in here, anyway! Don't need more than four or five hours!"

But for two nights now, he's been crashing -- directly under the phone, making access to it difficult -- in the early evening, around six or six-thirty, lying on his back and snoring loudly.

"Superman!" Jack snorted to Mike, with a nod at Joe.

LETTER #19, November 7: Changes, and more changes: John Jackson left us yesterday, to serve the rest of his time at the Manassas Jail in Prince William County. He'd been there twice recently for court appearances, spending the night in the jail there each time. "It's a lot better, a lot better," he said. "Hot lunches, better breakfasts, better dinners -- oh, it's a lot better," he said. "It was warm enough I could take my clothes off when I went to bed at night!"

I swapped my flat mattress for his. Not a huge improvement, but I slept better.

This afternoon Bernie Loeh moved in. He'd been in A-6 for several months, but got mad at another inmate who, he said, was swiping his cigarettes. The resulting tussle put them both in the Hole for ten days. /Later we found out the other inmate had to be taken to the hospital first./ "And you know," he said, "while I was down there I hear this tapping on my cell door and there he is. 'Got a cigarette, man?' he's saying, and he don't even recognize me. He's had a shower or somethin', and he's wandering around, cadging cigarettes!" Bernie is 40, blond, and almost movie-star handsome, in a slightly ragged way.

"You been to court, been sentenced?" Mike asked him.

"Well, that's the thing," Bernie said. "I been to court, pled guilty to burglary, but the judge, he don't know what to do with me. He said, 'Bring him back in a couple of months.' He asked me what I done, I told him it's like the story about a man, he's pulling this big ol' eighteen-foot chain down the road. A cop comes along, asks him, 'How come you pullin' that big ol' chain down the road?' and the man sez 'You ever tried pushin' one?' My lawyer, he throws all his papers up in the air. I ain't seen him since."

I asked him how it happened. "Did they catch you in the act?"

"I stole a vacuum cleaner -- pulled it down the middle of the street, long ol' cord trailin' behind," he said.

Suddenly I knew who he was. I'd read a feature story in the (spitui!) Fairfax Journal a month or so ago. "That was the State Theatre," I exclaimed, "in the middle of Falls Church!"

He nodded.

"I read about you," I said, trying to remember what else the story had said. "Did you see the piece?"

He had; he'd liked it. "Man came here and interviewed me after I wrote the paper a letter, asking if there was a school for auctioneers." As I recall, the piece treated him as a colorful character, an alcoholic drifter who was basically harmless. "I'm not really a thief," he says. He'd broken into the theater in the early hours of the morning and stolen only the vacuum cleaner, sitting in the lobby -- for reasons he couldn't explain. The newspaper story told his background, and read like a life that -- forty years earlier -- would easily have fit into the adventures of Jack Kerouac in On The Road. I look forward to talking with him. He is a natural story-teller, with a flair for colorful turns of phrase which I've not captured well here.

LETTER #20, November 9: Is not included here, for reasons of space. On November 9th I phoned Lynda Magee in Oregon and proposed marriage to her. She accepted immediately. The bulk of the letter talked about another new guy, Lewis, who was somewhat deaf, "cupping his ear to hear repeated statements or questions. Bernie, irrepressibly loquacious, talked more to him than any of us -- Bernie will talk to anyone and everyone. (When a medic came to offer aspirins and laxatives, Bernie said to him: 'Here's a question for you. A man is shot and killed while he's in his house, straightening a picture. The picture is of something that is behind his house. What is it?' It turns out the man is Jesse James and the picture is of his horse.)"

LETTER #21, November 11: We didn't get much sleep last night. And we alternated between testiness and humor this morning. Last night was the weirdest and least pleasant since I've been here. Bernie Loeh went around the bend.

It had become increasingly obvious that he was Not Right. Yesterday morning he'd been talking about how he hated to see his (ex-)wife naked. (And this from a man who took four or five showers a day and seemed eager to prance about naked, once telling a guard, from the shower, that he wanted to attend a naked church service.) "She's real good lookin' but I told her to put some panties on and throw a towel over her shoulder, and she'd look a lot better."

I injudiciously said, "To each his own."

That triggered an argumentative rant from him. "You don't like that?" he yelled at me.

"Did I say that?" I countered. "I said, 'To each his own.'"

We went back and forth on that about five times before he finally dropped it. Later on he could even boast, "I was testy this morning, but me and Ted, we worked it out."

Mainly what he worked was his mouth.

"Mr. Kitherow, Mr. Kitherow?" he called through the door to a guard outside. "Bet I can tell you your wife's middle name. Bet I can! Whadya say, is it a bet? Huh? It's Gwendolyn, right?" (Apparently it was.) To Mike he said, "Know how many holes there are in that floor drain?" Mike guessed sixty. "You're close," Bernie said. "You're real close." He shook his head in admiration. "Not counting the screw holes, there are fifty-two holes -- just like in a deck of cards." (Today Chester, having heard that story for the first time, counted the holes in the drain. Fifty-

two, plus two for the screws. "Ain't that somethin'?" he said. "He right about that, anyway.") To another guard Bernie flashed a picture of Eisenhower and asked him to name who it was and the year in which he was most famous. He didn't hold conversations, he conducted quizzes and he orated. He described working conditions on Texas prison farms ("They use three-word sentences"), and enumerated his objections to spending any time in a mental institution (as opposed to his perfect willingness to spend time in any jail): "They stick you in the ass with those needles." He scribbled graffiti on the wall behind the toilet/sink, and on the wall over Phil's bed, in Phil's cell, while he was talking to Phil that evening.

While Bernie was in Phil's cell, Mike, Jack and I discussed him. Mike and I have cells, but Jack had to spend the night out on the floor with Bernie. "That fucker don't let me sleep," Jack said. He said he just might do something about it. I told Jack that if he wanted to write Bernie out, I'd sign. My fear was that Bernie was going to bring the guards down on us. We had a quiet friendly cellblock, one with the best reputation in the jail with the guards. Bernie was attracting a lot more of their attention to us (every cellblock has a closed-circuit TV camera in it, by which the hall guards can monitor us); they were keeping a close watch on him. After supper, while Bernie was all but sermonizing on the subject of mental institutions, waving his arms excitedly, a guard popped in to ask, "Is everything all right?" (Bernie immediately told him an extravagant story, ending with, "You check out your Bible -- Timothy 1-dot-dot-2 -- it'll change your fuckin' life!")

I went to bed around 11:30. An hour or two later I was awakened by the sound of the dayroom toilet flushing, and then the sound of Bernie's voice, an intense low murmur. I didn't hear anyone else (in addition to Jack and Bernie out on the dayroom floor, we had a black man named Joe, in for DUI, who had come in that evening) -- just Bernie, rattling away. I drifted off, only to awaken to hear Bernie calling out to the guards, who were laughing in the hall, "Hey, you guys keep it down -- we got guys trying to sleep in here!" Apparently he got into a conversation with one of them; I heard him asking one of his inane questions.

Joe says Bernie offered him a cigarette, which he refused. "I turned my back on him -- I just wanted to get to sleep." Later he rolled over and saw Bernie kneeling over him, murmuring words at him. "I thought he was a queer," Joe said. "If he'd made a pass at me, I'd a slugged him."

Jack says he never got to sleep. "I told him, 'Keep quiet!' three or four times," he said. "I was ready to lay him out." Jack is about half Bernie's size.

I may have dozed off again, but around 3:00 am his voice woke me again, and this time it was much louder. He was making no effort to keep it down. I have no idea who he was talking to. It might have been himself -- he had gotten himself really wound up.

"Shut the hell up!" I said, giving vent to my growing irritation.

In the next moment he was outside my locked cell door. "What'd you say, you motherfucker?" he demanded.

"I said to shut your goddamned mouth," I said.

"You shut up, faggot!" he shouted.

"Ain't you got no respect?" I said. "Running your mouth all night, how you expect people to sleep?"

"Why don't you come out here and say that, you dirty dope-dealer?" he demanded. "You goddamned filthy muther, you come out here, so's I can smash your face in!"

We both knew the door was locked and neither of us could open it.

"I'm gonna be right here when this door opens -- two or three hours from now! I'll be right here," he promised. "You fuckin' slimey dope-

dealer! I know all 'bout you -- selling that cocaine to little kids. I'm gonna beat the shit outta you! I'm gonna teach you, boy! Pushers like you are the scum of the earth! Yeah, I'm right here, waiting for breakfast to come, waitin' for that door of yours to pop right open!"

Shit, I thought. That's all I need. Get in a fight and you go to the Hole and your time's extended. I'm about three weeks from release, and this has to happen! At the same time I was thinking about what I would have to do when the cell doors unlocked. I decided that since the door swung outwards I'd slam it into him and then hit him with my chair. I was sure his strength was greater than mine -- a crazed person is usually stronger and less able to feel pain -- and the only way I could match him would be to get really angry, a towering rage. Well, I was pissed, but not anything like that angry.

"You better shut up," I told him, "or they're gonna put you back in the Hole!"

"Oh, yes!" he said. "I'll go in the Hole all right! I don't mind! I'll take you with me, cocksucker!" He banged on my door some more and continued ranting. He'd worked himself up with some kind of moral outrage over my alleged cocaine sales to children (which, in retrospect, pissed me off more than anything else he said) and had by now convinced himself that it was his holy mission to wipe the floor with me.

At that point the Lieutenant came in.

"Pack your stuff and let's go," he said.

"What?"

"Pack up your stuff, please."

"What about this dope dealer? You gonna let him just sit in there like that? He sold cocaine to little kids!"

"Come on, let's go. Pack your stuff."

"Don't rush me now!"

"Let's go. Pack it up!"

"Say 'please.' I didn't hear you say 'please.'"

"I'm not going to tell you again -- pack it up!"

"You gonna make me? Huh? You gonna make me? I gotta good mind to hit you -- !"

I didn't see this. But I heard more guards running in and the sounds of a scuffle. By the time I had my glasses on and was standing by my door, looking out, four or five deputies had Bernie on his stomach on the floor, the lieutenant standing over them, and they were putting leg-shackles and handcuffs on him.

"Oh, that cold floor feels good," Bernie said, almost in a croon. "Hard and cold -- just like my second wife!"

"You going to stop this stuff and settle down?" one of the deputies asked.

"Hell no," Bernie said, still struggling. "You gonna have to do it right! You know, I'm gonna get a job as a deputy, you know that? Then I'll show you how it's done!"

By then both Jack and Joe had moved to the far end of the room, and the deputies were packing up Bernie's few possessions. "This your book?" one of them asked him. It was a book I'd loaned to Bernie two days earlier -- which Bernie had never cracked -- Heartland by Robert Douglas Mead.

"Nah, that's that goddamned gray-haired dope dealer's book! You know, he sleeps ten hours a day, has all that money -- 'cause he sells that fuckin' dope to little kids! That's a western book, an' he ain't never been west of nowhere!" Still ranting nonsense about me, Bernie was hoisted to his feet and taken out. Back to the Hole. "Tell that dope dealer," he called back, "if I ever see him in the hall, I'm gonna give him a kiss -- like a goddamned Georgia whore!"

"Hey, Jack," I said through my door, "you got any idea what time it is?" Jack went to the hall door and looked at the clock in the barbershop.

"It's 3:15," he said.

We all tried to go back to sleep. I found it impossible. And so, I discovered at breakfast, had everyone else -- except Chester, down in the A-cell, who had somehow slept through it all. ("Where Bernie at?" he asked, looking around.) Phil, Jack, Mike and I lingered, after breakfast, talking about it.

"He was going to punch that lieutenant," Phil said. "I'm standing right there, looking through my door, and they're not two feet away from me. 'I'll hit you,' he says to the lieutenant, and I believe he would've, if they hadn't wrestled him down on the floor right then!"

Mike said, "I was laughing. I was watching them and laughing like a motherfucker." I'd heard him. "I went back to bed, I couldn't get back to sleep," he continued. "I like to beat my peter for an hour, an' it stayed limp." He shook his head in wonder.

"I ain't got no sleep yet," Jack said. After half an hour or so of ventilating our feelings, we all went back to bed. I drifted off about half an hour before lockout.

It was a strange day -- and got stranger. Joe Love rejoined us from the Dispensary in the afternoon. Jack looked disgusted. "Here's the snorer," he muttered. Joe listened in amazement as we told him about Bernie.

Then, around 4:45 -- around dusk (on a gray rainy day) -- the fireworks occurred: the transformer outside blew up.

The transformer sits by itself about ten feet from the jail, and about fifteen feet below our window, directly opposite our cellblock. There was a low boom! and a fountain of sparks shot twenty feet into the air -- a spectacular view from our window. Our lights and TV went off, our night lights cutting back on a moment later when the emergency generator kicked in. (The lights in my cell were dim red glows.) When the fireworks were over we could see a hole in the ground next to the transformer, from which smoke still wafted.

Supper -- fried chicken -- was an hour late. The elevator was out and the kitchen staff had to take all the meals up the stairs by hand to the B-floor. Ours were nearly cold, but we were glad to get them. After supper I went into my dark cell and straight to bed, exhausted. It had been more than enough excitement for one day.

-- Ted White (1986)

SPUNG, The Upright Fanzine
from Ted White
1014 N. Tuckahoe St.
Falls Church, VA 22046, USA

F I R S T

C L A S S

M A I L

S · P · U · N · G · n · u · t

A thorough search of the *Spung* files revealed fewer letters than I had recalled; either some were misplaced, or time has exaggerated my memory. Inasmuch as those letters I *did* receive were from people to whom I'd given a copy in Brighton, and fans are notorious for not Lopping fanzines picked up at conventions, I suppose I should be grateful for the letters I did get. And I am. We'll lead off with a letter from someone who *didn't* get a copy. . . .

ROBERT LICHTMAN The new issue of *Pulp* showed up here today with a little surprise. In the fanzine review column, newly taken over by new co-editor John Harvey, there's a review of the first issue of *Spung*, which John apparently picked up at Conspiracy. It sounds good. Here it is months later, however, and I haven't yet received a copy.

Perhaps you are saving it to mail with the next issue, or something quintessentially fannish like that; but if you *did* send it out already, you might be interested to know that I never received it. Of course, no one else has mentioned receiving their copy, either. Perhaps they all got lost in the mail? Perhaps it's only available by running into you at a convention (in which case I'm up the creek)?

Robert's letter arrived in late February, 1988. At that point I was one or two weeks into being my son Aaron's full-time daytime parent, Lynda having just resumed her job, with Aaron approaching his third month of life. I'm sure I intended to send you a copy, Robert.
— tw

JOHN-HENRI HOLMBERG Many thanks for the copy of *Spung* #1 you gave me at Conspiracy; your prison letters were — well, any adjective I can think of seems somehow to be tainted by wrong or bizarre connotations, but perhaps a simple 'very interesting' is good enough. And the material on Terry struck many chords. I will refrain from extrapolating on this at the moment: my own tries at reconciling myself to Terry's death have occupied large parts of the past Summer, and resulted in several pieces for various Swedish fanzines as well as in a piece for the memorial issue of Bob Lichtman's fanzine. In a way I was surprised at my own reactions on learning of Terry's death: I had not expected them either to be so strong or so enduring. Naturally I knew Terry only very slightly on a personal basis, if by that you mean in person — I met him first at the 1967 New York worldcon, and later only five or six times when I visited the US

during the seventies and the early eighties. Nor was our correspondence all that regular. But nevertheless Terry was certainly the strongest single influence on both my fan and pro activities as well as an ever-present inspiration whenever events threatened to either sour me totally on fandom or to make me lose whatever sense of perspective and humor I may possess to make the vagaries of inane feuds and silly innuendo possible to distance myself from or ignore.

To this day I still occasionally dream about Terry Carr. It's as though in the dream-state I can still maintain contact with him, which I find oddly reassuring. — tw

MIKE GLICKSOHN I'm still slowly working my way through the masses of fanzines I either got in Brighton or found waiting for me when I returned from my five weeks in Britain and I've just encountered *Spung* again. I read it some time ago (because it was one of yours and because it was short) and really enjoyed it but it got buried in the debris around here and took a while to resurface.

I don't have a hell of a lot to say about it but I did want to put down in print my appreciation for the letters you wrote while you were imprisoned. I thought you handled things remarkably well under what must have been immensely difficult circumstances and you gave me a fascinating look at a life I hope never to get any closer to than your letters. If there was any good to come from this depressing situation I suppose it was just that: that you were able to convey a great deal of detailed information to a lot of us who couldn't help but be interested in what it was like "inside." And who knows, maybe you'll get a book out of it some day.

I gave serious thought to collecting and augmenting my letters for professional publication — although I'm not sure there's enough there to fill a book — but I suspect it helps to be a fan and to know me when reading material of that sort; a larger audience might find it less

interesting. It's arrogance on my part to assume a three-month stay in a local jail for dealing drugs is of any real importance to the public at large. — tw

HARRY BOND *Spung* was certainly different reading, but I really find myself unable to comment properly on the majority of the ish because while you inform the reader clearly of all the fax of the arrest, etc., you don't actually say whether you really were guilty!

In all fairness to Harry, he'd been in fandum less than a year when he wrote that. And I assume by now he knows that I entered a Guilty plea and saved the state the expense of a full trial. — tw

CHARLES PLATT Thanks for handing me a copy of *Spung*. I enjoyed it a lot. I also appreciated your remarks at Brighton re the tendency of Hugo awards to go to widest-circulation fanzines, regardless. (Do you think, incidentally, CNBrown will ever receive enough awards, and stand aside? Should we consider instituting a new category: the Brown Award? Just crank out an extra silver rocket every year, and hand it to him automatically, and save all the sweat of counting votes?)

Your dispassionate transcript of your arrest faces us all with unanswerable questions. In particular: Would I, reading this, have coped with it as well as you did? Can I begin even to imagine the state of mind that such an experience induces, or is it something without comparisons? Similar questions are roused by watching men under fire in military documentaries. One feels protected, fortunate, maybe even slightly guilty, at never having been subjected to this kind of punishment. Personally, my fear and anger toward authority are so great, I don't know what I'd do. Develop bleeding ulcers, probably; that's what happened when a six-month (unconnected) illness deprived me of my usual liberty.

I share your attitude toward authority, which made things no easier for me, but I managed to refrain from showing it most of the time. I made every effort to get along with both my fellow prisoners and the guards, but it was far easier with my fellow cons. What surprised me was the friendly relationship between many of the prisoners and various among the guards. Some of them had gone to school together, and they had a camaraderie that seemed inappropriate to their current circumstances. — tw

SUSAN ATKINS IS MY MUSE

In the summer of 1986 I was a regular reader of Isaac Asimov's *SF Magazine*.

Cyberpunk had gotten me back into reading SF. I had drifted away for several years, during the Judy Lynn Del Rey-George Scithers era, when the whole field went stale and rotten. Back in 1984, out of curiosity, I had picked up Gardner Dozois' first best-of-the-year collection, wondering if I was missing anything. I was: it led off with Bruce Sterling's "Cicada Queen." A few weeks later I noticed that this Sterling person had a blurb on an Ace paperback by another nobody, and I picked up *Neuromancer* too.

That summer Asimov's published an article by Michael Swanwick called "A User's Guide to the Postmoderns." In it, Swanwick talked about cyberpunk — it was the first time I had heard the term used — and mentioned something called *Cheap Truth*. This was a fanzine, published under a pseudonym. It had been stirring up the inner circles of SF for several years with rants that mixed provocative theory and scathing criticism. I loved the idea, and wondered what it was like. I didn't know how to find it, though. Like the special frequency of the paranoid Baldies, it was hidden from outsiders like me.

In the summer of 1987 I sent away for Paul Di Filippo's *Astral Avenue*.

Over the previous year my involvement had deepened. I had started reading fanzines and semi-prozines, including *The Green Pages*. This was published as a rider to *Short Form* by someone calling herself "Chester De Roors." In one issue she reprinted for purposes of rebuttal several rants from *Astral Avenue*, along with Paul's address. *Astral Avenue* was modelled on *Cheap Truth*, though it had its own whimsical persona. I was excited. Here I was, in on the action at last.

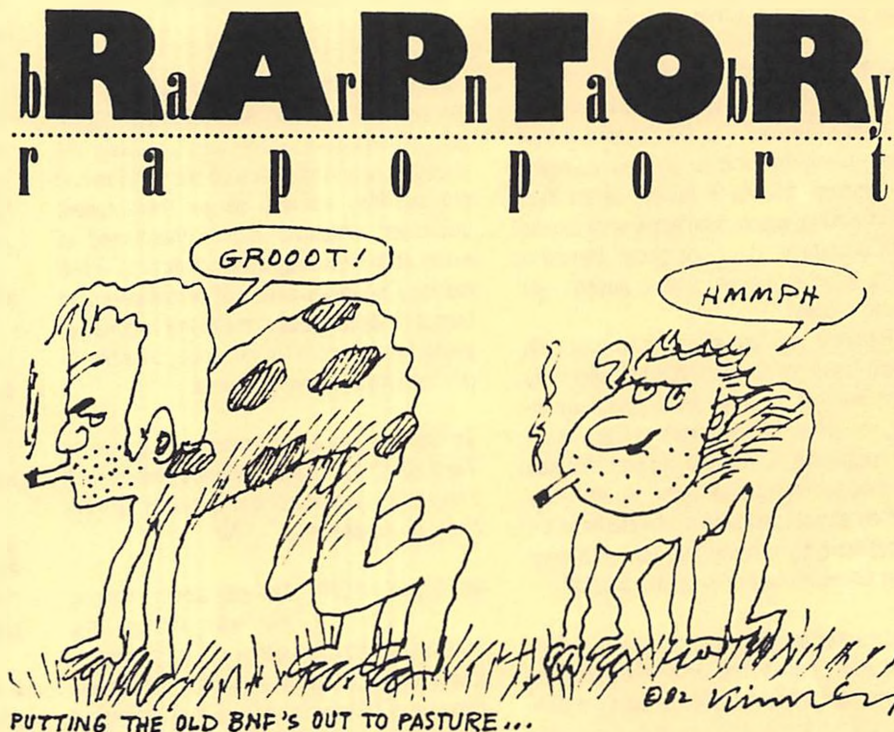
I thought idly of putting out my imitation. A chance reading of a newspaper article about a local woman who raised hawks had given me a title, *Raptor*. I jotted down a few ideas for articles, but that's as far as it got, "half a page of scribbled lines."

In the summer of 1988 I found a copy of *The Deadly Toxin* on the counter at Mark Zeising's bookstore.

This was yet another version of *Cheap Truth* published by a young fan named Glen Cox. It was

pretty weak. In fact, I realized that if he could do it, so could I. It was easy. All you had to do was type a couple of pages and take them down to a copy store.

I spent a month or two fussing with it. For one thing, I wasn't happy with the title. I had fancied that the way it echoed my name was clever, but was it? I had just read Terry Carr's "The Fan Who Hated Quote-cards," and the fugghead protagonist, Bill Tiggert, called his zine *Here There Be Tiggert*. Then there was



Cathseye, published by a Cathy. Maybe it was just too cute. I filed "Raptor" away. Perhaps I would change my mind later and use it for something else.

In September 1988, I published *Sadie Mae Glutz 1*.

I later described it in *Let's Fanac 1*: "I wanted to produce something like *Cheap Truth* . . . iconoclastic jolts of prescriptive criticism, as compact and flashy as a hit single." I saw that SF was in bad shape, and that most of the thinking about it was fossilized. It wouldn't be hard to shake it up.

My mailing list wasn't much in those days, so most of you haven't seen it. It went like this:

On the underside of our society, there are those who have no real stake at all in respectable culture. These are the open enemies of culture, despising indiscriminately a painting by Picasso and a painting by Maxfield Parrish . . . a poem by Yeats and a poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox — these are readers of pulp magazines and comic books . . . communicants of lunatic sects . . . the hopelessly alienated and outclassed who can enjoy perhaps not even Andy Hardy but only Bela Lugosi. . . .

But their distance from the center gives them in the mass a degree of independence that the rest of us can approach only individually and by discipline.

— Robert Warshow, "Woofed With Dreams" (1946)

Since the 1940's the history of SF has been an undeclared civil war between imagination and those who are embarrassed by it and would suppress it.

The 1930's were SF's greatest period of creativity. All the standard ideas and images of SF were invented during this decade. What stopped this marvelous flow? What brought on John Campbell, Jr. and *Astounding*?

The standard explanation is that it was a natural transition: the history of SF is a series of inevitable stages that are implicit in the nature of the form. SF had run out of things to invent, so now it was time to examine the consequences of its inventions.

In actuality, this great flow of invention was prematurely frozen by the first great wave of repressive "maturity" in SF.

The SF readership — the articulate core readership, anyway — were instantly converted. Campbell's simulations of respectability, such as limiting the letter column to boring technical discussions, promised these pathetic outcasts the status they craved. *Astounding* didn't lead the field in sales, but it led the field in their worshipful esteem.

Campbell's SF was slick, sober, and rationalized. In short, it was more mundane. Superficially impressive, it was actually sterile. The clearest example of this is Campbell's ideal of scientific extrapolation.

Before then, SF was based on customs and conventions, such as Earth-like climates for all the planets of the solar system. Even though most writers and readers knew better, these were accepted because they were so hospitable to the imagination.

Campbell's new standards seemed like a real improvement. Why fool around with these childish imaginings when the real universe beckons?

Of course, no one has enough background to write a true hard-SF story by themselves. At best, they can extrapolate intelligently in one or two specialized fields. Everything else they must borrow from the works of those with backgrounds in other fields. The majority without scientific training has to borrow everything. The result is a field of standard parts and ornamental jargon, a field more dominated by rote convention than the 30's ever were.

Given its frozen state, it's no wonder that SF failed to anticipate the computer revolution, as it had anticipated space travel in its creative phase.

Since then there have been further waves of "progress," of new constraints — literary decorum, "mature" characterization, moral "responsibility,"

"realism" of every kind, and so on, each adding to the deep freeze. The basic right to imagine is under perpetual siege.

And yet, just when it seems that imagination has disappeared, it materializes in a new form. No sooner had John Campbell, Jr. established his hegemony over "modern science fiction" than Richard Shaver burst forth onto the pages of Ray Palmer's *Amazing* like the Monster from the Id.

Shaver's writing was the ultimate distillation of everything garish and disreputable about pulp SF. His feverish epics are a violently-turning kaleidoscope of autodidactic super-science, pulp action and idealized pulp heroism, lurid sex and sadism, vast, dream-like settings, gaudy, hyper-romantic beauty and horror, bizarre, arresting concepts, and surrealistic inventiveness, all set in the framework of a compellingly paranoid cosmic mythos.

The writing in these stories is hopelessly wooden and creaks with campy melodrama. The characters are the stiffest of archetypes. He has none of the slickness of a Leigh Brackett. But, in contrast to the conventional pulp romanticism of Brackett, his stories are truly mind-stretching in their inventiveness and range.

If that had been all there was to it, it would have been bad enough. But that wasn't all. If Campbell was going to claim some kind of non-fictional merit for his magazine, Palmer and Shaver weren't going to be left behind. They claimed that all this hyperbolic purple pulp was true! It was explained, with the stentorian authority of Criswell introducing *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, that these stories were soberly transcribed from actual thought-records and thought-transmissions. Soon the letter column was full of pranksters and bozos describing their own similar experiences.

You'd think that a subculture as attuned to the absurd as fandom would enjoy this spectacle. The truth was just the opposite. Insecure, and close enough psychologically to the fringe to be embarrassed, fandom was outraged. Shaver and Palmer were vilified and driven from the field. Today they have been expunged from SF history.

Shaver deserves to be brought back into print. Even if his critics are right, how could he not flourish in a genre that gives so much shelf-space to Jack Chalker, John Norman, and Piers Anthony?

Shaver may have been mad. He may also have been a genius. The sheer imagination of his work has never been equalled. Will the abuse and neglect he suffered during his lifetime someday be compared to that experienced by Van Gogh? What a thought!

"Krazy Kat" is perhaps the best that the comic strip has produced. But it would be a mistake to think it a "higher" development of the comic strip. "Higher" development brings in a whole apparatus

of respectable controls and produces "Joe Palooka" helping to sell the country on conscription, or the hygienic, progressive-school fantasy of "Barnaby." "Higher" development makes "Krazy Kat" impossible. "Krazy Kat" is "pointless" and "silly," it comes from the peripheral world where the aims and pretensions of society are not regarded.

— Robert Warshow, "Woofed With Dreams"

Two months later, in November, I did it again. The first time I had taken apart SF history and put it back together upside down. Now I looked around at what exactly was wrong and what could be done about it:

The dirtiest word in the SF vocabulary is 'adolescent.' All it takes to trash an SF story critically is to catch it expressing 'adolescent' attitudes.

Now there's always been a tension between SF's vast capacity as a medium of wish-fulfillment and its natural didactic bent. Generations of SF writers have cast themselves in an educational role, from the Campbellian engineers who wanted to motivate the future scientists of America to the righteous young dudes of the David Gerrold anthologies and Ted White magazines who saw their relevant fiction as the cure for future shock. Their eternal nemesis has evolved alongside them, from the pulp space operas of the forties to the sword and sorcery paperbacks of the seventies. These night schools and massage parlors of the SF ghetto have warred with each other like feuding cartoon animals since *Astounding* first sprang up to menace Hugo Gernsback. But underneath the surface, these two positions had much in common. Above all, they assumed a largely teenage audience.

As America ages from the Reagan eighties to the Bush nineties and the senile twenty-hundreds, teenagers become increasingly threatening to their ever more conservative elders. Drugs and drinking, video games and role playing games, sex and rebellious fashions, comics, media SF and rock, all are recast as diseases, terrorism, satanism. This puritanical pressure has shifted the position of even those who are self-consciously liberal, even as its ideas of 'excellence' can indirectly discredit where a transparent attack would fail.

Though SF is a victim of this attitude, it flourishes within SF as well.

The clearest sign of the change is the disappearance of teenage readers for the cutting edge of SF. While pop SF and comics are flourishing, indicating that potential teenage readers are out there in spite of demographic changes, the specialty bookstores report that they have stopped showing up, and this impression is borne out by all the magazine readership surveys.

Another sign of change — one a step closer to the

causes — is that the pop SF still selling to teens is no longer generated by modern SF. It is all imported, either from other media like Japanese cartoons, role playing games and TV shows, or from the past, as with the Conan series or Isaac Asimov's *Robot City*.

The underlying cause is the death of the pulp aesthetic. This is obvious if you look at the future of the field: the stories by new writers in the magazines. Instead of the evolving, increasingly subtle derivations from action and adventure formats we saw in the past, they now strive mainly for 'realism' and 'sensitivity,' usually rendered in a careful, staid style that signals the ascendance of the literary workshop over the pulp sweatshop. The SF ghetto has become gentrified.

What, if anything, is wrong with that? Many of these stories are powerful and fresh. If you accept the field's concepts of 'maturity' and 'adolescence,' they're an improvement. But, if nothing is obviously wrong, is something missing? Has anything been lost?

If you look back at the fifties, the last period when 'maturity' was the reigning value, what you'll see is resignation to and acceptance of social realities that were far less inevitable than they appeared at the time. Our definition of 'maturity' is similarly loaded. What marks a current SF story as 'adolescent'? Its freedom from constraint, its catering to 'wish-fulfillment.' At its best, such a story is like discovering a daydream you should have had yourself. Physical and social barriers dissolve in the warmth of fantasy. The 'sense of wonder' is really a sense of new possibility. The unreal but compelling scenarios of pulp SF were, I suspect, what made some of the readers grow up to be scientists, not the accurate portrayals of science and technology. Technology, too, is based on wish-fulfillment, on taking our most childish and 'irresponsible fantasies,' such as being able to fly, and turning them into realities. Its ultimate desire is to melt the universe down into a perfect medium for human consciousness. 'Power fantasies' are often fantasies of freedom. What seems like authoritarianism in a lot of old SF is really an off-hand utopianism.

Certainly the ideology of 'realism' has had a crushing effect on modern pulp SF, on Baen books and its imitators. Here space opera's sense of possibility is submerged in an ideology of realpolitik, technological determinism, and social Darwinism. The sense of wonder caves in. Instead, our most cynical and fearful ideas about 'reality' are boiled down to their bottom assumptions. The short fiction of John Varley displays the process. His early *Eight Worlds* stories are some of the best, purest 'adolescent' SF ever written, but with 'Beatnik Bayou' he accepted the ideology of 'maturity,' and the result was a rapid decay, culminating in the terminal paranoia of 'Press Enter.'

SF that takes imagination as its highest value, far from being 'playing tennis with the net down,' is actually a rigorous and challenging confrontation with

the self. Instead of adapting literary standards, SF should push its most 'adolescent' tendencies to the limit until it breaks through into a transformation of values.

I didn't have a computer back then. I did *Sadie Mae Glutz* with a typewriter. Inevitably, since I was putting it together as I went along from a pile of notes — the same pile for both essays, it was like a compost heap of ideas — I left out a lot of stuff I had meant to include. In fact, *SMG*, had it continued, would have been, in effect, one long essay.

Some of the bits and pieces left over seem worth adding:

Teenage culture had always been the most aggressively original because, being relatively unformed, teenagers are the most open to the new.

When George Scithers or Judy Lynn Del Rey talked about "fun," they were more interested in what the term excluded than in what it contained. They were making a statement about what they *weren't* going to publish. What they did publish was "fun" only because it was too insipid to be anything else.

Judy-Lynn Del Rey tried to re-define "fun" as based on childhood, not adolescence. She wasn't selling fun but nostalgia for fun.

If the Del Reys' had been serious about "getting SF out of the classroom and back into the gutter where it belongs," they would have kept publishing John Norman.

For decades, from Gernsback to Sterling, the grail of SF has been maturity, respectability, even a civic-minded leadership role. But the imagination is irresponsible. Turned loose, it breeds "instant gratification," "power fantasies," "escapism." Guardians of intellectual responsibility like Susan Sontag recoil and call it "pornographic" and "fascist."

In the ideological jargon of the field, reading something too imaginative is "masturbation" and writing it is "prostitution."

It is exactly the self-confrontation inherent in "escapism" that drives timid writers to the generic and derivative, to recycling other writer's fantasies instead of exploring their own.

Edmond Hamilton "can't write" in the same way that Chuck Berry "can't play guitar."

I haven't mentioned the graphics, but they were always the most fun part of putting *Sadie Mae Glutz* out. My favorite effect was the slender psychedelic

mushrooms on the cover of the second issue. No one guessed that I had cut them out of magazine ads and turned them upside-down; they were really liquor pouring into glasses.

The photos of Debbie Gibson came from an issue of *The Big Bopper*; the outsize reptiles and blobs I had grappling with her came from assorted nature and science magazines.

Well, it would have been silly to put out a zine advocating "fun" that wasn't fun.

Underneath all the calculated outrageousness, though, I was serious. In 1988, as in 1993, SF is dull.



There are about half a dozen writers I look forward to reading. Isn't the current obsession with new writers and "the cutting edge" just a sign of discontent? Back when SF was exciting, it was the most established writers, the Heinleins and Ellisons, who caused the most excitement.

Sometimes I like to think *SMG* had an effect. Ernest Hogan later echoed some of my ideas in *SF Eye*; Colin Greenland wrote a novel, *Take Back Plenty*, that seemed to take off from them; Kathryn Cramer did a huge survey in *The New York Review of SF* on the aging of SF. All of them were on my mailing list.

Well, it would have been silly to put out a zine advocating "power fantasies" that wasn't a power fantasy, too.

SMG may have been silly. It may also been more in touch with the underlying realities of SF than respectable criticism. It could yet prefigure the SF of the future. Will it someday come to resemble *Cheap Truth* not just in form but in the effect it has? What a thought! — Barnaby Rapoport

ALL I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CORFLU I LEARNED FROM THE SNEECHES

Not long before this past Corflu, I had an epiphany. I was in the home of a friend who has small children, and one of the kids was reading a classic book by the late Dr. Seuss. The book was *The Sneeches*, and like many of the master's works, it features arch social commentary hidden in its whimsical text. The Sneeches are a group of very silly birds, who are preyed upon by a con man who awakens a kind of race/class consciousness in them, and uses it to rob them blind. He convinces them that the blue stars which he applies (for a fee) to their bellies are the universally accepted measure of social distinction and fashion; and they are equally credulous when he tells them that two stars, no stars, or even more stars, have suddenly become *de rigueur*. Eventually there is a mad pileup and much confusion as the lines of distinction become blurred, the birds send the con man packing, and adopt a kind of egalitarian sensibility, given a powerful object lesson about the folly of prejudice and pretension.

Looking over the little girl's shoulder as she read, I suddenly flashed on some things that people have said about Corflu recently. Like Bill Bowers, in *Outworlds* 65, who said that he was planning to go to Corflu, despite the fact that it was "becoming the Worldcon of fanzine conventions." Or more damning and more intelligible, Leah Zeldes Smith, writing in *Stet* #5 on the superiority of Ditto to Corflu, "... when I go to Corflu I often start to feel like I'm back in high school, with the cliquishness of it all, and think, 'these people are such snobs; why do I want to be here?'"

