

CHALLENGER

no. three * autumn 1995



CHALLENGER no. 3

fall-winter 1995

Guy H. Lillian III, editor
Dennis K. Dolbear, associate editor

P.O. Box 53092
New Orleans Louisiana 70153-3092
504/821-2362 (GHLIII)
504/831-9271 (DKD)

Cover by Dany Frolich



CONTENTS	author	page
Welcome to the Underworld	<i>Binker Hughes</i>	3
True Hearts	<i>Linda Krawecka</i>	6
Our Contributors		8
Editorial		9
A Fart of a Fiendish Scheme		14
To Contract or Not to Contract	<i>Tom Sadler</i>	16
The AI Side	<i>Alan Hutchinson</i>	18
Alaska, Poor Yorick	<i>Harry Warner, Jr.</i>	19
The Challenger Tribute		25
Jim	<i>Guy Lillian</i>	26
LonDDon	<i>Dennis Dolbear</i>	28
Witches	<i>Rich Dengrove</i>	58
The Ryan Moment	<i>Dave Ryan</i>	63
Midnight Rambler		64
Epistles	<i>the readers</i>	65
The Fanzine Dump	<i>the dumpsters</i>	91
Bacover		96

(c) 1995 by Guy H. Lillian III. All rights revert to the author or artist. Unsigned material by the editor. Contributions on paper or disc welcome; process is WordPerfect 5.1; disc will be returned. GHLIII Press Publication #815, 10/11-95.

Dr. Elizabeth B.G. Hughes got into fanzines at the same time I did, in the January, '71 mailing of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. She's back in SFPA after picking up her Ph.D. in Political Science, and she'll be a frequent presence in Challenger, we hope.

Welcome to the Underworld

Binker Glock Hughes

The recently formed Outing Club had introduced rock-climbing and caving [called "spelunking" by those who don't do it] to our campus, but a killer course-load had delayed my getting involved.

"At least come to the meeting tonight," Barbara said.

That sounded harmless enough. One meeting couldn't hurt. I was wrong. After the meeting, about five of my friends pinned me to the back wall of the room and said, "You're Coming Caving With Us This Weekend."

"I Have Two Midterms on Monday."

"That doesn't matter. You're coming caving this weekend."

That's how it happened that my copy of Kant's **Critique of Pure Reason** came along on my first caving trip. I didn't get much studying done, but at least *I tried*.

We left near 5:30 Friday evening, crowded in the back of somebody's old IH Travelall. Normally, the drive would have taken 3-4 hours, but recent snow meant it was well after midnight before we were unloading our gear into a barn on some wooded land that held a number of cave entrances. The caver who owned it all had lined the barn's floor with mattresses to accommodate visiting cavers, so we unrolled sleeping bags and tried to get some rest.

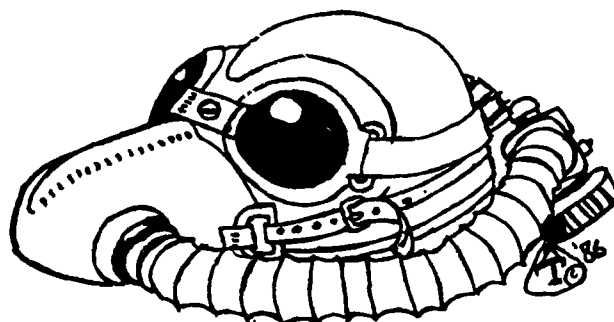
Over a huge breakfast in town the next morning, they began to tell me about caves. Caves have several unique features any visitor must take into account. The first is **light**. People talk about "pitch blacker" and "can't see your hand in front of your face" but even the darkest night outside has *some* light. In a cave, there is literally None. Without light in a cave, you're helpless, so cavers carry several

independent sources of light. If one fails, another can provide light for a repair or to light your way out of the cave.

Almost as important is the cave's **climate**. Caves stay at the mean temperature of the region, year round, and often have very high humidity. Where we were, caves were 54° Fahrenheit year round with almost 100% humidity. If we didn't dress for it or if we stopped for long, the moisture and temperature could really chill us down. Hard, low ceilings and slippery uneven floors made Hardhats and shoes with tread -- preferably boots -- essential. Cave Dust -- fine, penetrating stuff that permeates *everything* -- meant all gear and food had to be well wrapped.

