

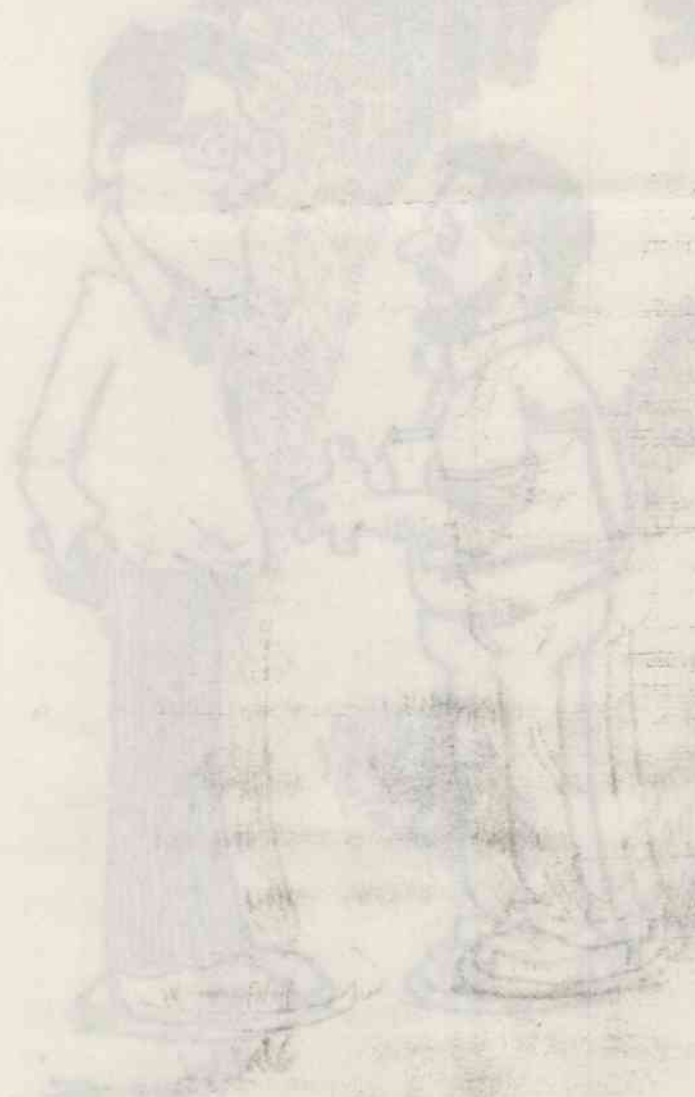
**SORENSEN
BARKER**



**What
About
MY COVER FOR
BOB?**

**JIM
BARKER**

BARRE
SORENSEN



1933

Here is the latest instalment of the great new interactive roleplaying game "Revive the Fanzine", otherwise known as **Bob#4**. In this scenario your character is reading a really great fanzine and you have to spot the amusing or interesting bits carefully hidden in the text then, using your +4 Powerpen or the Magic Wordprocessor of Amstrad, you send the Gamesmaster your response. Each day that you delay your character will lose two fannish credibility points until you reach zero and are removed from the scenario or Mailing List.

A few notes to help you in your quest. Just because someone comes from Leeds or Bradford this does not make them an evil character, unless they are standing for TAFF or produce a fanzine called Saliromania. Remember that fan-eds can only be killed by being completely ignored: the quickest way is not to vote for them in the Nova awards. Any utterly strange printed object, especially on yellowing parchment, is probably a Tommy Ferguson fanzine. On no account attempt to read it or your mental stability will be threatened. Any envelope oozing a mixture of slime, smarm and despair will have originated with Nigel Richardson and can be used as a potent shield to ward off women.

Don't despair if, on first reading, you can't find anything funny in the text. It's cunningly encoded so that only third level adepts will be able to discern the meaning. This is necessary because only at the third level do you attain the mental discipline that can prevent you from laughing yourself to death at the wildly funny material herein.

Speaking of funny material - I keep hearing great lines during conversations then not being able to remember them to use myself later. So I've written down a few that you might like:

D. West on why he won't go to Novacon, especially in the Royal Angus - "When you wake up you don't know what year it is". Or Lilian Edwards "Bulimics have twice the fun with food". (She also wins the foot in mouth award for her "When I worked for the Daily Record, my job as a call girl... ooops, copy girl was..."). Also overheard at Trout during a discussion on pheromones "It took 5 million years for nature to evolve human sex attractants but Yves Saint Laurent managed it in a couple months".

Anyway, on with your quest and remember: don't take any wooden nickels. I can say this with some authority, being the owner of a genuine an-teak buffalo nickel. It came into my possession at Illumination during the TAFF auction and one side features a picture of Ronald Reagan - so it must be really old. Dave Mooring was inspired by my determination to obtain this treasure and drew this cartoon. I'm sure I didn't bid that much...



With a sense of overwhelming joy he realised that he had paid only £6.10 for a wooden nickel!!

Clown Court

In Bob #3 I relayed to you to astonishing news of the election of erstwhile big-drinking fan Iain Thomas to Glasgow City Council, topping even that news with the revelation that he had been given a job on the Licensing Board. Some may have thought me a little unkind when I suggested that conventions might have to be careful in Glasgow if they didn't want to create problems for their venues by upsetting the powers that be, currently inhabiting the human, but somewhat scruffy, form of the Tory councillor for Shawlands. It is, therefore, with mixed emotions that I announce that the summer Star Trek convention - Contagion - are suffering legal action resulting from their dealings with Mr T. He has instructed lawyers to write accusing them of defamation. I can't help but think that de-infamation would be more appropriate.

The convention was in July, but the story only emerged in the Glasgow Evening Times on Friday the 18th of September under the headline:

YOU CAN'T BOLDLY GO! Trekkies banish councillor

Ace reporter Ron McKenna put in his bid for journalist of the year by revealing the sordid behind the scenes wrangle in the no-mans land between politics and the final frontier.

"A councillor barred from a city Star Trek convention is at the centre of a furious row. For organisers of the event claim Tory councillor Iain Thomas threatened to use his position on the city's licensing board to get his own back.

Councillor Thomas and hundreds of others were turned away as the convention overflowed. But now it is alleged trekkies were warned that the incident would not be forgotten when the Glasgow hotel hosting the convention asked for its licence to be renewed. A complaint has been sent to the licensing board - and the police - by Contagion, the event organisers.

Bosses have asked for assurances that the licence of the Central Hotel - hired for the charity event - will not be affected by the incident. Glasgow's solicitor to the licensing board, Charles Horsburgh, today confirmed he had received a complaint. He added that he was carrying out an investigation into the claims. "It is obviously something we are taking very seriously," said Mr Horsburgh. "The matter is disputed and I am looking at it on behalf of the licensing committee."

Heady stuff! Naturally, there are two sides to the story. The newspaper claims that Councillor Thomas's version of events is backed up by a third party, but doesn't say whom. The Contagion committee seem to have a few dozen witnesses who heard the unhappy servant of the people shouting a variety of unkind things as he was ejected from the hotel. The newspaper does make one interesting comment: *"The manager of the Central Hotel said he was unaware of any incident taking place at the convention."* When I was first told this story it was meant to be the manager who had gone to the committee asking them to make an exception for the councillor as the hotel didn't want any trouble. Perhaps it was an undermanager. The main question is whether he threatened to use his influence on the council to cause problems or was simply abusive in general - as if he could! It's just not in his nature.....NOT.

At present the committee are collecting statements from witnesses but have been advised not to bother replying to the lawyer's letter. Despite his claims to have been exonerated, Iain is apparently still in some considerable political trouble over the incident and may lose his place on the board. This accounts for him wanting to frighten the Contagion people into backing down. If it looks like it might go further then I think that we, as responsible, fair-minded people should all contribute to a "Thomas-balls" fund to help pay legal costs. Alternatively, we could just revive the COFF award: the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund - awarded to the person you think most deserves to be fitted into a concrete overcoat and dropped into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

Watch this space for further thrilling instalments of "Tories Against Reality".

STOP PRESS - Thomas resigns from Licensing Board, legal action continues to clear his name.