Leaving aside the reverse prejudice at work there — it's

a unique phenomenon of our age that comparison to the Worldcon is a pejorative — my mind clicked over and recognized a parallel between the Sneeches' experience with their belly stars and the supposed elitism of Corflu. Corflu suddenly appeared before me as a giant belly-stamping machine, through which I had dutifully paraded for five years, until the folly of

hierarchical images of fandom were revealed in all their noisome glory. And somewhere along the way, I had learned not to revere or revile or even to identify BNFs as being different from me. I stopped regarding the people whose work I admired in fanzines as above or apart from me and my concerns. I learned that people with prickly in-print personae — like Leah Zeldes Smith, for instance — were just normal human beings like anyone else, and hardly worth elevating to the status of bugbear for their opinions.

Like the Sneeches, these lessons had been brought to me with some inconvenience and at a cost. But in its own inefficient way, Corflu has the potential to build better fans. It presents you with a problem to solve: If fandom is dominated and controlled by a small coterie of jealous snobs and smofs, who are bent on denying you whatever big fun they are having, and you attend a convention where they are the only people in attendance — as is obviously the case at Corflu, in some people's opinion — how are you going to have any fun? Only by changing the rules, of course; by muscling in on that big smof racket, or by building or achieving something of your own.

I remember the first night of my first Corflu, Seattle in 1988. All around me were the people who had created the fanzines that I loved, and I knew about a dozen of them. The rest were names in a

DON'T START ME TALKING BY ANDY HOOPER



colophon, and meeting them seemed a herculean task. I remember sitting on a bed in the con suite, listening to Ted White and Moshe Feder talk about lost stations of the New York subway system for what must have been 45 minutes. I was the only other person nearby, no more than five feet away, yet neither of them made any effort to involve me in the conversation. I was aching to add something, but I couldn't break the invisible wall, the impression that to intrude into their conversation without being invited would represent some crushing social gaffe.

Idiocy. I knew both of them; Moshe had been to Wiscon the previous year, and Jeanne Gomoll had introduced me to Ted outside an Indian restaurant in Brighton. By that time, I had even pubbed my ish. But to my way of thinking, these two chaps were the best kind of Sneech on the beach, and my poor starless belly was all too obvious to their patrician gaze.

The thing about Corflu is that you don't have the option to melt into the faceless throng of fen who are there just to be entertained. Every Corflu I see a few people sitting around in a corner with a glum look on their faces, outside of the near social orbits and acutely aware of the fact. They stand out like a coal pile in a ballroom. I sometimes try to start up a conversation, but most often they're just kind of grooving on their misery . . . and resenting the rest of us who are actually having a good time.

I think this is the sort of thing Buck Coulson was talking about when he wrote to me in 1990: "I have never been to a Corflu or Ditto, and probably never will be . . . of course, my self-image as a fan doesn't need any boosting . . . my enjoyment of the con won't be lessened if you're off feeling sorry for yourself; why should it? Why do you need to feel personally important to enjoy something? That's the problem with fandom; too many fans with weak egos that need to be propped up by a spurious feeling of importance, all too often achieved by assaults on other people's egos . . . the idea is not to know everyone at a con, but to pick from the group those few fans who will become friends. The larger the group, the more choice."

I find this a neat piece of logic; Buck manages to both refute and embrace the star-belly thesis at the same time, which not just anyone could do. He wrote this in response to my piece, "The Convention of the Future," back in *Spent Brass* #1, wherein I had advanced the notion that the ideal convention would leave each attendee with the feeling that they had been a critical element in the make-up of the con.

It's too bad we can't get Buck to attend Corflu to see what I was talking about; I'm afraid that explaining it may lie beyond my limited powers of description. But as for engendering a "spurious feeling of importance," Corflu seems rather to do the opposite. Lacking the sheer mass of bodies that roam the halls of most conventions, Corflu acts as a leveller of fannish status. Everyone's voice can be heard. Whatever talents, ambitions, likes and dislikes, that you have as

a fan, become startlingly clear to those around you, without the need to stand on a box, or get on the committee, or throw a cup of warm puke in some pro writer's face. Nor is there any need to jealously create your own circle of chosen friends and repair to the bar to avoid the hoi poloi, a Sneechism if there ever was one.

(Admittedly, a certain portion of Corflu's habitués do have a tendency to retreat to a private room to enjoy certain communal pleasures, but I regard this as a response to our nation's draconian drug laws, and unlikely to survive them. There, now people can call me a snob *and* a drug fiend.)

So, back to my own case; given that Corflu lacked the usual bread and circuses to keep one entertained, I had to either break out of my star-belly fears, or basically resign myself to having a bad time. I decided upon the former course. By Sunday morning, I had made a lot of new friends, often through the simple expedient of asking people, "So, what fanzine do you publish?" A few people squirmed uncomfortably under this question, but that was all right too: It gave me the opportunity to opine that apa-and-letter-hacking were important disciplines as well, and that we really did need a few people who just *read fmz*. Since then, I have never, ever felt that anyone at Corflu was looking down on me, or that I particularly had to look down on anyone else. This isn't true of conventions at large, where I have often felt too fat or too old or too young or too poor or too well-read to fit in with most of the people around me. In a way, Corflu allowed me to put some pride into what had heretofore been merely a lonely thing.

It's pretty ironic that some older fans hold the idea of Corflu in such disdain, since whether the convention's founders and latter-day organizers know it or not, Corflu does a pretty good job of recreating the dynamic of conventions thirty-five or forty years ago. Of course, even then, a lot of people complained about what a load of snobs the BNFs were, and new generations of fans chafed against the relative notoriety of the old. And under the relative unanimity of the surface — Corflu supposedly has a tradition of bids running unopposed — there's just as much back-room politicking and rabbit-punching as with any other con. But people do care enough to pretend they're part of one big happy family, an illusion which has been insupportable in fandom at large for a very long time.

When Ted called and asked me to write something about Corflu for the second issue of *BLAT!*, it came as a relief. Right now, I don't know if I could actually write about anything else connected with fandom. For three years I focused much of my fannish energy and ambition on hosting the convention of and for fanzine fans, and while I had lots of help from fans in and out of Madison in bringing it to fruition, I still feel as though Corflu Ten has been something of a personal test. It's as if I had developed a compulsion to find some way to prove my devotion to fandom, and

settled on Corflu as my best choice.

This says a lot about me, of course, and it casts some doubt onto my assessments of Corflu: I'm hardly about to turn around and say that all the work that I and the rest of Madison fandom did for the convention was a waste of time. But I hold Ted White just as responsible as myself for my obsession. It was he who, in one of those classic smoke-filled room sessions in New York in 1990, first suggested that Madison would be a good place to hold a future Corflu. I think Ted has an ability to sense the subtle combination of ambition and ignorance that qualify a fan for that sort of undertaking; I went home elated that he would consider me worthy of such a project and started trying to put a committee together.

The title of this installment is far from the truth. There are a lot of things to keep track of in regard to putting on Corflu. Contrary to the theory espoused by the L.A. committee, there is more to running Corflu than just setting aside a few hotel rooms and filling the bathtubs with iced Pepsis. Corflu has developed a number of "traditions," as much as such habits can be afforded the term after only ten years. These things — drawing the Guest of Honor's name from a hat, conducting a benefit auction, electing the past-president of the fan writers of America, publishing commemorative or other special editions of fanzines — may well not be essential to having a good fanzine convention, but I think every committee does need to consider each of them in turn when deciding what to do at their con.

The last of those traditions, publishing a special fanzine, was the source of a lot of angst for us when we put on Corflu Ten. I was adamant that we should do something special, something really distinctive as our publication. To date, my favorite Corflu publication had been the *Chuck Harris Appreciation Society Magazine* that Spike had edited for the Minneapolis Corflu. To me, it symbolized part of the mission of Corflu, to pass history and lore from earlier fan generations into posterity, or at least the fanzine collections of contemporary fandom. I wondered if we could do something like that, perhaps an anthology of notable Wisconsin fan writers, like Dean Grennell, Bob Bloch, Jeanne Gomoll, maybe even Augie Derleth and Ray Palmer.

This idea met with little enthusiasm, and I was admittedly daunted by the amount of work entailed. I hated to drag other people into a project that would require a lot of their time, but this later proved to have been a naive concern. I found this out when I suggested that we might put together a new anthology of Bob Tucker's fan-writing, thinking that it had to have been twenty years since one had been assembled.

I soon got the feeling that I might have been better advised to suggest a collection of the early work of Dr. Josef Goebbels. Tucker is . . . how to put this . . . he has a particular attitude towards women, and a way of showing that attitude that honestly offends some of the people on the Corflu Ten committee. And those who

weren't offended to begin with were quickly convinced that they should be offended, and it became clear that whatever project we undertook had to reflect the ideological agenda of Madison fandom (or at least the part of Madison fandom that has an ideological agenda).

And so we settled on reprinting the *Khatru* debate on gender in science fiction. The project proved to be more work than I had ever dreamed of expending on a fanzine, but Jeanne Gomoll, who had cut her fannish teeth on just that sort of insanely involved genzine publication, was equal to the task of flogging the rest of the committee along. I was nowhere to be found, of course, having fled the state for Seattle; I'm not as dumb as I seem sometimes.

I'm not complaining here, or telling tales out of school; the *Khatru* reprint is a hell of a job, fascinating reading, and it reflects the spirit of the past twenty years of Madison fandom perfectly, both in content and execution. Steve Swartz rose to the occasion and did the best mimeography of his life to date in printing it. And I was very pleased that we were able to provide it free of further charge as part of the benefit of Corflu membership. I feel very strongly that there ought to be some physical benefit to being a Corflu member, and for being a supporting member as well. If future committees are faced with a problem doing a commemorative fanzine or similar souvenir, I'd rather they raised the membership rate, or cut back the banquet, than abandon their fanzine plans.

That *Khatru*, 2nd printing, mirrors the Madison fannish zeitgeist, strikes me as an important consideration. In some measure, Corflu represents an expression of something ideal or archetypal in fannish culture, and I think it works best when it is an expression of the character of a local fandom as well. Unfortunately, it's another way in which hierarchical structures can appear to be inherent to the Corflu process. A number of committees have had to worry about what would happen if a lot of local fans with no interest in fanzines were to show up at the con. Even Madison, with its tiny circle, had people that wouldn't show up for political reasons, and still others whom we wished would do the same.

Before I move entirely from the issue of publications and other Corflu traditions, I ought to mention that *Fanthology 1989* (now available from me, at \$8.00 post-paid, all profits to benefit Corflu Eleven) was not undertaken as an alternative to the *Khatru* project, and neither was it published merely in response to those who decried the committee's decision not to pursue it. What really made me work on the *Fanthology* was the guilt I felt at the immense amount of work that everyone else was doing on the convention while I sat in Seattle without much to do.

Besides, I didn't want to come to the convention empty-handed! Corflu is now the second great deadline of the fannish year; in addition to Worldcon, fan-editors talk about having things out by Corflu. The vast wealth of fanzines distributed at the con this year

helped to reinforce my image of Corflu as a gathering of the tribes; a fine and generous potlatch could be assembled from the issues of *Idea*, *Outworlds*, *Let's Fanac*, etc., which I picked up in Madison.

You can still contribute a lot to putting on a Corflu from 2,000 miles away, but I wouldn't recommend it. It felt like I had a vision of a Corflu in Madison, communicated it to a small group of reluctant disciples and returned a year later to find that they had actually taken me seriously. The biggest job had been convincing Jeanne Gomoll to embrace the idea; without her endorsement, a Madison Corflu would have had questionable legitimacy to me at best, if only because Jeanne is so central to my image of Corflu. Without Ellen Franklin's constant intercession, we would never have gotten half of what we did from the hotel. Jim Hudson performed all the utterly thankless but critical functions as accountant, treasurer, bursar and loan shark. Steve Swartz attacked everything he did with his customary frenzy, then later claimed no responsibility for anything beyond the choice of beer in the con suite. Bill Bodden chose wisely from the flood of available program ideas, ensuring us of a reason to leave the pool terrace now and again. And Tracy Shannon . . . well, let me tell you about Tracy Shannon. Tracy is just embarking on her trufannish career, but I think she has the potential to surpass all the rest of us. She is a responsible administrator, an entertaining writer, and a person of unfailingly considerate demeanor. When I spend time with Tracy, I am reminded of the way people described Lee Hoffman in the early fifties. She helped keep me sane, I freely admit.

Still there were a lot of problems we didn't solve. I'm not sure how we could have kept it from raining on Sunday afternoon during the softball game. I don't know how we could design a fannish trivia quiz without having some questions about Tucker. I don't know how we could have avoided scheduling events during "dinner," since people begin to go out at 5:30 p.m. and don't get back until after ten. And I don't know how we could completely avoid squabbles about who is

going to get to host the next Corflu, who is "qualified" to put on the convention, and so forth.

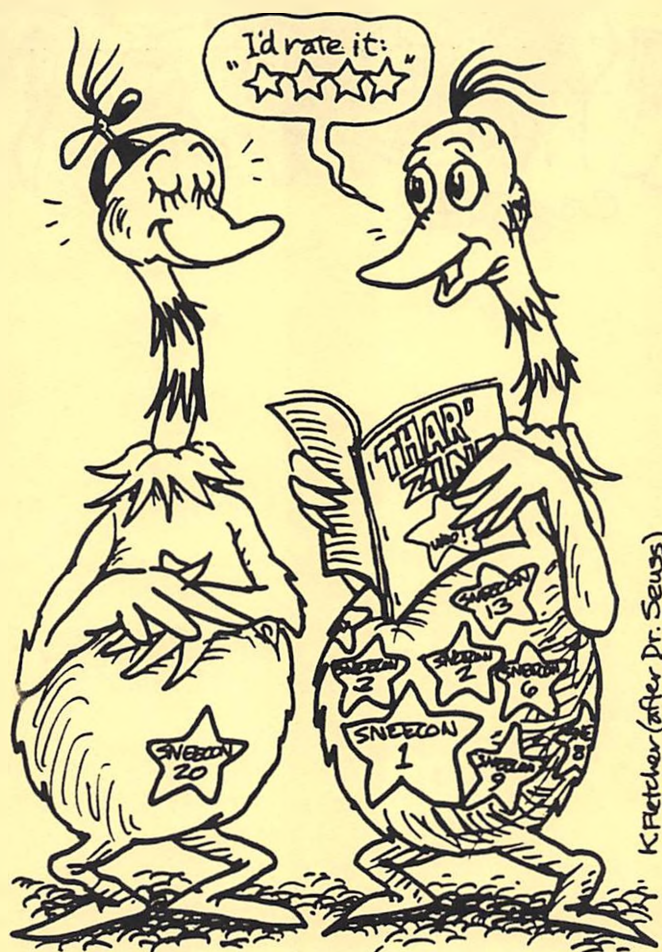
Corflu is a tradition of tender years, but it is very important within a select circle of fans. I guess they have the right to try and use whatever social pressure they can to ensure that the convention will take a course that isn't totally detrimental to that tradition. I would hope that we could let simple personality conflicts slide when it came down to Corflu as well, but I'm not naive enough to hold my breath waiting.

I think anyone who is willing to stand up and commit to at least considering Corflu's traditions, while guaranteeing certain baseline elements critical to the convention, deserves the chance to succeed or fail as they can. We have survived the campaign to clean up fandom, the Breendoggle (RIP), almost 40 years of fan Hugo controversy, the Cosmic Circle, numerous death hoaxes, Topic A, and Jacqueline Lichtenberg; we can survive another "bad" Corflu if we have to.

Not that I expect we will have to, for at least the appreciable future. I have high hopes for Corflu Nova next May, and I applaud their efforts to

establish a new Corflu tradition with the return of the FAAn awards. Besides, I'll get to explore a part of the country I've never been in, a not-inconsiderable feature of a good convention. And Jeanne Bowman was heard making rash statements about a possible return to Northern California in 1995, which could be interesting, especially if she can raise some of her neighbors from their slumber.

If she can't, well, I've helped put on a convention from a certain distance before, and I'm sure there are plenty of equally gullible people out there. While Corflu works well when it involves a local fandom, it has an identity that transcends any one region's concerns, and in understanding that, we go some distance toward fathoming the mystery of fandom as a whole. Heck, I'll always be up for exploring a fundamental mystery or two. Plus, there is this exceedingly handsome blue star that I have just had tattooed on my belly. . . . — Andy P. Hooper



K. Fletcher (after Dr. Seuss)





INTRODUCTION

by bob tucker

In the mid-eighties Joe Sanders began commissioning pieces for a book on fandom to be published by the Greenwood Press. In the luck of the draw I was assigned "The Negative Side of Fandom," and wrote a long chapter on this topic back in 1987. After a brief flurry of editorial activity following the submission of my piece, I heard nothing for five long years. Then, last fall, Joe returned my chapter. The book was too long, he said. The publisher was demanding cuts. He paid me a "kill fee" of \$25, which was just short of a slap in the face. Rich brown was luckier: his chapter — on fandom in the sixties — was more "essential," and just had its guts cut out. I began shopping my lame-duck chapter around among the faneditors, and this came up in conversation with Bob Tucker, at this year's Corflu.

"He bounced my piece, too," Bob said. I had known Bob was the author of the book's introduction because Sanders had asked me to send a copy of my chapter directly to Bob in 1987. But it had never occurred to me that Bob's *introduction* wouldn't make the book's final cut. And, after reading it, I can only speculate that it was cut because it made too many references to chapters which had been dropped.

(Although there are few mentions of mine; the reference to "Hugo lust" is probably the only one.)

In any event, in the time-honored tradition of the great faneds of yore, we immediately chorused, "Hey Bob, can we have yer intro for *Blat!*?"

And here it is. (My chapter will appear elsewhere, probably in *Let's Fanac.*) — tw

If I were an advertising copywriter in the employ of this publisher, and if I were charged with the task of composing the blurbs or headlines to be used in advertising matter, and on the backcover dustjacket, I would do so in the following fashion:

Did you know this?

- Successful world conventions need a budget of at least a quarter-million dollars.
- A Japanese girl, seeking science fiction, was shamed and scolded by the shopkeeper for wanting pornography.
- A naive fan editor once threw away artwork by Jack Gaughan because he thought it water stained and useless.
- A Seattle fan, planning for a world convention there, wanted to mail their progress reports from Spain.
- The lust for a Hugo Award has altered the behavior and the policies of fanzine editors.
- Fandom has been proclaimed "A safe harbor for nuts."
- There is one sure-fire, guaranteed method of going bankrupt while hosting a world convention.
- Local fan clubs often serve as marriage bureaus, but estimates of the female fan population vary widely and wildly.
- The two creators of "Superman" were early fanzine publishers before they invented That Man.
- At one time, a group of New York teenagers exercised editorial control over seven sf magazines, and one edited detective, sports, and mystery magazines as well.
- A famous fan, later a successful publisher, once rejected a novel about "a negro Tarzan."
- The Langdon Charts are a peculiar record of activities ascribed to some closed-circle fan groups.
- Science fiction fandom has been called "a mail order cocktail party," and that "fans are among the last great letter-writers of the world."
- No one in the Wimpy Zone really knows who sawed Courtney's boat.

All that is far too much copy to comfortably fit onto the back of the dustjacket, and someone will have a job of cutting down the fifteen blurbs to manageable size. The blurbs were designed to lead the browser into the book's interior, to discover the delights and insights of science fiction fandom as delineated by the several essayists present.

I admit to being surprised several times as I read the manuscript. I've been in fandom since 1931, and I had supposed that after fifty-six years or so, I knew everything. I did not. If I had ever heard of the Langdon Charts before this, I had forgotten them. I knew all of the New York teenagers who edited the seven magazines in the 1930s and early 1940s and I probably read all of their magazines, but yet their number surprised me because I had never paused to count. I have watched the lust for fanzine Hugo Awards burgeon in the last several years, have read the bickering and seen the back-biting that accompanies that lust, and I sometime believe that the Hugos should have never been invented.

Since the beginning, I've always looked upon fandom as a serio-comic world, and my own emphasis has been upon the comic. I've found it a splendid hobby, but never a way of life. In the following essays the writers examine both viewpoints, but I tend to favor those who espouse my viewpoint. I was delighted to learn of the gung-ho fan from Seattle who wanted to mail his worldcon literature from far off, exotic Spain, purely for the publicity value. That borders on genius-idiotcy. It was fun, and educational, to learn that Jack Speer is the father of the "mailing comment," and I hadn't realized that term is now fifty years old. I knew that Louis Russell Chauvenet coined the term "fanzine," but I was unaware that no one knew who first applied the term "fan magazine" to our own publishing endeavors. We simply called them "fanmags," and thought no more of it.

I've always known that some professional editors bought stories from themselves, and that some editors bought from each other and their fan friends, but I accepted that as a means of survival. Life was very harsh in the 1930s and in the early 1940s before the war came to the United States, and I understood that buying from themselves and from each other was but one more means of earning enough money to put food on the table — in the literal sense. The science fiction magazines of the day paid one-half cent or perhaps a penny

a word, but some of them paid not at all, and a sale to a friend that netted twenty dollars meant that one could pay the rent *and* eat that week. Richard A. Lupoff shines a different light on the matter and explains why he could not follow those precedents.

I'm also intrigued by this matter of estimating the number of female fans in fandom. At the first convention I attended in 1939, there were three females present: the wife of one attendee, the sister of another, and the close friend of a third. (The friend and the third fan later married.) Women were a rarity, but that was the norm. I believe I saw five women at the first worldcon I attended, Chicago in 1940. It was still the norm. Note carefully the number of girls and women the various essayists mention here. Some will express that number in percentages, others will mention ratios; while Pascal J. Thomas flatly states: "On the Continent, women in fandom are still about as common as extra-terrestrials." None of these writers agree with my own estimate, which is based on observation after attending about a hundred conventions during the past half-dozen years: I hold that present-day fandom consists of 60% males and 40% females, and few of those females are wives or sister of male fans. Of course, they are many wives in fandom, but those I've known are attending conventions and producing fanzines because they too are fans — not merely an appendage of their spouses. I've been delighted to meet and know women who are *the* fans in the family — their husbands have no interest whatsoever in us.

And now, world science fiction conventions, frequently referred to as "worldcons."

If you, as an individual, or as a member of a club, have yearnings to host a science fiction world convention, you should read closely and carefully the chapters by Notkin and Whitmore, Luttrell, and Busby, before you take another breath. I think you are an idiot for wanting to host a worldcon, but read those chapters nevertheless. Learn the very real headaches and pitfalls ahead of you. (The fan in your club who wants to post your literature from Spain is only the smallest of your problems.)

Learn that you must prepare a budget of *at least* a quarter-million dollars if you hope to avoid bankruptcy; learn that you must begin planning and spending three to five years in advance; learn that you club cannot hope to staff the convention and that you will need from two hundred to three

hundred volunteers to assist you; learn that sometimes the costume masquerade can be your largest single expense, and that it can be the tail that vigorously wags the dog. Learn that all the clashing egos and petty jealousies in your club can wreck your convention bid the moment you turn away and blink. Learn that your convention may easily go bankrupt.

Other fascinating minutia

- Tiberius Claudius Nero Caesar, second emperor of Rome, was a reader and collector of fantasy fiction. (Moskowitz)
- Fandom believed that 1958 was The Year of the Jackpot, so-named after a Heinlein story of disaster. (brown)
- Damon Knight founded both The National Fantasy Fan Federation and the Science Fiction Writers of America, but the one is not a junior auxiliary to the other. (Lupoff)
- Henry Kuttner, an early and respected writer, published a fanzine piece that eerily foretold his own death ten years later. (brown)
- Terry Carr conceived the idea of a tower of bheer cans to the moon, because his high school math and astronomy lessons demonstrated the possibility of it. (brown)
- "Fanzine" is a feminine word in Italian, but masculine in French. (Thomas)
- Chinese science fiction sprang up in China in 1904, following the publication of Jules Verne novels there. The first fan club was organized in 1980. (Wu Dingbo)
- Japan has more than three hundred fan clubs, and held its 25th convention in 1986. (Osako)
- Fandom has been characterized as living proof that anarchy can succeed as a basic principle of social organization. (But —) In the realm of "media" science fiction, there have been some successful attempts by the professionals to manipulate and exploit fandom for their own purposes. (Lupoff)
- Fannishness is a state of mind, independent of occupation. The propeller beanie fits amateur, professional, or academic heads equally well. (Miesel)
- An Australian fan, an eager collector, erected a new building to house his vast collection. The construction crew thought they were building a new city library. (DeVore)

I have but two more points to make. Fans are overly fond of the esoteric references, the enigmatic in-joke, the long-running gag that may have

been hilarious when it was new but which barely brings a smile now. There were fifteen blurbs or headlines at the beginning of this introduction, assuming that editorial whim or lack of space has not trimmed their number, and one of them contained two such references.

Mr. Wimpy and his zone. Mr. Courtney and his boat.

Esquire published an article about 1950, detailing the trials of a sportsman named Courtney who had entered himself and his boat in a prestigious race. Fame and a considerable amount of money depended on the outcome of that race. Mr. Courtney was considered the favorite to win but, alas, on the night before the big event some dastardly villain moved in under cover of darkness and sawed his boat in half. Thus, the title of the article, "Who Sawed Courtney's Boat?" A number of fans read the magazine article and both the title and the plight of the sportsman fired their imaginations.

About a year later that title reappeared in a fanzine published by Lee Hoffman, then of Savannah, Georgia. The title was presented as an interlineation (called *lino* for short) to appear like this on the printed page:

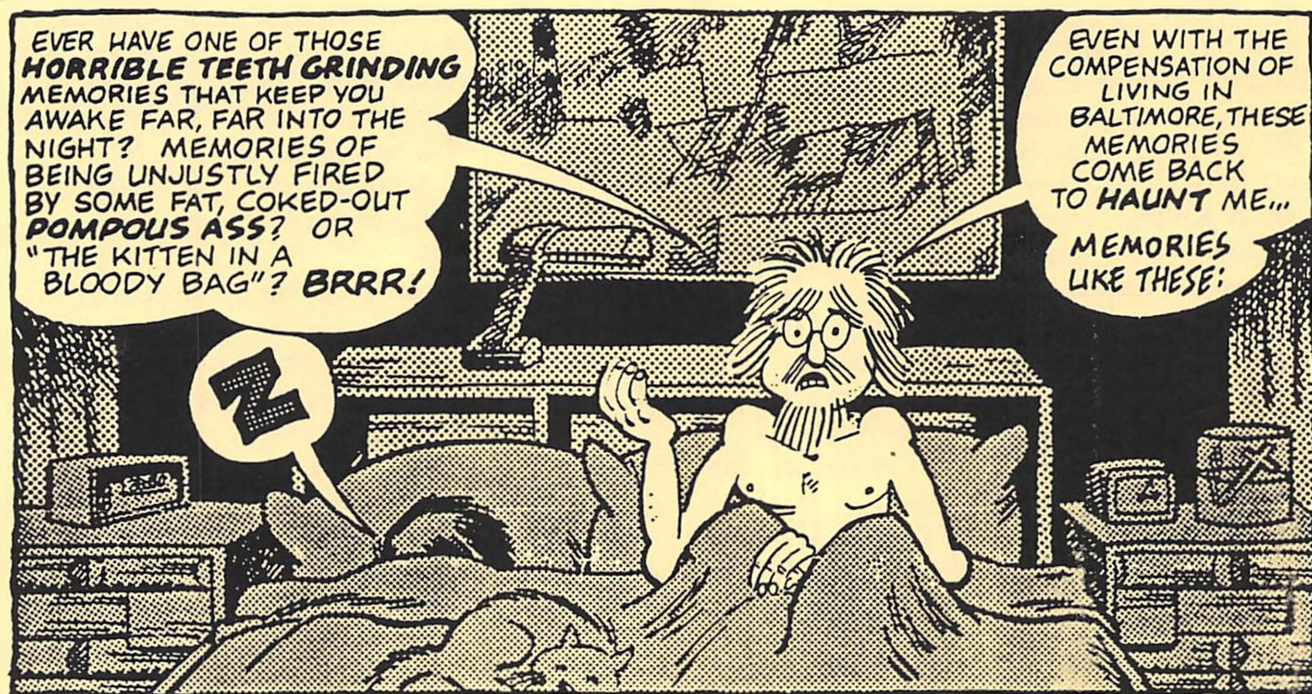
Who sawed Courtney's boat?

That is what is meant by a lino, and that particular lino captured the fancy of graffiti, as a lino in some other fanzine, or coupled with yet another lino to form a new joke or an esoteric reference. (Who *seen* Courtney's boat?)

It has been said that in science fiction fandom, the Midwestern parts of the United States is a wimpy zone, inhabited by wimps, of course. A few fans bridled at the suggestion but not the fun-loving crowd among the Midwesterners. Some fanzines soon announced that they were published in The Wimpy Zone, and some buttons and badges appeared at conventions advising one and all that the wearer was a Wimp. A Chicago fan soon produced the most humorous reply seen to date. He produced and sold T-shirts bearing a map of the middle states on the shirtfront, together with the legend, "Resident of the Wimpy Zone." They were popular sales items at conventions. It was inevitable that the two esoteric references were combined to form: No one in the Wimpy Zone really knows who sawed Courtney's boat. — Bob Tucker, August, 1987

WHINY MARTYR

by Steve Stiles



I Encounter Racial Prejudice

I was just an innocent young kid back in the late fifties, hoping to become a cartoonist (*sigh*). My biggest dream at the time was to attend the High School of Music and Art — the school many of my favorite E.C. artists, like Harvey Kurtzman, once attended. Naturally, one of the requirements of getting into Music and Art was to achieve high grades, particularly in my Junior High's art classes, as well as written recommendations from four of my art teachers. But since I was already a marvelous artist, I had little to worry about on that score. . . .

One of my school's art classes was taught by a Mr. Brooks, one of the few black teachers we

had. Outstandingly ugly, Mr. Brooks was cold and aloof, his toad-like features fixed in a permanently unfriendly scowl. Naturally my fellow kids (being a pack of bigots) hated his guts. One day Brooks left the room on an errand, leaving the blackboard completely unattended, just waiting for one little creep to go up and write the following:

"MR. BROOKS IS A BIG BLACK BABOON."

Everybody thought that this was a tremendous scream and howled with laughter, while I writhed in my seat, my advanced social consciousness outraged by this blatant display of ugly racial prejudice. As I sat there, a tremendous struggle of conscience took place within my young psyche: should I let the incident pass, or should I take a stand? On one hand, prejudice lowered the moral tone of our nation and inflicted

pain on innocent people. But on the *other* hand, to make a stand would expose *me* to a considerable amount of pain; at the very least, slanders and jeers from my fellow students. Or maybe a good beating after school.

I stood up, shaking, sweat running down my body. I pointed out that this was *America!* ("Shut up, ya faggit!") That it was *wrong* to judge a man by the color of his skin! ("Up Yours!") That people should be judged by what was *inside* them! ("Siddown, fuckface!") This was *America*, damn it! ("Booo!") I sat down.

Seconds later, Brooks reentered the room. Taking in the blackboard with one quick glance, his face flushed with anger, he cried out, "*Who did this?*" And then the trap was sprung.

"*STILES DID!*" shouted the entire class with one voice.

Brooks reamed me out, up, down, and sideways. Wilting under his stinging invective, speechless with shock and mortification, I was unable to get out a single word in my own defense. In subsequent attempts to explain, Brooks would turn away from me, totally ignoring my very existence. Needless to say, I didn't get any recommendation. In fact, I got a completely undeserved "D" in that class.

This whole incident taught me an important lesson in race relations in the United States: Black people can be assholes, too.



The Phallic Symbol

I was thirteen years old and out on my very first date. Amazingly, I had managed to work up enough nerve to ask someone out — and she was one of the opposite sex! Even more amazing, Karen Anderson was one of the most attractive and sought-after girls at Wagner Junior High. Now, it may be difficult to comprehend in these days, but in the bygone fifties teen sex was an extremely *rare*, almost mystical, experience. There was teenage intercourse and then there was spotting unicorns in Central Park. Kids who did **it**, or who were rumored to have done **it**, were in a tiny minority; there was the school slut, and

there were the Make-Out Artist (who did **it** with the slut). For some reason, the former were contemptible, while the latter were admired.

Considering all that, the fact that I carried an aging condom around in my wallet was pretty unusual; I was far from being a Make-Out Artist, but I think it was kind of a totem or good luck piece — there was always the chance that I might meet some desperate women who had contracted a mysterious fatal disease that could *only* be cured by immediately having sexual intercourse with the first teenage boy she met on the street. Who knows, I could get lucky!

So there we were, Karen and I, out on a date, and me trying desperately to be witty, debonair, and charming; it wasn't a hell of a lot of fun, but things were going smoothly enough. That is, until it was time to pay the restaurant bill. . . .

With all the sophistication I could muster, I whipped out my wallet. With much panache, I flashed out the bills. With unerring accuracy my rubber described a gentle arc to land — plop! — right smack in the middle of Karen's plate.

We never dated again. Shortly after that, Karen took up with a Neanderthal jock in our class.



I Accept Jesus Christ as My Lord and Savior

I was a little pagan when I was twelve; all the others in my circle at Calvary Baptist had accepted the Lord as their Savior two years earlier. Me, I was skeptical; walking on water and parting the Red Sea seemed a little . . . fishy. Besides, how *did* all those animals get on the ark? And, finally, there was the personality of Jehovah Himself; quite frankly, He struck me as being rather bloodthirsty, a real unappetizing character.

Still, the peer pressure was terrific. I was continually showered with hints while in Sunday School, not to mention all the times I was "Witnessed" to. It was pretty embarrassing.

I was converted by a man from the *Amos n' Andy* radio show. He was a guest speaker at our Sunday School, an elderly black man who performed magic tricks that illustrated Christian

dogma. He spoke about many things: of joys of heaven, the horrible tortures of hell — people roasting on grills! — and of the snares and pitfalls this world has to offer. Tears flowed down the cheeks of this gentle old man as he invited the uncommitted to step forward and make a decision for Jesus, tears that seemed to melt my stony heart as I struggled in my seat, torn between eternal bliss and ever-lasting damnation.

The big problem, though, aside from all my lack of faith in the miraculous, was that I was extremely shy; for me to actually *stand up* in front of a roomful of people, some of them adults, and admit to being a loathsome *sinner* was unthinkable.

As if reading my mind, the old man offered a terrific way out. All the sinner had to do to accept salvation, he suggested, was to stand up during the closing prayer, when all eyes would be shut, all heads bowed. Only God would know.

Perfect! I started, very quietly, to stand. Slowly I rose from my seat. And then, halfway up, all those doubts about the ark & etcetera, came back to me in a rush. Just as silently, I began to descend into my seat and hellfire.

All around me the whispers hissed out: "Hsst! Go ahead, Steve!" "Hsst! Do it, Steve!"

I was outnumbered. Two weeks later I was baptized. Water got up in my nose. Praise the Lord.



Casper Citron For City Council

It was my first job, passing out handbills in the streets of Manhattan, in the very streets Nazi bunds had met and paraded in during the '30s. Casper Citron was no Nazi, though — just a bald and meek looking little man running for City Council, who needed all the help he could get. That's where I came in; I was considered a little too young for envelope stuffing, so it was my job to stand outside Citron headquarters and pass out broadsheets describing My Candidate's many sterling virtues.

Evidently this was a much-sought-after position because there was a rotten little pest who was after my job: a little boy who badgered, and hectored, and pleaded with me for the high honor of distributing Casper Citron handbills. And when I refused, he began kicking me, snatching at my leaflets, spitting on me; unfortunately, he was

a little too fast for me to wring his neck, always dancing out of range at the last minute.

Eventually he wore down my resistance and I gave up, handing him a few hundred handbills. He walked up to Third Avenue with them and I got back to earning my salary.

Minutes passed. And then something caught my eye in the free-flowing stream that ran down the gutter of 86th Street: *hundreds of Casper Citron* leaflets floating down to Second Avenue. Up on Third I could make out two small figures. One, the smaller, was struggling and flailing in the grip of a larger figure — who seemed to be wearing a blue uniform. And when the officer complained at Citron HQ, I got quite a tongue-lashing.

That wasn't the end of it. While I was getting my little talk (and "final warning"), the amusing little tyke had crawled into the Casper Citron soundtrack, locking himself in.

"DON'T VOTE FOR CITRON!" he bellowed into the loudspeaker. "CITRON EATS IT! CITRON IS A FAG!" And a lot of other, *much* more livid invective. It took two cops half an hour to get him out of the truck, and he never paused for breath during the entire session.

It was the first time I'd ever been fired, but not the last. In fact, getting fired is the norm, isn't it? (*Isn't it?*) As for Casper Citron, he lost the election and never made it to City Council. He *did* eventually land a prominent position in Animal Control, though.