The third factor is the **cave itself**. Limestone caves are alive, growing as water deposits minerals or dying as it dries out. It can take 100 years or more to form one inch of a cave formation, yet growth can Stop if you touch a formation with an unprotected hand, leaving the natural oils on your skin on the stone. Even if you don't mind getting your hands muddy, gloves are important.

The caves we'd be visiting also housed bats (and NO, they *don't* "get in your hair").



Hibernating bats only store enough food to survive the winter *in hibernation*. Disturbing them makes them use some of that limited supply, almost guaranteeing they'll die before spring brings food. Similar cautions apply throughout the cave. So much damage can be done so quickly that care and common sense are vital.

Why go into caves, then, if they're Dark, Uncomfortable, and you need to pay more attention to the Cave's well-being than your own? Every caver has a different answer. Speleobiologists are excited by the Mexican caves where a new -- *genuinely* new, never heard of before -- insect is found *every time* somebody goes into them. Speleogeologists and archaeologists go to caves to see the layers of the earth from the inside, as they can never be seen on the surface. Every earth science can get important information from caves. I am drawn by less intellectual allures. In caves, I can go to places where I know I Am the First person ever to be there -- and I find that irresistible. But all that was a long way in the future.

There were enough of us, that first weekend, that we split into several parties going to different caves. You never cave alone (for safety) and you try to limit groups to no more than six (for convenience). I joined other beginners led by a member of the Windy City Grotto (Chicago chapter of the National Speleological Society) to do the "great circle route" in the longest cave on the property.

We hiked around the hillside until, about a third of the way from the top, we saw the entrance. Recent ice had built "formations" inside it, showing us some of what we'd see inside. That long rippling drapery, white with reddish-brown horizontal stripes, is called "bacon" for obvious reasons. The dark stripes come from iron compounds, dissolved and then redeposited in the formation. Black, similarly, indicates manganese -- and so on. Every color in a cave says something about the soil and stone above it.

We began by filling and lighting our

carbide lamps, putting calcium carbide lumps into the lower part and water in the top. The water dripping onto the carbide produces acetylene gas, which flows out a tip set in a reflector. Mounted on your hardhat and with the drip adjusted for a 1 to 1-1/2 inch flame, it'll provide about 3 hours of light before needing a refill. The Outing Club had just bought some hardhats and lamps to use on trips, so I had new ones of each. They didn't stay new long!

The cave had an encouraging entrance. Climbing down through large rocks with a reasonably high ceiling, we began to think it was just a neat form of hiking. Then came the 300 foot entrance crawl. It was flat, so wide we couldn't see the walls, and about 3 feet high. We could roll, go sideways on fingers and toes in a weird crab-like movement, or crawl. And crawl. And crawl. A long entrance crawl is quite an introduction to caves. (Kneepads were an early addition to my gear!) Still, we were getting off easily -- two other caves on the property had entrance crawls in the 1800 foot range.

Eventually, the passage opened up and we learned how to Not Get Lost in a cave. Frequently-travelled caves often are marked with "out-arrows" -- the letter O with an arrow attached pointing the way out -- but it's risky to count on out-arrows. Instead, you make a point of "looking back." In any room, you walk to any other passages that enter it, and look at the room from each angle. Cave rooms don't look the same from different vantage points, so you need to know What It Will Look Like When You Come Back -- and what the passage Out looks like from those other perspectives. Before long, though, we reached the Injunction that opened onto the Great Circle Route.

The Great Circle Route includes many common kinds of cave passage: large rooms, walking passage, stoopway, crawlway, and climbing. There are also formations, the most beautiful of which exemplified the problems of vandalism. It's a wall of glittering calcite

crystals like sheep's fleece ... that some idiot had defaced with writing. Once that's been done, the crystals can never grow in that pristine white again, so the owner had had to cut out the whole defaced section to let the cave recover from the damage. The piece lay, hopelessly sullied but still gleaming around its edges, on a nearby rock, many thousand years of growth and beauty destroyed by some fool's desire to "leave his mark." Cavers say, "Leave nothing but footprints, Take nothing but pictures, Kill nothing but time" -- but well-known caves are prey to noncavers, with this sort of result. It's little wonder so many caves are gated shut.