The Review Column

It appears that there is an unwritten law that makes fanzine reviews mandatory in every zine these days. It's only recently that I've managed to not read this law. If the rest of you are like me (sounds of readership stampeding off cliff screaming "I'd rather kill myself") then you skip through the reviews to see if you get a mention anywhere before going back and trudging through the tedious details of the latest issue of Redbrick Uni's "We haven't decided on the title so we'll call our zine Title Undecided like every other student zine". And, lo, in that publication, copies of which the poor saps will try to sell at every con for the next three years, we discover that there is a wacky introduction by the editor asking for contributions of articles and illos for the next issue as he's had to do them all this time, a one page story which ends "on the savage alien world the primitive inhabitants called ...Earth!", and the remainder of the zine is given over to book reviews. Fascinating to read the original I'm sure, but it possibly loses a little in review.

This review column is different. Gone are the tedious details of contents. Away goes the faint praise for artwork. Encouragement of mediocre prose is completely out the window and we get down to what makes a review interesting: who gets mentioned, who gets shafted and how superior is the reviewer's thesaurus to the victims'. To make it easier I'll dispense with reviewing the fanzine entirely and just review the editors and contributors - that way we get the maximum name checks and the minimum Christmas cards. Sorry if you don't manage to get a mention this time round, but there's just so many deserving people out there it will take a few issues to get through them all - assuming I don't meet with a nasty accident beforehand.

First on the chopping block has to be **Michael Ashley**. What can I say about Michael that hasn't already been said about dysentery? He looks like an accountant, talks like an accountant and drinks like a fish. A bloody big fish at that. His writing is compelling, repelling, telling. At times you almost feel as if you are inside his skin - and immediately start scratching. Through cataloguing his inner life for the rest of us to read and recoil, Michael does more than any Government health ad ever could to convince us of the evils of drink, drugs, loud music and masturbation. OK, maybe not loud music. This inner turmoil is cunningly disguised by outward respectability: does he not do good work in the community (albeit as a front for ripping off the Poll Tax payer's photocopy budget)? Is he not now a noted columnist in the Bradford local paper, dispensing advice to the needy (and getting a nice wad of drink vouchers for it)? Does he not include a handwritten note along with copies of his zine that arrive, regular as Novas, on my doormat? This just shows what a devious bastard he is. So I've outsmarted him: I've nominated him for TAFF this year, posing as a chum, while simply wanting to get him out of the country long enough for the rest of us to get a breath of fresh air. There's the added benefit that he won't produce a report of his adventures in the States, should he win, as he will be permanently stoned and incapable of recording the dazzling conversations of the Madison crowd, or even find his way to the Worldcon. The squalid crash-space arrangements reported by previous winners will seem like luxury to Michael after his vomit soaked bed at home. The only thing he might be able to report will be a visit to Ted White for a pow-wow - then we really will get a trip report.

Next up is **Alan Dorey**, recently disinterred after premature burial in the real world. Despite the years out of fandom his mind is still as sharp as it ever was, which is a pity as it was always as sharp as a brick. Fanzine editor, BSFA superno, Eastercon chairman, Alan has been many things in his time, but never modest. Such are his organising abilities that he has arranged for other people to blow his own trumpet! The highpoint of his career was undoubtedly the Seacon '84 programme book. This large, A4 book was edited by Alan in a hurry. Time pressures forced him to cut corners and leave out late commissioned articles but, despite the pressure, he still managed to find time to put in a number of classic, hilarious typos that saved the day at the convention by giving everyone a sense of community as they proudly wore their "I prof rood for Anal Dorey" badges. We are forever in his debt, and he forever on our mailing list.

Dave Langford has come back to the fold after shunning fanzines in favour of collecting fanwriter Hugos. Rather, he has returned to the no-fold, being so sure of his annual Hugo haul that he produces an occasional single sheet to satisfy the more cynical pundits who wonder where the hell he does all this award winning fanwriting. A recently available KGB report revealed that his hearing aid was packed with sophisticated monitoring equipment and a transmitter capable of altering readouts on a computer at 20 meters. I wonder how they store Hugo results these days? Despite the revelations a few years back that it was really Hazel who had been writing the zines, he continues to trade on past glories and can be seen at cons cadging drinks from impressionable youngsters and inviting them up to his room to help polish his Hugo.

Pam Wells' real name is Pamela. That should be enough to indicate just how deep the deception she has

been playing goes. Fun-loving party animal, friend to the new fan, stalwart of the convention disco - it's all a sham, Pam. The truth has finally come out through her tenure as TAFF administrator: she is at her best writing out lists of auction materials. All the claims she's made about remaking herself into a new woman every few years are refuted by the single fact that *she enjoys administering TAFF*. How can you trust someone who goes on an expenses paid trip to the States but enjoys organising postal fanzine ballots more? A real Pamela, if ever I saw one.

When you think of **Rhodri James**, which I don't recommend, you probably confuse him with every other beard in fandom. His outstanding feature is, I suppose, his total typicality. He does a bit of writing, a bit of filking, runs a con occasionally, reads books and drinks real ale. I'd be willing to predict that he votes LibDem, has size 9 shoes and hates Jeremy Beadle. (OK, too easy that last one.) A future fannish superstar in the making I reckon. The only thing that could stop him would be a juicy scandal over the Illumination profits, so here goes. It is alleged that some of the profit from this years Eastercon was used to provide the committee, and especially the chairman, with material for mastication. Deny it if you dare, Mr Rhodri "I Like a Nibble" James! (Not to be confused with **Steve Lawson** whose left contact lens became stuck, causing a painful reddening and swelling of the pupil and milky fluid to leak out, resulting in him being called Steve "Eye Like a Nipple" Lawson.)

David Bell writes letters to many zines, principally to keep up the demand for softwood timber for paper pulp. Since the EEC has totally screwed up his plans to not plant enough crops to make sufficient money to retire on, he has been forced to convert most of his farmland to coniferous forest. He tried changing from arable farming to chicken farming but planted the chickens too close together. He is more at home with the trees as he feels a certain kinship with them - he has links with the Tolkien society - but also partakes of Blake's Seven, SF and fanzine fandom, giving him a broad perspective, which he imparts to all and sundry at the drop of an imperial storm trooper's helmet. Currently he seems more interested in computers than SF or farming, but may simply be working on a program to drive a tractor so that he can stay at home and read the SF.

Splitting his fan activities between APA commitments and his fanzine *Thingamyjiggerybob* **Chuck Connor** (squidgey to his friends) is a busy boy. He spends hours crafting his prose into a form so totally unintelligible that the reader is forced to conclude that he must be a great stylist - a hair stylist. Chuckles (as he is known to his friends) receives zines from all over the world on all manner of subjects, from SF to sex, drugs to sex, horror to sex and some that are mostly about the horror of having sex on drugs. An unreconstructed fanzine fan, Choo-choo (as he is called by his trainspotter friends) is the Coelacanth of fandom: a creature once thought extinct, rediscovered then forgotten about all over again. His obsession with ink duplication has in recent years been largely replaced by computers and he likes nothing better than getting connected to David Bell at 1200 bits per second.