My First Job with Stan Lee

I had been out of the army for six months in 1967 when Dan Adkins told me that he no longer wanted to continue on with the pencilling of Marvel Comic's *Doctor Strange*. Probably few people outside of Lynn Hickman and Ted White remember Dan's activities in fandom, but at one time he had been quite active; his artwork appeared in all the major fanzines, and he and Bill Pearson produced the most attractive dittoed fanzine, *Sata Illustrated*, that I've ever seen (I still have my bound set). So when Adkins and Pearson moved to New York, it was only natural that I, a fledgling fanartist, seek them out. Since then we had become friends, and I had gotten into the habit of hanging out at Dan's studio, infrequently helping him out by inking backgrounds and panel borders when deadlines were tight.

So when Dan dropped his news, I leapt at this chance to break into the comics biz. I had been slaving long hours at an advertising agency; the work was dull and menial, and my boss was an ill-tempered old curmudgeon who thought nothing about ripping phones from the wall when in the throes of one of his many childish temper-tantrums. Besides, drawing for the comics would be so . . . so *fannish!*

For the next four weeks I spent my every spare minute during evenings and weekends drawing up samples for *Doctor Strange*. They look pretty crude to me now, but at the time I think they were at least adequate. When I had enough pages accumulated, I hurried over to Marvel's office on Madison Avenue on my lunch hour, and dropped the samples off with John Verpotten, their studio manager.

A few weeks passed. I continued working at the accursed agency. Finally the phone rang one morning when I was preparing to go to work. It was Adkins; his wife, Jennette, had dropped off his last job at Marvel on the previous day, and the secretary there, "Fabulous Flo Steinberg," had told her that "Danny's friend" had been hired, and that I should get over to their office as soon as possible! *Wow!*

I had been praying for that moment, for the chance to do creative work! My boss had been particularly irritating over the last few weeks, and I was just itching for the opportunity for sweet revenge. Picking up the phone, I told Mr. William Allen just where to go and what to do when he got there! Then I dressed and hurried over to Marvel.

They never heard of me! I hadn't been hired — Frank Springer, the artist for Michael O'Donoghue's "Phoebe Zeit-Geist," was going to be drawing *Doctor Strange*. "Fabulous Flo" had gotten the two of us mixed up.

It took me three months to land another advertising job with another ill-tempered employer. My experience with Marvel so soured me that it was years before I'd even *think* of working for the comics again. Eventually, I *did* get work with Marvel, putting in five years as an anonymous "Ghost Artist" for their British line of comics. Most recently I pencilled two stories for their children's comic "Royal Roy" ("He's A Prince Of A Boy"). Then it folded.



Sex and the New York World's Fair

I really didn't know what to expect. A friend in Brooklyn had generously fixed me up with a date with his luscious (if spacy) live-in girl friend (Oh magnanimous friend of my youth!). I was to pick her up and take her to the World's Fair; when we returned to the apartment, my friend would be out for the evening and whatever would happen would happen: maybe even *sex!*

Well, I didn't know; it seemed kind of dubious to me — stuff like that only happened to *other* people. I had lost my virginity some months ago, but it had cost me \$50; I had earned the money through church work (and that's a whole different story). When it came to women and sex I was almost completely inexperienced. A real cretin,



you might say.

The morning of our date arrived, and I hurried over to Brooklyn. I arrived at the apartment. I knocked at the door. She opened it. She was nude. Bare. *Starkers*. And lovely.

What the hell?! It was 8:30 in the morning and I hardly knew the woman. Wasn't this kind of *rushing* things? Or perhaps this was a subtle hint of things to come, pun, pun? Or maybe she was simply a house nudist, a liberated bohemian soul flying in the winds of freedom?

Me, I was a very young ex-Baptist, damn it.

Oh well. Nothing to do but play it cool and see what developed while she had her morning breakfast and I admired her breasts. Then we left for the Fair.

I really don't remember much about the New York World's Fair. My mind was on other things. It seemed like an awfully *long* day.

The day ended; it had been enjoyable. I thought I had gotten along nicely with A., it seemed as if she liked me. On the subway ride back she had rested her head on my shoulder and

we had held hands.

As promised, my friend was indeed absent when we entered his apartment. There *was*, however, a complete stranger waiting on the living room couch. A stranger to me, that is. A. greeted him like a long-lost lover.

After a while they began to neck. It was a *very* long subway ride back to Manhattan. . . .



The Long Loud Silence

Parts of these teeth-grinding memories and ghastly incidents from my past were originally roughed out in comic strip format and submitted to *Weirdo*, the underground comic edited by Aline Kominsky-Crumb. That was four years ago. Since then I have heard nary a word from Kominsky-Crumb, not even one of those dreadful generic xeroxed rejection-slips. *Phooey!*

The stupid cow. — Steve Stiles



**TOWNER
SEZ**

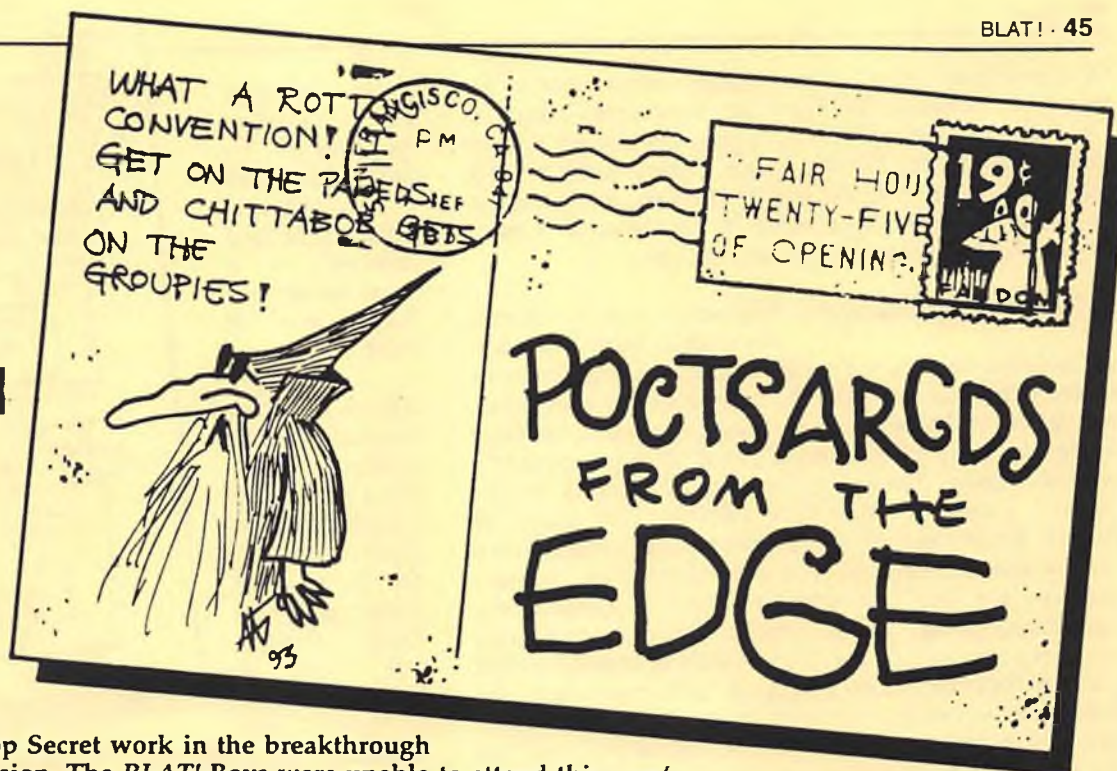
“ Personally, I am unable to stand fanzine fiction. I never read any fiction in a fanzine unless it was written by E. Everett Evans. (I read that only for the laughs.) With full and abashed knowledge of the many pages of fiction I myself published, I will state flatly that any serious story that is worth a faint damn will be published somewhere professionally. This is all the more true now that the fantasy/stf field is glutted with prozines. And as utterly unreadable as the typical pulp magazine is at its best, life is just too short to read its rejects, to say nothing of sweating out the stencilling and mimeographing of them.

Please note that I said *serious* story. Satire is quite another dish. I still remember with great relish some of the innumerable take-offs on “World of Null-A,” particularly Paul Spencer’s. There was Burton Crane, with “Free Seeds from Congress” and other gems. A lot of Burbee’s best work is satirical fiction, including the item he considers his best, even if Rotsler did botch it up on publication. (“Big Name Fan,” if you must know.) Nor should I forget “Shadow Over North Weymouth 91” by Art Widner, a snappy double take-off on Lovecraft and George O. Smith. Stuff like this is wonderful. Any fanzine editor who can publish its equivalent is doing his readers a favor.

Another dislike of mine is poetry. I used to use it for fillers. I even wrote three or four poems (serious, weird ones, too!) which were published in various fanzines. The word you are groping for, son, is fugghead. I’m not even groping for it. ”

— Francis Towner Laney, *Spacewarp* 42,
September 1950

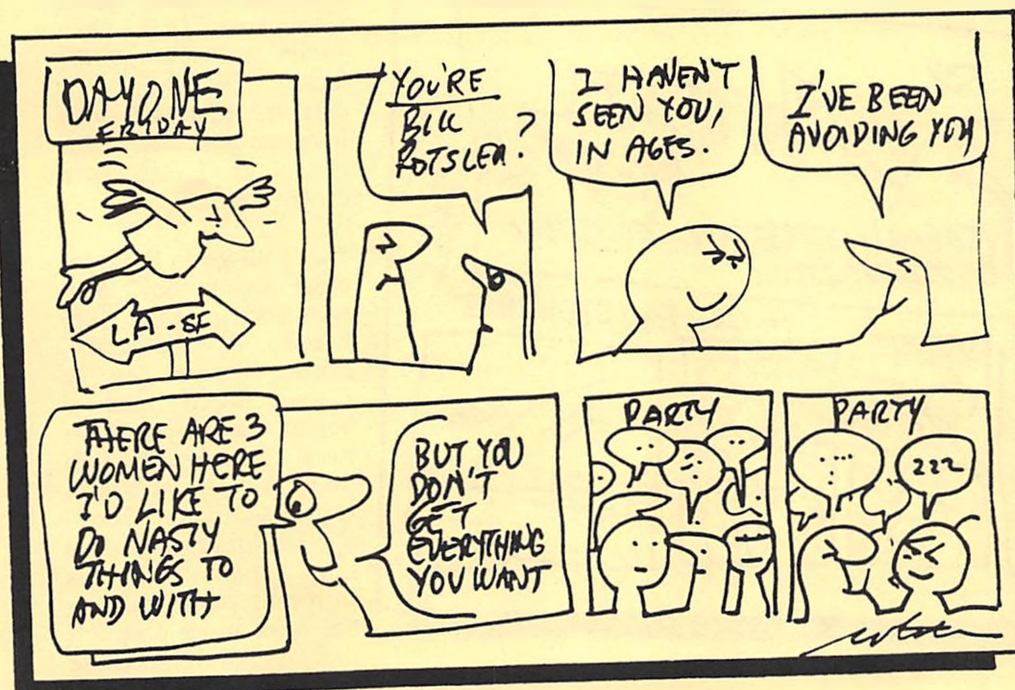
THE 1993 WORLDCON AS IT HAPPENED!



Because of our Top Secret work in the breakthrough field of Pepsi fusion, The *BLAT!* Boys were unable to attend this year's Gathering of the Tribes in San Francisco. Instead we recruited **FRANK LUNNEY, STU SHIFFMAN, JEFF SCHALLES, ANDY HOOPER, STEVE STILES** and the inimitable **WILLIAM ROTSLER**, to be our eyes and ears in the City By the Bay. Their reports, written on postcards and mailed from the convention, are presented here for your vague enjoyment. — djs

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd Jet lag & cable car clacking outside our 2nd floor hotel room are squeezing these words from my fingers while I munch complimentary croissants at 6 a.m. Forgive the lapses en Français. * This is, of course, not a convention report. After the hell (expected) of airplane travel, Catherine and I ran into Len Bailes at the nighttime fanzine lounge. Our first *BLAT!* reader! He led us upstairs in the Parc Fifty-five to Joe Siclari's Magi-Con Appreciation party. We soon commandeered a

room with Jeff Schalles, Andy Hooper, Barnaby Rapoport and Lynn & Bill Koehler for le premier de sercon information exchange. * Happy fingers raising volume controls on a portable CD player soon attracted a knock from a Dick that wasn't Philip K. Speaking thru billowing smoke he reminded us we were on a no-smoking floor & could we turn down the music. GAK! After less than 1 hour in, this can't be a defining moment *ALREADY* in San Francisco. * Andy Hooper and I agreed that our cartes postales would be Totally Truthful. Frank



Friday night at the Night-time Fanzine Lounge at the Parc 55 — partly sponsored by Minneapolis in '73 (20th Anniversary) and TAFF. Plentiful fans (the pro parties are far away in another hotel, and the bid parties are far above us. Take the elevators? Yeesh!). After the hubbub of the Emperor Norton Reception (i.e.: Meet the Pros) complete with bagpipers and drums, ye olde compleat Schottische thang — it is good to retreat to Fannish Land. * Lucy Huntzinger is here done up like Patsy Montana in bovine gal outfit, doing her Grand

Ol' Opry voice. Also Lillian Edwards, enblondified by her sojourn in Canada's San Francisco, Vancouver. Alas, Abi Frost is not a Happy TAFF Delegate, smoking up a storm cloud, crying, and she has major culture shock at U.S. worldcons. Its nothing like Brit conventions, too spread out, no place to smoke & socialize in the Moscone Center. Cruddy coffee, no central bar, etc., etc. Stu

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th My smile was so drastic my cheeks hurt. "Frank is so isolated in PA, he's astounded to find someone sleazier than he is." The Rev. Jay Kinney, subscriber, explained to Mark Kernes, managing editor of *Adult Video News*, as I introduced them and subsequently watched their discussion of mutual friends in the "adult" industry. We were climbing the stairs, 15 flights: Friday night's elevator computers were blown out by the convention. No cybernovel's omnipotent machine for this nonvirtual reality. * Back to my hallucinogenically painful smile: Dixie Tracy-Kinney has just promised us that Jamie Gillis & friends would perform for honored houseguests, Catherine et moi, the following weekend, followed by a trip to the lesbian strip-bar across 16th Street. Then Father Jay said that the next cover of *Gnosis* would feature full frontal nudity — his own, of course. Frank

Sitting in a tribute to Avram Davidson. I am thrilled by the several reminiscences by a select group of folks: including son Ethan Davidson (that same erstwhile "Frodo Ethan" I read about long ago), which is much like being confronted by Christopher Milne, I suppose. Deeply felt introduction by Silbersack, stentorian-voiced tribute by Ethan (probably didn't realize the level of amplification) that was very funny & touching. Grania Davis on the literary estate and cleaning out his Bremerton WA apartment. Very funny tale by Greg Benford on the adjunct professorship gig he got for Avram at UC Irvine and Peter Beagle read "The Golem" to

great hilarity. Harry Turtledove on Avram's review of Dereleth & Lovcraft. Silverbob in fond memory — a great salute to a major fave of mine. Stu

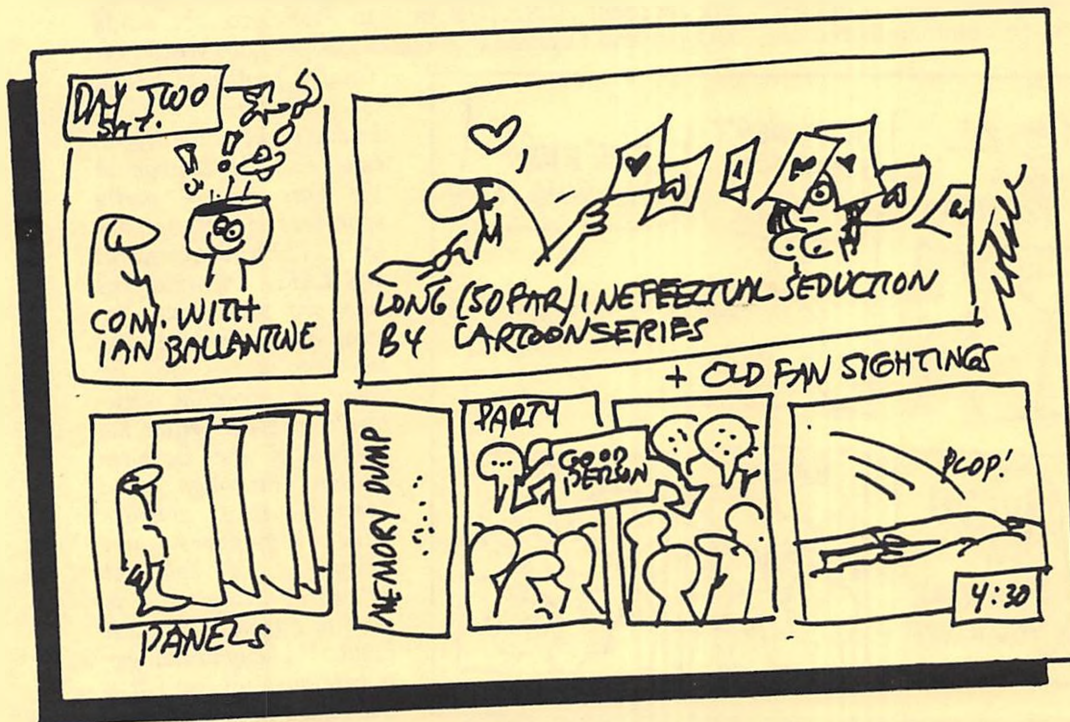
After a great breakfast at Dottie's True Blu Cafe, I find myself finally at the Moscone, at the Jerry Jacks Remembered thing. Present are Frank & Catherine, John D. Berry, Robert

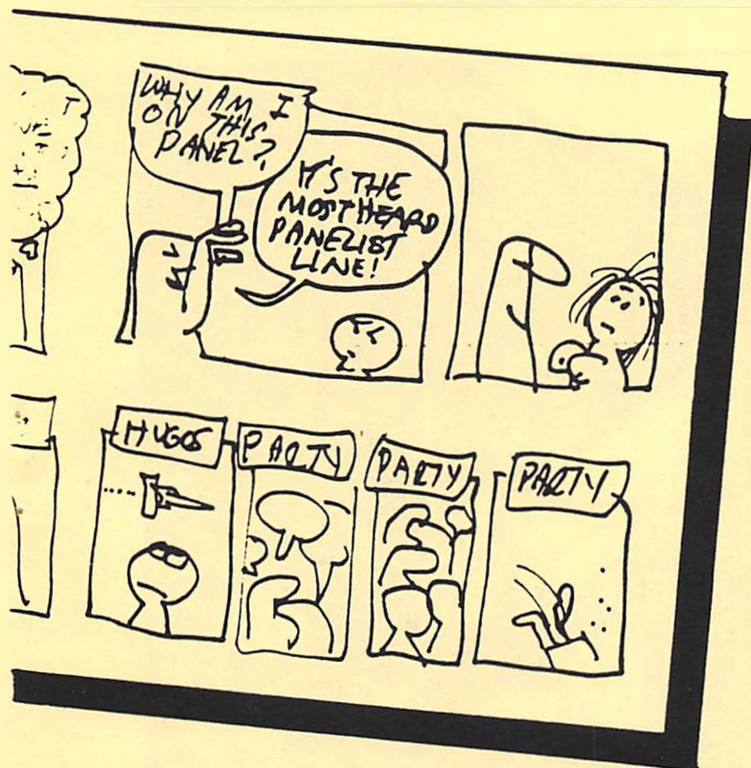
Lichtman, etc. Whoaa! *Fast Forward* — Robert and I find Terry's stencils for the second Burbee [anthology] waiting for me and we go back to my place to get sercon and look at them. I crack my first lager of the day. * Hey, now I'm at a surprise Harlan appearance at the Lester Del Rey memorial — PK Dick had ten times the crowd show up (and in a smaller room . . .). Jeff

The Jerry Jacks Remembrance panel was quite touching. Paul Moslander, Liz Lynn, Loren MacGregor and many more shared stories ranging from Jerry as #1 Gay fan to Con organizer to enthusiastic Dope maven; "Slave Boys of Gor"; "Fafhrd & Gay Mouser." Jerry at the Rich Street Health Club: "No matter how many times you want to do

it, you always want to do it one more time!" Jerry: Champion of Detail Delegation but owner of Big Ideas. His smile/giggle persists. All agreed: Jerry lives, we miss him. I left with a small tear and a choke. Frank

"Let's all go to the Bondage Exhibition!" said somebody, and Jeff, Frank & Catherine, Mark Kernes, Jay & Dixie, Elaine and I began the tedious business of moving from point A to point B at a typical worldcon. Bondage fandom has become more apparent at sf cons in recent years and you see a lot more dog collars and handcuffs these days, most often on all





the wrong people. Still I couldn't help wondering what the Bondage Exhibit would be all about and I mentally reviewed some of the more common setups; the Stork, Pollywogs In A Bucket, Our Savior, Eel In The Manger, Parish Pump, as well as the more esoteric presentations like Fifth Cavity and, more rare, the Vigorous Recliner.

Arriving at the exhibit we found a young woman in fishnet stockings entertaining her audience with a detailed dissertation on the meaning and significance of her shoes; their shape, the color, the length of the heels, the zippers. We looked at each other and then turned and left for the Fan Lounge, a mere thirty-two floors away.

Just three zippers
— how vanilla! Steve

SUNDAY, SEPT. 5th

I didn't know who the pale, skinny woman with the fluorescent red lipstick was; they arrived together, she and Len Bailes, and it turned out they were old friends. Turned out she and I were old friends, too, even though at first I thought it was Richard Belzer in a dress. "Have you seen Frank & Catherine, I haven't seen them in a long time, and it would be great . . . wait, it's you. I don't believe it!" She was Hank Stine,

now known as Jean Stine.

"Well, now the secret is out, I don't care, everyone can know. So how ya doin', hon?" Somehow, I had tapped into the universal source of knowledge in recognizing Stine without any prompting from her, and I think that was a real plus. "I'm having the operation in January," she said. "Either in Brazil or Denver, I will become a woman." Catherine and I had a very good talk with Jean and her son, Damian, but I lost them and Jeff Schalles on the way to the pro party in the ANA Hotel (nobody knows what those initials mean). Frank

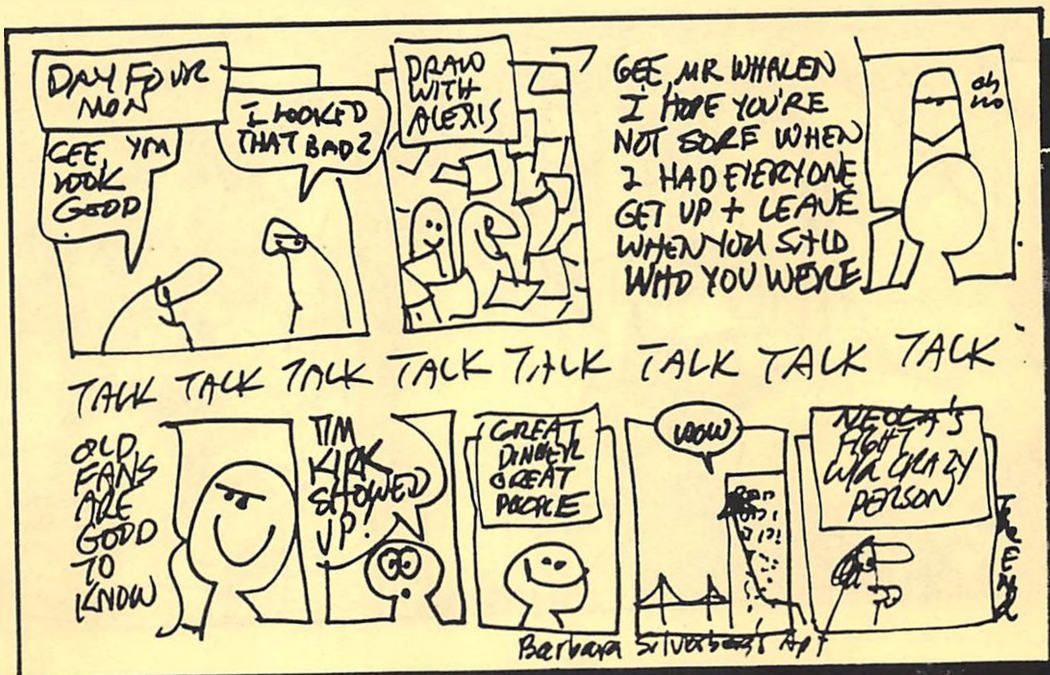
Last night after a hectic whirl, Andi Schecter and I went over to the Parc 55 to meet Jeanne Gomall, Scott Curtis, Hope Kieford and Karl Heileman for dinner. Andi and I had seen a review of a fascinating Jamaican-Caribbean restaurant in *Chile Pepper Magazine*, which was recieved with great enthusiasm.

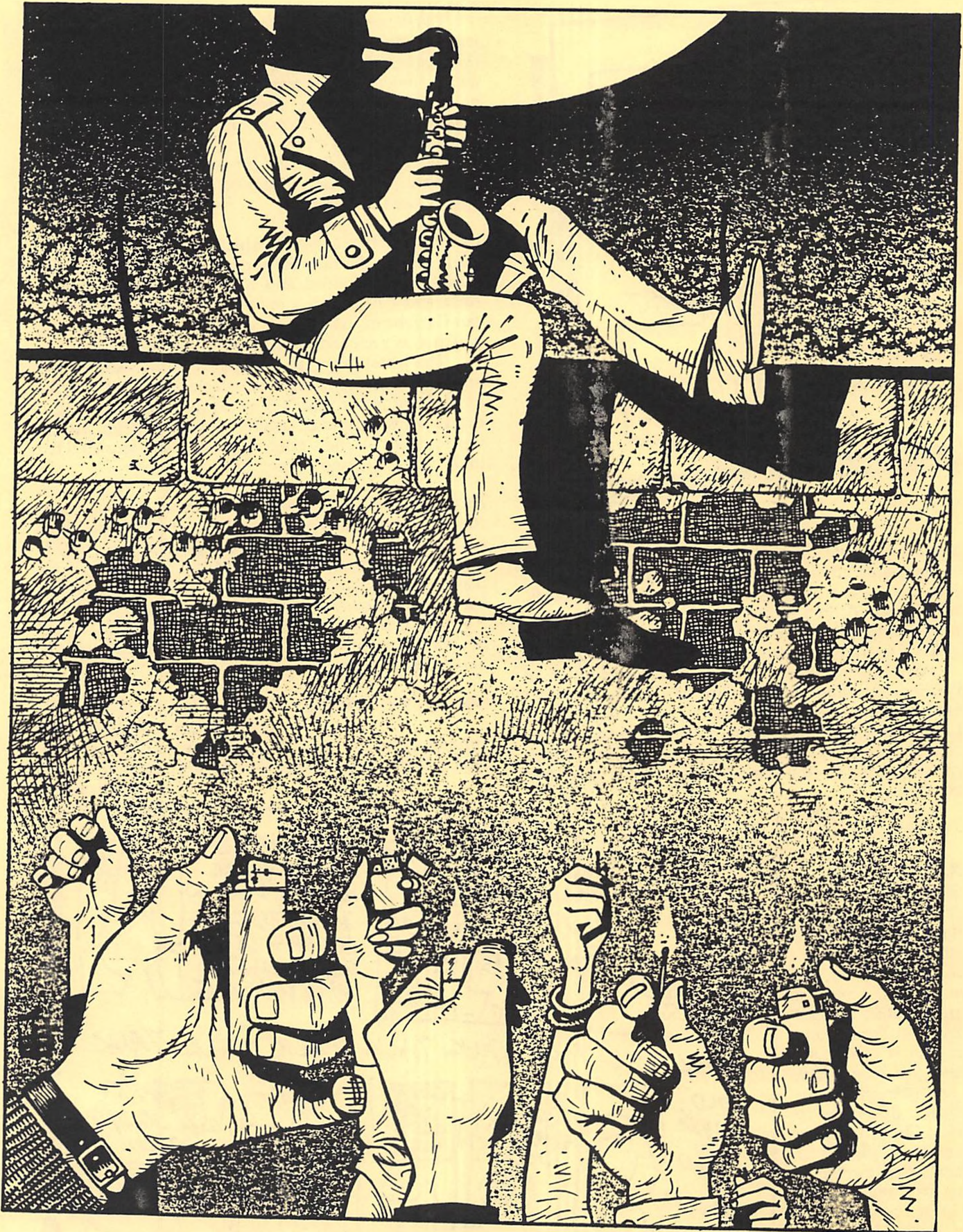
The restaurant was great and Jeanne went beserk on her Strawberry Margarita, attacking people with the shark included in Karl's blue liquor Slushie, giving it drinks of water and splashing Hope and Andi, attacking Scott, etc. "She's got a shark and she knows what to do with it," cried Hope. Stu

Hugo ceremony a shambles. A drunken Martin Hoare stumbles down the stairs with Dave Langford's Hugo award and drives it through his Entepicondylar Foramen. While the medics approach, a distraught Mike Glycer leaps from his chair to grapple with Hoare, and 9 or 10 Nesfans fall down like Mack Sennett characters in the widening skin of blood. P.S.: The truth is much worse — fan program equal to half of Corflu, thousands of dead costumers fill the streets after SFPD mistook them for homeless. Andy

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6th No room for us at the masquerade on Saturday, but Sunday everyone stood in cattle chutes two hours to wait inside one hour for the Hugos. Catherine, Jeff

continued on page 52





THERE, AT THE FALL

by Will Straw

Until 1989, I had only been once to Europe — in the summer of 1977, when I spent three weeks in Paris and another three thumbing around England and Scotland. Ever since, I had been held back by the decade-long (and potentially fatal) condition known as An Unfinished PhD Thesis. I avoided any long, international trips all through the 1980s, determined, as the end of each year of teaching arrived, that *this* was the summer I was going to wrap up my thesis and get on with my life. Each summer, nevertheless, brought its own distractions — the Iran-Contra Hearings, attempts to give up smoking, the emergence of house music. In the fall of 1989, I received the absolute final ultimatum from the university at which I worked — submit your thesis by the middle of November, or risk being denied tenure and put out of a job.

A couple of years earlier, the Music Department at Carleton University (my employer until this summer) had set up an exchange program with the Centre for Popular Music Research at

Humboldt University in what was then East Berlin. This was largely a pretext enabling the Centre's Director, Peter Wicke, to visit and spend time in the West. Wicke was the first rock promoter in East Germany in the 1970s; he had dated Nina Hagen, written a book on rock music which became a bestseller there, and generally became a minor national celebrity. Peter visited Carleton in early 1988, and invited me to come to East Berlin the following year to give a couple of lectures. Pick a 10-day period in the Fall Term, he said, and let me know the dates. In August 1989, I looked at my schedule for the upcoming term and settled on 8 days; almost randomly, I picked the period from November 9th to the 16th.

And so, during the first week of November, I scrambled to finish my Thesis, watching on television as Eric Honecker gave way to Egon Krenz in the East German leadership. On November 9th, I caught a plane that went Ottawa-Montreal-Heathrow-Frankfurt-West Berlin. Fresh

newspapers at each of these stops brought updates on the situation in East Germany. When I landed, I was told my luggage was not on the plane, and immediately confronted a Quandary. Someone was waiting for me on the other side of the Berlin Wall, as was my Visa, and if I waited for my luggage they would have no idea what happened to me. On the other hand, if I went to meet my contact, there was no guarantee I could get a visa enabling me to come back and get my bags. Finally, I opted for the second alternative and took a taxi to Checkpoint Charlie, where I could cross over on foot. My visa, of course, was not on any record at the East Germany border crossing and, after a long wait and many phone calls from the border-guard, I received a one-day pass.

I knew I was not where I was meant to meet my contact, and wandered around parts of East Berlin that had not been rebuilt since 1945 — that looked, in fact, like American movie caricatures of the Soviet bloc. Eventually, I found Monika, the women sent to drive me to the place where I was staying. She was, needless to say, excited about the political changes going on around her, though extremely apprehensive about their unsettling effect on her life. Monika drove me to the Police Station, so that my one-day visa could be changed to one of a week's duration — a visa which gave me only one back-and-forth privilege. This resolved, she dropped me off at the University's Guest House, a very old but comfortable building with washrooms down the hall and a bunch of Soviet physicists in the other rooms. (One of them, after several days of warming to me, gave me an "I Like Mike" button with a photo of Gorbachev on it.)

I slept for a while early that evening and then, around 9:00 p.m., headed off by subway to the border crossing, where I entered West Berlin and caught a train to the airport. My bags showed up, and I re-entered the East at 11:00 p.m. or so, moving slowly through a customs line consisting primarily of Poles carrying all kinds of things (things, I later learned, they were taking home to sell on the black market). The others in the line were mostly elderly East Germans who, because they were of pension age, had the right to cross over to the West regularly. (Their escape to the West would not be considered an economic loss.) I waited half an hour for an East Berlin taxi, and went back to the Guest House to sleep.

The next morning (Friday, November 10th) I

woke up famished and walked outside looking for something to eat. I bought some pastries and took them back to my room, where I turned on the radio. To my surprise the BBC announced that, while I'd been sleeping, the Berlin Wall had opened up, and people were pouring from East to West.

Clearly I had stumbled onto the most exciting event of my life.

Peter Wicke showed up to welcome me, and was obviously agitated. For several weeks now, the university and all other institutions had been on the edge of chaos; old party hacks were being denounced, and others were jockeying for position. Workers and students and professors were meeting in all-day sessions to debate their futures. Peter, who had never joined the Party but was a committed socialist, had a good deal of credibility with a wide range of political factions, and was in great demand by this point. As someone who spoke English well and had many contacts in the West, he was also much sought after by journalists covering the story. Peter believed that the opening of the wall spelled imminent disaster; once people had access to the West, he felt, acquiring Western currency would become the main motivation in every interaction, and this would poison the economy and social structure. And yet, as he agreed, the present government had no right or mandate or moral justification for governing.

We drove downtown. People still, at that point, required visas to cross the Wall, but these had become more readily available, and there were traffic jams around all the police stations where these could be obtained. Peter went off to be interviewed by a foreign television network, but suggested I go to a rally being held later that afternoon at Karl Marx Platz.

I wandered down to the Brandenburg Gates. The Wall was on the far side of the Gates, and both were separated from the East by a huge field and a fence guarded by soldiers. I stood, with several hundred others, looking over the fence and across the field at the Wall, where what seemed like thousands of Westerners held up matches and lighters. I remember, at one point, a child climbed up on the fence and a soldier rushed over to order him off; his superior quickly told him to back off and leave the child alone.

I hooked up with a Czech tourist and a French journalist, and we wandered over to one of the newly-opened border crossings. Cars were lined

up for blocks waiting to cross over; a pedestrian line-up likewise stretched on for a mile or so. Down one side street, on a stretch of the Wall, a Westerner sat playing "Take Five" on the saxophone. Several East Berliners and I climbed up on piles of metal tubing to watch and wave to him. My images of the day were shaped by the fact that there was little sun and lots of dust. All you could ever see of the West were hazy, indistinct shapes and light, like Heaven in some bad movie.

I spent most of the day hanging around the Wall. People were already beginning to return to East Berlin with Western shopping bags, smoking Pall Mall cigarettes and fondling their new purchases. Around 4:00 p.m., I started walking up to the Unter der Linden to the Plaza where the demonstration was to begin. People streamed off side streets by the dozens, carrying banners and placards. My only German is what I learned from watching "Hogan's Heroes," but I gradually realized that these were posters calling for reform within the Communist Party; the rally, in fact, was organized to push for reform within the Party. At Karl Marx Platz, thousands milled around while loudspeakers played what seemed like old Party songs (a couple of them, in any event, mentioned Rosa Luxembourg).

At this point, the events I have been most asked to recount took place. I spotted a reporter from CNN — one who was vaguely familiar to me — with his cameraperson and producer. He pushed his way through the crowd asking people, in what seemed to me boorish and loud American, "Do you speak English?" When someone said yes, he began an interview, but he typically cut them off in mid-sentence with a finger across his throat when it became apparent their English wasn't satisfactory. I was fascinated by this, in large measure because I am a CNN junkie. Then, at one point, the reporter turned to me: "Do you speak English?" he asked. Yes, I replied (as a matter of fact, I do). "Do you live in the GDR?" I hesitated a half-second, then said Yes. He interviewed me for 5-10 minutes, and I answered his questions in the poorest of fake German accents. I said that, for the people of the GDR, West Berlin was like his Times Square: You might not want to live there, but you wanted the freedom to visit it whenever you wanted. And a few other things I've forgotten. After several questions he thanked me, told me my English was really good, and moved on.

I never found out if this interview made it on the air. It was meant in part as a wink at my then roommate, who watched CNN religiously. I discovered later, in any event, that he was on route home from Florida during the collapse of the Wall and would have missed it anyway. Some to whom I have told this story have been appalled at my abuse of journalistic ethics. Regardless, I would, in any case, have done much worse to become a part of the permanent record of that day's events.