Part of the time, we were walking on the ceiling. People worry about "cave-ins" but most roof collapses happened millennia ago. The result is "breakdown" -- large chunks of rock that form the floors of some cave rooms. Walking on breakdown is actually walking on what used to be the ceiling -- but it's treacherous footing. If you slipped and broke something, how would you get back out those climbs and crawls? You walk *carefully* in caves!

Limestone caves are formed by water flowing underground, dissolving rock and soil. They start small, growing larger as the water dissolves and erodes the passage. Once they're large enough, unstable parts of the ceiling crash down. When a large, swift-moving stream fills the passage, its action can tear more boulders loose. That's why parts of the Mammoth Cave area are closed off when the Green River, underground in parts of Mammoth, is "working" -- making more cave. After the water level drops, time must be allowed for rocks loosened by the water to stabilize or fall.

Water is the life of limestone caves. While there's water, the cave is growing, building more formations and cutting more passage. Many caves still have traces of the streams that formed them, larger or smaller with the passing seasons. A dry cave is dying, going back to the dust from which it was

formed. Changes in water flow patterns aboveground can kill caves downstream of them by cutting off the water that creates and renews them.

We entered the cave around noon. Some six vigorous hours later, having seen True total darkness and traversed the Great Circle Route, we crawled back out that 300 foot entrance crawl and emerged into the dusk -- and I knew I was a cave rat. I bought the hardhat and lamp I had used and began figuring out how to make more caving trips.

I was extremely lucky. Instead of encountering "wild" caves with the eager-but-ignorant types I've often helped rescue, I was with people who cared about caves and were smart enough to do things right. My first caving trip was led by an experienced saver in a neat cave. I've tried to return the favor, and it's led to some wonderful, crazy, dangerous -- and unforgettable -- moments.

A few years later, I took my brother and two of his friends caving for the first time at a small, diverse cave near the same fieldhouse. The cave has a bit of everything: some climbing, crawling, formations, even side passages beginners can explore to get used to tying the party together with voice contact. You can "do" it fully in a couple of hours, or spend much longer poking into odd corners.

To keep out rain and local critturs, the cave's circular entrance climb is covered with an oil-drum lid. I lifted it off much as a chef would lift the cover from a culinary masterpiece. One of my brother's friends looked at the hole in the ground and his eyes got as big as the oil-drum lid. He stammeringly spoke:

"You're going to take *Me* into *That*?"
You bet I am.

If you decide to try caving, contact local NSS people or other experienced wavers. They'll start you right and get you into outrageous adventures -- But that's another story!

Linda Krawecke, once of New Orleans, now lives in Eastbourne, in the U.K. Below she relates a memory of home.

TRUE HEARTS

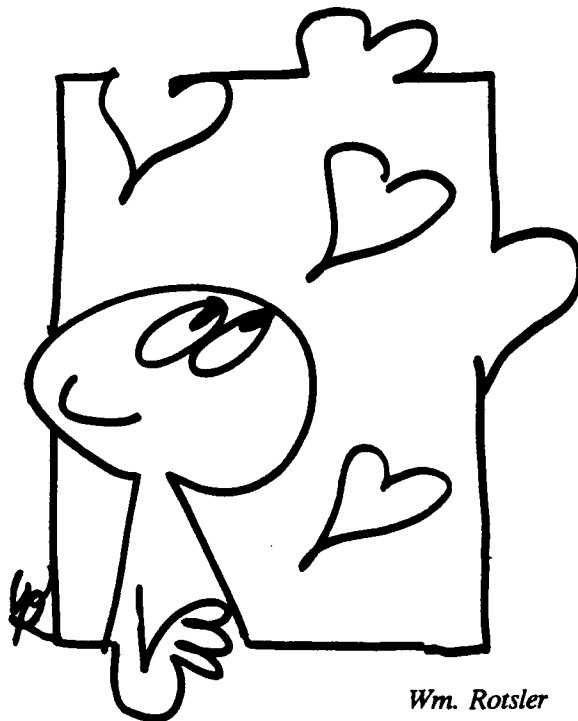
Linda Krawecke

My hands were red. The crepe paper had to be stuck to the box just so, with no wrinkles or rips. I was left with red hands and Elmer's glue under my nails while Eleanor, who placed the white paper lace trim around the edge came away as clean and perfect as ever. Carol was cutting out pink construction paper hearts which we would glue to the sides. This was the class Valentine Box and we were quite privileged to be selected to decorate it. Our second grade teacher, Mrs. Hubble, had sanctioned a corner in the back of the room as the class "post office" and over the course of the following week we were to buy our Valentine cards for our classmates and "mail" them in this box. On Valentine's Day we were to have a party with Hawaiian Punch and cupcakes and the delivery of our cards by a classmate-cum-mailman.