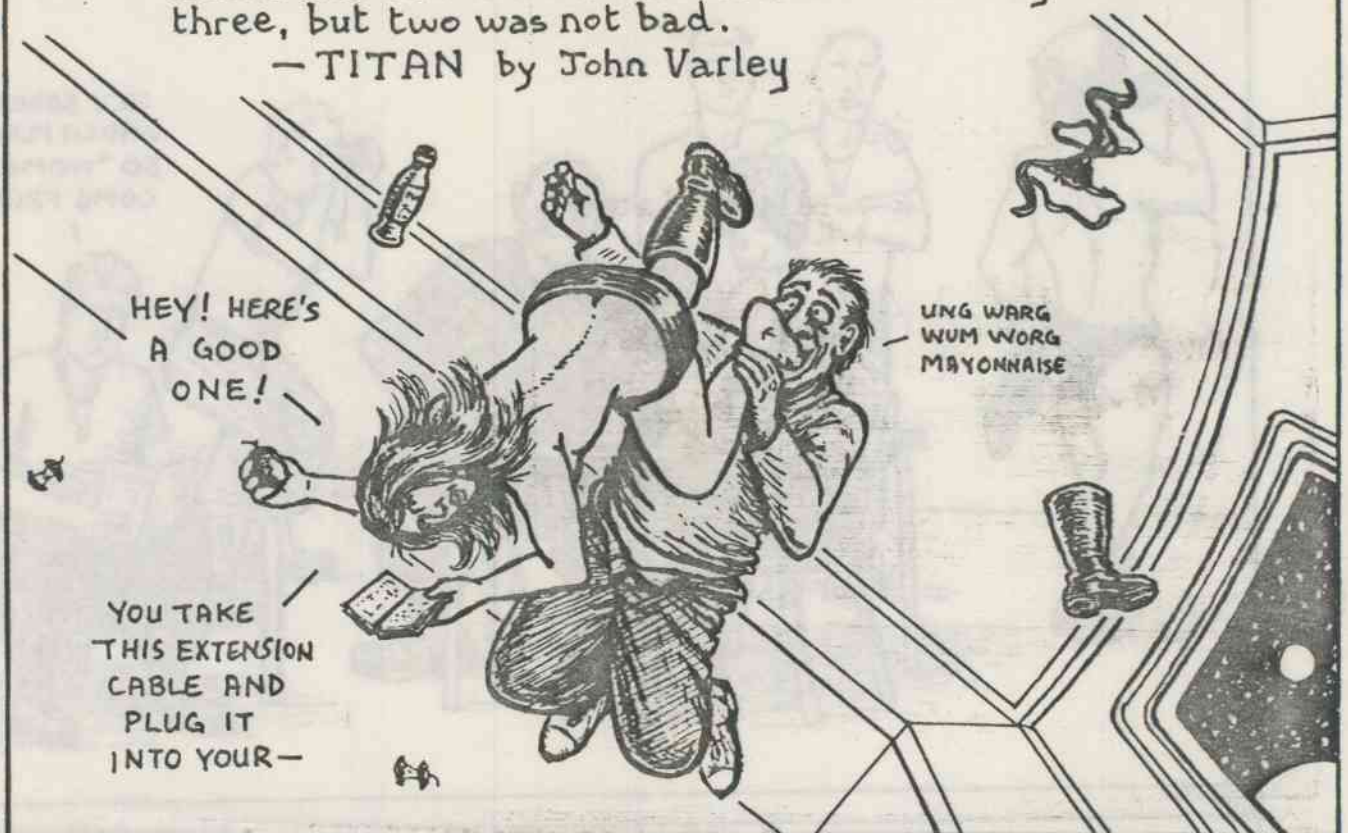
Pat Silver writes a lot. A hell of a lot. If she laid all the pages she writes in a year end to end it would keep her busy long enough for me to publish a fanzine without her commenting on it within a week. A staunch defender of the poor under-appreciated tech-ops staff at conventions, founding filker, conrunner, masquerader and overall wonder woman, Pat found so much to do that she had to change her name: two identities are better than one when you are into as much as Pat. In addition to all this she is a very nice person. I doubt that we will ever see a fanzine from her as she would feel compelled to loc her own articles before they were published, then comment on her loc, then disagree with what David Bell would say about her remarks..... It saves on postage.

Nigel Richardson - oh, what's the use. Nigel puts the boot into himself with each of the carefully turned phrases he uses to describe his totally self-centred, worthless existence. Don't worry about him though, it's just mid-life adolescence. He sees his chances of pulling a beautiful, cultured, intelligent woman receding faster than his hairline. If only he could channel some of his great writing talent into producing chat-up lines we'd see a much happier Nigel, and his fanzines might become more upbeat. (*Slubbberyslippersquidge* is the only zine that comes with a free razor blade).

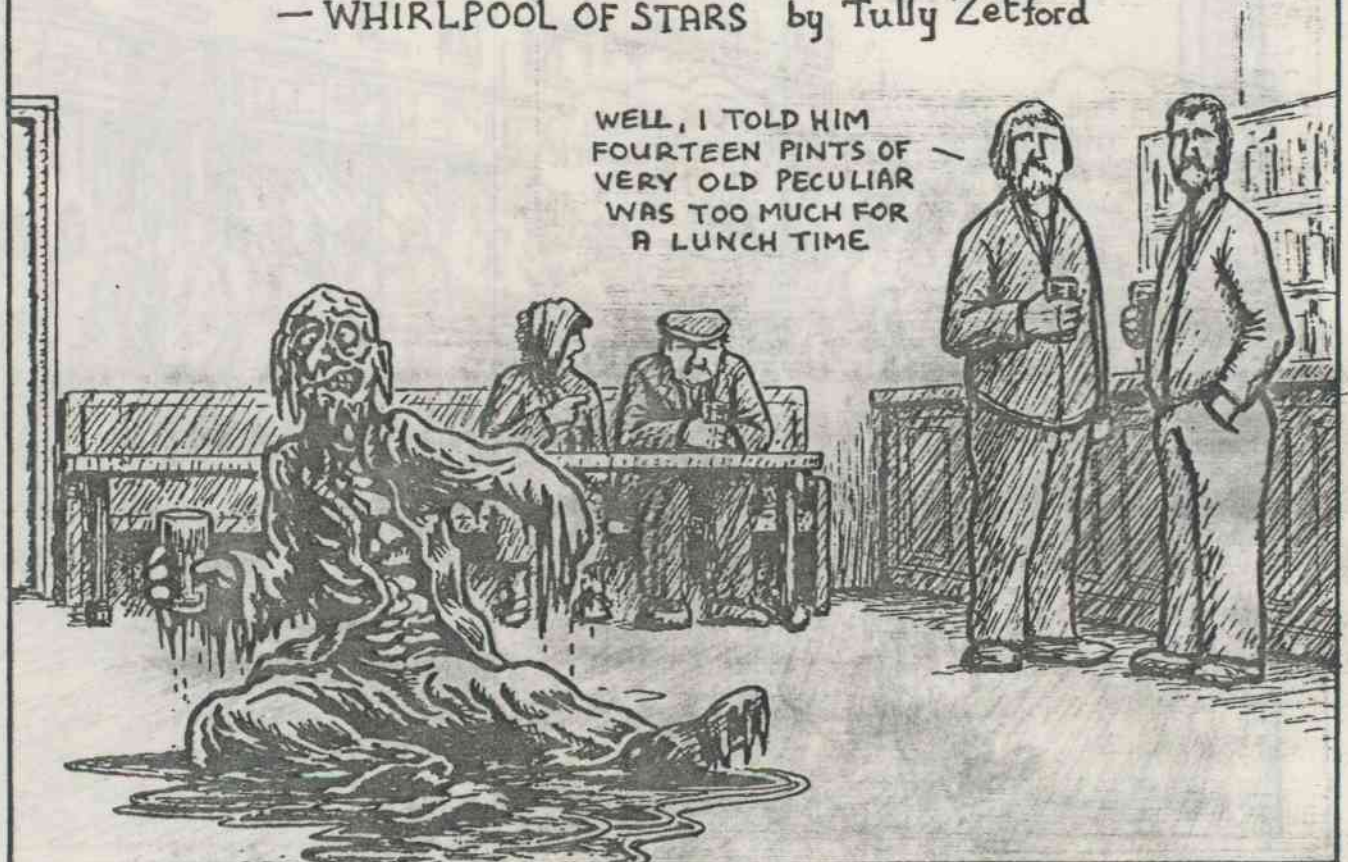
And that brings us to **Ian Sorensen**, a fan of such overpowering ego that he publishes not one, but two fanzines. One is so incredibly boring that it makes the WSFS Constitution seem exciting and the only thing that can be said about the other one is that it is just interesting enough to keep you reading this far.....