The rally continued with speeches I could not understand, and eventually I left, hunted down some food, and returned to the Guest House. I starved the entire week I was there. Restaurants were often closed, because people had gone over to the West, and I was afraid of some of the others because I could not read the menus. So I ate whenever I could find a cafeteria, or bought things in stores where pointing would suffice. (As a result, I lived on sausages and pastries.) Nevertheless, as many have pointed out, there were never food shortages or line-ups in the stores of East Berlin, though fresh fruits and vegetables were in short supply.

I slept for a couple of hours, then, edgy because of jet lag and the day's events, headed out for a drink. I went down to Alexanderplatz, the center of the city and a horrendous monument to Stalinist architecture, and found a place called the Press Bar. This was an ersatz New York bar with stools and fancy drinks, and a dj who played Imagination's "Just An Illusion." I had a couple of drinks, then headed out around 1:30 a.m., to walk home. I was stumbling up the Schoenhauser Allee when I came across a number of people outside a closed door; someone, obviously a doorman, pointed to me and asked if I wanted to go in. I did. It was a huge dance club, with a large bar, dance floor, and table area. I had a couple of Cuba Libres (the young, in East Berlin, all seemed to drink juice-and-liquor drinks rather than beer) and wandered around, quite drunk. I saw a black man, assumed from his accent when he ordered that he was an African student, and asked him if he spoke English or French. He spoke French, we talked, and he introduced me to a couple of Germans. The male had moved to the West a couple of years earlier and was back visiting his sister. They were planning to both go to West Berlin the next night, she for the first time. I got very drunk and, through a haze, decided at one point I should go home. I stumbled

a half-mile to the Guest House and went to sleep.

The next morning, the first thing I saw after going outside was a group of soldiers beginning to dismantle a bit of the Wall near the Guest House, creating another border crossing to handle the rush.

That was the Day The Wall Opened for me. I stayed another week, only doing one of the planned lectures. I was to talk about Canadian cinema at the Film School in Potsdam, but the students voted to close the school the day before my talk. I saw a free jazz concert, a heavy metal show, and the most amazing punk concert I have ever attended (at the Gethsemane Church, one of the centers of oppositional activity in East Berlin, with the candles on the altar lit and the band playing in front of them). Much of the time, curiously, was marked by low-level boredom. I seemed to be the only person who wasn't heading over to the West, and (the radio aside) I had no access to Western media for in-depth reporting on what was going on.

After that week, I crossed over and the 14 hours I spent in West Berlin before my flight — which included gobbling down a lamb-in-pesto sauce at a fashionable restaurant — were a kind of horror. Hundreds of thousands of East Berliners wandered around, gawking at cheap fabrics and gadgets put outside tawdry stores for them to buy, while every snake oil salesman in the West seemed to be out trying to get their 100 marks of Welcome Money. In East Berlin, the people had seemed proud and even somewhat stylish. Set alongside West Berliners, they looked like hayseeds, undernourished, drably dressed and hypnotized by flashy cars and billboards.

I returned home to find that I'd received tenure and lots of invitations to dinner parties. In 1991 I went back to Germany, to a conference held in the former Stasi training compound outside of East Berlin. I planned to retrace my steps, but much of the city had stopped being recognizable; what I remembered as an official Youth Club from 1989 was now a Hare Krishna hang-out. The last night of that trip, after dancing at Tresor, a techno club in Potsdamerplatz, I wandered by mistake towards the east, desperately looking for taxis. None came by for an hour or so, and the absence of any signs of night life — combined with all I'd heard about the newly violent mood in Berlin — made me afraid in the city for the first time. — Will Straw

POCTSARCDs continued from page 47

and I split after Harry Warner's win for AWoF. Also Langford, G. Ranson (art), *Mimosa* and Andy Porter were number one. Andy's triumphant tour of parties afterward was satisfying. Hooper predicts *Locus* may never win again. SFC's margin was ONE VOTE!! * Lichtman and I barred from Hugo loser's party; it's now Fannishly Correct "Hugo Nominees/Acceptors" only. Few more hours and it's bye-bye to the world of sf. Frank

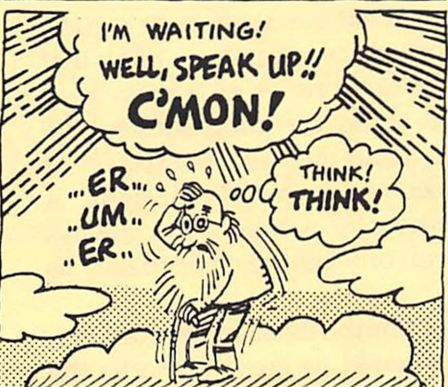
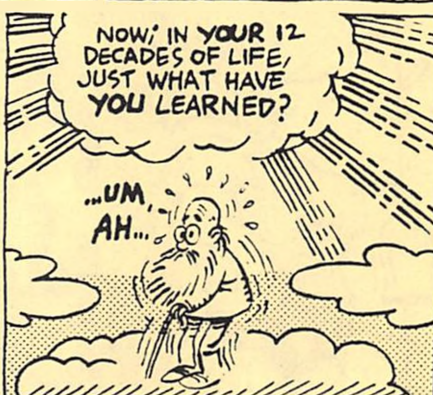
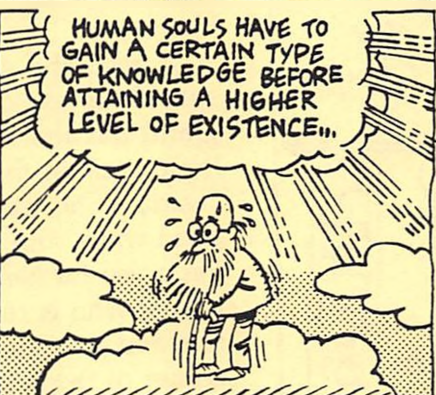
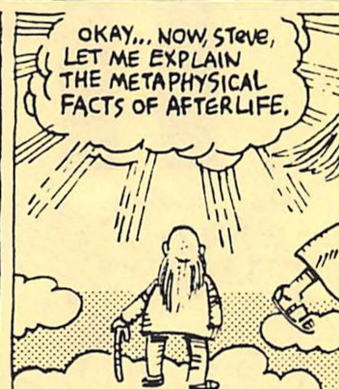
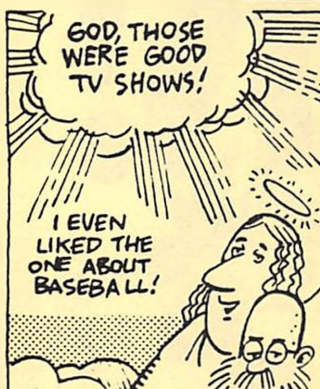
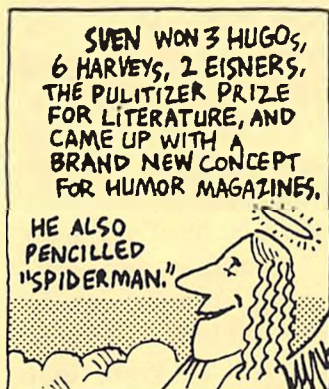
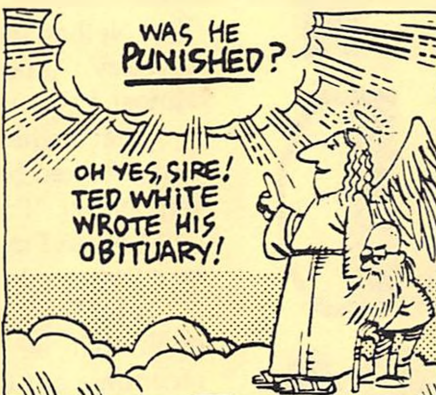
Taking the Fanzine History Project down and packing it away for another year — the box reminds me of boxes of Christmas ornaments. Pull the Gestetners into a circle. What did we used to do that was so much fun? Lichtman and Rotsler walking off one way, Steve & Elaine waiting at the Moscone curb for a relative. Frank and I head off to meet Catherine and they're soon gone too. The dogs are dying upstairs and I don't care. Jeff

The BLAT! Boys Also Heard From: John D. Berry, Alexis Gilliland and Mark Kernes. Ciao!

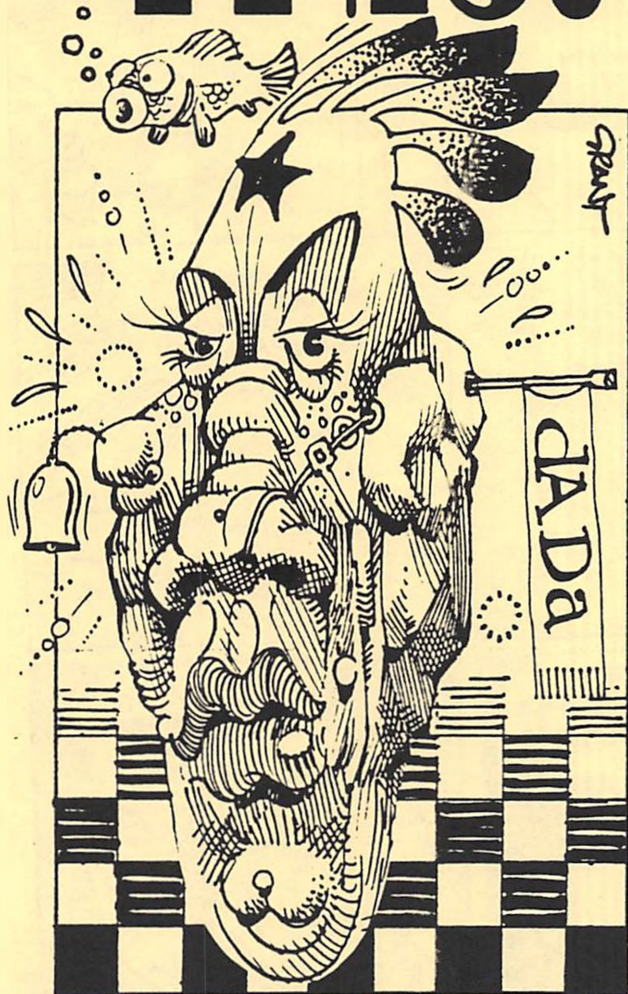


THOTS ON A 50th BIRTHDAY

THE BIG CHILL (OR "DOES THIS MEAN I'M AN ADULT NOW?")



DON'T READ THIS!



by Lynn Steffan

It was a work day like any other. I was sitting at the receptionist's desk so she could go to the bathroom and get some coffee and, as is usually the case when I do this, I was reading. I don't remember what it was. Shakespeare, maybe. A book about Amsterdam and/or The Netherlands, possibly. A novel — horror, mystery, "mainstream" — probably. I'll read almost anything.

That's when Jay Moskowitz, a Principal in our firm, walked by. He'd seen me sitting there reading before. "I'm reading this great book," he said, "and when I'm finished I'd like you to read it. I'd be curious to hear what a woman thinks about it."

It took Jay another two months to finish this book that he found interesting enough as to recommend it to me. Anyway, he finally brought it in. *Mating* by Norman Rush, published by Vintage International, was a winner of the National Book Award for Fiction. The quote on the front cover from *The New York Times Book Review* read: "Exhilarating . . . vigorous and luminous . . . Few books evoke so eloquently the state of love at its apogee." The quote from the *Chicago Tribune* on the back cover proclaimed: "A complex and moving love story . . . breathtaking in its cunningly intertwined intellectual sweep and brio . . . *Mating* is beyond doubt a major novel." Well, that sounded intriguing. I'm always up for a good love story.

I read the synopsis: "The narrator of this splendidly expansive novel of high intellect and grand passion is an American anthropologist at loose ends in the South African republic of Botswana. She has a noble and exacting mind, a good waist, and a busted thesis project. She also has a yen for Nelson Denoon, a charismatic intellectual who is rumored to have founded a secretive and unorthodox utopian society in a remote corner of the Kalahari — one in which he is virtually the only man. What ensues is both a quest and an exuberant comedy of manners, a book that explores the deepest canyons of eros even as it asks large questions about the good society, the geopolitics of poverty, and the baffling mystery of what men and women really want." All right. A female narrator written by a man. I'm always curious as to how well one gender can "speak" as the other.

The book is set in South Africa in the Kalahari region. As a kid I wanted to grow up to be the vet in *Daktari* — with a chimpanzee and a cross-eyed lion as pets, of course. So the wild plains of

the Kalahari held an interest for me. Grand passion. Comedy of manners. I'm willing to give it a shot.

It started out all right. By page 11, I was presented with some intriguing questions:

"... Why did Batswana babies have woolen caps on during the summer? On the other hand, why did some Batswana shave their heads in winter? I knew. Why did Kalanga men let the nail on the little finger of the right hand grow to an extreme length and then sharpen it? Why did the Batswana hate lawns and prefer beaten earth around their houses? Why did schoolgirls so often try to sleep with their heads under the covers? ..."

Unfortunately, the answers didn't follow these questions. And since I didn't finish the book, I'm not sure they were ever answered. I would really like to know why the babies wear woolen caps in the summer or exactly what those Kalanga men are doing with that sharp, little nail. But if it takes reading this whole book to find out, forget about it.

Between pages 70 and 89, there was a scene at a party in which several males were discussing socialism vs. capitalism and which would be best for South Africa. This was written in play format — a person's name and then dialogue; another person's name and their dialogue. A script can be very cold and impersonal. I've known several people who absolutely hated reading plays. Not everyone has the imagination to bring the characters to life through their dialogue. Fortunately, I've been interested in film and theatre all my life so this came easily to me, but it seemed particularly jarring to suddenly come upon this format in the middle of a novel. It was then that I realized that Rush never used quotation marks. What was said by other people was simply reported by the narrator, not quoted. It was extremely annoying. It had never occurred to me that I would be bothered by something as simple as the lack of quotation marks.

"Oh, are you reading *Mating*?" Carmen Arroyo (a Research Associate working on her Ph.D.) asked me as she passed my desk one day. "I'm reading it and I love it!"

"You do?" I asked somewhat incredulously.

"Yeah. I can really identify with the lead

character having a busted thesis."

I must admit, many times when I come across a word I don't know the meaning of, I try to figure it out by the context in which it was used (or take the easy way out and ask someone if *they* know what it means). If it's a real stumper, I pull out the dictionary. There had already been a few words that I wasn't completely sure of, some of them were in a South African language and not included in the glossary at the end of the book, but nothing that brought me to a grinding halt like the phrase on page 124: "... the omphalos of my idioverse, ...". I put my brain into a mini Wayback Machine and, by concentrating on that year of Latin I took in high school, was able to somewhat decipher "idioverse." But "omphalos?" I didn't have a clue. I had been reading this on the subway, so when I got home I ran for the dictionary. I had pretty much figured that idioverse meant one's own "personal space" and the dictionary verified my definition. Then I looked up omphalos. "1. The navel. 2. The central part: focus." So I interpreted the phrase to mean: "the center of my universe." (I hesitate to assume that the author didn't mean "the navel of my universe.") I couldn't believe that those particular words were used to express such a simple idea. Was the author just trying to impress people with all the "big words" he knew? I was beginning to think maybe this book was *too* intellectual for me, but continued to slog my way through.

"What do you think of that book?" a woman asked me one evening on the subway. "Do you like it?"

I felt compelled to be honest. "No," I replied.

"Yeah, I bought that book in hardcover," she said. "You've made it a lot further than I did."

"I hear you have to read that with the book in one hand and a dictionary in the other," another woman chimed in.

"I'd say that's pretty accurate," I responded.

A couple of days later I passed Carmen in the hall at work. "So how far have you gotten in *Mating*?" I asked her. "Are you still enjoying it?"

"Oh, I gave up," she said. "It started getting too boring."

I couldn't believe it. What had I gotten myself into? Here's a woman who initially loved the book and had given up on it. Eventually, I went

to Jay and said, "I just don't think I can finish this book."

"What page are you on?" Jay asked. When I told him, he laughed and said, "You haven't even gotten to the best part yet! It gets more interesting when she finally gets to her destination." And then added, "But I should tell you that I skimmed through pages 300 to 400."

"You skimmed through 100 pages!? You didn't really read the whole book?"

"Well, it got sort of repetitious through those pages," he replied sheepishly. "Sally," another woman in our office who also had attempted to read this book, "did the same thing."

"Okay. I'll keep going, but if it doesn't get any better once she gets to Tsau. . ."

Despite my vigilance, the story *didn't* pick up once she arrived at the "unorthodox utopian society." On page 193, I finally admitted defeat. I didn't care what happened to *any* of the characters or how the story resolved itself. I realized I was never going to finish this book.

The last time I couldn't finish a book was when I had tried reading one by Jackie Collins. (And, of course, for the completely opposite reason: she wasn't intellectual enough!) I'd been curious because her books always went right to the top of the bestseller lists — much like the curiosity I'm feeling now about John Grisham. What made them such huge hits? Why were so many people buying her books? I went to the library (thank ghod I was smart enough not to actually *pay* for a copy of one of her books) and checked out *Hollywood Wives*. Because of my interest in Hollywood and films, I figured maybe I should start with that one. Fifty pages later, I couldn't bring myself to read another word. The complete wretchedness of her writing almost made me nauseous!

Now, you have to understand. I have read every book that Jacqueline Susann ever wrote — even her science fiction novel! (*Valley of the Dolls* was definitely her best.) Admittedly, I was MUCH younger when I read them (junior high/high school, I think), but Jackie Collins' prose is *far* worse than Susann's. How is it possible that this woman has made a fortune on this crap and 9½ out of 10 people don't even know who Donald Westlake is? (You know how contrary those ½ people can be.) There's no justice.

Anyway, I'm one of those people who, once I start reading a book, I finish it. I may have to struggle with some that are less than fascinating,

but I do finish reading them. And that's why I found the *Mating* experience so disheartening.

Having been through this exercise in frustration, I became particularly irate by the pages of critical acclaim printed in the front of the book: *The New York Review of Books* said, "The best rendering of erotic politics . . . since D.H. Lawrence . . . a marvelous novel, one in which a resolutely independent voice claims new imaginative territory . . . The voice of Rush's narrator is immediate, instructive and endearing." After reading that I was sure I could actually *hear* Lawrence spinning in his grave. Just this past fall I read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. That book had eroticism. This book was so non-erotic as to be clinical.

"It draws the reader steadily in," the next blurb from *The New York Times* lied. "Not toward the heart of darkness but toward brilliant illumination." It drew this reader right into the Heart of Boredom.

Newsweek's quote called *Mating*: "A novel that doesn't insult the intelligence of either its readers or its characters: a dryly comic love story about grown-up people who take the life of the mind seriously and know they sometimes sound silly . . . *Mating* is state-of-the-art artifice." NOT! I kept waiting for something to be comic or for someone to "sound silly," though it's possible that I just didn't get the "highbrow" humor. And I'm sorry, but anytime I hear the phrase "the life of the mind," all I can think about is John Goodman running down a hallway full of flames in *Barton Fink*.

So I guess my basic question is this: Who *are* these reviewers and what book did they *really* read?

"Exhilarating?" If I was dead and rigor mortis had already set in, I could maybe twitch my pinky from the stimulation.

"A complex and moving love story?" "Grand passion?" I wasn't even sure the two main characters *liked* each other. Obviously, these critics wouldn't know what passion was if it walked up and French-kissed them.

"An exuberant comedy of manners?" "A dryly comic love story?" Yeah, it's pretty comical that people are buying this book and expecting a real page-turner. I don't think I laughed, smirked, or smiled once while reading as much of it as I did.

I'm always open to reading recommendations. If it hadn't been for my friend, Ellen Donohue, I might never have read *A Handmaid's Tale* by

Margaret Atwood. If it hadn't been for Jerry Jacks, I might never have read *Chinaman's Chance* by Ross Thomas. If it hadn't been for Ted White, I might never have read *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller. (Although the movie — *Henry and June* — helped, too.) If it hadn't been for my husband Dan, I might never have read Donald Westlake and all of his various pseudonyms. Each of these books, in very different ways, had an impact on me. After reading them, I searched for other works by those authors. That's the great part about discovering a new writer. Someone recommends one particular book, and before you know it, you end up with a bookshelf full of that author's output. Having said that, I feel confident that I *won't* be seeking out any other works by Norman Rush.

Mating had to be the driest, dullest, most emotionless book I've ever attempted to read. I've found more intensity and humor in textbooks than I found in the 193 pages I read. The author managed to intellectualize all of the passion and humor right out of it for me. When I finally gave up on this book, it took me two weeks before I could even consider starting another. (At least it allowed me to get caught up on my magazine reading.) I was leery of having the whole experience repeat itself. I'm sure that would have driven me completely over the edge. I'd probably be on a tower mowing down publishers and critics with an AK47. (Hey, maybe that's not such a bad idea. If parents can blame rock 'n' roll for their kid's suicide and television for their kid's blowing away someone else's kid, then I could always plead temporary insanity due to bad literature.)

Recently, I read an article about the romance novel in-

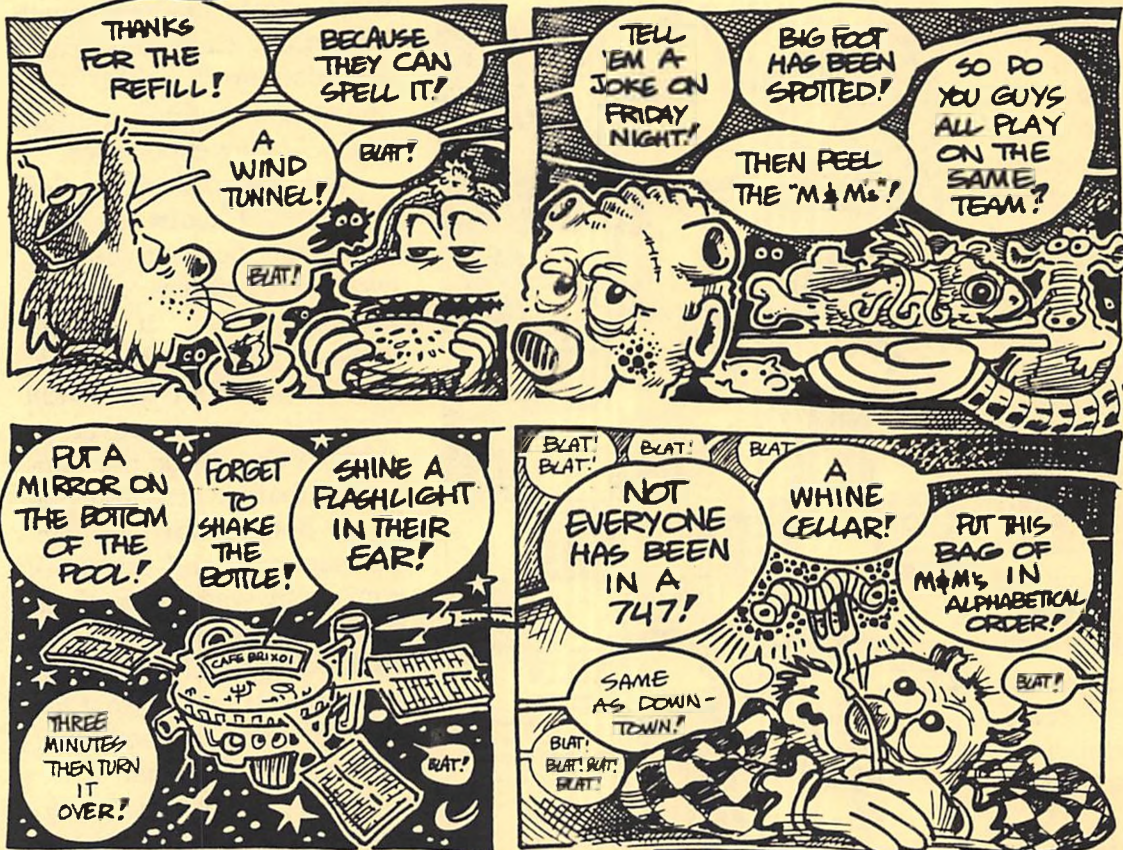
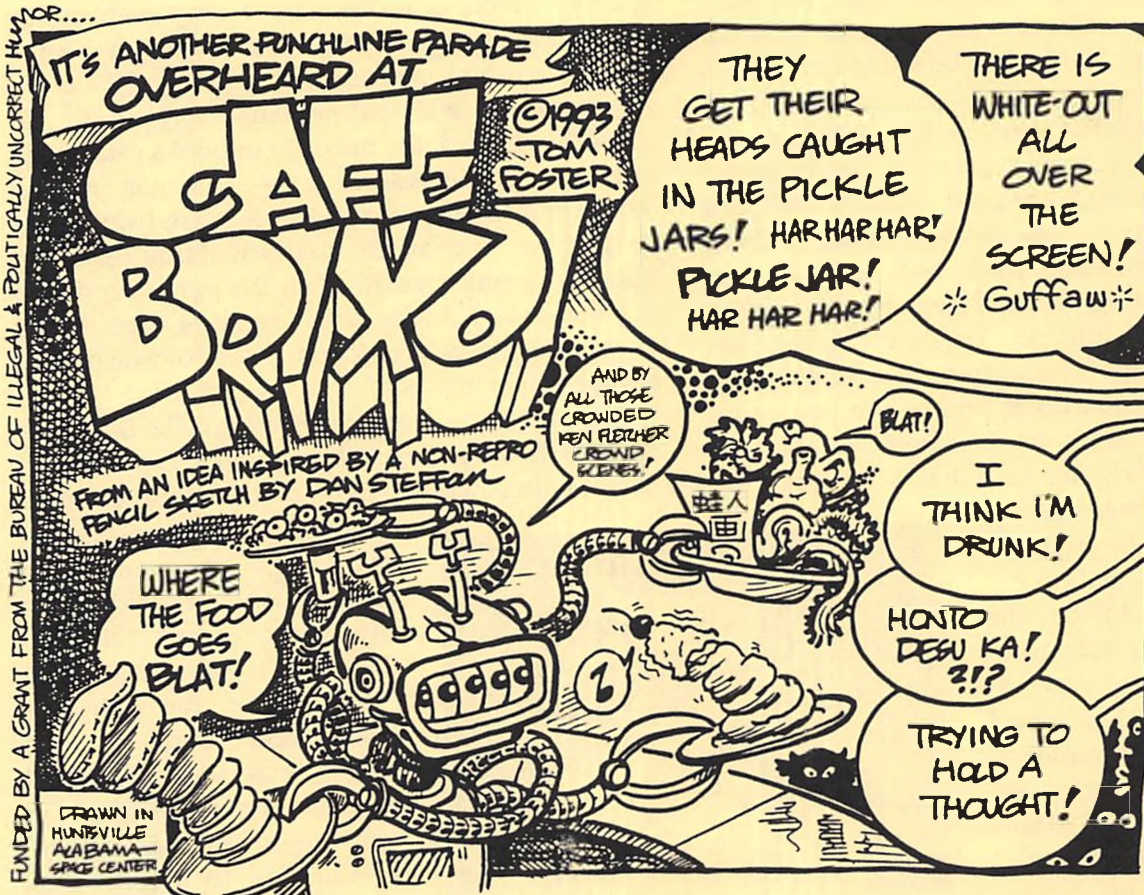
dustry (which, unfortunately, I can't seem to lay my hands on right now). The author presented some disturbing statistics: Last year, 60% of the American population did not buy a single book! Of the 40% who did, the majority of books purchased were — you guessed it — romance novels. According to this article, people (dare I say women?) who read romance novels will buy up to 300 books in a single year! With the jacket proclaiming that it was a love story, some of them might even have bought *Mating*. An old-fashioned bodice-ripper it's not.

Fortunately, I recently finished *The Bridges of Madison County*, which has revived my compulsive reading habits. Now *that's* a love story — romantic, intelligent, sensitive, tugs at your heart strings. AND it was written by a man (a fact that still somewhat amazes me). AND it's on the bestseller list. I don't think it's won any awards, but Hollywood has already snatched it up for a "major motion picture." (I shudder to think what they'll do to this marvelous little story. Cast Tom Cruise and Madonna? Argh!) This book was a soothing antidote to my *Mating* experience.

But that ordeal has left me puzzled about the standards of book reviewers, award committees, and the general public. If the reviewers idolized this book, why can't I find *one person* who has read it cover to cover? Who sits on the committee that awards the National Book Award for Fiction and why did this book win? Why was this book on the bestseller list? Was this book being purchased strictly because it was on that list and, therefore, perpetuating its "bestseller" status?

Was everybody who attempted to read this book as frustrated and baffled as I? — Lynn Steffan





DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

move later

食物既出，概不退換。謝謝！

CHUCH HARRIS The word *BLAT!* is new to me but my dictionary sez "Of US/Canadian origin . . ." (and it certainly is) ". . . to cry out or bleat like a sheep. . . ." Well, er, yes. . . . It is certainly original, (and who am I to complain when I had to steal my own FAPazine title, *Charrisma*, from Arnie just as soon as I got to the bottom of the FAPA waiting list). Brit sheep are notoriously difficult to lip-read but as far as I can make out they still seem to prefer the Olde Worlde "Baa." But be reassured *BLAT!* is certainly okay with me — at least you won't be plagued by people writing to tell you there is only one "R" in Charisma.

I still feel guilty about my non-appearance on the platform at MagiCon. I was supposed to be Up There scintillating three times over the weekend but didn't get there at all. Teresa, who was to back me up with a laptop word processor so that I could instantly understand what the other panel participants were saying, was reassuring and kind and said it didn't matter, but I still feel bad about it. All I can say is that I was really ill with shingles, doped up to the eyebrows with handfuls of tablets, and even more of a zombie than I usually am. It wasn't until I got back to Daventry that I found that my programme times were affixed to the back of my nametag.

Kindly old John Justice, M.D. had advised me not to go and doled out the pills and unguents and stuff but this was something I'd been saving for years for and there was no way I could stay home.

And I'm still glad I went, even though much of it was a fiasco of my own making. I never saw the Art Show, and the only programme item I attended was the Ted and Bjo show, and I shared only fleeting greetings with people I wanted to spend hours with — Geri/Jeff, Dick/Nikki, Ted (the only time I was able to speak with Ted was in the Mpls suite; I said "Pass me a coke please, Ted" and, as he did so, the crowd swirled us

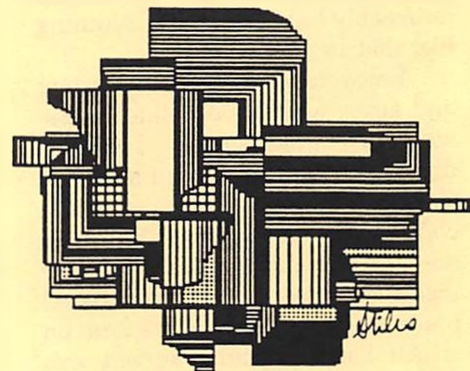
away and I never did get back to him.) I never did see Kit either — I didn't even know she was there. I met her years and years ago at Brighton. She was a pleasant, pretty and courteous kid . . . and a chocaholic then and if she still is she must weigh about 400 lbs. or so. I never saw Sheryl Birkhead, who is a correspondent, at all, or . . . ghod, there are hundreds of people I never did get to see.

[Kit occasionally tells me that she thinks she weighs too much, but she remains slender and attractive. She's sorry she missed you at MagiCon, too. — tw]

Maybe next time. Sue wants to gaze in awe at the Grand Canyon, and I would very much like to do the same to Chas Burbee. Robert has already promised to fix up a trip to the Grand Canyon if and when we get there. I'm trying to work up enough courage to ask him to drop me off at Temecula and pick me up on the way back. Sure, I'd like to see the Grand Canyon too, but you can't have everything and it's important to get your priorities right in these things, hmmm?

You needn't have worried, your scribbled notes were fine and are immortalized somewhere in the foot high stack of notepads and paper scraps recording all my MagiConversations. And Frank was no real problem. It's understandable; lots of people, after seeing me lipread, don't realize that it takes a long time to get used to the way people move their lips, and imagine that if they holler loud enough I will understand them too. Sue NEVER has to write anything down — but occasionally has to repeat things — nor did my close co-workers at Ford. But, people I knew only casually would infrequently come into the office and hopefully scream away until

one of the "in-group" would interpret for them. The in-group's favorite game was to urge strangers to make greater efforts. They would wait until someone was red-faced and yelling at the top of their voice and then say, "You will have to speak up a little, he's rather deaf," and then repeat the screams just by moving their lips without



BLATher

LETTERS

making any sound at all. In my office, apoplexy was an industrial disease. [32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants NN11 5EB, U.K.]

The name of this fanzine has absolutely nothing to do with sheep — and despite any rumors you may have heard to the contrary, neither do the editors. In our case, the name (all caps, with an exclamation point) comes from the funny papers. It is a sound effect that is usually associated with a big, wet fart — not unlike POOT! (also the name of one of my old apazines), which usually accompanies a smaller and much cuter breaking of wind. Other titles we are waiting to use in the near future include: PFFFT!, BADABOOM! and the ever popular SPLURP!. — djs

ROBERT LICHTMAN Let me start out by saying that *BLAT!* seems like a worthy successor to *Pong* (and *Gambit*, *Boonfark*, *Stellar*, *Spung*, *The Gafiate's Intelligencer*). While *Pong* was my favorite fanzine during its run and was responsible in many ways for luring me back into activity, one of the big problems I always had with it was that it was too small. By the time one really got into the swing of reading it, it was over. *BLAT!* takes care of that and, with your use of fonts to replace the old elite type, you really cram a lot of

wordage into these 44 pages despite the generous use of artwork and healthy white space. The first thing that I noticed was how much the editorial writing has loosened up since the *Pong* days. In the good sense, of course. I used to find some of Dan's writing in *Pong* and earlier in *Boonfark* to be rather forced; I enjoyed reading it, but the pain of its structure stuck out noticeably here and there. Nothing like that here. . . .

Enjoyed Barnaby's first outing and agree with his one-line assessment of *Fanthology '88*. I was so disappointed at it when I saw it at Corflu '92 that I never bought a copy and so can't refer to it now to see what of my suggestions were included. (See my list elsewhere.) It's interesting that the one item on which Barnaby and I agreed was the David Haugh piece from *Outworlds*. Also interesting that while Barnaby admits to not having seen many of the selections Glycer chose to include in his fanthology, I haven't seen any of the items Barnaby lists other than the Haugh and Langford articles. In my opinion, Mike achieved the dubious distinction of putting out a fanthology on the par of a slightly better than average issue of *Laan's Laantern*. I also much preferred Richard Brandt's approach — or for that matter, the approach of every other fanthologist whose volume I possess. One thing that hasn't been pointed out enough is that there's no requirement that only one fanthology can be published for any given year. Leave off whatever Glycer didn't include of my and Barnaby's lists and there's another, much more entertaining *Fanthology '88* that could be created. (Not by me, though. . . . I need to avoid taking on new projects and try working on my TAFF report.)

Jay Kinney's article is easily the best in an excellent issue. Oh yes, and I have to agree strongly with the sentiments in his final paragraph. So far we don't seem to be getting into "pig baiting" and lame protests and riots, and I truly believe that — despite the pillorying

ROBERT "BOB'S" FANTHOLOGY '88 LIST

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|--|---------------------|--|
| "My Last Convention" | Michael Ashley | <i>Lip #3</i> |
| "Trailing Clouds of Glory" | Hazel Ashworth | <i>Lip #4</i> |
| "Playing Dead" | Michael Ashley | <i>This Never Happens #11</i> |
| "What I Did on My Holidays" | Michael Ashley | <i>Lip #4</i> |
| "My Truck: A Tale of West Texas" | Richard Brandt | <i>Pirate Jenny #1</i> |
| "Going Nova" | Avedon Carol | <i>Pulp #11</i> |
| "Even Blodwyns Get the Blues" | Sherry Coldsmith | <i>Pulp #11</i> |
| "Boy-Friends" | Lilian Edwards | <i>This Never Happens #11</i> |
| "Airfixation" | Judith Hanna | <i>Fuck the Tories #5</i> |
| "The Mid-Life Crisis Bookstore and Delicatessen" | David R. Haugh | <i>Outworlds #58</i> |
| "Guys Who Passed Up Girls Who Make Passes" | Lucy Huntzinger | <i>Abbattoir #4</i> |
| "Pandora's Box" | Lucy Huntzinger | <i>Abbattoir #5</i> |
| "The Legend of Saint Yo Mama" | Lucy Huntzinger | <i>Nutz #7</i> |
| "Puppies, Picnics and Sensible Shoes: a Dykecon Report" | Christina Lake | <i>The Caprician #3</i> |
| "Alabama Run" | Robert Lichtman | <i>Mimosa #5</i> |
| "On Love" | Simon Polley | <i>Chain Lovers aka Vile Anchors #3</i> |
| "On Doors, and Brandy, and Being Dead" and "On Desparately Seeking Saxons" | Simon Polley | <i>Corvine Lash aka Vile Anchors #4</i> |
| "On Fat as a Humanish Issue" | Simon Polley | <i>A Chosen Vril aka Vile Anchors #5</i> |
| "What It's Like to Receive a Death-Threat from Harlan Ellison" | Christopher Priest | <i>Pulp #9</i> |
| "Looking for Sunrise Mountain" | Jeff Schalles | <i>Trap Door #8</i> |
| "Easy Driver" | Peter-Fred Thompson | <i>Balloons Over Bristol #2</i> |
| "Artwork for Fanzines" | D. West | <i>Lip #3</i> |
| "The Secret Diary of Nigel E. Hedgehog" | D. West | <i>Lip #4</i> |
| "Good Taste Is Timeless" | Owen Whiteoak | <i>Good Taste Is Timeless #11</i> |
| "The Most Distressful Country" | Walt Willis | <i>Pulp #7</i> |

he's been getting in the press — Clinton holds promise of dancing the dance between his apparent '60s semi-radicalism and real-politik.

If there's a weak link in this first issue, unfortunately it's Andy Hooper's piece. It's well-written but I'm so far removed from being a reader of science fiction that it doesn't even begin to pull me back in. Basically I read almost no fiction these days. It's hard sometimes to reconcile this with having read most of *SF Eye* and owning a complete run of that magazine, and always browsing through *Locus* and *SF Chronicle* when I encounter them on the newsstands. I guess I like reading about stf more than the stuff itself. Go figure.

Unfortunately, Steve Stiles' cartoon on page 21 ("Will Work For Food") is a too-chilling prediction of things to come. When I was growing up, predictions about the future were optimistic. With the coming of what was then called automation, the work week was supposed to continue to shrink and the Big Problem in the future was forecast to be what to do with all the new-found leisure time mankind (or at least Americans and others in the "free world") would "enjoy." I guess the ruling elite just figured that it would be Too Much for us all and better to go the other direction. Now we're working more and enjoying less leisure time, for less money, than ever before. Where is Hugo Gerns-

back now that we really need him. . . ?

Like Ted I have great admiration for F. Towner Laney as a writer. One of the many fringe benefits of having been given, and recently finished sorting through, Burbee's fanzine collection is that I now have many more examples of Laney's writing than I previously possessed, including his several pieces in that large Insurgent issue of *Spacewarp* to which Ted refers. (Laney's "Syllabus for a Fanzine" still strikes me as one of the best "standards" pieces ever.) Ted is right that Laney wasn't as naturally humorous as Burbee but that the Burb magic wore off onto Towner and blessed him with quite a few good lines. I love his referring to himself as "the Laniac," for instance, as he does in *ASI* and elsewhere. One of the many Big Projects I've thought up and let go of in recent weeks is an *Incomplete Towner* collecting maybe 100 pages of Laney's best. No one's ever done this; in fact, Terry's *Stormy Petrel* is the only memorial to Laney I can recall. It was just articles about Laney, however, with nothing by the man. And it came out over 30 years ago. [P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442]

I'm in total agreement with you about the need for a comprehensive volume of Laney's fanwriting. I think Towner's skill has been tarnished too long with the specter of his memoirs. There was much more to the man's fan career than his opinion of LASFS, Al Ashley and a couple of queers. He was the quintessential modern fan. He introduced a healthy dose of cynicism into fandom and taught us all that being a fan doesn't automatically make you perfect.

I'd be proud to help you produce such a volume. As soon as you finish your TAFF report and I finally get the last, giant issue of Boonfark completed. Real Soon Now. — djs

ANDY HOOPER The hidden time-bomb in this issue was Barnaby's piece on Fanthologies, as I'm sure you were aware when you published it. If, as some people claim, we are actually in a

time of resurgence of fannish publishing energies, then the question of what Fanthologies are or ought to be is going to be a source of some debate. I had written my editorial and made my decisions about what to include in *Fanthology '89* before reading Barnaby's article, so I am interested to see which of his concerns he thinks I have addressed and those which I have ignored. I was momentarily stung by his characterization of my own work, but there is little point in being attached to things that I wrote six years ago; I was just beginning my development as a fanwriter, and I see the pieces which Glycer reprinted in *F-88* primarily as historical curiosities.

Certain fannish theorists would maintain that historical trivia is the only dependable product of Fanthologization anyway, so I suppose it is refreshing in a way to see Barnaby so intent on creating a more worthwhile thesis for the reprint-minded. I suspect that where he errs is in not carrying his ideas to their logical conclusion. He decries insularity and parochialism, but as far as I can tell, the only alternative he suggests is to pay more attention to those pros who are published in semi-pro-zines. Or, in other words, pick his favorites instead of Mike Glycer's. Now, it so happens that I agree with Barnaby about some of his specific choices in this instance, but



when you link those articles with the phrase "fresh and eclectic," I feel the urge to reach for a fowling piece. Why were those pieces innately better than those chosen by Glycer? Is it because they were

more directly concerned with SF, Barnaby, you crypto-Sercon insurgent you? You have to make a stronger case than you have here, before I would be willing to throw aside all the "recognized writers in standardized fanzines" in favor of talented writers from beyond the faanish micro-culture. It is the latter body to which the damn Fanthology is to be distributed, after all.

This railing at the established culture of crifanac seems to be a favorite theme of some current fan columnists familiar to you and me. I begin to think that we might unify such writers as Luke McGuff, Peter Larsen, Nigel Richardson, Barnaby, and perhaps even Michael Ashley, under the heading of, oh, "The New Rats." All of these writers express an ongoing dissatisfaction with the state of fandom, and offer a vision of how it could be changed in order to reflect their personal agenda. They can be easily differentiated from the bulk of fanwriters by the fact that they don't moan for days gone by — Fandom has never achieved what they would like it to, so they see nostalgic time-binding as a waste of time. Of these writers, Barnaby seems the most reasonable and coherent now working, but he too is afflicted with an impatience that can never be satisfied — his recurring complaints strike at the fundamental disorganization and incompetence of 90% of fandom, and no amount of cogent criticism will ever change that situation.

Any *Fanthology* could be attacked on the grounds that it did not feature your personal definition of the writing most worthy of reprinting from a given year. The only solution is to publish your own definition of "the best," which I ardently urge Barnaby to undertake. I am sure that he would be more than equal to the task.

Fanthology '88 suffers far more from a rushed and compromised production than it does from any ideological failure on the part of its editor. The work was undertaken at the last minute in order to present some worthwhile special pub-

lication to accompany the rest of the half-hearted preparations for Corflu 9, and it certainly looks like it. If Barnaby had sent along copies of the articles he recommended, they might well have found their way into the final product. Mike simply did not have time to hunt down these pieces, few of which I would imagine he read in their original sources.

If F-88 was calculated to do anything, it was merely to appear on time for the convention. If it appears to evoke fandom at its most standardized and familiar, it is because that canon of material was the easiest for Mike to assemble. When he stated that he did not wish to pursue permission from professional authors to reprint their work for free, what he is actually doing is covering up for the fact that the work was left to such a late hour that he could not contact anyone whose address he had to hunt for or whose phone number was not conveniently to hand. To some degree, I suffered from this myself when putting together *Fanthology '89*; I couldn't find Linda Krawecka (nee Pickersgill), and didn't have ninety days for a written query to be forwarded and find her and then to wait for her to reply. The professional prohibition doesn't seem to have stretched to Langford's "Trillion Year Sneer," but then Langford regularly uses the extract of an obscure Patagonian root to make editors his willing mind-slaves, and why should Mike be somehow immune?

A lack of time also led to the use of pretty dreadful and expensive Xeroxing to reproduce the *Fanthology*. And what other fan-artist then Rotsler could be depended upon to come up with dozens of illos virtually overnight (and lives within easy driving distance of Mike Glycer?)? I would be interested to hear how long it took them to finish the whole thing, from the first piece of retyping to the driving of the last staple — I would be very surprised if it was more than a month. Two people, holding down fulltime jobs, could

have accomplished little more in such a truncated span of time. But then, two other people might have had higher standards than to make such a dubious undertaking in the first place.

As for complaining about Marty Cantor's typing, for Ghu's sake Barnaby, pick on someone your own mental size.

Jay Kinney's piece on modern-day activism was a familiar-sounding tale. These days, only three things seem to bring out determined protest in America: Reproductive rights, Gay rights, and legalization of Marijuana. You might laugh at the juxtaposition of the latter cause with the first two, but I've seen a line of heads stretching eight city blocks marching down Madison's State St. at the annual Harvest Festival, and the front of the march was in position at the State Capitol before the back of the march had left their start positions. Not coincidentally, these seem to be the three genres of protest which police forces are least eager to assault or contain. I have seen both pro- and anti-choice activists physically assault one another



The next Big step in
Homo Sapiens

at clinic defenses and pickets, while police stood by and did nothing. I imagine they're getting a little more concerned now that actual shooting has begun. And any time arresting a portion of a crowd would mean taking a large

percentage of the police off the line in order to control and cuff those being arrested, they tend to stand back and watch. It's small protests like the one's which Jay was writing about that seem most dangerous.

But then, modern protesters are far more likely to paint themselves green than to try blowing anything up with a truck-load of fertilizer. We identify those actions with Muslim terrorists now, and they are seen as inextricably un-American. As Jay pointed out, nobody really seems to know how to turn their personal disaffections into constructive action anymore, and in such a vacuum, the urge to burn down buildings and steal TV sets is hard to resist. [4228 Francis Ave. N., Apt. 103, Seattle, WA 98103]

*Let's see if I've got this right: Glycer's *Fanthology* suffers not from Mike's taste as an editor, but from a last-minute rush-job to make up for the lack of anything else worthwhile issuing from the half-assed LA Corflu. Strong defense there, Andy. I thumbed through a copy of the *Fanthology* in question while at that Corflu, and was so stunned by its resemblance to a cross between an old Holier Than Thou and equally aged issue of File 770, that I put it back without the slightest desire to buy or own a copy. — tw*

Obviously editing a *Fanthology* meant to represent a given year in fandom is a difficult challenge for any fan. Somebody is always going to be disappointed by the articles that are chosen, no matter how diligent the editorial process might be. I think a quick look at Barnaby's list from last issue, Glycer's anthology, and Lichtman's recommendations this time, bear this out. There is very little overlap. Each of them are coming from different fan-nish neighborhoods.

Many of Barnaby's choices came from sercon/academic-style fanzines that reflect his own interests in that area, Robert's choices are predominantly from the pages of British fanzines that explore much the same personal territory as his own fannish institution, *Trap Door*. If *Fanthology '88* has an unfocused, middle-of-

the-road flavor, I think it is because Mike Glycer is a very ordinary, mainstream kind of guy; not because the book was done at the last minute. His fanzines have always had that quality — they never seemed to me to be trying very hard, and yet, they were always dependable and legible and regular. If he produced the 1988 collection at the last minute, as you say, then he is to be commended for doing a lot of thankless shit-work.

Nonetheless, I don't necessarily believe that a mediocre anthology is better than no anthology at all. While Mike Glycer rose to the occasion and put out *Fanthology '88* when nobody else would, I can't help but think that maybe we all would have been better off if he had let it slide and put his energy into producing a revival issue of *Scientifiction* (or something like it), instead. At least then nobody could challenge his editorial choices. There is plenty of time to produce these *Fanthologies*; if a year slips by without one it is no bother to anyone. Especially if it means that when the collection does appear it will be truly representative.

For those of you who want to pass judgment on Andy's efforts as an assembler, I recommend you send off for a copy of *Fanthology '89*, which he produced for this year's *Corflu*. It's available from him at the above address for \$7 (plus \$1 postage). All proceeds go to *Corflu*. — djs

DAVID LANGFORD Barnaby Rapoport's examination of *Fanthology '88* is fascinating. I agree with much of it but still feel that anyone who takes on the whopping task of editing a fanthology has an inalienable right to stick in whatever he or she fancies. For some reason Mike Glycer's editorial matter failed to mention the ridiculously short time in which the whole thing was conceived and put together. With this not spelt out, his policy of using "only fanzine material which I received, or could readily borrow" sounds a bit dismissive of the efforts of "self-appointed jurors" (his phrase) in pointing out rare and interesting stuff which in fact there wasn't time to locate and consider. Hind-

sight suggests that the invitation to *Corflu* members should have included the plea, "if you think Glycer hasn't seen it, for God's sake send a xerox!" By the way, my own piece was indeed written for free as a Conspiracy '87 speech and published in an ordinary, non-paying British fanzine (Dave Wood's *Xyster*) before its *Thrust* appearance. I managed a slight double-take when I got to the words (on its first page), "All right, I cheated and changed a word or two in that last sentence." In *Fanthology '88* the previous sentence is . . . omitted.

Andy Hooper's sercon bit is jolly good. Anyone who likes *Queen of Angels* and *Use of Weapons* is certainly OK by me. He is my tip for a fan writer Hugo in the not too distant future, and if he plays his cards right he could even get into *Laan's Laantern*.

So my "Rob Hansen" letter took you in, did it? Just a small, stunted simulation program I whipped up and fed with a few thousand words of typically droll Hansen fanwriting. . . . What



actually happened to many UK fans of the *Pong* era is stranger than fiction. Greg Pickersgill, for example, has found his true happiness with Katie McAulay (my oldest buddy Martin Hoare's ex-wife) in remote Haverfordwest,

and has been heard to say that his entire London sojourn was a terrible mistake. Harry Bond is living with Joy Hibbert. Malcolm Edwards has attained heights so awesome in the HarperCollins empire that none of us recognized him when he descended in a shower of gold on this year's Eastercon (it was the laurel wreath and flickering lightnings that confused us). John Jarrold is a big name editor with a publisher I forget, and keeps almost saying amusing, scandalous things until he remembers in mid-syllable that he has responsibilities now. Leroy Kettle has attained stratospheric heights in the Civil Service; from time to time Hazel in her own lowly post sees top-level memos signed "Roy Kettle: tremble and obey!" Peter Roberts, after a spell as a beachcomber, is said to have rethought his life and got an expensive car, job and haircut. John Brosnan writes novels about dinosaurs that get made into Spielberg films called *Jurassic Park*; to be precise, he wrote the earlier novel to which the Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* bore such an eerie resemblance that John started to protest loudly in print . . . and then asked furtively that I forget it and not put any of that stuff in *Ansible* after all, from which I deduced that there might just have been a pay-off. D. West has gone into seclusion in Keighley, where the faithful believe him to be working night and day on his new collection *Deliverance* ("more gooder than *Fanzines in Theory and Practice!*") while less-than-faithful advance subscribers suspect he's just hiding from their wrath. Simon Ownsley is still ill, but not so much as previously. Michael Ashley is ill but apparently otherwise miraculously unchanged, hungover, etc. Nigel Richardson remains a bundle of joy. Rob Hansen is finishing *Then 4*, his history of 1970s British fandom, with glad cries of "Oh, fuck, that means I have to do the '80s now." Joseph Nicholas still writes paragraphs like this one, though less terse and sinewy and with even more parentheses; he and/or

Judith send us postcards from strange places as they attempt to tick off each and every sight worth seeing in Europe and environs before a threatened but increasingly delayed move to Australia. Alan Dorey is still laboriously copying words out of newspapers and old jokes out of *Private Eye* magazine, and hopes to have accumulated enough for another issue of the new, dynamically revived *Gross Encounters* in a year or two. Dave Langford spent over a year revising the player ranking software of the International Table Tennis Federation for corrupt personal gain (learning in the process that you must not call it ping-pong, else there are cries of rage as though one has shouted Sci Fi in a crowded theater). Pam Wells is shattered and exhausted from her long fax machine session on the Night of the TAFF Counting, teaching Jeanne Bowman how to add up figures (preferably in a manner which produces the same total twice running) and perform the arcane ritual of the single transferable vote. Abigail Frost, now this years TAFF person, explained in honeyed tones: "Fuck off and die, Langford, I'm not ready even to start thinking about my plans yet." God knows what happened to Paul Turner — now running a Soho bondage parlor? now a Conservative MP (possibly much the same thing)? shackled up with Ambrose Bierce in Mexico? [94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, U.K.]

Since Dave did that wrapup on Britfandom, Greg Pickersgill has emerged from the glades of gafia with Rastus Johnson's *Cakewalk #1*, which we here at BLAT! Central highly recommend to one and all, especially if it sticks to its announced bimonthly schedule. (Greg Pickersgill, 3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 2XG, U.K.) — tw

STEVE GREEN Like Dan, I have doubts about the "fanzine revival" currently being heralded on both sides of the Atlantic; although the ongoing debate appears to have persuaded

a few fans back into print, *Empties'* Martin Tudor most recently, but I have no doubt this would have happened without the fanfare.

But even if a revival is in progress, one sure way to derail it is to reinvent the past to such an extent that newcomers see no point in contributing towards its future. If, as Barnaby opines in his first column, the keynote of the latest fanthologies is "institutionalized mediocrity" (I can't comment, having skipped both the 1987 and 1988 volumes), what incentive is this for those simultaneously informed that this material represents some kind of golden age which demands resurrection?

Anyway, I've begun to suspect that the entire debate is fundamentally unsound. When I entered sf fandom in the mid-1970s, fanzines certainly appeared to be thicker on the ground (even if they were duller than dishwater). On the other hand, fandom's contracted nature artificially magnified the profile of any particular fanzine, even those with relatively small



print runs. As fandom fractured, it became possible, even inevitable, for an individual fanzine to be extremely well known in one sector whilst gaining no discernable recognition factor in the wider sphere.

Sadly, much of this ignorance

is self-perpetuated. When Martin Tudor and I set up the fanzine review column in *Critical Wave*, we considered it crucial that it attempted to reflect the field as a whole, but we still get criticized by certain myopic fans for featuring publications and conventions emanating from outside of "fannish fandom." Thankfully, the majority of our readers are in tune with *Wave's* approach.

One avenue we should perhaps all explore is slightly extending our mailing lists, to include fans we wouldn't normally target. I know that Chuck Connor's *Thingummybob* has adopted this, and his decision to print his mailing list each issue indicates he'd advocate it for others. Of course, cost has to be a consideration (I certainly have less disposable cash than, say, five years ago), but I doubt an extra four or five copies each issue would break the bank, and I'm sure the investment would be rewarded in the long run. [33 Scott Rd., Olton, Solihull B92 7LQ, England]

I haven't heard anyone referring to the late eighties as a fannish "golden age which demands resurrection," although I suppose, inevitably, someone will someday. On the other hand, the "institutionalized mediocrity" of such fanthologies should give new fans something to shoot at, as in, "Shit, even I can write something better than that!" Indeed, some of fandom's most inspired writing, from that of the LA Insurgents in the late forties, to that which erupted from Ratfandom in the seventies, was done in reaction to the mediocrity of fanwriting then all too prevalent. What Fandom Needs Today is more vigorous fanwriters. Where are Lou Stathis and Victor Gonzalez when we need them? — tw

I don't think Barnaby was saying that "institutionalized mediocrity" was the preferred goal of all fanthologies. In a perfect world, the annual collection would be an inspirational volume that would attract newcomers by offering them a taste of the best fanzines have to offer. Unfortunately for everybody this ain't no perfect world.

We, too, are trying to expand

things a bit by sending copies of BLAT! to fans that we should probably ignore. Still, it is worth a shot. You never know when the next Burbee or Willis might come along. — djs

Speaking of which, how come we aren't on Chuck Connor's mailing list? — tw

BOB TUCKER The two editorials, front and rear were the best reads and that is not putting down the contributors in between. I prefer material by the editor or publisher, always have, which is why my choices for the top fanzines of any given year seldom match the choices of others who want to read a large number of contributors. A day ago, Leah Zeldes Smith told me that her fanzine *Stet* had been nominated for a Hugo and I think one of the foremost reasons is that she is present everywhere in each issue, even unto the letter column.

I like long letter columns too, the kind made up of many letters, not just a few short stories and novelettes of several thousand words each. I believe that I displeased the editors of *Fosfax* a few years ago by saying much the same thing to them.

And thank you, Ted, for "At Tucker's Feet" on page 40. I feel proud but not all that lonely. [2516-H East Washington St., Bloomington, IL 61704-4444]

It was good seeing you at this year's Corflu, Bob: a pleasant reminder of all those old Midwestcons Past. — tw

ALJO SVOBODA William Breiding dangled his copy of BLAT! before me on a visit to his pad last week, and finally lent it to me when I looked upon it longingly enough. I wanted you to know that I much enjoyed the read. I marveled at myself, gafia for going on two decades and still savoring your con reports and ruminating in parallel with you and your correspondents on the essential nature of fannishness. The essential nature of fannishness is actually a subject that occupies my thoughts more often than you might think — mostly when I con-

template the failures of my youth and wonder what it was I lacked for this or that endeavor. I pieced together from Ted's comments a kind of cultural theory of fannish fandom that I chose to identify with my own: namely, that fannish fandom distinguishes itself from other fandoms by its intense contextualization of all activities relative to itself. Other fandoms are ultimately dependent on consumer orientations, whereas fannish fandom, being more genuinely tribal, lives or dies on its sense of its own history, the continued life and appreciation of models like Burbee and Willis and Dan and Ted in the collective sensibility of what true quality fannishness should look like. It's interesting to me, though, that despite most of these fannish models being humorists and wits, the contextualization at the heart of fannish fandom acts as a bar to the postmodern ironic distance that the consumer-oriented fandoms are, in fact, capable of. Fannish fandom exudes a sincere and affectionate nostalgia for itself (not so much for its past as for its essence) that is simply not postmodern — it may hardly even be "modern," reminds me of (the American myth of) the British tendency toward auto-mythologizing. Anyway, active fandom was a phase of early adolescence for me because although I was even then adequately aware of all this contextuality and historical consciousness, I really didn't have much to say about it nor anything to add to it. But I did love reading the best of it, and BLAT! evokes that ancient pleasure in me very well indeed. Thanks for briefly reawakening that vestigial bit of me. [P.O. Box 10604, Oakland, CA 94610]

Aljo, I can tell by the look on your sensitive fannish face and the sentiments you've expressed that you are a Trufan at heart. It's just too damned bad that you are obviously also some kind of filthy, drug-crazed beatnik. — djs

CHARLES BURBEE Your 44 page BLAT! was, to say the least, an extraordinary

piece of work. I enjoyed it cover to cover. I had considered myself the forgotten man of fandom. Now, thanks to your putting my address in your zine, I hope to get more than four fanzines in 1993.

Yes, we did enjoy Silvercon. We were both astonished. They all treated me like I was a celebrity. For just writing fan stuff!

I do try to avoid conventions, but my wife Socorro talked me into it. Even when I was Fan Guest of Honor at Westercon 27 in Goleta, CA (the only one they had because the Pro Guest of Honor Philip K. Dick called in sick), she was the influence that got me there. As for Silvercon, the second I sorta said "Okay, I'll go," she got on the phone and booked hotel and plane reservations before I could back down. She felt that it would do me a lot of good to get together with Rotsler (Silvercon's Guest of Honor) whom I hadn't seen in about 15 years and other fannish folks, to sort of give my brain a jump start.

She was right. At a pre-con party at the Katzes', Rotsler and I monopolized each other's conversation for about three hours. We had a lot of catching up to do. It was great. One night, just after the FAPA party, I kept my wife awake until past 2:00 a.m. I was bouncing article ideas off her. She finally said, "Go to sleep Charlie, it's awful late," and so we did.

Now Socorro wants me to rejoin FAPA. I was officially invited by Arnie and Robert Lichtman at Silvercon. Arnie is the President and Robert the Secretary Treas. I'm still not sure what I want to do. I have been gafiating for about 15 years and it's difficult to get into the swing of things.

Andy Hooper's article has talked me into reading some of Greg Bear's works. I went to the library yesterday and got out *Queen of Angels*, which I am reading now. I appreciated his recommendations and may try other authors he mentioned. I wonder, is today's fandom acquainted with the works of "Saki" (H.H. Munro)? I discovered him when I was 16

and have enjoyed him all my life.
[P.O. Box 2284, Temecula, CA 92593]

I can't speak for fandom, but I got turned onto "Saki" about 25 years ago, during high school, and enjoyed his short stories a lot. I remember them as being vividly descriptive and emotionally bold and look forward, now that you mentioned him, to hunting down and reading a collection of his work.

I was fortunate enough to have had an English teacher named Mrs. Johnston during my junior and senior years who took great pains to teach her students true appreciation of writers like "Saki," Stephen Crane, Hemingway and William Faulkner. In fact, we spent an entire semester studying Faulkner's writing. We read his stories at length, discussing them in detail and she always took enough time to actually give us a real understanding and appreciation of his creative process — instead of just teaching us enough names and dates to pass our next exam.

I am also indebted to Mrs. Johnston for exposing me to the cartoons and artworks of people like William Steig and Saul Steinberg. She was a rare bird — even 25 years ago. — djs

BILL ROTSLER At Silvercon, Arnie Katz was saying that with the arrival of desktop publishing he detected a trend (in his own publishing) back toward a less "professional" look, i.e.: no even edges, etc. But I think that if fans had had dtp in the '40s, '50s, or whenever, we would have used it. I think *BLAT!* was and is an excellent example of "fannish" publishing with professional skills. So there.

Jim Caughran said he saw Laney's death certificate, but when Towner died both Burbee and I thought, *immediately*, "It's a con." That it was Laney's way of getting out from under, getting away from his wife problems. We discussed this at Silvercon, but neither of us would be at all surprised if Towner turned up again.

Dan, you really "caught" Bruce Pelz in that drawing. You have an excellent "line," which you non-artists will understand is an arty-

fella's (Burbee's term) trade jargon for, well, a good, interesting line. "Good lines" are sure, interesting and positive. They know what they are doing and don't hesitate to show it.

Ted, your story of feeling like Tucker reminded me that a few years back our Highly Sophisticated friend, Robert "Don't Bother Me, Boy" Silverberg told me I had been his early icon of the witty, sophisticated fan. I was amazed, since my idol along those lines had been Tucker. I guess no one was Tucker's idol because who was before Tucker?



And that reminds me of the question, "Whose records does Frank Sinatra put on when he wants to make out?" [17909 Lull St., Reseda, CA 91335]

Bill. Tsk-tsk. Anyone who knows anything about ol' Blue Eyes knows the answer to that question: Sinatra listens only to Sinatra, Baybee. — djs

RAY NELSON I think you've succeeded in making desktop publishing look fannish, and the textual portion of the zine probably would be no different if printed by mimeograph in the Good Old Fashioned Way. You're just a couple of wild and zippy guys, the same as always.

The artistic portion, however, points in new directions, boldly goes where no fan has gone before.

When I developed my own cartooning style, back in the Fabulous Forties, I was strongly influenced by the physical characteristics of the mimeograph. I cut most of my

drawings directly on stencil, so the line I used was a wire line, with no thick or thin, the natural line of the stencil cutter. I knew the mimeograph would not reliably print a large area of solid black, so I used no solid blacks. I knew the stencil would disintegrate if cut up too much, so I used very little detail. I knew the text areas would not be very dark, so I kept my drawings light so as not to overpower them.

The end result was something rather in the spirit of your spot illustrations on pages 4 (the car), 36 & 40. Unfortunately these drawings don't look right in the context of your current xerox and desk top state-of-the-art *BLAT!*. Your current format seems to demand something with thick and thin lines, blocks of solid black, and a certain minimum of detail, as in most of your other spots.

The cartoon portrait on page 37 fits the new graphic context perfectly, and it's something I could never have done with a stencil cutter.

The only flaw, I'd say, is the use of the wire line instead of thick and thin. I've noticed that this anachronistic clinging to ancient limitations is doing bad things to people's work in the professional sphere, too. I've recently been following a comic book entitled *Sandman Mystery Theater* where some really wonderful pencils are inked in wire lines so they look like the work of some absolute beginner.

In animation the wire line may be necessary, and it looks good in your *Batman* spot on page 4, where you were simulating the look of the *Batman* television cartoons, but under the conditions of modern reproduction, I think thick and thin should be the rule in magazines, and wire line be an occasional special effect.

Andy Hooper, in the letter column, brings out another special characteristic of desk top publishing. He bemoans the difficulty of getting fan artists to "crank out little square cartoons at a moment's notice." The intimidating neatness of computer layouts, especially

where you use three columns and justification on the right hand margin, seems to demand square cartoons. Indeed, the two by two box may well become the standard format for artistic submissions in fandom for the foreseeable future.

If I were starting out in fan cartooning today, I would draw up sheet after sheet of two by twos, using a thick and thin line, large areas of solid black and a good deal more detail than I ever dared use in the mimeograph era. Then I'd send them off to all the fan publishers who use desk top.

Yes, I have seen the future, and it is square!

Mimeography's shortcomings may have forced you into a style of drawing, but it also taught you some valuable lessons, I'm sure. Primarily, it made you simplify your artistic statements until they reached their essence. Your work became pure and stylized. That is one of the hardest lessons for an artist/cartoonist to learn. When you are just starting out there is always the strong urge to fill every drawing up with extra, unnecessary



detail — just to prove that you can do it. But in the end, it just gets in the way (especially the always deadly, but ever-present, crosshatching). Even illustrators like Virgil Finlay — master of the stipple — turned out a lot of crappy artwork because of too much needless shading and contouring. You might feel that the mimeo medium held you back, but I think it probably

did you a favor. I'll take a simple ol' Nelson, Rotsler, Steinberg or ViP over a pile of busy crosshatching any day.

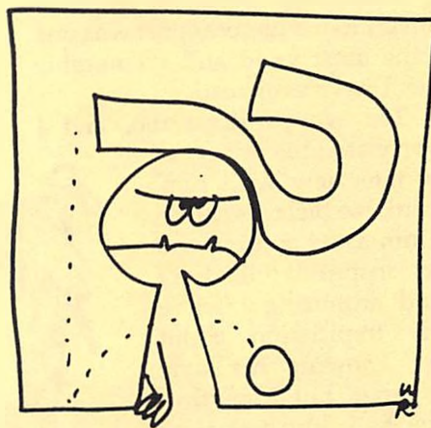
In my case, I choose the type of line I want to use based on a number of factors: repro, audience, personality, etc. My straight illustrations tend to be more detailed than my pure cartoon work and my fanart is usually simpler than that. In the case of the two automobile portraits last issue, I decided to render them very simply because I knew they were going to be printed quite small and be surrounded by type (which has its own busy qualities). The other reason they were drawn with a simple line was because I wanted to give them a more fannish feeling — a feeling that would harken back to the minimalistic fanzine art done the "Good Old Fashioned Way."

I think that obsolete mimeo-style is a part of the fannish look that we all love so much. So I used thin lines to give the drawings and, indeed the whole page, a more fannish look. That is part of my philosophy for overcoming the dtp disease. You might think it is retro, but I just think it is a matter of integration — like the warm, colored paper and the continued use of classic fan cartoonists like yourself, Rotsler, Steve Stiles, Atom and many others. — djs

There have always been fanartists who understood — and made use of — stylized (thick and thin) lines. Bergeron stood out in that respect even in some of his earliest fan art (more designs than cartoons) in the early fifties. By the sixties electronic stencils made this art much easier to mimeograph, and by the end of the decade the craft of hand-stencilling art was already beginning to disappear. What always fascinated me was the way in which some fanartists seemed to be comfortable only within the pages (mimeoed, dittoed, or multi-lithed) of fanzines, utterly failing all attempts to make the transition to professional print. Perhaps they too (like some of us writers) needed to know their audience in order to work well. — tw

WALT WILLIS BLAT! was such an important event in our house that I have struggled

downstairs to acknowledge it despite an attack of sciatica which has immobilized me for nearly a fortnight. It arrived yesterday and Madeleine read it first, she being first up. She kept me informed of developments at MagiCon. . . "Oh dear . . . you've cut Dan Steffan . . . no, it's all right . . . thanks to Ted White." This was enough to bring



it all back to me. How this stranger sat next to me in the audience at the Irish Fandom panel, and said something to me which I didn't understand — I need a little time to adjust the decoder in my mind to new voices — and when I stole a look at his name tag I realized it was Dan Steffan. He had sent me a beautiful painting of Jophan on a mountain top in Trufandom to cheer me up in my illness, which had succeeded so well that I had photographed it 24 times to show around at MagiCon. The copies were in my green rucksack, which contained also our Traveller's Cheques, our passports, or flight tickets to Minneapolis and our return tickets to Belfast. I took it with me wherever I went, but where was it now? Madeleine must have it, I hoped, and fortunately this turned out to be the case. As soon as the panel was over I got a copy of the photograph and repaired my bridges with Dan.

I am grateful to Ted for explaining about my hearing. The thing is I can hear perfectly well but I miss the higher frequencies which distinguish consonants. My hearing aid is supposed to empha-

size the consonant frequencies, but either my hearing is completely deaf to them or the instrument needs adjustment. I am still experimenting.

I am grateful to Dan for his understanding and can only apologize for the fact that the incident doesn't appear at all in my own conreport. I am grateful for his remarks about me and what he regards as my influence over the convention. His conreport was one of the most vivid and memorable ones I have ever read.

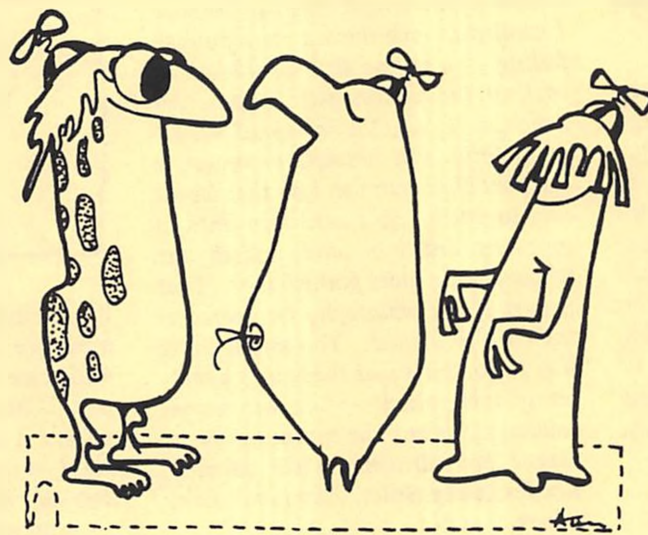
Ted was brilliant too, and I appreciated his review of my interview with him. I think Joe Siclari's choice of him as an interviewer was inspired. I don't mind admitting I felt a little trepidation about him, knowing his style on paper, but I couldn't have had any better interviewer than him. He understood my hearing difficulties perfectly and repeated each of the questions from the audience. I'm not sure how he managed it, but he got the audience involved in the discussion, which made the occasion, and was more responsible than anything else for the standing ovation at the end.

Andy Hooper's contribution was one I agreed with, once I got over the suspicion that Pat Cadigan was a hoax. It shows how little in touch I am with modern sf . . . though I am familiar with the work of Greg Bear, who has made his way onto the shelves of the Donaghadee Public Library. I found his work readable but obscure, making me wonder if he really is obscure or if I am trying to read too quickly. The alternative is that I'm getting more stupid, which is a worrying thought.

Although *BLAT!* was an outstanding fanzine, I am tremendously impressed by the Big Machine. It seems the most significant advance in fmz publishing since Charles Hornig said, "Take a

fanzine."

Gosh, Walt, it looks like I'm gonna have to do something about my image. It seems like a number of people — whom I've considered my friends for decades — either fear a hostile attack from me, or are convinced they've already been my victim. From comments you made in *Geri Sullivan's Idea*, I get the impression that you considered my review of *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator* (in *Spent Brass*) to have been hostile — and feared before *MagiCon* that you might encounter further hostility from me



when I interviewed you. Rumors have reached me that Harry Warner feels he was similarly savaged by my comments on his (reissued) *A Wealth of Fable* (also in *Spent Brass*). And Greg Benford told me that he considered my reviews (in *The Washington Post* and *SF Eye*) of one of his lesser books "a personal attack" causing him to search for possible motives for my viciousness. I am taken aback. None of my reviews contained ad hominem attacks on the authors in question; in each I was careful to balance my criticisms of the specific work with praise for the general output and reputation of the author(s); and in each case my criticisms were specific and to the point. Nor was I the only one to voice disappointment in the works in question. I can only hope that your subsequent experience, at least, will serve as an antidote to

this image of me. I will continue to call 'em as I see 'em, but it seems to me that others need to learn to tell the difference between literary criticism of their writings and antagonistic personal attacks, and refrain from confusing these two very different things. — tw

DON FITCH Perhaps Walter Willis had the same problem with Dan Steffan as I have — we've attended at least four of the same conventions during the past few years, yet I have only a vague impression of Dan as an amiable person I'd like to know better; it's impossible to conjure up any picture whatsoever of his physical appearance. Presumably this is because we always happened to meet well into the conventions, after my allotment of person-recognition (usually about 6 individuals per con) had been exceeded. [Naw, that isn't it, Don. I just happen to be invisible. — djs]

Having worn a hearing-aid for over 40 years, I know that they (seem to) amplify background noise selectively, more than whatever it is one is trying to hear, and when Walter indicated that he was wearing (a presumably new) one, at that Mpls in '73 Party at *MagiCon*, I understood that he was probably suffering from a Tension Headache and was going into Perceptual Withdrawal . . . quite enough to explain why he was so much more quiet than when we first met, at a small fan gathering at the Fan Hilton (or some such slanshack) back in the '60s. He's also written (I suspect with British Understatement) about his discomfort in large group situations — a psychological quirk I share, and which would go far to explain his quietness at the convention.