Famous Fannish Moments in SF BY DWAR

- 11 Cirocco liked space, reading and sex, not necessarily in that order. She had never been able to satisfactorily combine all three, but two was not bad.
— TITAN by John Varley



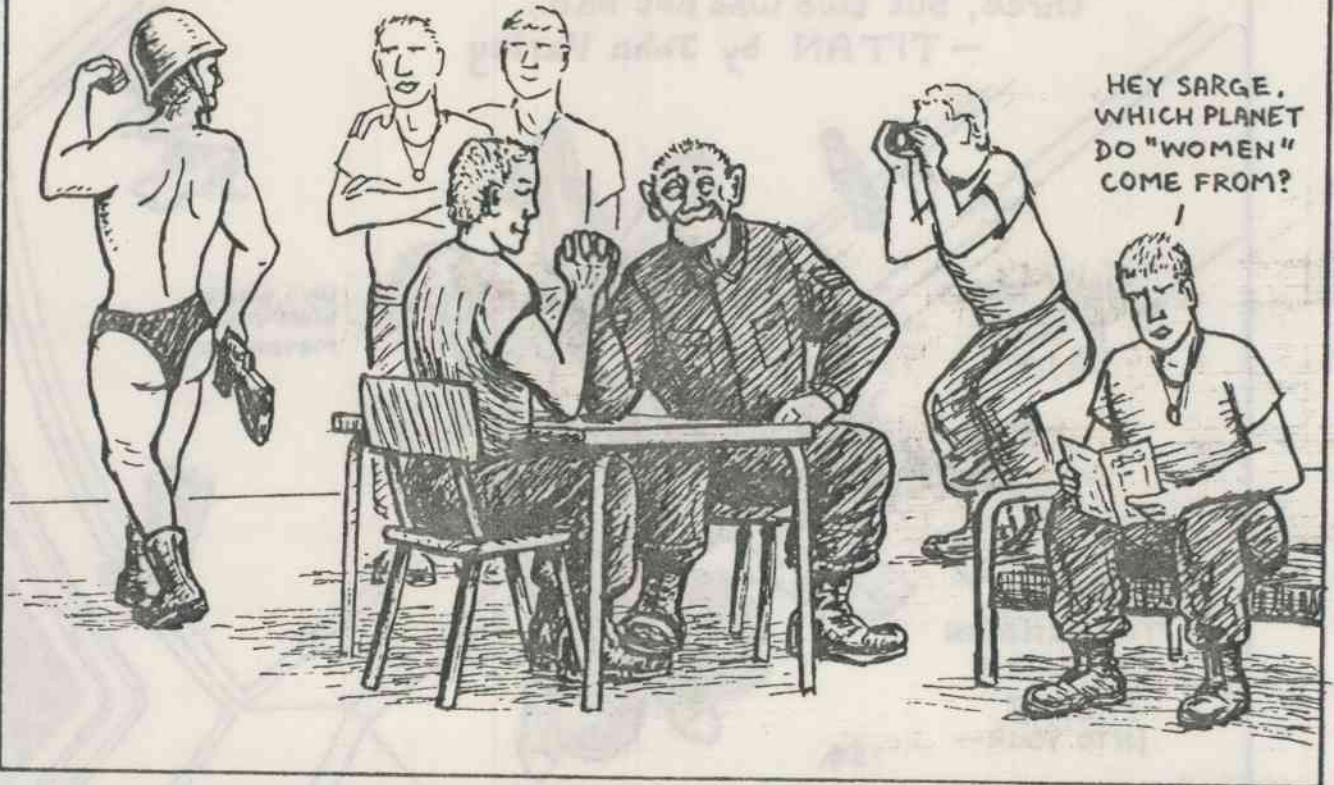
- 2 His body deliquesced. It oozed. His head flowed and collapsed and sloughed. Still upright, he melted and shrank and collapsed...
— WHIRLPOOL OF STARS by Tully Zetford



3

...and to all sergeants anywhen who have labored to make men out of boys.

-dedication of STARSHIP TROOPERS by Robert Heinlein



4

His physical superiority, however, was as nothing compared to his gigantic mind.

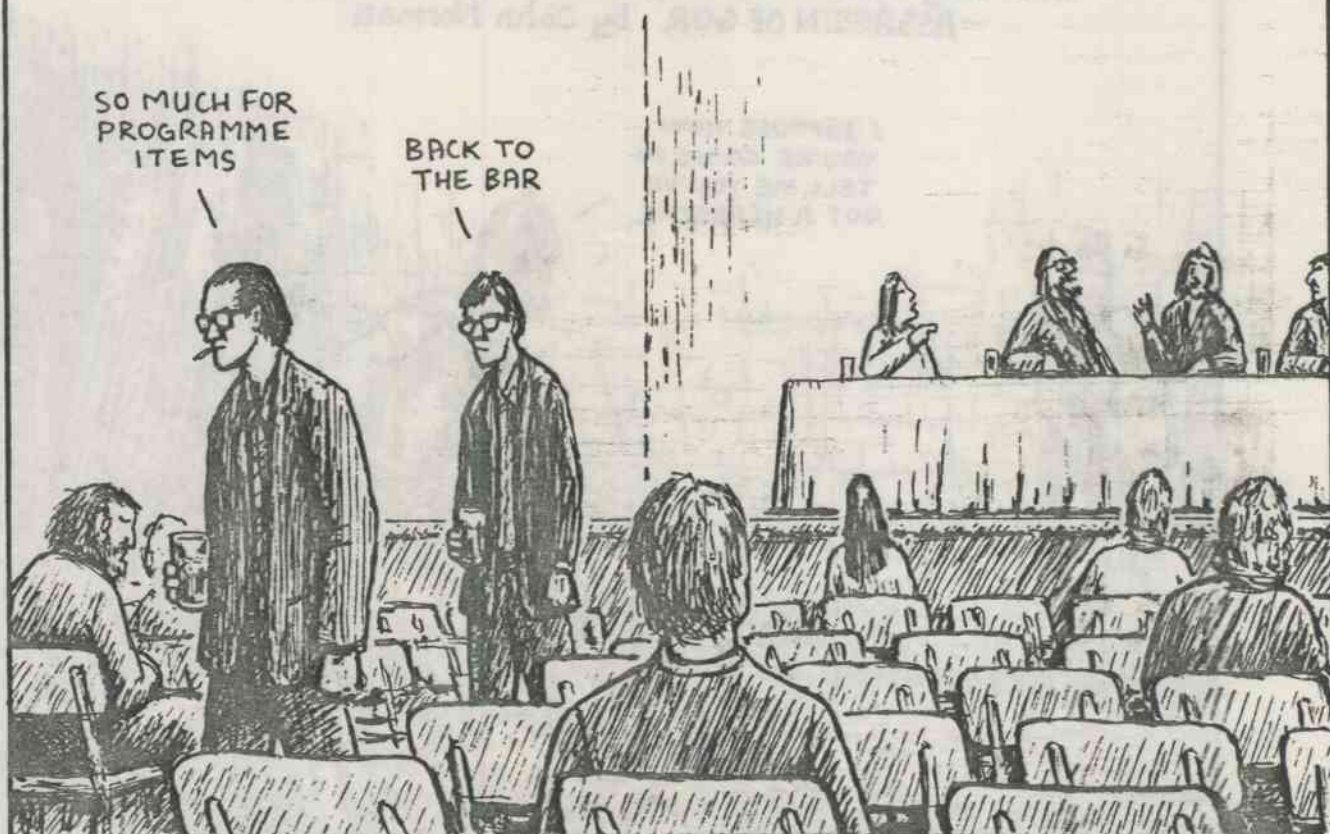
-RALPH 124C41+ by Hugo Gernsback



5

They both realised at once that with terrible cunning and subtlety the Martians were trying to drive them mad.

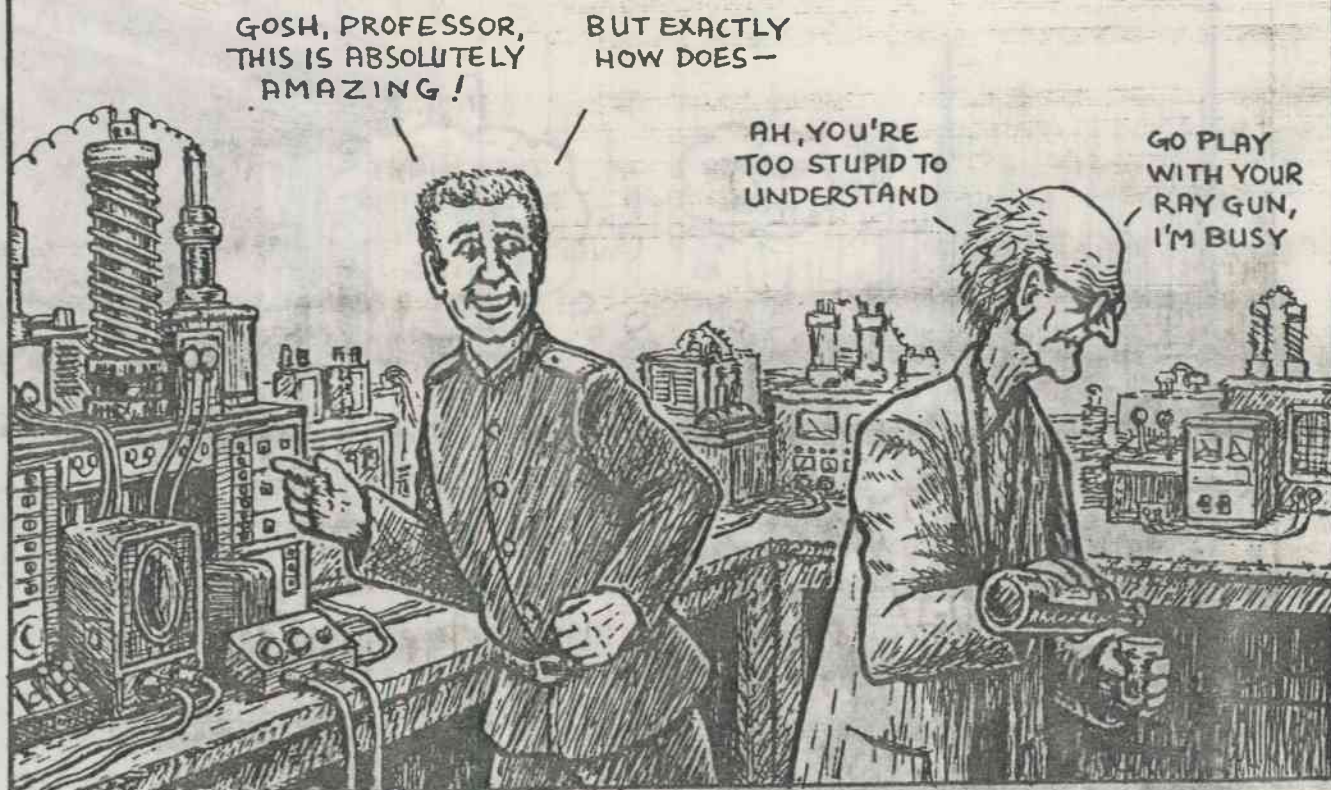
- ADRIFT IN THE STRATOSPHERE by Prof. A.M. Low



6

"How can a thing like that possibly work as it does?" asked Crane.
"I know that it does work, but I could scarcely believe it..."

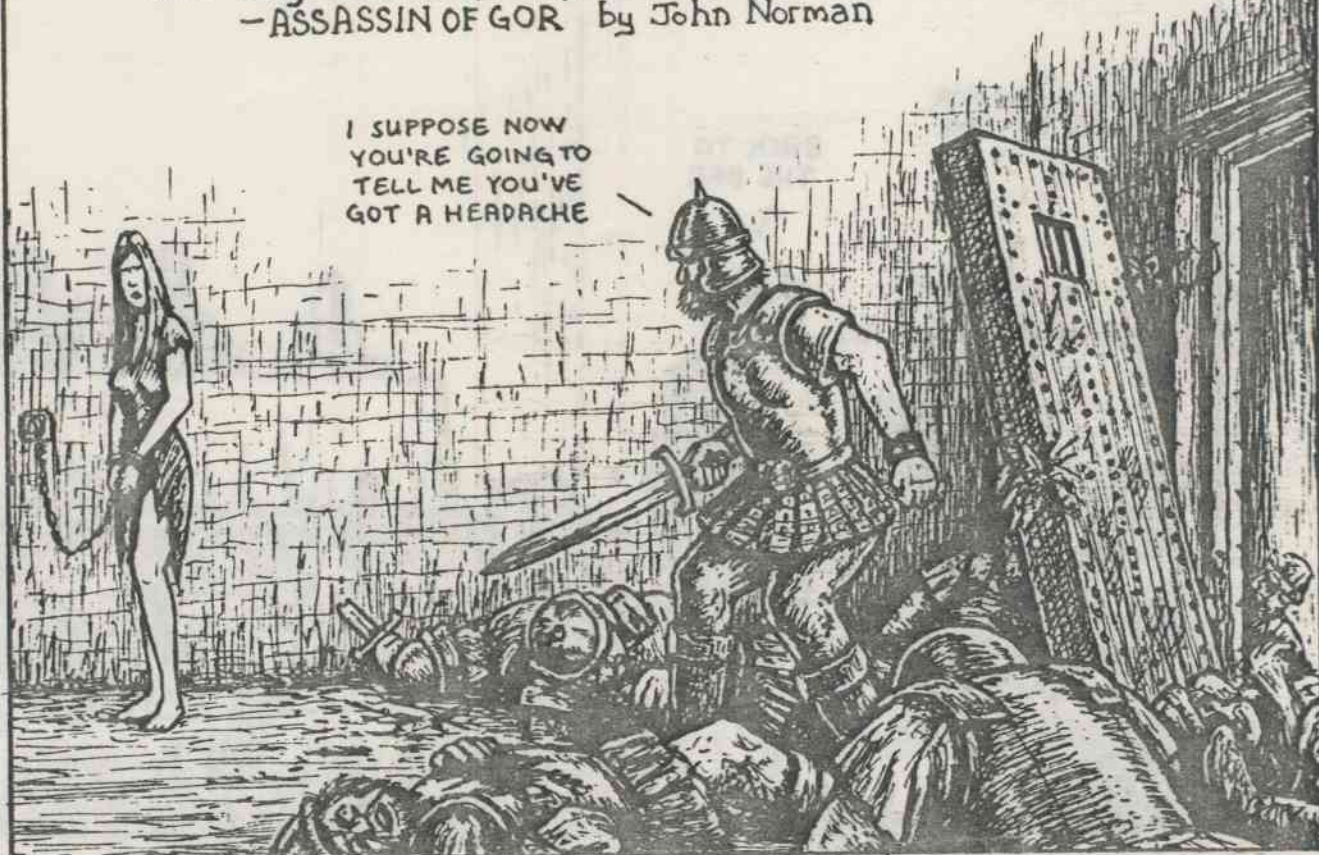
- SKYLARK THREE by E.E. Smith



[7]

"Is it not true that the women of weaker conquered men, if permitted to live, have been kept only as the slaves of the conquerors, permitted to live only that they may serve the pleasures of victorious masters?"