Returning to a greatly-expanded convention "fandom" after 8 years of *fafia*, I at first agreed

with those long-time fans who talked about staying away from the Big Contemporary Conventions which try to provide something for everyone in the horde of "dweebs and drobes" (i.e., fans who don't share precisely our interests and attitudes). But after about two years I discovered that it's really not too difficult to develop techniques for finding and associating with most of those people with whom I wish to be re-united, and now I'm beginning to lose patience with the attitude that "conventions are absolutely no good unless they're tailored entirely to *our* tastes and interests." Hey, it's no more difficult to ignore those "dweebs and drobes who call themselves fans" than it used to be to ignore the "Mundanes" back in the days when the Con didn't take over the whole hotel. [*You have the greatest technique there is for tuning out the "dweebs and drobes," Don. You just turn off your hearing aid.* — djs]

Barnaby's comments about various Fanthologies are (appropriately enough) idiosyncratic, but always reasonably sensible. I can't recall anything in recent Fanthologies that was really Bad, but kinda feel that there was at least three times that much which was equally deserving of inclusion — and that's from Genzines; probably much of the very best fanwriting nowadays appears in apazines and such material is almost never anthologized or reprinted. *sigh* Of course, there's no fannish law against supplementary Fanthologies, or other anthologies of Fan Writing, produced either as major one-shots or in serial form (say, as 16-page signatures) for which there are vast possibilities in this era of computers. Where is Walt Daugherty, now that we need him?

As I see it, the major problem is that of distribution. There's a whole bunch of anthologies and one-shots, many of them still in print, which are not available from any single source, and only a persistent and knowledgeable person who's already a member of the in-group can track them down. I

believe that True Fandom ought to be more accessible than that.

Unlike Ted, I agree with Willis' assessment of Laney and Burbee as fanwriters. FTL was indeed brilliant, a powerful and perhaps excellent writer, but in those of his works I recall most clearly he exhibited a habit of validating himself by putting down others — usually in ways and to a degree which I found less than admirable, and often downright reprehensible. The combination of "brilliant" and "petty" just doesn't make it, for me. Burbee's fanwriting may not have been entirely free of that, but for the most part he concentrated more on the foibles than on attacking the people who displayed them, and he usually indicated that both he and the reader had those same foibles, though to a much lesser and non-harmful degree, of course. Laney was indeed saying, "Get a life!", with the obvious meaning of "Lead the sort of life I think best." Burb, much more able to laugh at himself, seemed to be content with saying "Don't go overboard," which is much more in harmony with my own approach to life.

Several years ago I concluded a review of McCrumb's *Bimbos*. . . with "Laney would have loved it; I didn't." This morning I broke down and bought a new copy of her *Zombies*. . . , even though I begrudge her the royalties, and read it. Sheesh! As with the earlier volume, all those characters (give or take a few literary exaggerations) are accurate as to type and to individuals (I've met or seen most of them). And yet, (to paraphrase Geri Sullivan) neither individually nor collectively are they crucial to what fandom is really all about. Actually, I can almost understand how some readers can think that McCrumb is sympathetic towards fans, but I can't understand why they don't perceive that she drenches this sympathy with a large dose of condescending pity and scorn. It seems that, like Laney, she feels that she has "outgrown" fandom, and like many religious converts and reformed

smokers and drinkers, she feels that she has to validate her new position by ridiculing those who have not yet ascended to her heights. Her primary technique is the same one Laney used, and she is nearly as skillful as he was with it, but somehow she fails to convince me that Yuppie neo-Puritanism and Materialism are really such "better" goals than merely Having Fun.

Yes, I'm aware of the danger inherent in assuming that a major character is speaking for the author, but I don't think McCrumb is a sufficiently good writer to divorce herself from her major female character — in this case, one who will marry her boyfriend if they both get tenure in the same university; otherwise she'll marry someone more convenient and more economically advantaged. I find myself more in sympathy with Tony Hillerman, who demarks his villains by ascribing to them precisely this sort of contempt for the importance of human relationships, and suppose that this is why I think that McCrumb doesn't really *understand* fandom, even though she observes it acutely.)

I respect the "Spaceways Syndrome" — the practice of totally ignoring Hot Controversies (aka fan feuds) — even though I often feel compelled to state my position on such matters. (Taking a stand is not the same thing as joining a crusade.) One Fandom-shaking, and three significant (though lesser) events of this sort have taken place during my fan lifetime, and there were perhaps four others either before my time or while I was fafia, but they're all part of my Fannish Racial Memory. And I see no clear evidence that fandom is a better place because of them. It may be, but the waters are muddy — largely because such disputes, in fandom, have never stuck to the issues, but have degenerated into personal attacks and the turbulent release of animosity. Since fandom is so much a matter of interpersonal relationships, damage to this social fabric is damage to fandom itself.

A year or so ago, in a letter to *Mimosa*, someone suggested that, to a dispassionately observing outsider, the Epic Battles in fan history would look remarkably like tawdry little family squabbles. They look that way to some concerned people within fandom as well, and refusing to dignify them with attention seems to me to be a valid response, even though I seem usually to end up taking a moderate position and getting brickbats binged at me from both sides. Which is only fair since I sometimes bung a few at both sides.

For what it may be worth, it seems to me that such Big Controversies in recent years rarely attract the attention/activity of people who got into fandom after about 1970. It's not, I think, that older, long-time fans are necessarily more passionate, but that we are of a generation which got into fandom when it was much more than merely another forum for social activity. We tend to take fannish movements (and, perhaps, our own status in fandom) much more seriously than most newer fans do and view disagreement with some of our basic attitudes as a Mortal Challenge. *sigh* [3908 Frijo, Covina, CA 91722]

Sharyn McCrumb's *Zombies of the Gene Pool* is dedicated to FTLaney and a fellow named Michael Dobson. Dobson was a fanzine fan from Charlotte, NC who got into fandom about the same time I did. We were in an apa together and have been casual friends for more than twenty years — in fact, Michael even officiated at my wedding in 1981. Since that time he has worked extensively in the role-playing/gaming field and was affiliated for many years with TSR. Through them he met and befriended Sharyn McCrumb and recommended to her one day after reading *Bimbos of the Death Sun* that she might find something of interest in fandom and loaned her some fanzines, including Laney's memoirs and a copy of *All Our Yesterdays*. Little did he imagine the monster he had created.

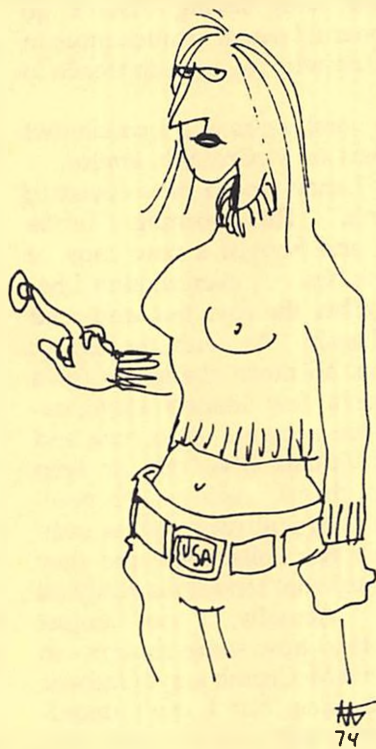
Yes, that's right. It's all Michael Dobson's fault! And next issue he has promised to Tell All because if he

doesn't . . . well, let's just say we know where he lives.

I do have to disagree with your final statement about feuds and post-'70 fans somewhat. You should remember that a lot of the fans involved in "Topic A" in the '80s were of that era, including Avedon, Patrick and Teresa and D. West. At the beginning the only Old Farts involved in the argument were Bergeron and my co-editor, though they were joined later by Dave Locke and a few others. — djs

As I see it, it's something like the stabbing of Kitty Genovese, which was watched by more than two dozen people, none of whom interfered, called the police, or in any other fashion involved themselves.

From time to time bullies appear in fandom and they mug other fans in print. "Topic A," or "The TAFF Wars" was only the most recent example. The "bully" in that case got away with several years of trashing his victims in print largely because fandom as a whole "tolerated" it and let



him get away with it. One mediocre faned, desperate for material, perpetuated this event by giving the bully a fresh pulpit: a column in his fanzine. In my opinion, the proper response was to condemn the bully's actions

and refuse him further attention — not to get into a long running battle with him, in the manner of the classic feud. What pissed me off at the time was the number of prominent fans (I'll name just one, with whom my argument was public: Terry Carr) who stated, privately, that they deplored the actions of the bully, but refrained from any public statement of condemnation, because, as they said, they "wanted to keep open the lines of communication with him" in order, perhaps, to subsequently influence him in some way. In actual fact, the bully took their silence as approval, and in some instances exploited that perceived approval.

The last time this sort of fandom-wide shunning was used successfully was probably the boycott against Gertrude M. Carr for her attacks on Willis, circa 1958 — although as I recall, D. Bruce Berry's "A Trip To Hell" (a strange psychotic attack on a prominent Chicago fan, circa 1962) caused him to be pretty effectively shunned thereafter, as well. In any case, what I am talking about here is not "tawdry little family squabbles," but sociopathic behavior. Not all "Hot Controversies" boil down to just "fan feuds." — tw

DAVE RIKE Well, it's good to see that Pong 41 was not a fluke but rather a test run. The results show that you've managed to evolve your zine making capabilities over from manual typers, stencils and mimeo to electronic media with a bit of a boost in appearance. Redd Boggs commented appreciatively to me about how well your zine looked and that he liked the triple column page format for the lettercolumn. Yes, I said, and I bet those pages hold more text that way than they would if Ted had typed them up using his old micro-elite typer.

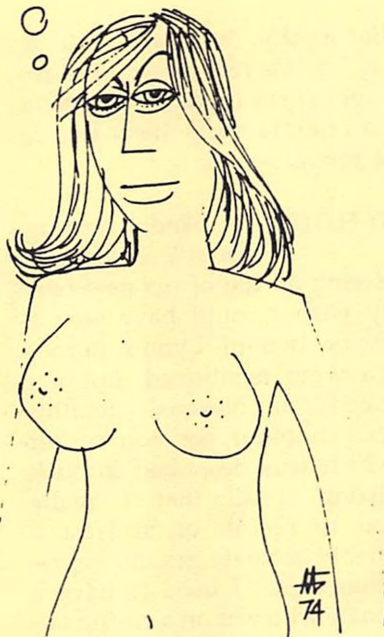
What's so quasi-Stalinist about D. West? Why not Marxist, or Leninist, Maoist, or even Trotskyist? Hasn't Joseph ever come across the Spartacists or their paper (in the U.K.), *Worker's Hammer*? I know, he'll whine something about how well I have never had to deal with the Stalinists he's had to com-

bat in the CND, etc. No, I must admit I've never met them, but I have come across a broad spectrum of people on the job, in my union, and among the political people I met elsewhere while living and/or working in Berkeley for over 25 years, including some Stalinists, that is persons who were members of the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) during the '30s and '40s at least and possibly later. They all impressed me as being intelligent, honest, hard working devoted persons. While some got a bit of college, for the most part they learned things on their own and were heavy readers. A few of them fought in Spain. I showed the son of one a video I got from the library, *The Good Fight*, which was about the life and times of Yanks who went over as part of the International Brigades. His dad didn't appear in the film, but the feisty nurse who fought to be able to drive an ambulance up to the frontlines turned out to have been his first wife. I wouldn't suggest that Joseph could have learned more about class struggle by having spent a few years as a coal miner down in the pits instead of from stuff he picked up in books, pamphlets and papers, but I don't think it would have hurt him any. But, if fanzines are no different than any of the amateur journalist zines one finds listed in the likes of *Factsheet Five*, then why does Joseph bother to write to and swap his zine with persons who feel they're fmz fans and faneds? How does he differentiate us from all of the rest? I feel I know what a fanzine is from looking at it and reading it enough to tell it from a plain zine, having looked at a few over the years from time to time. Of course, you understand, we all fail the criteria of Norm Metcalf who decries most stuff except for his own zines and perhaps *Fantasy Commentator* as being pseudo-fanzines being produced by pseudo-fans, some of which are being sent through that mundane apa, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. All this because the zines fail to devote themselves to a serious and

constructive discussion of science fiction as he, Norm Metcalf, defines it. It is rather much of a *reductio ad absurdum*, but then again that's Norm Metcalf for you.

It would certainly be a wonderful thing, if someone could make a listing of compounds one could take to turn their urine into interesting colors, plus suggested dose levels. I understand cobalt chloride and potassium permanganate each produce neat colors. It would be just the thing to take before peeing in a bottle for a drug test. [P.O. Box 11, Crockett, CA 94525]

The persons who demand that you fill a cup for analysis usually don't have much of a sense of humor, so I wouldn't worry too much about what color your piss is going to be during a urine test — I'd worry about your future if you are forced to take one. The tests are all very flawed and are totally unreliable as a means for judging people, yet the authorities maintain that the margin of error can be successfully figured into the final



results. Even when that margin reaches the 50 percentile. Often false positives have been caused by a wide variety of mundane things, like the poppy seeds found on the top of a deli roll or by a week-old antihistamine

dose. Because of this, people's lives have been destroyed by positive test results which prove them to be unfit for — among other things — employment, even though they have never taken illicit drugs. Talk about yer reductio ad absurdum, sheesh. — djs

As someone who has undergone drug testing (via urinalysis), I'm here to tell you that it's a (bad) joke. Apparently the error rate is typically 50%, which makes the whole deal close to worthless. As the beneficiary of a false-negative test, however, I'm not complaining. — tw

MARTIN TUDOR Okay you per-
ishers! What makes you think you've got the ghod given right to produce a fanzine so good I felt compelled to read it at my bus stop — missing my bus in the process? I had meant to write to you before about this tendency after I received *Pong 41*, but things kept getting in the way: *Critical Wave* deadlines, catching buses, more *Wave* deadlines, trying to make a living, even more *Wave* deadlines, and stuff like that. But *BLAT!* is going too far! Over the last ten or so years I can only remember missing a bus twice through reading at bus stops (I've missed a lot of my bus stops through reading on buses — but that's different); you two have published two joint-edited fanzines during the same period — do you sense a pattern?

I must admit I'd be one of those unfortunates sneaking off with Andy Hooper to chat in the sercon closet out of earshot of our peers. These days I get my "fix" mainly through researching, writing, editing and producing *Wave*. Producing a serconzine around six times a year gives me almost as much (pause to look over shoulder before whispering) science fiction as I can take. But because, as Dan mentions elsewhere in the ish (re: *SF Eye*), there is so little feedback I have to come back to less sercon circles to get a real buzz.

How I've dreamed of having access to a Big Machine like the

one Ted refers to. The *Wave* copier (which nearly broke us financially, when we were forced to buy rather than lease it) is almost on its last legs. But even when it worked properly we weren't able to collate and staple with it — such decadence! I can think of a few things more wonderful than just putting the proofs in one end and pulling the completed zine out of the other . . . (Okay, so I've got a limited imagination, sue me). [845 Alum Rock Rd., Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2 AG, England]

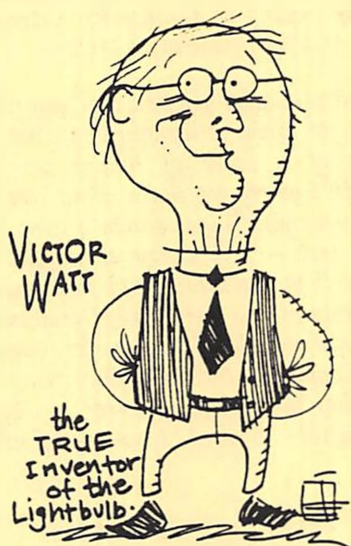
Martin, you seem to have forgotten the true message of all great science fiction: In the future everyone will have a Big Machine. And you call yourself a sercon fan? Good Ghod, man. Wake up and smell the Caffeinated Liquid Substitute. — djs

TERRY JEEVES The snag with Fanthologies in general is that the reader often has totally different tastes from the compilers. The result is that no matter how terrific the latter thinks a piece might be, when the reader picks it up, he simply pans the thing. The different tastes thing has a nasty habit of becoming an us versus them situation with both sides bad-mouthing the other instead of accepting the simple fact that tastes and opinions differ. We have an exaggerated example of this in the UK, where a few fans of one particular political view go out of their way to run down and castigate fans with different views. Why they can't just agree to differ, I do not know.

The cartoon on the lack of women fanartists raises an interesting issue. Why shouldn't a fanzine have a preponderance of men (or women) artists. Surely, it isn't a question of editorial discrimination, but simply of an editor using whatever is sent in free, or calling on any artist (gender unspecified) who has a style he likes. Plus the ability to carry out a commission on time. When reading a story or admiring an illo, I don't give a tinker's cuss whether it came from a man or a woman — it just isn't relevant. I judge a piece on how I like it, not on the sex of the creator.

[56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, U.K.]

Fandom has always had fewer women in its ranks which, quite naturally, means fewer female fanartists. Percentage-wise, there has just never been very many of them; though we have usually had at least one good woman artist around in each fan generation — starting with Leeh Hoffman. Let's see, there was Bjo, DEA, Trina, Cynthia Goldstone, Alicia Austin and, of course, Jeanne Gomoll.



But frankly Terry, you know as well as I do the real reason there are so few girl artists in fandom: Ya gotta have a penis to really know how to hold a pencil. — djs

TERRY FLOYD I liked hearing about Dan's tattoos and seeing an illo of his new one. I only wish I could have seen a sketch or two of Lynn's tattoos (which were mentioned, but not described) or Nevenah Smith's glorious dinosaur skeleton on her leg which was described in such tantalizing detail that I really wanted to see it, or at least a reasonably accurate graphic representation of it. I used to have a roommate who was an aspiring tattoo artist and apprenticed to San Francisco's Lyle Tuttle. She used her own body as a sketchpad for practice, and you could trace her development as an artist by examining her earliest "scabs" and her later, more refined achievements.

Of course, she found it much easier to work on someone else's body, and the tattoos she did for friends demonstrated her talents much more effectively than her own work-in-progress body. Unfortunately, I never took advantage of her when I had the chance. I guess I just couldn't muster up the courage to get a tattoo, because I learned so much about the process from her and other illustrated friends. I know what's involved and that you're talking about something you will carry with you to the grave, and the choice of image is therefore very, very, important. I wanted to put a whole lot of time and planning into such a venture, and I guess I'm just too indecisive to go through with it.

Jay Kinney's thoughtful examination of the state of political activism in San Francisco just prior to and in the wake of the Simi Valley verdict took me back to my own political awakening during a San Francisco demonstration/riot in 1984. The City That Forgot How was hosting the 1984 Democratic Party Convention where Walter Mondale was nominated as their presidential candidate. In the weeks prior to the convention, Mayor Dianne Feinstein had ordered police to sweep the South of Market area clear of the winos and prostitutes who normally make it their home, and the heavy-handed tactics used in the sweep made many of us nervous and uncomfortable. It was a strong hint of what was to come. Feinstein was, of course, kissing up to the Mondale campaign for a chance to be his running mate, and she wanted her city to leave a good impression with the party powers. In her handling of the events of that week, all my illusions about the innate benevolence of traditional liberalism were shattered.

Karen Pearlston, a Toronto fan I met through Apa-50, was in town and staying with Mog Decarnin in the Haight. Karen had distanced herself from fandom a few years earlier as she became more politically active, and had come to San Francisco specifically to join in the

anti-war demonstrations that would be going on. I was working as a downtown office drone only a few blocks from the Moscone Convention Center where the Demo-Con was taking place and was peripherally involved in a number of quasi-political groups such as the *Processed World* magazine collective and the SF Cacophony Society (bastard child of the old Suicide Club).

Through these groups I'd heard about the San Francisco War Chest Tour, which was to be a guided tour conducted by some peace activist groups through the downtown Financial District to the headquarters of various multinational corporations which make obscene profits from the defense industry. Although I'd planned to go along, I was unable to get away from work and so had to content myself with attending the Dead Kennedys concert scheduled at the end of the tour that afternoon. By 5:30 p.m., the DKs were performing on a flatbed truck in the Moscone Center parking lot and were to play with MDC (Millions of Dead Cops), one of the top thrash punk bands at the time. The DKs were superb, as always, and concluded their show with a terrific cover version of "I Fought the Law" rewritten as a playful condemnation of former San Francisco Supervisor Dan White, the assassin of Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, who had recently been released from prison after serving less than seven years for the two murders. "Drinking beer in the hot sun, I fought the law and . . . I won!"

As the performance ended, Jello Biafra explained to the crowd what had happened during the War Chest Tour that afternoon and why MDC had not shown up to play. Apparently, when the tour reached the Bank of America plaza on California Street, a group of



Lynn and Nevenah's tribal tattoos at Corflu '93, as requested.

undercover police disguised as hardhat construction workers leaped off some scaffolding set up at a skyscraper across the street and began arresting the leaders and participants involved in the War Chest Tour. About 45 people were taken into custody and transported to the San Francisco Hall of Justice. They were charged with "obstructing the sidewalk." Among those arrested were most of the members of MDC. Jello then urged the crowd to march down to the Hall of Justice on Bryant Street and demand the release of the hostages.

The entire crowd roared in approval and began moving as one toward the street. I turned to my friend and housemate, Chris Price, and shrugged. Only the roadies were staying behind to guard the sound equipment, so we decided to go along. It was a short walk to the Hall of Justice, but the crowd gained numbers along the way. By the time we reached the jail, we were probably more than four hundred strong and filled the streets for at least two blocks. There were so many people, it was standing room only in the block at the front of the building. A solid wall of riot police stood between the demonstrators and the entrance.

Someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned and saw Karen Pearlston beside me. She wore a scarf over her face to hide her identity, but I recognized her eyes.

She hugged me and told me not to be afraid of being arrested. She said she was going to be arrested and it was no big deal. My friend Chris had also been arrested before, but he was not so thrilled about the idea of spending more time in jail than he'd already done. He was getting nervous.

Although the demonstration had no leader, someone suggested that we all sit

down outside the building until the hostages were released. Just about everyone did so. Karen trotted away and found a seat among the middle of the crowd in the street. She waved to us and began leading a chant. Chris and I wanted a better view, so we walked around the seated crowd to the end of the building. "Check out the alley," said Chris nervously as we rounded the corner. At the end of the alley, row after row of motorcycle police were emerging three abreast from an underground garage beneath the building. We dashed back to the front of Bryant Street and saw mounted police on horseback coming from the east. Their strategy was obvious — they were surrounding the demonstrators from all sides to contain them within the block in front of the Hall of Justice.

A police helicopter buzzed overhead. A cop with a bullhorn was ordering the crowd to disperse or risk being arrested. He was saying that anyone who remained seated blocking the street would be arrested and anyone who did not leave the area would be arrested. Chris turned to me. "I gotta go to work tomorrow, Terry, and I've spent all the time in jail I ever wanted to. Let's get our asses out of here." I thought about it for a moment. I had never been arrested and never spent any time in jail except when visiting incarcerated friends. I wanted to think that I

wasn't afraid of the police or jail, but I damned sure *was* afraid of poverty. I was a temporary office worker. If I were arrested and had to spend several days in jail, I could not take vacation time or sick time off from work. Every day I couldn't work meant fewer dollars in my pocket to spend on the necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter. I was already having a hard enough time paying my rent. I decided I just couldn't help being a wage slave. As much as I wanted to defy the brutal authority of the totalitarian state, I couldn't bring myself to make that kind of sacrifice.

Our options were rapidly running out. People were scattering in all directions as the gravity of the situation became apparent. There were too many people in too small a space, and the cops were closing in fast, squeezing all of us against each other. If we didn't get out soon, a lot of people were going to get hurt.

I didn't want to be one of them. I watched as people tried to run between the horses and were clubbed unconscious. Someone tried to run between two motorcycles and was thrown to the ground, his foot stuck under the wheel of a Harley-Davidson. I lost sight of Karen in the confusion. "This way!" Chris shouted and pulled my arm. We ran past a television camera crew to the alley opposite the Hall of Justice. Dozens of people were clambering over a chain link fence as the only avenue of escape. Another helicopter swooped low over our heads, this time from one of the local TV stations. Chris and I climbed over the fence and ran south toward Brannan Street and freedom. Fortunately, the police did not attempt to chase those fleeing the trap and concentrated on closing in on the demonstrators in the street.

We ran all the way back to our flat in the Mission, too afraid to stop and wait for a Muni bus. As we caught out breath, we turned on the television to see what was happening at the Hall of Justice.

Nothing at all. All three networks were broadcasting from the convention floor at the Moscone Center as Walter Mondale accepted his party's nomination for president. We fired up the bong to calm our nerves and discussed what we'd seen. We watched the local news that night for more information



and were astounded at how such a massive demonstration could be ignored by the news media. The convention dominated the news that night, but the demonstration was barely mentioned. There was a brief report with videotape coverage of a march earlier in the day by COYOTE (Cast Off Your Old Tired Ethics), the prostitute empowerment movement, protesting Feinstein's oppression of hookers during the convention, but nothing, absolutely *nothing* about the much larger demonstration and riot we had escaped. We flipped through the channels to the other newscasts. One station mentioned the War Chest Tour demonstration, but showed no videotape and only discussed the 45 people arrested outside the Bank of America that afternoon. Nothing about the Dead Kennedys, nothing about MDC, nothing about the crowd of several hundred who impeded traffic for blocks outside the Hall of

Justice. It was as if it had never happened.

The next morning, we checked the newspaper for information. Buried on page 16 of the *San Francisco Chronicle* was a brief story about the Hall of Justice "incident." More than 300 demonstrators had been arrested. Unable to find enough cells at the Hall of Justice to hold all of them, the gym and cafeteria of San Francisco's Potrero Middle School had been commandeered as an overflow jail facility. At any other time, such an event would have been front page news.

I simply could not believe that with all the TV news cameras and helicopters present at the event, recording for posterity the tremendous size of the crowd, all the violence, the blood and the terror, not one single minute of footage was ever broadcast. I realized then how completely Dianne Feinstein controlled the city of San Francisco, even to the point of suppressing the electronic and print media from covering an event that would have embarrassed her in front of her party and jeopardized her political ambitions. I was outraged. This wasn't Chicago in 1968, this was San Francisco in 1984. It was frighteningly Orwellian.

The following week, after the convention ended, all those arrested in the demonstrations were released. The only ones charged with any crime were those few who had resisted arrest or struck a police officer. All charges were dropped against the original 45 War Chest Tour demonstrators who had been arrested for obstructing the sidewalk. It was clear that the last thing Feinstein wanted was for any of these cases to go to court, for that would draw public attention to what had happened.

Dianne Feinstein is viewed by many as a kindly old lady who only wants to serve her country and prove the mettle of her gender in politics, but to those of us who have been ground under her thumb in San Francisco, she is one of the most dangerous politicians in Washington. An ignoramus like Jesse Helms doesn't frighten me

nearly as much as Senator Feinstein.

I share Jay's ambivalence with the current state of political activism and the incident chronicled above only served to awaken me to the realization of the powerlessness of those of us who simply want to live and let live. [240 Sybil Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94577]

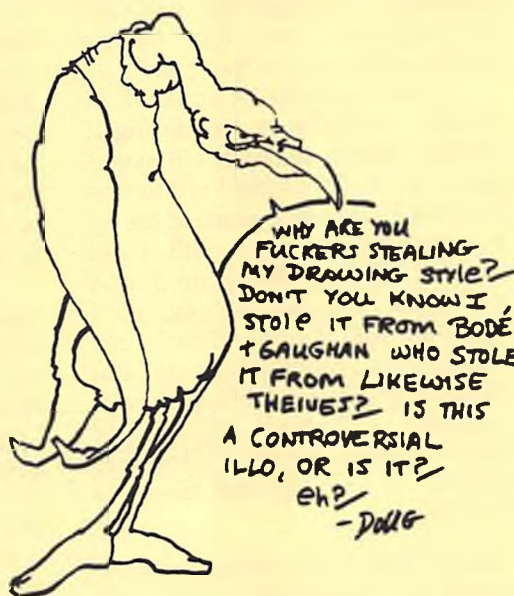
Every year more and more people realize how powerless they sometimes are. Most folks learn this tough lesson from bad experiences in the workplace or from trying to deal with the gas company or the IRS or, recently, the Mississippi River. The demonstrators you described had to learn it a different way: from the police. It probably doesn't get much tougher than that — unless you want to figure in drive-by shootings and child-molesting priests. Whatever the circumstances, that shocking comprehension — when you suddenly realize that you do not have total control over your own life — has got to be one of life's most sobering moments.

The resulting frustration, anger and depression that go along with this helplessness only make matters worse. You lose control and then you lose control. In retrospect, I'm glad you escaped arrest. It is an experience that both Ted and I feel is highly overrated — and can really cut into your freedom, too. — djs

ALAN BOSTICK My favorite piece of text is Jay Kinney's "Private Revolution." I'm not sure I take Jay's point in his introduction, about the true face of dissent movements being shown in the demonstrations that attract no serious notice. Is this what Jay really thinks, or is it just a hook he thought up to try to snag reader's attention in spite of the hullabaloo surrounding the L.A. and San Francisco rioting? It seems a little specious to me, which is a shame, because the article as a whole is a fine piece of writing and an instructive document.

Not long after the Rodney King

verdict and just after Richard Hongisto, San Francisco's power-mad police chief, got sacked for going too far, I volunteered to work as a safety monitor for a march and demonstration in the City. The occasion was the anniversary of the Milk/Moscone assassinations, but there was a strong undertone of protest specifically against the police repression of the Rodney King protestors and bystanders. Because Hongisto had been canned, public fury was



diminished, and the march was smaller and calmer than we had feared it would be. The City Council members and other local VIPs in the front line of the march were somewhat embarrassed by the contingent from the Revolutionary Communist Party (the Trekkies of the revolution) who had fallen in just behind them. The RCP goons got their share of embarrassment, though: despite their loudest shouting, the only slogan of theirs that caught on was, "Dan Quayle, fascist clown, keep your hands off Murphy Brown." Everything else fell flat.

There was a lot of anger directed towards the police officers who were detailed to direct traffic around the march. The police responded with civility and professionalism. It was *status quo ante* for police tolerance of protest. I went out of my way to tell officers I

encountered that they were doing a great job, for in fact they were, and they deserved to hear it between the shouts of vilification.

Was Andy Hooper trying to write a piece of humor, a book review column, or what? He got off to a good start, although formulaic and familiar, but instead of the cute Twelve Step parody his opening promises he serves up a bunch of blurbs about books he's read and liked. That is, I assume that he read them; the book's contents are strangely absent from his comments. "[Pat Cadigan's] gift," Hooper writes, "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." This is perfectly true, and it would look great as a blurb on a dust jacket flap for *Synners*, but it would be just as apt (baring the pronouns) as jacket copy for *Red Mars*.

I'm in the middle of reading Gore Vidal's *United States — Essays 1952-1992*, and perhaps this is showing a bit too much in this letter. Vidal is the man Tom Disch wants to be when he grows up, and his exquisite mastery of the poison pen makes Charles Burbee look like George Laskowski. [680 66th St., Oakland, CA 94609]

Alan, for somebody who complains about blurbish writing ("Funny, you don't look blurbish"), your final sentence really stinks of blurbocity. It is so blurboid, in fact, that I had to go lay down. And you can quote me on that. — djs

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK I will have to take your word for it that I received and LoCced previous issues of *Pong*. That was back in my alcoholic drinking days, and I still find I have huge memory gaps in that time period. Sigh. . .

Of course, in reading through the zine, those words at the top of

page 15 [*"Yeah, go ahead, forget the L.A. riots . . ." — djs*] leap out at me . . . loud and clear . . . for there is no way I can forget the L.A. riots of last year.

As you may know, I work as an Electronics Technician for the United States Postal Service. The building I work at is the GMF, and it is located in the heart of the south-L.A. district that was the worst hit by the riots. Twice a work day I commute along Florence Avenue, from the Harbor Freeway to Main Street, and back in the afternoon. I see the burnt out buildings, the slow pace of clearing away the rubble, the slow pace of rebuilding (what little there is), not to mention the graffiti, the filth, the drunks, the dregs, the gangs, boarded up buildings, iron bars all over the place, and especially on the Church windows, and the general air of misery.

So what am I to make of Jay Kinney's pathetic writing? Is this supposed to be serious or what? For some reason my knee-jerk reaction would be to use that knee-jerk reaction to kick him in the rear and say "get a life" or something like that. Or invite him to come down and walk around south-central L.A. I really won't, of course, since it probably wouldn't do any good, and people do get killed walking around that area.

All in all, I'd like to leave the L.A. area. LASFS has nothing to interest me anymore, not after Robbie Cantor thought it was OK to throw out the APA-L mimeograph and spirit-duplicator, both in good working condition . . . and then convince the club that LASFS owed APA-L \$2 per machine, since \$2 was the scrap metal price. The fact that a Dr. Who fan like Robbie can get away with this sort of vandalism and get the LASFS to go along with it should show you that the LASFS is today a bunch of comic fans, media fans, and gamers. I am totally out of place there.

However, I dare not leave the Post Office. I need the pay, the modest pension, and above all, the health insurance program. I have zilch confidence in whatever pro-

gram Clinton may cobble together, since it is sure to combine the worst features of the UK system, the Canadian system, and anything else the democrats can think of.

OK, I'll send Burbee some of my fanzines, even if he doesn't LoC. And that may be why so many fans dropped him from their list, you know. I have talked to these fans, who see no reason to send copies to fans who do not respond. Even if you are a BNF and oh-so-fucking important many years ago. The question seems to be "what have you done for me lately in the way of response?"

I also remember that as OE of FAPA I was always wondering if Burbee would make his 8 pages minac on time. Elmer Perdue was another FAPAn that worried me by his deadline pushing. Still, I did get Art Widner back into FAPA and back into fanpubbing, so I have no complaints. Terry Carr was good about his 8 pages, but Silverberg was another last minute contributor. Now if only I could have recruited Harlan Ellison into FAPA. . . . [P.O. Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309]

Harry, I like a man who says what he means and means what he says. In fact, I think you are just the guy to



answer my two burning Postal-related questions: 1) Why do so many disenfranchised Postal workers go nuts and shoot and kill their co-workers? 2) Do you own a gun? Keep those cards and letters comin', pal. — djs

PAMELA BOAL Of course cultural snobs laugh at the honest person who admits that they have no training in the fine arts but say that when they look at a painting they know if they like it or not. Thus it is with a fanzine, each one received may differ in size, layout, production method and emphasis but when it is in your hand you know it is a fanzine and you know if you like it or not. So when I opened *BLAT!* and started to read it I knew I had a fanzine in my hand and when I had finished reading it I knew I liked it. The cogneocenti may pontificate and debate what they argue are the finer points of fanzine fandom, they may sneer at my simple approach, that's ok, that's how they get their fun. I get mine from reading fanzines.

Two or three years back I was wondering why so many fans were talking doom and gloom, bemoaning the dearth of fanzines. At the time I was getting as many zines as I had time to respond to and those zines I received mentioned others. Now because of my lack of time and energy I am still getting nearly as many zines as I can reply to but am all too aware that there aren't others. Only two of the zines I receive are from newer and younger fans, the rest such as *Erg* and *The Mentor* have been around since Jophan was a twinkle in his father's eye, or are newish titles from people like yourselves who have been absent from fanzines and have decided to rejoin the happy band. Too few and for the most part too irregular. As you write in reply to Vince, pity the neofan from whence his or her example!

In the 70s I was setting time aside to answer the week's batch of zines, now I set time aside to deal with the month's batch and some months that may be only one or none at all. Apas, E-mail, recession, the whys and wherefores have been debated to the point of tedium. I can only hope that, letterhacks like myself convince editors such as yourselves that pubbing your ish is worthwhile. If we do convince every editor there

just might be enough zines around for new fans to see some and get smitten with the publishing bug.

Which brings me to Jay Kinney's article. It seems to me that the demonstrators had only the vaguest notion as to why they were demonstrating. That these well-meaning but incoherent, woolly headed people (to whom demonstrations are a way of life) are indirectly responsible for violence, which no doubt they would abhor. People with a cause see that small orderly demonstrations not only fail to bring about results they also fail to get enough media coverage to alert the general public to the existence of a problem. So the message to organizers is make it big, loud and controversial (by marching in areas where objectors to the cause live, by hassling police escorts) and if we attract those who attend marches just for the chance of a punch up, well at least that will bring the media along.

As for the L.A. riots: People who know the system is against them are not going to risk police beatings and biased prosecution over a decision that they knew was a foregone conclusion anyway, but the chance for a free TV or revenge on that uppity shop keeper who refused credit is worth the risk. So the tiny number of politically aware people (who have learnt the lesson from the woolly heads that violence gets results) can readily manipulate the instincts of the many and get a retrial. Does democratic law, let alone justice, get a look in anywhere in these situations?

On behalf of the Mythical Animals Defence Persons I protest Steve Stiles' murder of a Unicorn. Even when depicted as an old nag that noble creature deserves protection, and anyway, I didn't get the joke, so there! [4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, U.K.]