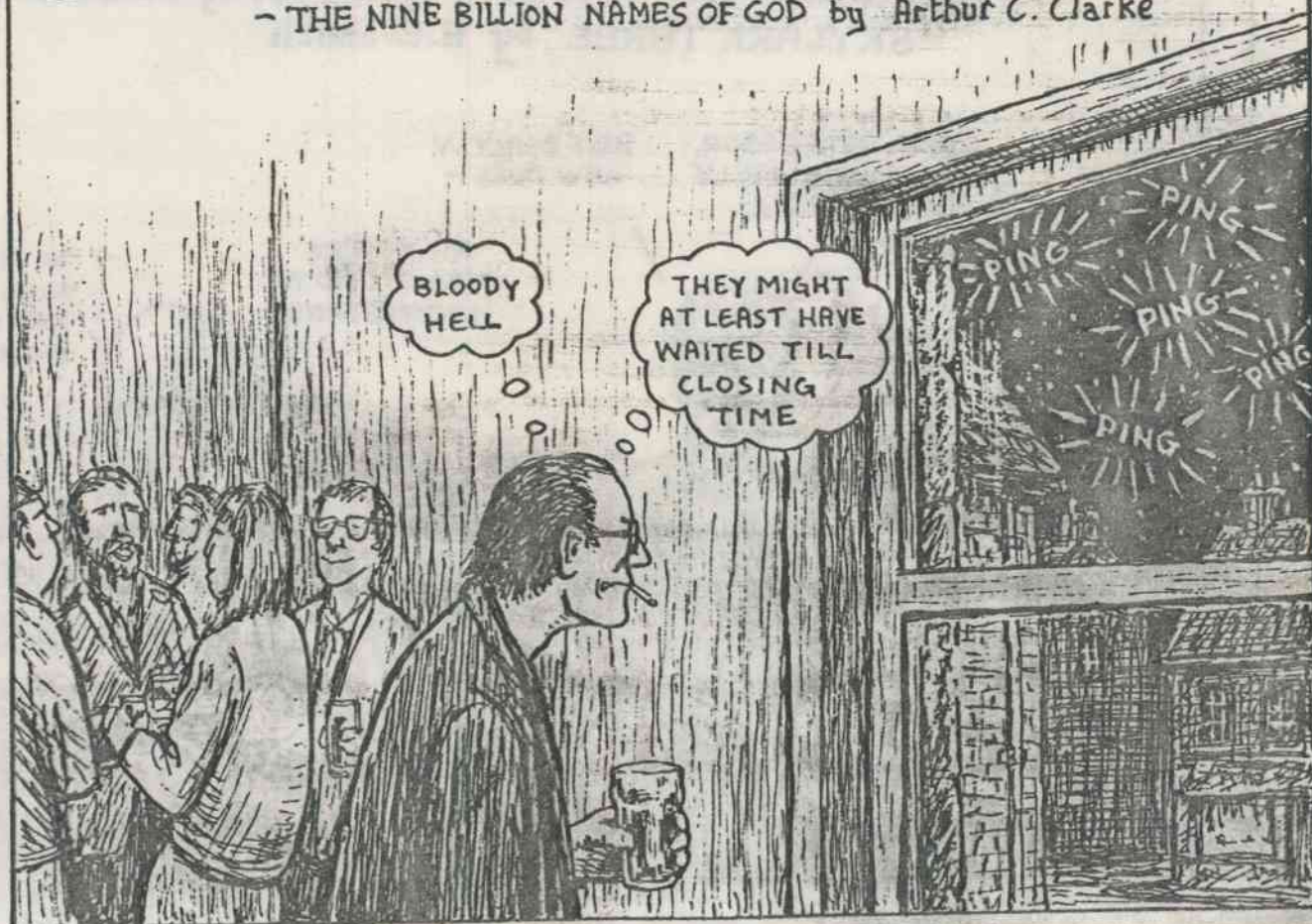
- ASSASSIN OF GOR by John Norman



[8]

Overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out.

- THE NINE BILLION NAMES OF GOD by Arthur C. Clarke



Famous For Fifteen Minutes

As publicist for many conventions I've appeared on TV and radio often enough to have had more than my allotted quarter of an hour of fame already. However, two occasions stick in my mind: a caption put over an interview with Scottish Television which described me as "Ian Sorensen - Convention organist". (To this day I wonder if one of the punters at the pub I played the organ in worked at STV and recognised me). The other time was a long delay surprise: I was interviewed for Albacon '85 and have a copy of the transmission. Looking at it a couple of years ago I was astonished to discover the identity of the cub reporter the BBC had sent to cover the con - none other than Kirsty Wark! (Be still my beating heart).

Enough about me. Let's see what you have been up to. Jean Maudsley sent me her story along with a cutting from a magazine about people who had brief flirtations with fame then disappeared; people like Erica Roe who streaked at Twickers, London cabby Fred Housego who won Mastermind and my childhood favourite, Milly, who sang "My Boy Lollipop" before disappearing from public view. According to the magazine, all of them became disillusioned and bitter after being first feted then ignored by the media. I hope my correspondents here don't suffer this fate.

Famous for Fifteen (to One) Minutes **By Jean Maudsley**

I attended an audition for the Channel 4 quiz show "15 to 1" in Manchester last January. The genial quizmaster William G Stewart himself turned up to ask the questions.

During a long and much appreciated introduction he explained that he wasn't looking for Einsteins; just people with a good general knowledge. He told us anecdotes about previous auditions and programmes, including the one about the man who collected his expenses, before the audition began, and walked out, never to be seen again. One man had appeared on the programme and failed to answer any of the questions correctly, and everyone he knew was at home that day to witness his performance. We were assured that even if we'd seem to have done badly we might still be invited to appear on the programme. The questions ranged from the easy to the obscure, it's just the luck of the draw.

All this was valuable to us would be contestants because we were all nervous. By the time we took our places ready to answer the questions, everyone was more relaxed. I managed to get only two right out of several and thought I'd blown it.

I was very surprised and pleased to receive my invitation to the Capital Group Studios in London. Regent Productions who put out the show were very organised, sending out a map and travel information.

I alighted at Wandsworth station on Tuesday March 31st, clutching the said directions. Now, I'm fairly hopeless at following maps so had Allowed myself plenty of time. Off I went, in the wrong direction, as it turned out. Back to Armoury Way and then down another street. I stopped again, unsure, beginning to get a little flustered. (Reminds me of the time I tried to find a restaurant in Glasgow and gave up). A group of people were just leaving a building and came towards me.

"Do you know the way to Capital Group studios?" I asked.

"Yes," they chorused, pointing, "it's there." Indicating where they had just come from, the building with "Capital Group studios" in large letters on it.

"I'm a better map reader than I thought," I said, as they went off laughing.

Once inside I was escorted to the hospitality room where sat a jug of coffee and some biscuits. I tucked in and tried to relax. Other people arrived and we watched a TV monitor showing a game in progress in the studio. They scored some of the highest scores I'd ever seen.

We all had our make-up done by two charming ladies. This was treat and I felt like a film star for five minutes. (Move over Joan Collins).

Then it was our turn to go into the studio. There were camera and sound checks then a briefing by William

G., who is also the producer. The game began. We all had to answer three questions to get into the next round. The woman next to me, a previous winner, was shaking with nerves, but I was fairly relaxed. I answered two questions which went something like -

"What is the other name for the Evening Star?"
Venus.

"By what name is the romantic piano concerto by Beethoven called?" The Moonlight Sonata - rather poetic I thought.

Then I floundered on science and sports questions, and sat down, with some relief. The programme was transmitted on May 5th. Shortly after a souvenir photograph arrived (a nice touch).

I had enjoyed myself, the expenses were generous, I'd met the dishy William G., I'd answered some questioned right and hadn't made a fool of myself, so I decided I could tell my friends about it!



Ethel Lindsay

As for brushes with the media I remembered that at one time I had written in SCOTTISHE about a tv experience. Trouble was which issue! I did have a hazy idea of when it happened and fortunately found it quite soon. It is quite hazardous for me to go into these files as I get sidetracked into reading something or giggling at an ATOM cartoon and then time goes by. Things are not helped by the fact that I rarely bothered to put a date on each issue! When I re-read this piece I realised that there was not anything I could add about my feelings on the media and SF...if anything I have become even more cynical.

Many years ago I had an interesting experience by appearing on a TV discussion show. It all started when Gerry Bishop rang me up and asked if I would care to take part in a discussion panel on which SF would be the featured subject. He said he had asked Gerry Webb and, as three fans were wanted, Gerry had suggested me. He said that there were three books to discuss - Aldiss's "Greybeard", McCaffrey's "Dragonflight" and Wells's "War of the Worlds". My immediate reaction was "Oh, no!", but I went off and brooded about it. That made me discover that if I didn't say "yes" I would probably be consumed with curiosity as to what took place. so when Gerry rang back again I said "yes!"

The reason I had reacted with a "no" in the first place was the fact that I am deeply suspicious of any reporters when it comes to the subject of SF. This stems from my initial meeting with a reporter at my first convention - the Mancon. There I was enticed into talking to a reporter who seemed to take an interest in SF seriously; but whose newspaper report was full of the usual blah about "monsters from space" and 'off to the moon ha ha..."

I went off to the initial meeting with a representative from London Weekend Television at a London hotel. We were told they they wanted us to choose a passage from our favourite SF book and to read it out as an illustration of what we liked about SF. Finally we were told, with a disarming smile, that really they only wanted two of us, not three. I guess I was only mildly indignant about this because it reaffirmed my ideas about the arrogance of media people. Nothing like having your suspicions confirmed for making you purr - it makes you feel so clever.

On the day I got there first, I always do, and eventually found my way to the reception area. From there I was given the key to a handsomely furnished dressing room which i was to share with the two non-fans taking part. They arrived shortly, the younger woman was a university student who didn't seem to like SF at all, the older

woman had enjoyed reading the books and found "Greybeard" a very timely warning story.

We went down to the coffee area and found Gerry and Gerald both. Then Brian Aldiss and Anne McCaffrey appeared. Both enthusiastically greeted Gerry and smiled vaguely at me. I discovered they **did not** recognise me wearing my new bifocals.

We were introduced to the compere of the show, Pauline; and we started the rehearsal discussion. On reflection I think the rehearsal was better than the actual programme, but I may be wrong. The latest revelation had just come out: this was to be a 20 minute programme. The thought of trying to cover these three books, or the subject of SF (it got fairly vague as to which we were doing) was filling me with hidden (I hope) glee.

The actual recording time just whizzed by and I sure would be interested to hear what I said. **All** I can remember now is one remark "after all if one man can make a difference so might one book"; and I'm pretty sure that was when I spoke at the same time as Gerry... and kept on talking.

After the programme was finished we waited around for a while whilst Pauline had to say "See you next week" in a hopeful tone about two dozen times before she got the OK.

I was pleased with the opening shot from "War of the Worlds" - an impressive looking sequence that perhaps made up for the fact that the book was hardly mentioned. I think the programme closed with a passage from "2001". The credits rolled up for Brian and Anne - and the rest of us remain mercifully anonymous.

Danny Livingston

Thanks for Bob?, it cheered me up no end to find I'm not the only one good at being miserable. (5 months working in the Netherlands - great. Was here about 2 weeks and my girlfriend back home started going out with someone else. Downer.)

Was a bit ill myself at the start of June. Was feeling generally not well, sore back by the end of every day, bit of a pain in the belly. Felt alright, tho', to go to "Pinkpop", one of the hundreds of massive music festivals they have around here. Ghod, it was huge.

Not the best place to have diarrhoea. But I did. After every set, the toilet. Annoying when the paper ran out too, though I later stockpiled my own supplies.

But at least I became famous for my 15 minutes.

The concert was shown live on Dutch TV and, between sets, roving reporters did there bits. Yes, my workmate Fulco spotted me in the queue for the toilet while one of the attendants was being interviewed! (Sorry, can't do more than one autograph per person, I'm in very high demand.)

Alan Dorey

As for 15 Minutes of Fame... I did review books on BBC Radio Manchester in the days before I became GMR. Trouble was, most of the stuff they sent was absolute dribble and the show went out as a ten minute sequence during the middle of a women's magazine programme on a Tuesday afternoon.

Needless to say nobody listened, I got no fan mail and I still have this pile of rotten books that I actually had to read.

Lesley Ward

15 minutes of fame? Well, I walked past in the background on "Panorama" once - at the time I didn't realise this, just wondered what all the all the wires were doing over the pavement outside this police station - assumed a police training film or something was being made. Actually, it was a documentary about the Liverpool riots or something - but I didn't actually see the episode myself - someone told me about it. (Exciting, huh?!)

Gwyneth Morgan

I haven't had any encounters with the media unless you count an interminable phone conversation with some bloke from Central TV who wanted to film the Tolkien Centenary Con and ended up launching into a reminiscence about how he used to see Tolkien drinking in the Bird and Baby when he was a student.

Never mind, Gwyneth and all of you are now famous contributors to Bob!

Through the Looching Glass

Fiona Anderson

I have just read Bob?3.

EEK!!

((Strangely enough, I got a lot of reactions like that to my tale of a tender testicle - and mostly from women. I was somewhat worried about publishing my hospital story because I thought it might not be of interest to most of you, but I was wrong. Thanks for all the get well messages and nice comments on the piece. I'm quite well now and hope to remain so.))

Alan Dorey

Mike Ashley motivated me into writing this loc - Saliromania #8 fell through the door today, and he's wittering on about Chicken Pox and other such ailments. And then I recall your run of ill-fortune earlier this year. Bah. I ain't squeamish (but thanks for the warning), but it did bring back memories of a guy at school who had the misfortune to receive an extremely wet and heavy leather soccer ball in the groin during the course of a game against the local college. I generally ran around on the wing (being fleet of foot and quite good at whopping huge looping crosses to the forwards to nod majestically into the net), but even I could see and feel the stunned look on his face as he sank to the floor like a sack of dead rabbits.

One of the teaching staff ran on and attempted to administer what aid he could, groping frantically down the front of this guy's shorts. All he could say in a strained voice was "don't feel them... count them..."

He was carried off to various ribald comments, and we never did find out what Really Happened.

Derek Pickles

The hospital ward you were in was the twin of the one I was in - not for your complaint I hasten to add, just the usual problem for men over 50 (I'm not saying what, so just worry for the next xx years). One of the less appealing inmates wandered round the ward with, initially, a surgical smock on back to front with the tapes untied, later (after the op) with a hospital-issue striped towelling dressing-gown which barely reached his knees and only half-way down his fore-arms, wideopen. It was not a pretty sight. The nurses weren't bothered really, except at visiting time, as one said to me "after you've given a thousand bed-baths NOTHING surprises you".

I'm also reminded of the patient who asked the consultant to examine a rash that had appeared on his 'groin'. "What is it?" he asked - "Don't know" said the consultant, "but there's a lot of it about".

I've been in hospital so many times that instead of writing my name in green felt-tip to stick at the head of my bed they've had a name-plate engraved. The last time he brought my full file of notes the porter went in the next bed with a hernia. Do you want any more gems like those?

((No.))

Mark Nelson

Thanx for the current issue of "Bob?", an excellent read. The article running from pages 5-14 is one of the best pieces of, err, factual writing that I have seen since... well I can't remember.

When Bob? arrived I was out of the county, working in Manchester. Some American soap/serial was on the TV (not that I would normally watch these of course, you understand) and the lead character was in pain. Great pain,

This pain was coming from a twisted testicle. The plot rumbled on. His girlfriend wanted to know what he was doing to twist the testicle in the first place, since he wasn't where he was supposed to be but was discussing work at his, female, boss' home...

"It's not the kind of topic you want to watch on TV after your tea, is it?" I hurriedly agreed to the Landlady's suggestion, whilst thinking at the same time that he would be a great article for a fanzine!

No doubt the very same thought was a crumb of comfort for you Ian. Whilst you were in agony, laid up in

hospital, you could, at least, think that your pain and agony wasn't going to go wasted — you could get a fanzine article out of it!

Lesley Ward

My sympathies with the great balls of fire - hope there is no reoccurrence. Made a most entertaining article though, and I liked the illos.

The flavoured vodkas sound intriguing, wonder if they'll put in an appearance at Novacon. Not enough beer tasting events at cons these days!

((Glad to see you have your priorities right, Lesley. I suspected that I had written the Leeds piece after drinking too much vodka myself when I got a letter from Ethel Lindsay saying she did not understand a single word of the report. Oh well, perhaps I haven't really mastered any writing style beyond "report card prose".

The next letter comes from what I mistakenly thought was a charming young lady when I met her and promised her a copy of Bob#3: a few weeks later I received a calling card from an organisation known as the "Sisters of Mercy" threatening dire consequences of Cousin Marigold doesn't get her fanzine Real Soon Now... On the whole I think it was nice of them to take time off from beating up Hell's Angels to send me the warning.))

Gwyneth Morgan

Thanks for the copy of Bob? which arrived just in time - getting on the wrong side of an organisation whose motto is "Be Nice or Pay the Price" is never a good idea. Victims are guaranteed **not** to enjoy the price which is individually devised to suit the crime....

I'm afraid your run-ins with the NHS provided some welcome light relief during a moment of personal crisis (since resolved) - nobody beats the Sisters when it comes to laughing at other people's problems.

I will be at Novacon. I'm looking forward to going to something I haven't spent 3 years helping to organise - I'm not long returned from the Tolkien Centenary Con which did in fact have its moments e.g. the Finno-Dutch room party (free beer and vodka). I can't really comment on the official events - out of 83 panels and papers I went to one - by way of a token gesture - plus a couple of evening activities, mainly because I was stewarding them. What a week - it took the real stalwarts who went to a party every night (myself included) a week to recover.

Was the Martin Smith mentioned in the pages of your august zine the M. Smith of Witney (brownish hair, moustache, glasses) or just a M. Smith?

((Neither, just Bloody Martin Smith from Croydon. Martin is a famous fannish institution., friend to all, sad case to himself. But not sad enough to go to a Tolkien centenary. Here's soemone who might be, though.))

Kev McVeigh

On my Bob? address label was a tiny superscript 'z' to the left of my postcode, does this mean I now owe you a letter? I'm afraid I don't recall ever having many significant or entertaining brushes with the media (with the police, yes.) Let me tell you about fannish fame, instead.