I don't think the Simi Valley acquittal was a foregone conclusion. Despite their history of oppression, poverty and racism, I can't help but believe that most of the residents of South Central still hoped there was a chance (however slight) that justice would be

served in the Rodney King case. Before the jury's findings were announced it was widely accepted that the entire affair was a giant fiasco and that the prosecution, armed with that damning videotape, were going to win. There was no fucking way they wouldn't win — I mean, here was all the proof anyone could ever need being shown nightly on every TV set in the world.

However, despite that hope, I think there was also a lot of fear. Fear that even this time, with so much in their corner, they would lose anyway. Fear that the system would prove itself to be as corrupt as everyone always said it was. Fear that all their suffering still brought them no opportunity or respect. Fear that was justifiable.

Fear is a very strong emotion — it is right up there with hope, lust and rage. And I believe that when any of these primal feelings reach the boiling point they can easily spill over and get mixed up with the others. At the peak of things in L.A. all the emotions were running very high. That day brought them some mixture of most of these feelings, probably starting with hope and quickly shifting into fear and then, after the acquittal, into bitter rage.

The "system" not only let those people down, it rubbed their noses in it. So, in the end, I don't think that for most people in the riots it was a matter of getting a free TV, but an attempt to somehow prove that even the powerless have some power — even if it is just the power to destroy. — djs

GEORGE FLYNN "Joe Siclari — probably the first trufan to chair an American Worldcon in more than a decade." Yes, Joe's great, but I don't think that's really a fair statement about (some of) the other Chairs, unless you make fanzine activity a necessary part of being a trufan. [As a matter of fact, I do. Read your Enchanted Duplicator. — tw] But I'll be prudent and avoid trying to argue specific cases.

I think Andy Hooper overestimates the extent of "the rejection of Stfnal literacy" by fans. Certainly this varies from place to place (and even from group to group within the same club, for that matter). But a significant number of the

people I hang out with *do* keep up with the SF field to a considerable extent (though it gets harder to do all the time, with the glut of stuff out there to sift through for nuggets; and while they try to keep up with novels, not many of these people read the magazines much any more). I must admit, however, that there are damn few who maintain familiarity with both SF and fanzines.

I think Avedon is expressing paranoia (here and elsewhere) about "talent being sucked up by GENie" on insufficient evidence. There is some interesting writing on GENie, but not a whole lot of it, and very little of it from people who'd otherwise be fanwriters (and there'll probably be even less now that the rates have gone up). The standard counter-example is Teresa, of course, but in fact she's had very little to say on GENie for the last year or more. I'm not really sure how much her last Hugo nomination owed to GENie readers and how much to fanzine fans who were just in the habit of listing her name (the latter is a different problem of the Hugos); after all, it usually takes only about ten votes to get on the ballot. In any case, none of this year's fan writer nominees are on GENie.

"Fanzine" used for "movie gossip magazines" in the '30s? I thought Russell Chauvenet invented the term *ex nihilo* in 1941. "Fandom" on the other hand, was in use by sports writers in the 1890s. [P.O. Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Stn., Cambridge, MA 02142]

*Instead of paranoia, I think Avedon was expressing a sense of loss. Unlike a hard to get fanzine, GENie is completely unavailable to her in far-off London. While it may be true that Teresa has had very little to say on GENie in the last year, that very little is still more than she has had to say in the pages of any fanzine during that same year. For Avedon — and the rest of us who aren't plugged in — anything Teresa writes for a computer network is lost to us. *sigh* While the same could be said for writing done for the pages of a private apa, there is one distinct difference: You*

can buy the old apa mailings of dead or gafiated fans. It is much harder getting access to somebody's floppy discs.

While it is true that Russell Chauvenet coined the word "fanzine" for SF fandom, it was apparently in use in mundane circles before he applied it to our publications. I get my information on this from a very reliable source: My Mother. She was a kid in the '30s and she and her peers called their movie mags "fanzines." I guess that there is a chance that they "invented" the word themselves — it seems pretty obvious, in retrospect — but probably not.

Nonetheless, I believe her recollection — I have to, she's my mommy. — djs

DAVID BRATMAN I tend to agree with your theory that the fanzine revival is a myth, or at least a very small fact. Having just finished counting the Hugo nomination ballots for ConFrancisco, I'm struck by the way in which virtually anybody publishing a general-distribution fanzine can be a serious contender, at the least, for a Hugo nomination. And I'm dismayed by the fact that, although I'd thought my collection of current fanzines was pretty pathetic, it nevertheless contains four of the five eventual nominees: *File 770*, *Fosfax* (though I'm not getting it currently), *Mimosa*, and *Stet*. (That fifth one is *Laan's Laan-tern*, which only makes me more trufannish by its absence.) So if you can astound the world and publish the minimum of four issues all in one year, perhaps next year you too can get a Hugo nomination. The only catch is that you'd have to go to Winnipeg to pick it up.

For a moment I thought I occupied a place of honor in your zine, but then I realized you were thanking Batman, not Bratman. This sort of misreading happens to me all the time. I'm pleased that you were able to draw the Caped Crusader, as he used to be known before being demoted to Dark Knight, into submission, but I found the worldcon report to be more interesting. The purpose of

conventions, meyer, is to provide fodder for entertaining trip reports in fanzines. And yours was entertaining indeed. Wish I'd been there. Even your halting first encounter with Willis made good reading. And Ted's with a certain young editor.

Andy Hooper's true dark secret is not that he reads and enjoys science fiction, it's that he's willing to talk about the fact. Although a number of fans have loudly deserted sf for the greener fields of mysteries, many of us are still quietly reading sf. What astonishes me, though, when I find out what other people are reading and enjoying, is how varied our tastes can be. People with whom I am at one on the spirit of fannish fandom will be devoted to authors I find appalling or at least totally uninteresting. Fortunately Andy begins his article with Howard Waldrop. I hope never to hear the fan who does not enjoy Waldrop. There is no pro whose fiction is more fannish.

And the purpose of fanthologies, it occurs to me, not for the first time, after reading Barnaby Rapoport's piece on *Fanthology '88*, is so they can get bad reviews. [1161 Huntingdon Dr., San Jose, CA 95129]

*I couldn't agree with you more about some fans' terrible taste in authors — just look at the popularity of Orson Scott Card. On the other hand, some writers get overlooked their whole careers and have to struggle for survival, never mind recognition. I think John Shirley is a perfect example of this. He has written some incredible books — Cellars is a novel that will stick with you forever — but he seems doomed to some kind of weird oblivion. Let's face it, his novel City Come A'Walkin' was really the book that started the whole Cyberpunk movement, and yet Bill Gibson — despite his best efforts to the contrary — gets all the credit. *sigh* — djs*

MIKE GLICKSOHN I really enjoyed Dan's editorial, not only for the personal history it contained but also for the way it took me back to MagiCon (which was my first worldcon in five years

and may well be my last worldcon for at least that long). Like Dan, I went primarily for the opportunity to be there when Walt was honored (not so much to meet him as I'd done that twice before) and although I was balancing attending the fannish con-within-the-worldcon with introducing my fiancée to worldcons in general (which kept me from participating as fully in the fannish con as I might otherwise have done) I too thought the whole tone of MagiCon was a fine one. Very fannish, very laid-back, very enjoyable. And Dan's excellent article brought a lot of those good feelings back for me and had me feeling more fannish than I have in many months. And left me wondering when another worldcon will be able to recreate such an atmosphere? (I somehow doubt San Francisco did and I *know* Winnipeg won't and I'd be a little bit surprised if Glasgow pulled it off. Perhaps it's just as well I probably won't attend any of the three.)

Excellent letter column, even if some of it baffled me because *Pong #41* was one of the fanzines that I failed to give proper attention to due to the pressures of my personal life at the time I received it. A lot of fine writing/thinking about things fannish and generally excellent reactions/replies from the editorial board. But Ted's response to Lan seemed entirely too severe to me.

Now Lan doesn't need me to defend him and he knows I won't defend his fanzine because I agree with Ted about its merits but I can't help wondering why Ted takes such a personal stance when replying to Lan. The cheap shots this response contains are unnecessary and uncalled for. It's as if Ted sees the existence (and success) of *Lan's Lantern* as a personal attack on his own fan life and that's flat out ridiculous.

Attacking someone who is not primarily a fannish fan for not attending a fan programming at a worldcon makes little sense. Worldcons have such crowded programs that someone whose interests are not primarily fannish will *always* have other program items to

attend. That's the whole nature and purpose of the world convention. Ted may believe (and I may agree with him) that the fan programming is among the best aspects of the convention but castigating someone for not sharing that view and preferring some of the other 90% of the program doesn't make much sense when that other person has already admitted to being an sf rather than a fannish fan.

And why accuse Lan of being "scared" because he's never attended a Corflu? Corflu is for fannish fans and Lan has never claimed to be one. Does that call for a gratuitous insult? Ted doesn't insult every fan who isn't fannish but he seems to have a personal grudge against Lan that I don't understand. (Hell, I've never been to a Corflu either. Does Ted think I'm scared, too?) I like Lan, even though I don't admire what he does with his publication. I don't think it's worthy of a Hugo but I don't think a lot of award winners are worthy of the honor. Ted seems to be working through a private agenda when it comes to Lan and I think that's a damned shame. Lan may not have made any lasting contribution to fannish fandom but he doesn't deserve to be picked out of the crowd and dumped on all the time. [508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6S 3L6, Canada]

You've made a fundamental error in confusing "fannish fan" with "fanzine fan." (It's probably true that more often than not, the two can be used interchangeably — but they do not mean the same thing.) Corflu is a "convention for fanzine fans," and I certainly include Laan in that category. He does publish a fanzine, and his ego is tightly bound up in it (e.g., the use of his coonskin hat on its cover) — about which, more in a moment — so why does he avoid contact with his fellow fanzine fans? I think he's scared of us, afraid of what we think of him/his fanzine, afraid of some sort of confrontation, perhaps. But another possibility is that he — confusing "fanzine fans" with "fannish fans" as you did — looks down on us, sees us as "second rate" in comparison with the pros who populate

the portion of the conventions he attends, and to whose mediocre works he dedicates his fanzine. I mean, no one at Corflu (with the exception of Amy Thompson, who received a Special Dispensation) was flogging their latest book on a panel or signing autographs for a long queue of adoring people.

My "personal grudge" was piqued by Laan's smug, self-congratulatory cover and editorial in celebration of his first Hugo win. You remember that

Hugo — on the first ballot "No Award" got more votes than Laan's Lantern. But to read Laan, you'd think his was an overwhelming and richly-deserved victory, overdue even. His identification with his fanzine is complete. And his fanzine is a celebration of mediocrity in its every aspect. This offends me, but I have no "private agenda" here. It's all out in the public, for anyone to read. — tw

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Bill Breiding:

Ted has been Bob Tucker for some years now — everytime I see him at a con they're all lazing away at his feet." Craig Smith; Alexis Gilliland: "Back in the old days when you wanted to pub your ish, you had to supervise all these monks laboriously copying out the original, which was projected on a screen in the front of the room." Tom Foster; D.S. Black; Avedon Carol: "Arthur Thomson once plaintively asked me why everyone wrote his name as 'ATom' rather than 'Atom,' and I explained that that's how it looks, and he said he didn't mean it that way; it was supposed to be 'Atom.'" Ben Indick (twice!); Brad Foster: "Kinney's piece was wonderful. I've subscribed to *The Realist* in the past for just this sort of thing. It's the 'wouldn't it be great, but, really, it's all pretty stupid' style of reporting." Catherine Mintz; Steve Stiles: "I simply had to congratulate you on the exquisite artistry of your brilliant portrayal of me in the latest, very charming *BLAT!*. No other seer has been capable of looking so deeply into the truth of my very soul!!! I salute you, maestro! Only thing is, you left out the drool." Rob Hansen; Frank Denton; Jeff Potter; Paul Di Filippo: "In my last move (an unbelievable 13 years ago) all the fanzines got dumped, as well as my file of high school newspaper articles, in a fit of zen-like purity. Will future scholars of my 'career' (haha!) lament the loss? Not as much as I." Bill Humphries; William Danner: "At 86 I'm no spring chicken myself, but I've been lucky so far and still get around. But for years I've wondered each time I have started on a new issue of my fanzine, *Stefantasy*, if it would ever be finished." Pam Wells; Jean Young; Ethel Lindsay; Ken Fletcher; Shelby Vick: "Alan Dorey refers to zines that avoid controversy, to which I plead guilty. I've seen too many times when controversy evolves into senseless feuds, gaining nothing but riled tempers and sundered friendships. Does that mean the resulting fmz that avoid controversy are nothing but troth? I don't think so. Guess I'll never make a Crusading Editor (or Crusader Rabbit, for that matter)." Mark Kernes; Russell Chauvenet: "Now,

when I entered (First) Fandom in 1938-39 the term in common use was 'fanmag,' a term which I grew to dislike. As attested by Harry Warner, Jr. in 'All Our Yesterdays,' page 41, ¶2, I introduced 'fanzine' as a replacement for 'fanmag' 'around 1941.' If everyone who speaks English should add one popularly accepted word to the language in a lifetime, dictionaries would be too ponderous to lift. Therefore, I shouldn't take such a fatherly interest in 'fanzine,' but I do." Nevenah Smith; Daviddy Thayarvia: "Are you sure those fanoclasts at Tucker's feet haven't fallen and can't get up?" Garth Danielson; Brian Earl Brown: "It is a shame that Burbee has been forgotten by so many in fandom. I'm sure many were surprised to learn that he was still alive. Fandom is much like Hollywood, where you're only as good as your last role. Here you're only as good as your last loc, and when Burbee stopped loccing he just faded away. One thing I didn't know before this was that Burbee was the oft spoken of 'Meyer' of many a fan reminiscence. Since there were no fans with a real name of Meyer in California I thought it was just some inscrutable in-joke." Berni Phillips; Tracy Shannon: "The only jarring note [in the issue] hit with Steve Stiles' 'guerrilla girls' strip. As a casual fanartist myself, and a more-than-casual feminist, I found it kind of offensive. It kind of perpetuates a lot of nasty stereotypes, and makes a joke of the equality women have been working for a long time. Not that I haven't been tempted to shoot a unicorn in my time. . . ." Sid Birchby; Derek Pickles; Gary Deindorfer: "I have memories of sharing an apartment with Bhub Stewart on the west side of the Village in Manhattan in the late '66, early '67 times. Too bad I didn't pay my rent and was starting to use LSD and in general act wacky. No wonder he kicked me out. I don't blame him for a minute." And, of course, that bitch Madonna, who still wants us to publish a photo of her left nipple on our cover. She just won't take "no" for an answer.

NEXT ISSUE: The entire lettercol will be printed in Pig Latin. BE ERE-THAY OR BE ARE-SQUAY!

FORTY YEARS BEFORE THE MAST (SORTA)

Welcome to *BLAT*!'s Fortieth Anniversary Issue. It hasn't been easy getting this far because, as everyone knows, the 40th Anniversary issue of a fanzine is always the hardest, but somehow we have made it. Producing this ish has meant a lot of hardship and long hours at work — by our wives — to provide you readers with days of glorious eyetracking and ego scanning.

As my coeditor has already explained in his editorial, it was four decades ago that he produced his first issue. But what he neglected to tell you is that another first issue was also in production during August 1953.

Yes, that's right. While Ted was sweating in his basement over a postcard mimeo; my mother was sweating in a Kentucky hospital with her feet in the stirrups. As Ted was breaking new ground in fandom, my mother was breaking her water. While Ted was collating, my mother was contracting. When Ted was... Well, you get the idea.

The only real difference between these two first issues is that my mom decided to call me *Dan*, while Ted chose to call his *Zip*.

I have been a fan for almost 25 years and published my first fanzine in August of 1971. It was called *Lizard Inn* and featured a cover by Vaughn Bode and an article about conventions by Linda Bushyager. It lasted three issues. The first issue of *Boonfark* came out in 1974 and featured articles by Dave Locke and Neal Goldfarb. Unfortunately it took three more years to publish the second issue, though I did eventually publish six more by 1983. Ted and I published the first issue of *Pong* in 1980 and regularly produced it through the 40th issue. I created *SF Eye* with Steve Brown in 1986 and produced five issues before resigning.

I was nominated for a Hugo in 1983 and illustrated a version of *The Enchanted Duplicator* that same year, having earlier attempted to adapt it to comics. I helped run the fourth *Corflu* in 1986 and will help put on the eleventh one next year. I have been married to a wonderful woman for fifteen years (including 3 years of living in sin) and hope to be with her for at least another fifteen.

And my coeditor? Well, let's just say that Ted White has been my friend and confidant for more than 20 years. His influence is wide ranging and his coattails are large. His heart is pure and his mind is fine. His head is bald and his eyebrows are long. He holds powerful opinions, but also looks real good in a Cub Scout uniform. Ahem. Without him I wouldn't

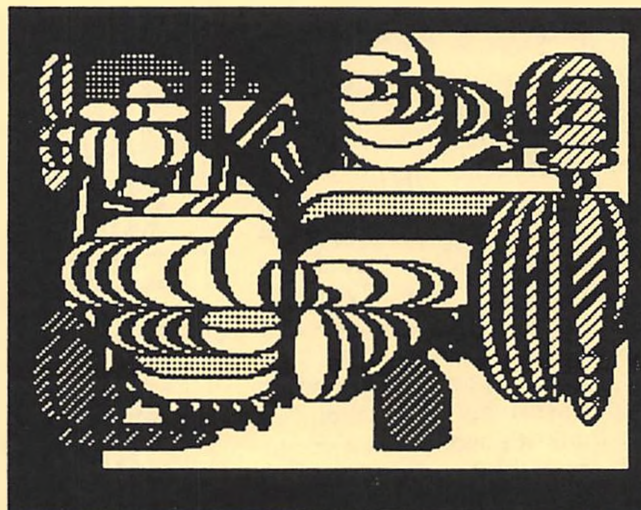
be here today — because this fanzine was his god-damn idea.

Forty years? That's *definitely* not too many.

THE BABY SEAL HUNT My wife Lynn really likes to watch nature programs on television. I, on the other hand, am less enthusiastic. I always expect them to be dry and boring — "Oh no! Not Termites screwing on an erupting volcano again!" — but, in fact, some of these shows can be really fascinating. For instance, the ugliness found in the insect world can be both repulsive and hypnotic and is

BULLSHIT ARTIST

DANOTATIONS



Stiles

far more bizarre than anything any sf author could ever imagine. (Seeing insects up close is all the proof I'll ever need that Aliens Walk Among Us.) I can't help but watch.

But, eventually there comes a moment in these programs when I *have* to change the channel. It is the one part that is guaranteed to make me wince and, try as I might, I am unable to sit there and passively continue watching. It is that moment of senseless death. It is that moment when the predator (all too often human) brings down his prey in as savage and gratuitous a way as possible.

The classic example of these sort of things are the Seal Hunting and Clubbing scenes that are a part of every documentary that's ever been made about Alaska or the Yukon. You know what I'm talking about: Native hunters and white adventurers dressed in Mukluks and parkas out on the tundra for an afternoon of beating defenseless baby seals (with big sad eyes) to a bloody pulp. Occasionally they also beat baby Polar bears — the blood is so photogenic against their white fur and the snow.

It is at these gruesome moments that I start channel surfing.

About a month ago I was shooting the video curl in search of some interesting vis-u-stim and stopped momentarily on CNBC, the broadcast network's business and talk cable channel, to check out the guest on that night's Tom Snyder talkshow. To my surprise it

was Harlan Ellison. To my dismay the show was more than half over. I had been expecting Harlan to turn up as a guest on Tom's show ever since it went on the air — he had been a guest on Tom's old "Tomorrow" program several times in the '70s and was also one of the few people that Tom went out of his way to thank at the close of his final show. And, though I'm not a regular viewer, I often tune in for a quick guest-scan, knowing that I'll occasionally hit pay-dirt.

I watched the rest of the show and laughed when Harlan told a Trekkie phone caller that he wasn't responsible for her twisted life. Later Harlan talked about how his wife is a saint for putting up with him for almost eight years. He was energetic and entertaining and put up with Snyder's bombastic babbling with style, even though he did look a bit silly in that fedora. I was glad I'd stumbled on the program and vowed to tape it in its entirety the next time it was on.

Harlan has been a weird part of my fan life from almost the beginning. I discovered sf fandom by reading the prozines and in the late '60s Harlan was a publishing dynamo and appeared regularly in *Galaxy* and *Worlds of IF*, among others. His stories were eclectic and wild and vivid and had strange names like "Repent Harlequin, Said the Ticktock Man."

When I started getting fanzines Harlan was still occasionally putting in appearances in zines like *Trumpet* and *SFR* and was, by that time, well on his way to being a legend.

My first convention was the 1970 PghLANGE in Pittsburgh and Harlan was the Guest of Honor. And what a GoH he was, too. He was quite possibly the most charismatic and energetic person I'd ever seen. His performances on panels and, especially, at the banquet — where he publicly dissected and ridiculed an early issue of Don Keller and Jeff Smith's *Phantasmagoria* before an appreciative audience — was unlike anything I had ever witnessed outside of a Don Rickles routine. He had the convention in the palm of his hand. A couple of years later, at a Lunacon, he and Issac Asimov took on each other in very much the same way. The insults and witticisms flew for an hour and I walked away feeling like I'd just snuck into the Friar's Club.

That same weekend Harlan did a dramatic reading. It was a story he'd just written about his dog, who had recently died. It was obviously still a very emotional subject for Harlan, who fought back tears from nearly the beginning of his recitation. By the time he'd finished reading the story many members of the audience, including myself, had lost that battle. It was one of the few times in my life that I really experienced the power of the written word. The audience just sat there, stunned. I left that convention convinced that

Mr. Ellison was a very special man.

By this point in the early '70s, Harlan had gotten pretty fed up with fandom and even sf itself. He railed against being called a science fiction writer. It had been a long-time coming; his dissatisfaction went back at least a decade. He did a lot of screaming and yelling in the pages of *SFR* and vowed to forget fandom. Events at the 1969 worldcon in St. Louis had apparently pushed him over the edge and he vowed never to attend another convention — except those, like the PghLANGE and Lunacon, to which he had already accepted the GoHship. But after that, *No More Conventions*, goddamit.

But Harlan's bad opinion of fandom continued. He complained that fandom just wouldn't leave him alone and that, in some way, fandom seemed to be poisoning every aspect of his life. Any contacts he had with fandom, that I saw, were usually bitter and occasionally slipped into character assassination. All of which led me, in the mid-70s to write Harlan a letter. We had met each other on a number of occasions, in the company of mutual friends like Lisa Tuttle, and I thought that I could somehow soothe his angst. (Yeah, call me a naïve git.)

I haven't been able to find the carbon of my letter to Harlan, but I recall it being a sincere, though misdirected, plea for him to just *chill*. I think I told him that he didn't have to be The Life of the Party all the time and suggested that he begin cultivating a quiet, in-the-background type persona. I thought that the idea of Harlan going to conventions to quietly hang out with his friends — instead of making a spectacle of himself — would be a lot healthier. I received no reply to my letter and doubt I really ever expected one.

Nonetheless, since that time Harlan has always treated me decently. At the Phoenix worldcon we occasionally ended up at the same parties and he always greeted me warmly and was complimentary. At the Boston worldcon in 1980 Harlan and I often exchanged quips when we ran into each other at parties or in the hall. And while he made pissy remarks about most of my friends, he always seemed enthusiastic and was, to my amazement, familiar with my cartoons and comic strips. And at one point during the weekend, he sought me out to commend me for a comment I'd made on a panel called, "Why I Hate Fandom."

Why, Gol Dang it, he's even called me on the phone.

I have always been grateful that somebody as talented and as reknowned as Harlan Ellison chose to be acquainted with me. I have also been equally grateful that I have never been the object of his mighty anger and his mightier mouth. Over the years I have



heard many first-person examples of Harlan's acrimony. There are things he has said and things he has done that have left me feeling sick to my stomach. (And if you've ever seen my stomach you can imagine how painful that must be.) So I know how lucky I have been.

To be fair, I should mention that I have also heard a few stories about Harlan's generosity and compassion.

The last public example of Harlan's rage, that I know of, appeared a few years ago in the pages of a sorta-fanzine, called *Short Form*, published by a guy named Mark Van Name. Harlan had a column in *Short Form* that answered readers' questions. In the last published issue Harlan answered a smarmy postcard from Andy Porter with a multi-page screed that was personal and hateful. It reduced Andy to rubble. It was a vile and offensive use of the English language. When it was later proven that Andy Porter hadn't written the postcard, it was already too late. The damage had been done.

Though Harlan agreed to a carefully worded apology to Andy, it was apparently never written. And the issue of *Short Form* that was to feature it has never appeared. When my coeditor wrote on this subject in the 13th issue of *Spent Brass* he spoke hopefully for his old friend: "One wishes, as someone who has known Harlan for nearly forty years and considered him a friend much of that time, that Harlan now feels a sincere and genuine regret for what he has done to Andy Porter."

The logic of that wish made it a lot easier to let Harlan off the hook. Andy wasn't going to sue him — it wasn't the fannish thing to do. The damage could not be undone, but at the same time Andy probably benefitted in some weird way from the sympathy the incident generated. Before long I had pretty much forgotten it had ever happened.

A couple of nights ago they rebroadcast the episode of Tom Snyder's program that featured Harlan as a guest. I had found out by coincidence that it was scheduled and this time I got it on tape. If the first 35 minutes turned out to be as entertaining as the 25 minutes I had already seen I decided I would save the tape and show it to Lynn. She's been skeptical about my interest in Harlan ever since I introduced them in a Boston hotel lobby, in 1980. Harlan never said hello, but chose instead to ask Lynn if she were "here of your own free will?" When she said that she was he shook his head and told her, "I'd rather have a hys-

terectomy than be here." By the time she had recovered enough to react he had already moved up the line — having spotted somebody else he knew who was closer to the front desk. "What a pig," Lynn finally said.

I hoped that seeing Harlan at his witty best would change her mind a little. Instead, watching the tape changed my mind about Harlan Ellison.

The show itself started out with the usual sloppy host-type gushing. Tom called Harlan "Harley Darley" and told him that *Shatterday* was his favorite Ellison book. Then, while he looked through his notes for a particular quote, he got Harlan talking about his father's career as a phony dentist and the time in jail it cost him.

Finally Snyder found the quote he was looking for. "You probably know this fella," he began. "Okay, the fella who said, 'Harlan Ellison burns his bridges before he crosses them.' This man is Andy Porter, the editor of. . ."

Suddenly I started paying closer attention.

"Andy Porter?" Harlan yelped. "That simpering bag of monkey-nuts! He is one of the most loathsome, detestable human beings. . ."

"Oh really?" asked Tom, somewhat surprised but laughing loudly.

"He's a, a. . ."

Harlan continued, searching for the right word.

"Turd?" offered Tom, helpfully referring to one of Harlan's earlier comments.

"He is enobled by the word 'turd,'" Harlan replied. "The nicest thing I ever called him in an article was 'a piece of ambulatory phlegm.'" Tom laughed again, exposing his receding gums. "Andy Porter," Harlan went on. "Andy Porter. I'd like to burn down a bridge he's on while he's in the middle of it."

I couldn't believe my ears. Tom sarcastically added that he was glad he'd brought the subject up.

"I'd like to nail his foot to the floor and spin him, for god's sake," added Harlan with a broad gesture. "He's a monster."

"Don't hold back now," Tom encouraged.

"Ah man," Harlan took a breath before he continued. "Listen. Believe me, he'll be on the phone in five minutes. Out there Andy Porter right now is just shrieking on the phone. Right now, he is. . . He is one of the most awful people in the universe. I . . . if I had to make my top, first percentile hit list. . . If I was on a rooftop with a thirty-ought-six. . ."

"And you had your chance. . ." Tom chimed in.

". . . my chance to take out anybody," said the author of *The Beast That Shouted Love at the Heart of the World*, "it would be either him or Geraldo Rivera."



I hit the pause button and did a mental double-take. Did Harlan just call Andy Porter a “simpering bag of monkey-nuts?” Did I just hear Andy referred to on national television as “one of the most loathsome, detestable human beings” and “a monster?” How could Harlan get away with calling Andy “one of the most awful people in the universe?”

I rewound the tape and watched the segment again. When Harlan got to the point where he began talking about shooting Andy from a rooftop I hit the pause button again. It was then that I realized that I was viewing the talkshow equivalent of a Baby Seal Hunt. As I stared at the video still of Harlan’s laughing face flickering on my TV screen my stomach began to knot up. I could almost see the figure of Harlan Ellison standing over Andy’s supine body with a bloody club. The vision of Andy’s big sad eyes staring lifelessly into space sent a chill up my spine. This was like watching a car wreck.

I pushed the play button again in time to hear Harlan add, “That’s all right. Listen, if he said a kind word about me it was said in a fever pitch.”

He seemed to be getting inarticulate — which can be especially dangerous during a character assassination — and he seemed to be suddenly trying to take the edge off his comments. As if he had just realized that what he’d been saying was being heard by a couple of million people.

I started getting the old “Surf’s Up” feeling again, but this time I ignored my impulse to change channels and continued watching. I discovered that it is much more difficult to turn away from the bloody snow when you happen to be acquainted with the dead Seal. Tom tried to get Harlan going again by repeating the Porter quote, but now Harlan wouldn’t take the bait.

“I mean, you do . . . you are . . .,” Tom was struggling to reignite the flames, but managed only a lame admonition. “You do boil over real fast, you know,” he said.

But it was too late, Harlan had regained his edge. “How can you say that?” he asked. “I’m perfectly calm.”

The subject under discussion changed after that and Harlan did a bunch of plugs for some of his upcoming books and then spent a lot of time talking about Hollywood, directors and the time he had a brain scan that proved that he had a brain as healthy as an average 7-year-old. Tom found the latter story particularly amusing.

I, on the other hand, was no longer amused by Harlan’s antics. He seemed to have gone out of his way to be mean and hurtful. I felt somehow certain that Andy had not done anything to provoke this attack. To my experience, Andy is a benign person — possibly even a little sad — who is probably incapable of very much mischief, even if he tried. The quote that Snyder used to start Andy’s disemboweling seemed fairly accurate to me and possibly even a little clever. Despite the lack of context, it probably would have made a great jacket blurb.

But another look at the tape proved to me that Harlan never really heard Andy’s quote. In fact, it appears that he started his attack only after he heard Andy’s name. That was the catalyst for his rage. It was at that point that I remembered the mess in the pages of *Short Form*. Could these two events be connected? It sure started to look that way.

Was Harlan attacking Andy Porter because he had a genuine gripe or was his behavior a knee-jerk reaction? Did Harlan think that after his incredible fuck up in *Short Form* that Andy had become a threat to his credibility? Was he feeling suddenly guilty because he never apologized? Perhaps his behavior was a pre-emptory strike brought on by the fear that Andy’s quote might have a second sentence that would tell all of Tom’s viewers what an asshole Harlan could be? Or was Harlan attacking Andy Porter to protect his own imperial status?

Sometimes, if an untruth is repeated often enough it becomes the accepted reality. After a while it doesn’t matter what really took place because a lot of people prefer to believe that He Who Speaks The Loudest Must Be Telling The Truth. It is an old trick that has been used by revival preachers and faneditors for many years.

It doesn’t take a genius to recognize that Harlan can speak very loudly indeed. And with volume and celebrity comes a kind of believability, even when you are still standing over the bloody corpse. This is a lesson I learned the hard way several years ago and is a lesson I’ll never forget. Nor, I suspect, will Andy Porter.

The admiration I once had for Harlan Ellison is gone now. His bitterness has forever robbed me of my ability to enjoy his talent. His skill with words can do nothing to change my mind. In fact, nothing sums up my feelings about Harlan better than his own words. They were spoken towards the end of his appearance on that night’s Tom Snyder program. Originally used to express Ellison’s opinion of David Letterman, they are, I feel, much better suited to describing Harlan himself: “I think he’s a mean spirited man and I don’t like the way he treats a lot of people who can’t defend themselves.”

Need anyone say anything more?

UNDER OUR VERY NOSES Lynn and I used to live in the section of Washington, D.C. known as Mount Pleasant. Despite its name, it was at times a very difficult place to live. When we moved there in 1984 it was a shabby, working class (mostly black) neighborhood — the area was full of fine old houses that had seen a better day. Nonetheless, Mount Pleasant had many charms, like nearby restaurants, clubs and the National Zoo. It suited our shabby, working class (mostly white) lifestyle, to a tee.

By the time we moved away in 1988, the neighborhood had taken a turn for the worse. Despite a brief attempt at gentrification by wealthy gays, the streets of Mount Pleasant had started to take on the aura of a

ghetto. A massive influx of poor Latino immigrants, who chose the area as their new turf, had created serious overcrowding problems. The sidewalks became crammed with aimless people, who seemed to be spending their lives in confusion. Most corners now included at least one drunken fool and the park became a No Man's Land.

The crime rate soared as well. Our house was burgled twice during our last two years there. The nights became a mixture of police helicopter searchlights and the unsettling sounds of shouting and car alarms. The day after we moved back to the suburbs a man was shot on our block in Mount Pleasant. For once our timing had been superb. We had made it back to the relative safety of suburbia without any mortal wounds. But our old neighborhood wasn't quite so lucky.

In 1990 an argument between a Latino drunk and a policewoman led to three days of rioting, burning and looting. It was all over national TV and, if you looked closely at the screen — just down that street a bit — you could see our old house.

In the summer of 1992, Mount Pleasant seemed to be under seige. The news reports said that a man in a blue hatchback was travelling around the neighborhood every night *shooting residents with a shotgun*. One woman died while walking her dog, another died while taking out the trash and others while they walked down the sidewalk. Before they caught him, he had shot more than 19 people, some of whom survived.

In the last few months the neighborhood has been victimized by a rapist.

As my wife and I watched these events on the evening news we thanked our lucky stars that we didn't live there any longer. We had returned to the arms of Mother Suburbia and were content and safe, though concerned about our friends who still lived in the area.

You see, Lynn and I are both children of the Suburbs and we have always taken for granted that the 'burbs were a kinder and gentler place to live. A place

where you could leave furniture on your porch without worrying about it being there the next day. A place where you can leave your car unlocked most of the time.

Of course we don't live in dreamland. I know that parts of the suburbs can be just as treacherous as any part of the city. I know where those neighborhoods are too, and I avoid them whenever possible. Mount Pleasant wasn't one of those neighborhoods when we

moved there, but became one in the brief four years we lived on Lamont Street.

Our current neighborhood is a suburban cliché. There's a big park with a basketball court, baseball diamond and playground. There are three churches in a four-block radius of our house. There are lots of kids and pets and bikes in the yards. In the summer the residents toil endlessly on their yards and in the winter they compete with Christmas decorations. This neighborhood is so straight-laced that the Steffans and the

biker family in the next block are definitely the local oddballs. Some of the neighborhood kids have been known to taunt us as we drive past, by chanting, "The Addams Family! The Addams Family!" We love it — Lynn says she feels honored.

But all of that changed on Saturday July 17, 1993, the night of Steve Stiles' 50th birthday party. There was a cookout and party held at the Stiles' house in a Baltimore suburb. Many came to pay tribute to Steve's incredibly advanced age and brought many useful gifts like wheelchairs, walkers, hearing aids, hemorrhoidal cremes and the latest U2 album. Steve responded to this generosity by actually sitting up and eating a bit of solid food, and a fine time was had by all. Ted, Lynn and I had to leave the party early because of the long drive back to Virginia, but we're sure the hoopla went on until dawn.

We got home around midnight and even before we got out of the car we could hear the sound of LOUD disco music. As we walked towards the house I traced the sound to a presumably vacant house, two doors down from ours. The house's picture windows were



covered by blankets, but I could still see the glow of colored lights and the flash of a strobe. The music was pumping out of the house like water from a hydrant and the street was jammed with cars. In fact, both sides of the street in every direction was jammed with cars.

"It must be a Rave," I said to Lynn as we went inside our house. Once inside I could still hear the throbbing disco beat and had to put on a CD of my own and turn it up to eleven before it disappeared.

About an hour or so later we decided to go out to get a late-night something to eat. As we walked to the car the music seemed even louder than before. I noticed one of the doors to the house was now open and people were spilling out into the yard. By the time we got to the car I noticed a couple of people standing at the end of my driveway and went to have a looksee. By the time I got to the sidewalk I knew that something was going on. The intersection was quickly filling up with young, sweaty Latino kids — mostly boys around 18 years old — and they were obviously not happy. More ravers came out of the house and joined their comrades in the street and battle lines were very quickly being drawn. By the time I told Lynn to go back into the house they had begun to shout at each other.

"What the fuck is going on here," I asked one of the young women who was blocking my driveway.

"Don't talk to me, Mister," she answered. She had a thick accent. "I don't know what you're talking about."

I quickly glanced into the intersection in time to see that things had escalated to pushing and shoving. There was now about a hundred sweaty and angry people in the street and more continued to exit the house. "Are you trying to tell me that you have nothing to do with this?" I asked the girl incredulously. She ignored me and started walking away. "Perhaps you were just passing by," I yelled to get her attention.

I had to yell because the crowd in the street had now started fighting with one another. "Don't yell at me, maan," she finally replied as she joined some others by the curb. Looking past her I saw that some of the boys in the street were carrying baseball bats and sticks. Some others were holding empty beer bottles.

"My god! That guy has Nun-chuks!" Lynn shouted, over my shoulder. It was the first time I realized that she *hadn't* gone into the house, but had been standing behind me the entire time. There was a momentary lull in the crowd's emotions and I tried to get Lynn away from the street. All of this was going on less than a hundred feet from where we were standing and it was obviously going to get worse

before it got any better. But before she had a chance to argue with me All Hell Broke Loose.

Suddenly everybody was yelling. The humid air was filled with dozens of flying Corona beer bottles and, a moment later, the street was covered with broken glass. At the heart of the conflict was a knot of perhaps a dozen young men, each swinging weapons over their heads to repeatedly strike the young men next to them. Around them was a ring of thirty or forty others who were busy beating the shit out of each other. Around them stood another thirty or forty people (mostly females) who were screaming at each other and at the battle in front of them. Others stood off at a distance — like us — passively watching the show in the street.

Then, just as suddenly, it was over. Police cruisers had finally put in an appearance, coming into the intersection from three sides. The fighting instantly stopped and the running instantly began. Young, sweaty and now bleeding men were running everywhere. Some ran down the intersection's fourth street (which is blocked by a small park) and others scattered across people's yards. The spectators, for the most part, continued watching this bizarre form of street theatre passively, as if it were on TV.

As Lynn and I stood there at the end of our driveway, one guy made his escape by hopping over our next-door neighbor's chain-link fence. Well, hopping is the wrong word; it was more like he *rolled* over the fence. We just stood there watching him — he was no more than 15 feet away from me. When he tried to get up off the ground I realized that he was obviously injured and I momentarily thought about helping him. "Hey, man!" I shouted authoritatively. "What the Hell do you think you're doing?" He had finally struggled up onto his legs and was running towards the side of the house. Well, maybe running is the wrong word; it was more like he was *limping* towards the side of the house.

He was holding one of his legs for support as he reached the narrow passage between my neighbor's house and the fence that separates our yards. As he pushed through the shrubbery he strained to remain standing. I was now about 6 feet away from him and I was getting pissed. "What the fuck do you think you're doing in my neighbor's yard?" I yelled as he fell down again.

"Leave me alone, man," he cried, sounding strangely like Ren Hoek. "Can't you see I'm hurt?"

"Baseball is a very dangerous game!" I screamed, knowing that my sarcasm was wasted on him. By this time he had managed to get moving again only to trip over a ladder that was leaning against the house.

"Leave me alone. I'm hurt!" he cried again, struggling to his feet once more. He had disentangled



himself from the ladder rungs with much difficulty and saw the back yard stretched out before him. Unfortunately, he didn't figure on my neighbor's garden, which was directly in front of him. His feet immediately tangled in the little fence and he went down again. By the time he scrambled out of the garden he was making guttural noises of panic and pain.

I yelled at him to Come Back Here about the time he hit the metal frame that hold's my neighbor's hammock, but finally gave up when he rolled over the fence at the back of the property and entered the small, wooded lot that we all call Catland ('cuz that's where all the felines in the area hang out).

When I rejoined Lynn at the end of the driveway the police were in the process of gathering the ravers into groups and making them sit on the curb. The street in front of my house was covered with bits of broken beer bottles, which was strangely pretty in the lights from the police cars. My sleepy neighbors had finally started to come out of their houses to investigate the commotion. My other next-door neighbor Don was wiping sleep out of his eyes (after all it *was* 1:30 in the morning) as he shuffled towards our driveway with a lot of questions. Others just stood around looking puzzled or dazed. I had started trying to sweep the street — Hey, I still wanted to go get something to eat — when another neighbor scowled at me and said, "Don't sweep that under *my* car." Even the biker from the next block was there — he was wearing sunglasses.

Soon one of the policemen figured out that I was a witness and started asking a bunch of stupid questions, mostly about who owned the supposedly vacant house (my landlord owns it) or if this had ever happened before. I told the officer everything I had seen and resumed my sweeping.

While other cops took down the names of the ravers, "my" officer went to talk to my neighbors. They had all been asleep and missed everything, except, of course, for the biker. He told them all he knew — "I was sitting in my living room and then, suddenly, there were forty of these fuckers in my front yard."

This provoked me to stop sweeping and mention to him, "I think it was a Rave, man." He nodded and said, "Ah." I knew he'd understand — everyone else just looked confused. Hearing this, "my" officer came back over to me and asked me what I'd just said.

"I said, 'It was probably a Rave,'" I repeated.

"A what?" he answered predictably. He took his notebook back out of his pocket.

"A Rave is sort of a spontaneous party," I explained. While I talked I tried to playback a mental file about Raves. How much should I tell the cop?

Does he need to know about the Manchester scene in England or the subway parties in New York? I decided to keep it simple. "Kids find out about a vacant warehouse or house or something," I spoke slowly so he could write it all down. "And they bring in lights and a sound system and tell all their friends and then everybody just sorta shows up."

"And?" asked the dim policeman.

"And they have a big, wild party," I replied, struggling to keep from adding a "Duh!" at the end of it. I gave up on my sweeping.

The cops took everybody's names and then just let them all go. Despite the presence of a paddy wagon, I saw no one put inside. The ravers all quietly got into their cars and left as quickly as possible. Lynn and I got into our car as well and left for our now-even-later meal, but we were in a bit of a daze. It had all lasted less than a half an hour and now we were off to eat as if nothing had happened.

"This is all pretty scary," Lynn said.

"And weird, too," I added lamely.

"I expected this kind of thing when we lived in the city," Lynn said. "But it just never occurred to me that we could have a little gang riot right in front of our house."

"Yeah," I replied sarcastically, "who says the suburbs don't have everything you can find in the big city."

"Urban decay comes to suburbia," Lynn laughed weakly.

"Does this mean I should start locking the car?" I kidded her.

"No," she answered seriously, "but it *is* pretty scary and weird." And I had to agree.

Later, at the restaurant we told the story to some friends and the guys behind the bar. They all laughed appreciatively but, I think, doubted our sincerity. We ate a robust meal and got back home about 3 a.m., exhausted from all the excitement.

The next morning the neighborhood had returned to its former banal serenity. The Rave house was being cleaned up and bags of beer bottles were stacked on the curb. The glass had miraculously disappeared from the street — I've never been able to find out who swept it up — and my neighbor Don was cleaning his gutters.

There was the faint sound of a lawn mower, the birds were chirping and the flowers were growing. Somewhere a kitten was being born. Nothing had apparently changed — except, now when we go back to that restaurant, the bartender always greets me by asking, "Had any more riots on your street?"

So far the answer has been "no."



CORFLUVIA I made the decision to attend this year's Corflu during a party in Arnie and Joyce Katz's room in Orlando. Joyce and I had been having one of our intense little conversations when the subject came up. I hadn't really considered it before then, though everybody else in the room had indicated that *they* were going. I somehow doubted that the great and powerful Cash Ghods would be providing me with any "spare money" in the near future. But then Joyce said something that changed my mind.

"Bill is going to be there," she said.

"Bill Kunkel?" I asked incredulously. "You can't be serious?"

"Yes, I am," she replied. We had been laying next to each other on one of the beds and our fantalk seemed intimate. "He has promised me that he'll be there," Joyce continued. "He's already sent in his membership money, that's how serious he is."

I was stunned. "Well," I whispered, "if he can make it, then so can I." I knew this was a chance I couldn't pass up.

Bill Kunkel had been one of my best fan buddies in the early '70s. We met at the Philcon in November of 1971 — Bill thinks it was at the 1972 Lunacon, the following Spring — and immediately recognized that we had a lot in common, especially our sense of humor. In those days I was often very shy around people, but Bill made me laugh and that was something I could relate to. I also admired Bill's worldliness. He was a year or two older than me, a musician, a writer, a faneditor and a street-wise New Yorker. *Rats!*, the fanzine he co-edited with his wife Charlene, was very hip and very fannish and entertaining as hell. I found it a lot less intimidating than the other fanzines being published by the Brooklyn Insurgents.

I published my first genzine, *Lizard Inn*, in August of 1971 and it helped me establish contact with other fans; I felt it gave me credibility in fandom that I somehow lacked in *Real Life*. (Looking back now, 22 years later, I'm surprised anybody paid attention to me at all.) Though I entered fanzine fandom on the arm of local Syracuse fans, like Jerry Lapidus and Jay Kay Klein, I found my niche in the company of people like Frank Lunney and Bill. They were both a lot bolder than I was and I used them to shield me from the many opportunities I had to humiliate myself.

Bill helped bring Frank and me into the circle of Trufans that regularly sat at Arnie Katz's feet and

Joyce Katz's kitchen table. I was extremely proud to be a part of such an infamous group of fans — though I was certain that at any minute somebody would get wise to me and I'd be out on my ear. But Bill's instincts about me proved to be correct and I became a welcome member of their elite group of snobs and potheads.

Before long I was drawing covers and cartoons for everybody's fanzines, I was invited into their exclusive apa and I was included in several of Joyce's memorable holiday feasts. Whenever I was able to escape from Syracuse — where there's snow on the ground 11 months of the year — I stayed with Bill and Charl in their apartment in Queens. As my interests became more fannish, Bill signed on as a columnist for *Lizard Inn* with the third issue in November of 1972. The premier installment documented his first encounter with the effects of Barium milkshakes and X-rays on his miserably fucked-up stomach. It was a classic example of the kind of personal journalism that is so unique to fandom. It was funny, painful and, unfortunately for Bill, true. Great stuff.

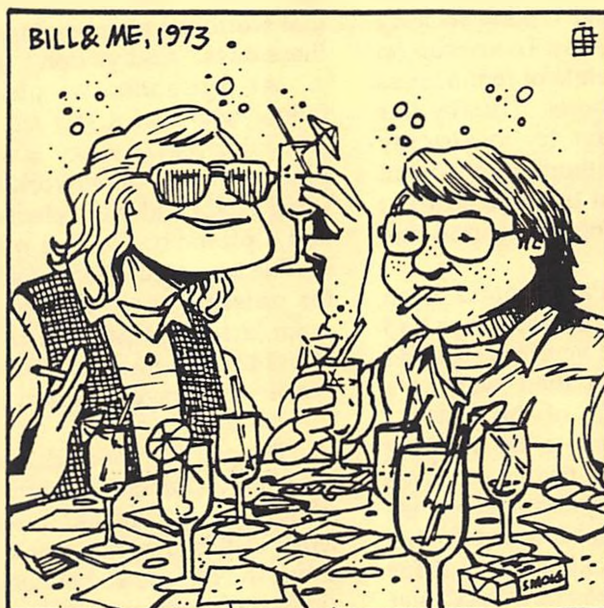
As the '70s progressed, Bill seemed to lose interest in fandom and publishing. At some point he realized that he had to get his priorities straight and put all of his time and energy into his rock band which, despite several grueling years of playing and touring, had never quite made it. I continued to stay with the Kunkels whenever I visited Manhattan and, though Bill had gafiated, our friendship never seemed to suffer.

Sadly, the same can't be said for Bill. He suffered a lot. His time as a professional rock 'n' roller took its toll. His health went from bad to worse as he lived the lifestyle that went with his profession, leaving him with a legacy that haunts him to this day. After those kinds of disappointments fandom must have seemed pretty tame.

Throughout this time, however, Bill maintained his close friendship with Arnie and Joyce. They were loyal friends. They offered him their support when he needed it, and visa versa. When things started falling apart for the Katzes

circle of fan friends, in 1974 and '75, there was never any doubt where Bill's allegiance stood. He stuck by them when most of the rest of us walked away — a bond that still survives.

But Bill never let the schism get in the way of individual relationships. We remained friendly, despite my disassociation from the Katzes. Nonetheless, our contacts became few and far between — I was



well settled in Falls Church and rarely got up to the City and Bill never seemed to leave it. The last time we got together was in January 1977.

I had helped design a bong manufacturer's display booth for a trade show that was held in New York City and they had paid for me to drive up there and set everything up. It was a lot of work, but it also meant that I ended up with free room and board for three days. Once I'd set the booth up I was free until the show was over, when I had to tear it all down. I called Bill and arranged for him to join me for lunch the next afternoon.

We started our luncheon in the hotel bar and drank several whiskey sours while waiting for a table. Once seated, we consumed mass quantities of the most expensive tidbits on the menu. Our drinks were never empty. If vomitoriums hadn't gone out of fashion I'm sure we would have stayed there forever. On our way out of the restaurant I signed the check with my room number and left our waitress a handsome tip. It was the least I could do. As I watched Bill stagger off to the subway I never imagined that I wouldn't see him again for sixteen years.

Lynn and I rode in from the Madison airport in a van full of Seattle fans whose plane had landed about the same time ours did. Seeing and talking to Jerry Kaufman, Suzle, Stu Shiffman and Amy Thompson on the ride into town thrust me into a state of fannishness before I ever reached the damned hotel. Usually this First Contact unnerves me. I always try to ease my way into a convention — just like stepping into a hot bath, I try to protect my balls — but this time I didn't even have a chance to get tense. The convention met us at the airport and enveloped us.

We arrived at The Inn on the Park around 5 pm and checked-in. On our way to the elevators we had to wait while a group of aged WW2 veterans shuffled across the lobby in front of us on their way to a reunion of some kind. At the back of the crowd I noticed one old geezer who seemed to be swaying from side to side while apparently trying to move forward at the same time. His hair was sticking up like a rooster and his shirt was unbuttoned to his navel. It was only while I was checking him out for gold chains that I realized that it wasn't a WW2 vet after all. It was Bill Kunkel.

He recognized me immediately and gave me a big hug.

"You actually showed up!" I said, hardly believing my eyes.

"Yeah, man," he said. "Thirty-five bucks is thirty-five bucks."

I introduced Bill to my wife Lynn and he gave her a big hug, too. He told us that "they" were eating a

late lunch in the hotel coffee shop and we promised to join "them" as soon as we'd been to our room. Which we did, after a quick pit-stop to dump bags and crank up the air conditioning.

"They" turned out to be Bill and his girlfriend Laurie Yates, Arnie and Joyce, fellow Vegas fan Peggy Burke, rich brown, Rob and Avedon and my co-editor.

"Would you like to join us?" Ted asked above the din of dining.

I looked at their long table full of meals in progress and declined, explaining that we'd just spent four hours sitting in planes and airports and needed to move around. We agreed to meet after their meal and after we'd had a chance to register.

"What room are you in?" he asked me. My answer seemed to please him. "Really? That's great," he shouted over the particularly noisy salad course. "I'm right next door in 326. We can open the connecting door and. . . ." A chorus of croutons drowned him out, but I nodded my head like I understood.

Lynn and I wandered upstairs to the convention area, which consisted of several rooms and a balcony full of tables overlooking the pool. The joint was thick with fantypes. After a few howdys and goodtaseeyas we made it to the registration table and swapped \$110 for two memberships and two t-shirts. Not a bad price when you consider that worldcon memberships seem to be *starting* at \$110 these days. And ya don't get no friggin' t-shirt, either.

At registration we picked up our badges from a fellow who had a sad face like one of those clowns that John Wayne Gacy is so fond of painting. While filling out our paperwork he moaned at us to *please spend money* and then reluctantly handed us our t-shirts and a plastic bag with a picture of a drunken cow on it. The bag itself was stuffed with things like a coupon for ordering more t-shirts (*Pleeeeeeze!*), a pocket program, a copy of *Madison* magazine, a massive reprint of a 142-page issue of *Khatru* from 1975 and a really excellent 40-page program book.

The program book deserves further praise. First of all, Jeanne Gomoll's design and art direction was outstanding, as were her numerous illustrations. Her work in this program book proves that the brouhaha about the difference between computer-produced fanzines and those pounded out of a typewriter is a lot of needless bother. Fannishness doesn't have anything to do with the tools we use. It is something that comes from our hearts and minds. Sure, Jeanne's design sensibilities are a lot different than mine — more formal — but her sense of humor and her trufannish spirit make all the difference.

The editorial content of the program book was excellent as well and included "A Narrative History of Corflu" and "Roasting Bob: A Gallery of Tucker



Snapshots." The Corflu history turned out to be ten separate Corflu histories; one for every year, each written by a principal player in that con. Compiler Andy Hooper's running commentaries really helped tie them all together. I hope future Corflus will continue this idea.

The Tucker Gallery was a collection of written portraits of Bob Tucker by thirteen of his admirers, including Dean Grennell, Art Rapp, Walt Willis, Robert Bloch and, of course, my co-editor and were gathered to commemorate his appearance at the Madison convention. The committee made arrangements for his transportation to and from the con so that we would all have the pleasure of his company. It is another fine innovation that I hope becomes a tradition. The book was rounded out with a couple of other histories (of Madison fandom and Madison itself) and an amusing article about toastmaster Dave Hartwell by John Douglas.

When the Desk Set hosted the third Corflu in 1986 we provided no program book at all. Now the precedent has been set by the Madison crew and I think we've got a challenge ahead of us for next year.

Suddenly I found myself loaded down with con stuff: Our t-shirts, my convention goodie bag and a bunch of fanzines that had been thrust upon me when I entered the con area. Now don't get me wrong, I love fanzines but I hate being loaded down with stuff at conventions. Whenever possible I avoid picking up zines or even accepting them from smiling faneds. But sometimes it is unavoidable and I find myself stumbling around with piles of paper under each arm.

The last person to give me his ish was Barnaby Rapoport, who offered the latest *Let's Fanac*. I was delighted to see Barnaby and convinced him to follow us to our room — so I could get rid of my burden — with the promise that I would buy him a drink afterwards. We stayed in the room just long enough for Lynn to listen at Ted's door for fan-noises and for me to notice Barnaby's striking resemblance to the big-eyed Keane face he wore on his t-shirt.

It was still happy hour in the bar, which meant two-for-one drinks, and Barnaby and I started getting acquainted. Though we had met before, we had never gotten the opportunity to talk and really establish a friendship. His presence in *BLAT!* had been Ted's accomplishment. I only knew him on paper in the pages of *Let's Fanac* and the occasionally brilliant *Snarkin' Surfari*. Getting to know Barnaby was one of my goals for the weekend.

Surprisingly, we ended up talking about science fiction; a subject that I haven't paid much attention to since my departure from *SF Eye*. We talked about Norman Spinrad and Bill Gibson and Paul Di Filippo.

During our conversation I discovered how widely read Barnaby is, that he has excellent taste in fiction and fanzines, and that he is possibly the quietest human being I have ever met. Barnaby Rapoport makes Helen Keller look like a chatterbox.

I've never worked so hard to keep a conversation going in my life. Not that Barnaby was being rude, I'm sure. He's just a shy fellow who speaks like most people write prose — I'm pretty sure he drafts, re-drafts and copyedits every sentence before it leaves his mouth. Barnaby seems to prefer playing the observer in most social situations — which is probably the secret behind his perceptive and intimate convention memoirs — and contributes to the general conversation only when he has something important (and well written) to say. In many ways he reminded me of one of the angels in Wim Wender's film, *Wings of Desire*.

Lynn joined us just as we were finishing our second cocktail and swept us off into the bowels of the convention. At the tables on the balcony were lots of friends and other folks with name-badges. I mingled. I said hello to Andy Hooper and Jeanne Gomoll and Moshe Feder and Lise Eisenberg and Bob Tucker and Linda Bushyager and Jeff

Schalles and Geri Sullivan and Jane Hawkins and Steve Swartz and Bill Boddin and Art Widner and Shelby Vick and Leah Zeldes Smith and Alex and Phyllis Eisenstein (Thanks for the copy of *Wild Hair*, Alex!) and Richard Brandt and Dave Hartwell and Bill Bowers and Don Fitch and Nigel Rowe and others, including the Seattle fans we met at the airport and the legendary "them" we'd schmoozed in the coffee shop.

Eventually a group of us retired to the smoke-filled *BLAT!* suite where Bill Kunkel and I caught up and I had my first chance to actually meet Laurie. Unfortunately, our gathering was short-lived because Ted and I were due at the rehearsal for Andy Hooper and Jerry Kaufman's latest bit of fan theatrics, *The Richest Fan In Town*. On our way there we dropped off a stack of copies of *Group Mind*, the last-minute fanzine we'd produced just for the con, in the con suite.

Ted was playing "Francis, a god-like personage." (It was type casting.) I was playing two roles: "Terrance, another god-like personage" and "A Jabbering Mad Man, on a city bus." (No Comment!) Being a method actor, I had spent the three weeks prior to the convention riding public transportation while wearing filth-encrusted slacks and a t-shirt that said, "Fuck the Pope!" I was ready.

But my preparation paled in comparison to the work done by our director, Eric Von Hooper. As soon as he arrived in the Capitol Room, Herr Direktor conducted himself in a strictly no-nonsense manner — I didn't know you could get leather jodhpurs that big — and demanded the same of his troupe of players. He

A JABBERING MAD
MAN, ON A CITY BUS!



ruled the rehearsal with an iron fist, though he never struck us where it could be seen by the audience. I don't think I'll ever forget his chilling words to the actors: "Svine! Ve haff ways of making you learn your lines!"

By the time we had finished our run-through the crowd of fans were pushing at the Capitol Room's glass doors like they thought they were going to a Who concert.

The play itself was a witty and clever fan send-up of *It's a Wonderful Life* and came off without a hitch. The authors took the lead roles. Jerry was "Clarence Ghubody, an agent of Roscoe on Earth," while Andy played the principal character of "Gheorge Bailey, a family fan." It provoked a lot of laughter and seemed to be enjoyed by everyone. After the play, Hartwell introduced Bob Tucker and the GoH's name was picked out of a hat. The "lucky" winner was Jae Leslie Adams, a Madison fringe fan. Jeanne and Andy handed out various disgusting pieces of local cheese fetish gear to Tucker and the new GoH while members of the audience made rude comments — like my own, "Funny, you don't look Swiss."

By the time the crowd broke up, Lynn and I were getting quite hungry. Nevenah Smith had shown up during the play and joined us in the hallway afterwards. She was hungry too and we quickly put together a small group for dinner that included the three of us, Barnaby, Steve Swartz, Bill Bodden and Janet Cooper. Having three locals in our number was a big help when it came time to pick a restaurant. We ended up in an Afghani restaurant on State Street, where we had excellent food and conversation. Steve, Bill and Nevenah told us all the local gossip, Janet told us all the Minneapolis gossip and we told them much more than they really wanted to know about D.C. and Virginia fandom. From time to time Barnaby spoke, but he was usually too quiet for me to hear at my end of the table, though I'm sure whatever he said was probably brilliant.

The rest of Friday night was a whirl of partying and smofing. Only fragments remain: Talking to Joyce Katz about fanzines, cows floating in the pool, hearing Bob Tucker say, "I won't have to get anything pierced will I?", watching Avedon's joy at showing Lynn and other women the part about dicks in her new book, Ted attempting to get me to talk to a very worried man with deep furrows in his brow, talking to Arnie about Bur-

bee and Silvercon, and looking over Andy Hooper's shoulder as a transvestite cartoonist, named Miss Vickie, drew a portfolio of portraits ("Men in Dresses for Your Entertainment") that became the convention's only artshow.

Like many others, I later found out, my evening ended in bed reading the new issue of *Idea* until I passed out.

Saturday began with a visit to Madison's huge farmer's market which was, coincidentally, right across the street from the hotel. But proximity had nothing to do with our enjoyment; the market featured many interesting booths and stalls run by local farmers and merchants. The market itself occupied the four sides of the square that houses the state capitol building. Lynn and I strolled around the entirety of the market square, alternating our "oohs" and "aahs" between the impressive architecture and the equally impressive selection of foodstuff.

We ran into Jeanne Gomoll soon after stopping at the chocolate covered strawberries stall and we convinced her to become our native guide. The crowd around us was eclectic and lively — a mixture of college grunge and midwest homeboy, with the occasional bearded, pipe-smoking college professor thrown in for balance. By the time we finished our tour, Lynn had shot a roll of film and I had purchased some tasty momentos, including a wedge of garlic cheese, a jar of

6X jalapeño jelly, a bag of muffins and a package of home-made buffalo sausages. The apple struddle, chocolate covered strawberries and coffee never made it back to the hotel.

When we returned to our room, the *BLAT!* suite was in full swing and we quietly joined the fun. Almost immediately Ted motioned me over to where he was sitting. "Have you seen Dick Lynch?" he asked and then continued before I could answer. "He is *really* upset about what you wrote in *Group Mind*."

"What I wrote? Why? What did I say?" I sputtered.

"He's talking about giving up his bid for next year's Corflu!"

"Why? What did I say?" I asked again. "Or should I say, what does he think I said?"

"He thinks you hate him," Ted replied. "He's convinced that you were attacking him personally."

"But I don't even know Dick Lynch," I cried.

"I just wish you had come over and talked to him last night," Ted continued. "I was trying to tell him that he was overreacting,



but. . ."

I suddenly flashed on the the face of the Very Worried Man With The Furrows In His Brow from the previous evening. "Was *that* Dick Lynch?" I asked my co-editor. "I should go talk to him. I don't want him to drop his Corflu bid. That's the exact opposite of what I want." And that's exactly what I did.

After a light lunch, I headed off to the Fannish Trivia contest and Lynn left the hotel to shoot a couple more rolls of film. I got to the contest just in time for the introduction of the two teams: Ted, rich, Moshe and Arnie versus Tucker, Hansen, Joyce Katz and Dick Lynch. Tucker's team left their opponents in the dust, though they ended up winning by only a single point. Bob's mind was a steel trap and what he didn't know Dick Lynch seemed to. Indexing Harry Warner's book had apparently paid off.

After the contest, I approached Dick before he could get up from his seat on stage. As I got nearer to him his expression grew darker and the furrows from the previous evening returned.

"Hello Dick, I'm Dan Steffan," I said.

"Why would you write something like this?" he asked me.

"I'm sorry if my piece upset you," I replied. "It was not my intention to attack you."

"This is mean spirited," Dick said angrily. "Nicki is really upset."

I was stunned. The item I had written was supposed to be about how surprised Ted and I were when we found out that there was going to be a Corflu in our own backyard. It never occurred to me that I had written something offensive. But to the Lynches, my bits of pseudo-Burbie dialog were anything but funny.

But before we could continue, the next panel was ready to start with both Dick and Nicki as participants. We arranged to talk again later. I immediately rendezvoused with Ted, who had been having the same conversation with Nicki, and we agreed to talk to them in tandem next time.

My adenalin was really pumping by this time. I hate these kind of personal battles — the stress really fucks me up. I knew I had to unwind a bit, so a group of us retired to the luxurious BLAT! suite for some much needed tranquilizers and New Age music. Out of these meditations came the desire to eat dinner in the hotel's panoramic, rooftop restaurant. The fact that the restaurant wasn't on the hotel's roof at all — it was on the panoramic 8th floor — didn't seem to bother anybody very much and reservations were made.

In fact, I think reservations were made and remade several times that evening and by the time we arrived on the panoramic 8th floor there were 15 or 16 of us in our party. Fortunately this didn't seem to faze the staff one bit. They simply assigned one waitress to work exclusively for us.

We sat at two tables — one round and one a rec-

tangle — with Bob Tucker sitting at the point of intersection. I sat beside him, but with my back to him because I was at the other table. But, to my delight, he would periodically lean back in his chair and pass on some fannish witticism or other. I couldn't have asked for a more entertaining dinner companion.

Bob seemed to thrive on the good fellowship and social interaction. As the con wore on his energy and stamina seemed to increase, while the rest of us got progressively more frazzled. His little speeches during the con were warm and funny (and short). It struck me that he is really just an old vaudeville performer at heart. Hoy Ping Pong, the fakir. Tucker the Magnificent. There was always a playful twinkle in his eye and a bit of the ol' Razzamatazz about him. Persuading Tucker to attend this year's Corflu was one of the best things the Madison fans could have done.

By the time we had finished eating it was a little after 10 p.m. Ted and I immediately searched out the Lynches for our pow-wow. I was really worried that, as a result of my glib teasing in *Group Mind*, Dick and Nicki had given up on their Corflu aspirations. Fortunately, that wasn't the case. We all sat down together and tried to make peace. They had calmed down quite a bit from our earlier encounters, but it still took

some serious talking to convince them of our sincerity. Once we did, however, I am happy to report that the discussion was friendly and all misunderstandings were resolved. By the time we parted company Ted and I had even agreed to concoct the convention's programming and do some of the publications.

The rest of Saturday night is a haze of smoke-filled rooms and a lot of laughter. I do recall drinking most of a keg of the excellent local Porter that was in the con suite, as well as a couple of hits on Tucker's perpetual Jim Beam bottle. The evening ended with a spontaneous party in our room. The Katzes and Bill Kunkel and Laurie and Andy Hooper and Jeff and Geri and Nevenah and Barnaby and whoever else. We all agreed that it was a shame that Steve and Elaine Stiles had missed the con and everybody wondered where the once and future Luttrells were.

Sunday came much too soon — no matter how hard Lynn and I tried to ignore it. Before we could get out of bed Unca Ted was rapping on the connecting door to remind us that it was almost 11 a.m.; time for the Banquet/Brunch. We told Ted we'd meet him downstairs and then tried to wake up enough to get dressed and find our way to the Madison Room.

By the time we got there most people were already sitting at their tables, though there was still some needless mingling and milling about going on. Despite our tardiness, the Brunch had yet to begin. The lull afforded me the opportunity to spy on other salivating attendees as they sat at their tables, forks in the locked and upright position. This was the first time I'd really



seen all of the other fans together in one room and was impressed by the size of the crowd. I was glad that the turn-out had been so strong, though it was also disappointing that fans like Mike Glicksohn, Gary Hubbard and Ken Fletcher hadn't taken advantage of the midwestern locale and put in an appearance.

By 12:30 the buffet's serving trays had been licked clean, the staff were busily clearing the tables, and the post-banquet festivities were under way. The room unanimously elected Bob Tucker as past president of the fwa and overwhelmingly endorsed Dick Lynch's unopposed bid for the 1994 Corflu. [May 20-22, 1994 in Crystal City, Virginia. Supporting memberships: \$10; attending (advance) \$37; attending (at the door) \$42. Address all correspondence to *Corflu Nova* c/o 4030 South 8th Street, Arlington, VA 22204. Please make all checks payable to Alexis Gilliland.]

Jae Leslie Adams' Guest of Honor speech began as a classic example of the Geeain'titweirdbeingafan speech, but quickly mutated into a series of delightfully funny anecdotes about her 4-year-old son's embodiment of Bill Watterson's comic strip kid, Calvin. Her stories were witty and engaging and a credit to the GoH selection process. And you didn't have to be a parent to appreciate them, either.

A softball game was scheduled for attendees after the speeches but Lynn and I decided to skip it in favor of lounging around the hotel — I learned many years ago that recently eaten bacon doesn't like sliding into home. At first I wasn't sure we'd done the right thing. I was sure that I'd probably miss something important by not attending the game, but it turned out that the only thing I missed was the torrential rainstorm that dominated the afternoon.

Instead of playing ball, Lynn and I ended up doing our lounging in the Katz-Kunkel suite. They were due to take a 6:00 p.m. flight back to Las Vegas, but had arranged to keep their rooms for the afternoon. It was the perfect opportunity to finish the fragments of conversation we'd been having all weekend. We reminisced about the early '70s and talked about the fans from that era who have managed to escape fandom's slimy tentacles, like Grant Canfield, Neal Goldfarb, Bruce Telzer and Calvin Demmon. But before long it was time for Arnie, Joyce, Bill and Laurie to leave for the airport. Everybody agreed that the weekend had gone by too fast and promised to contribute to everybody's fanzines *Real Soon Now*.

Dinner Sunday night began with a leisurely walk around Madison conducted by Andy Hooper. Eventually we ended up in a very nice restaurant right

across the street from the local civic center. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld was performing there that night and from our table we could see the crowds come and go — apparently he did two shows. We could also see Jerry's limo parked at the curb outside the building, but the star himself eluded us, despite our vigil at the window. After dinner, the walk back seemed to be a lot more difficult than our earlier sojourn. Apparently, while we were busy eating, the Madison Public Works department installed a whole bunch of new hills between us and the hotel.

The rest of Sunday night is a blur to me now, as if somebody has smeared Vasoline on my eyeballs.

Monday started with the sound of jackhammers. At first, I cursed myself for overindulging the previous night — I knew I shouldn't have finished off that keg of Porter — and tried to go back to sleep. But the pounding in my head wouldn't go away and eventually I resigned myself to my fate. It wasn't until Lynn woke up and asked what all the noise was that I realized that the jackhammers were actually outside our window, instead of in my skull. *Was my face red?*

By the time we got out of bed it was after 10:00 a.m. and the door between our room and Ted's was soundly locked. He'd already left for the airport. Our flight wasn't until early afternoon, so we wandered outside to explore Madison again. We didn't see a single fan anywhere in the hotel. It was kinda spooky.

We made our way over to Hank Luttrell's book & comics store for a brief visit and then spent the rest of our time taking photos of some of Madison's cool old architecture. After a small lunch at the hotel we set off for the airport. On our way out to catch the shuttle bus we ran into Geri and Jeff, on their way to their car. They were struggling with a luggage cart full of plants that Geri had bought at Saturday's market on the square. There were hugs and kisses all around (and even a little tongue from Jeff). Corflu was definitely over.

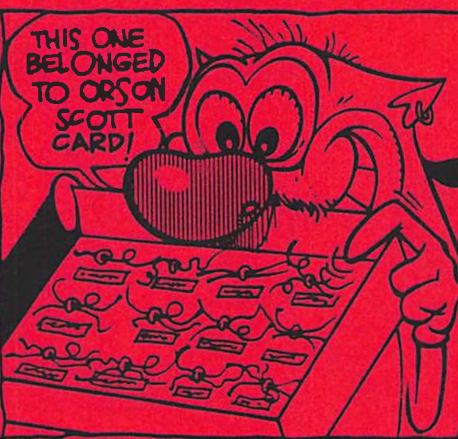
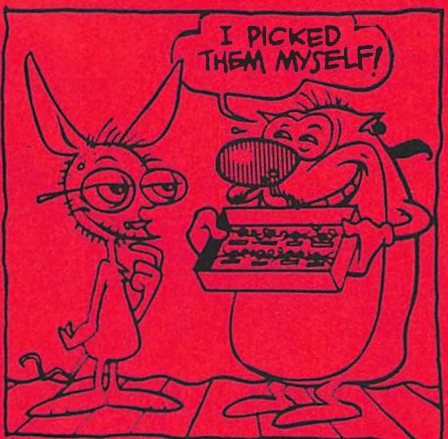
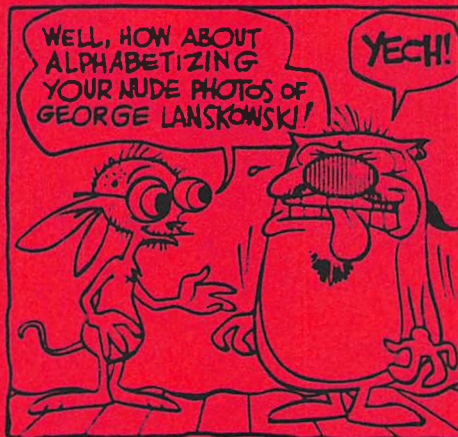
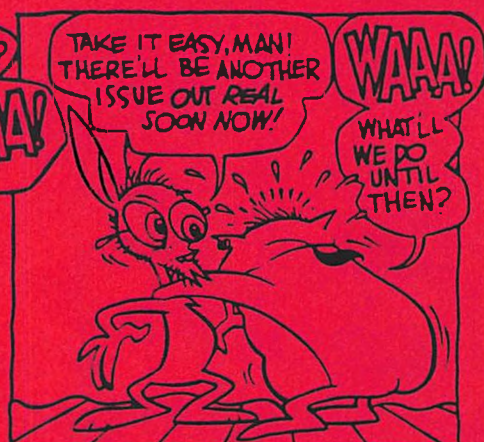
On the flight home I had a chance to reflect on the weekend and came to several solid conclusions: (1) *I'm not as young as I used to be.* (2) *Bob Tucker is made out of steel.* (3) *When he's sad, Stu Shiffman looks like a koala bear.* (4) *Fandom is fun again.* (5) *Sometimes the noises ARE outside your head.* (6) *Fandom is harder work than it used to be.* (7) *I hope it isn't another 16 years before I see Bill Kunkel again.* (8) *The Madison fans have left us with some big shoes to fill next year.* (9) *Avedon Carol is still a rude bitch.* And (10) *I am definitely not as young as I used to be.*

But then, who is? — Dan Steffan

The TED & STEFFY Show

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DAN STEFFAN

DEDICATED TO JOHN K



• Next Time: FANNVIS & FUGGHEAD