People seem to think I'm running for Taff (should that be TAFF?) As I write, I'm not. Well, maybe I've considered it. My last encounter with Taff was a young lad of that name who, despite my "cute, endearing Northern accent" (*The Caprician* 4, 1989), beat me up for being Irish. That was that, until Blackpool, when I wandered through the late-night bar to say a passing "Hi" to Bernie Evans:

"Hi Bernie" I said.

"What's all this about you standing for TAFF?"

"What's all what?"

"I heard you were standing for TAFF." (I'd heard that too, but not from me.)

"No, I don't think so." I got the feeling Bernie approved of this, somehow. "Lilian suggested I did but I've said nothing. She wanted me to run last time against Pam."

"You'd have been slaughtered." (Gee, thanks.)

"I know."

"You wouldn't have stood a chance." (Do you notice a theme developing here?)

"That's why I said no."

But after that other rumours began to filter through to Milnthorpe. The idea that Harry Bond is standing on the "anyone is better than Kev McVeigh" platform, for instance. Personally I disagree, but who cares what I think. It did raise the concept of the ironic vote. I would not stand, but let Harry stand on this manifesto, only for me

to beat him by a covert campaign of write-ins. Pam Wells, sadly, decided to abolish write-ins. It was fun while it lasted. (Rumour also has Michael Ashley standing against both Haz and me, by the way. Nice to be popular, isn't it.)

That was as far as my campaign got, a little further than Pat Robertson's. Then D. West, as ever right on the pulse of fandom, portrays me in his usual amusing (damn! faint praise.) manner as standing against Harry and former loser Abi Frost. Nevermind, at least this way everyone will know I would have been the best candidate, and I still can't lose. Then again, if it worked for Iain Thomas... maybe I should stand?

((Two months later and the situation is clearer: Mike Ashley, Abi, Tony Bery and Ashley Watkins are standing. I have nominated Michael in an attempt to destroy TAFF once and for all - I can't run myself you see because a) nobody would vote for me and b) the trip has to take place during my school term time. Ah, such altruism.))

Avedon Carol

Thanks for Bob, which arrived this morning. Chuch Harris thinks West is the only person who deserves to stand for TAFF, seeing as Hazel Ashworth can't go at that time of year. Actually, I sorta wish he would stand - and win; maybe a trip to America would mellow him out. Jon Singer could give him a backrub, for example. If he thinks he can go a whole two weeks without saying something bigoted about Americans or people who don't suffer from anorexia, he should probably stand.

((Moving from fan politics to the (slightly) more real world.))

Kev McVeigh

Bruno Ogorolec suggests that the Stock Exchange works on informed opinion. This is rubbish. The run up to the election clearly demonstrated this as prices fluctuated with each new opinion poll, each new debate, each lie about tax policies of the opposition, etc. The Currency Exchanges are equally irrational. The simple truth is that the economy of the Industrialised nations is very highly dependent on rumours and whims. It can be significantly affected by a few bad hangovers, broken relationships, maybe even a bad case of orchitis. Furthermore, because so much importance is attached to these institutions by Government and Media, the pressure on the human operators is such that alcohol and drug abuse are rife as escape routes, broken affairs are commonplace and mental breakdowns virtually classed as industrial injury. All of which exacerbates the crazy nature of the system. I'm not even sure that these people have time in the yuppie economy to develop any real informed opinion at their best. Still, at least Bruno takes a look at the world around him, unlike Pat Silver who treats fandom the way an ostrich treats sand. Without politics fandom would not exist, Pat.

Steve Green

Although fanzines are hardly an ideal vehicle for party politicals, articles in which fans discuss their political motivations can make for fascinating reading. Lesley Ward's heartfelt attack upon pornography in Sounding the Ritual Echo #3, for instance, was one of the best articles of 1985 and would certainly have left her a strong contender for the "best writer" Nova had it appeared in these more fanzine-impooverished times.

Anyhow, thanks to Kinnock's purges, there isn't enough left of the Labour Party for me to feel like promoting it in print, nor do I anticipate an improvement following Smith's succession.

Judith Hanna/Joseph Nicholas

You wanted people to send you postcards? Then a postcard you shall have - to ask two crucial questions:
1 Why was Bob?3 addressed to me by the hideous abbreviation "Joe" rather than my correct name?
2 Why was Bob?3 addressed only to me instead of to both of us? It's the wobbly bits hall of shame for you, my lad! Thanks for printing large portions of my letter anyway.

((Sue Harrison wrote complaining that your letter was too heavy going, hope she likes the postcard better.))

Judith Hanna/Joseph Nicholas

I was about to pen (or wp) a note of response to your touching yet hilarious tale of pain, when Joseph reminded me that you had addressed Bob?3 solely to him and not to me at all. Obviously I can't respond to a zine that wasn't sent to me, and your suffering organ is due to make an appearance in the wobbly bits hall of shame next issue, so there. However, I'm sure that unlike recidivist Mathias Hoffman, after one tactful warning you will have adjusted your address list. Trust your wobbly bits are keeping well.

((OK, I'll talk computers just long enough to explain that my database isn't smart enough to only print one label per address so I assign a code for Conrunner and another one for Bob to each person - thus two people at the same address get a code each. I notice you don't complain that Conrunner only goes to Judith....))

Mark Nelson

Several years ago it was "official" policy of the Student's Union in Leeds to distort all Polls by encouraging the membership to lie to Pollsters. The idea behind this policy was that if Polls could be distorted then there wouldn't be so much store put into their findings and people would instead spend more time discussing the issues. And these people are graduating? Still, there's little else for the Union Hacks to do.

The only time I've ever been polled was a poll organised by... Leeds Student Union. The Pollsters got rather upset when I started distorting their Poll. "Why don't you take this seriously?"

I saw Harry Bond last week. In the absence of any zines from Leeds this year he suggested that a flutter on Bob? to win the Nova would be a sound investment. Or at least it would be provided the High Priest of the Nova's was put on the mailing list.... (hint, hint, hint).

This has been a very sorry looking loc, perhaps you'd better include more, free, Taffervescent (reaching the parts other fanzines fail to reach!) in your next issue.

Derek Pickles

Bob 3 arrived 25th June. Bob has the alarming regularity of choclax but a much better end result. Love the cover, typical group from any Con I've ever been to, one of the followers should have been beating a BIG drum tho'.

Your reminiscences of the Leeds Group - none of whom I not only do not know but have not met (as a Conrunner you know there is no correlation between the two). All I can say is, as a supporter of Bradford City and contributor to the fanzine CITY GENT, if a Bradfordian was unbalanced enough to go to live in Leeds the act would raise the IQ of both cities.

((I think I understand that, though the idea of linking Bradford and Leeds with the word intelligence is a trifle odd.))

Ken Cheslin

I can't think of much to say about Jim Barker, but I'd like to mention him because so often artists are taken for granted, as if it was easy to "dash off" a cover and "a few illos" but harder and somehow more "up-market" to produce a age of writing. It is a waste of "pen+ink" I suppose, wishing some folk would try either or both.

Long ago, in the early 60's, we had a small SF and wargames club. We invented a character whose wedding tackle was so huge he had to carry it round in a barrow - the illo in Bob #3 reminded me of him. We called him O'Toole - he never saw print but he was a sort of club legend.

((Jim's illos seem to have been much admired but he did an extra one that I didn't use because I thought that nobody would recognise where it came from. Of course, it turns out that it was Jim's favourite one and now he's gone all huffy on me. Bloody temperamental artists. I'm going to be killed no matter what I do because both Jim and D. West have threatened awful things if I don't vote for them in the Nova Awards.

So, at the insistence of Mr Barker (I know a Smith and Wesson 38 when I see one), I'm publishing his cartoon here as this issue's competition: what is the inspiration for this cartoon? Send your answers to the editorial address on the back page. You could win the operation of your choice - say, that's a good comment hook for you to respond to....))



This is **Bob#4** from Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY, UK.
Published in October 1992 and available for The Usual.

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That's all folks - next issue will be out as soon as you send in enough stuff to fill it!

Oh yes, and remember to vote Michael Ashley for TAFF. You could even vote **Bob** for a Nova.

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