That week was torment. There was the agony of selecting which card to send to which classmate. As most of our parents shopped at the same stores we usually had the same pack of "Big Bargain Value Valentines Bonanza" cards, with 30 or 40 little paper card cutouts of hearts and cute creatures with phrases like "Be Mine" and "Specially For You Valentine" scrolled across them. Eleanor

and Carol and a few other girls sat around trying to decide which card to give to which classmate. As Queen Bee, Eleanor made the decision to send cards only to those she liked. If someone didn't get an Eleanor card you knew that he or she would be branded as a Nerd for Life. I was always the wimpy diplomat and thought it only fair to give a card to everyone, though I did use my discretion: my best friends (and of course, Eleanor) got the cute bunnies or big-eyed kittens while the majority got the average nondescript cards and the ones I thought "ugly," like the grey elephant holding a heart in its trunk, went to those I didn't really like. This way I could be subtly mean to them without them ever knowing it. I knew the elephant card was for

nerds and Eddie was going to get the elephant this year. As we sorted through our selections I set one aside out of sight. I didn't want the other girls to know that I was saving an extra special card for someone. It had a lot of hearts all over the background and in the foreground were a cutesy boy and a cutesy girl leaning towards each other with puckered lips to deliver a chaste first kiss. I didn't want anyone to know that I had a crush on Teddy. At the age of 8 laughter would



Wm. Rotsler

have killed my budding ideas of Romance.

Teddy was a new kid. He had gone to the Catholic school down the road but transferred mid-year to J.C. Ellis. I never thought to question why he joined us mid-year. It was one of those things Grown Ups just *do* to kids. Even though Teddy was now in class with us regular suburban brats he still wore the khaki school uniform from his previous school days. I thought this was really cool. First and last time in my life I dug a guy in uniform. What was more cool about Teddy was the fact that he would play Godzilla and Rodan with me.

For months the schoolyard game was Wild Stallions. At recess we would divide into "herds" and Eddie was the leader-stallion of our herd. He'd wave his hands/hooves in the air, neigh loudly and with menace and take off in a "stampede" across the school ground and we, the faithful herd, galloped after him. We galloped the circumference of the playground, we galloped around the swings, under the slides, back to the field where we inevitable ran into a rival herd and there was nothing left to do but have a herd fight. Eddie would take on the rival stallion and the two herds stood to the side neighing and pawing the ground. Sometimes the nipping got pretty furious and once we had to stand with our faces to the wall cause Eddie got a bit too wild. As I said, this game had been going on for a few months and it was beginning to get a bit tedious: neigh, gallop, fight, gallop, trot, gallop.

Then Teddy came along. I don't know how it started but we discovered a mutual love for Japanese rubber monsters. Godzilla and Co. has been on various late night creature features and Teddy raved about them. This hit home with me because I loved monsters. I mean I *loved* them. You know how it is as a kid -- you identify with the poor big lumbering idiots who were so despised and misunderstood by the Grown Ups. They couldn't help it if they knocked over ships or crushed cities. I knew they just needed to be

loved. So did Teddy. Soon a group of us stopped galloping with Eddie and started playing Rodan and Godzilla. We built miniature cities in the dirt, peopled them with toy soldiers or whatnots from Crackerjack boxes then took turns being the monster and destroyed all. The best part was when the monster was bazooka-ed by the rest of the group. That was when you had the chance to die a glorious death; you could growl and roar, clutch your chest, thrash about and plunge Earthwards on top of the soldiers, letting out a death roar full of sorrow and pride. It was a moment to treasure. Better still was when we played Rodan. There was that wonderful death scene when one of the giant bird creatures, mortally wounded by bazooka and missile, fell into the molten lava of the nearby volcano and out a terrified death cry to its mate. Unable to face life without one of its own Kind, the mate plunges into the lava and together they die a most wonderful death. Teddy and I did a wonderful Rodan and Mate. Together we would screech and bellow, circle the miniature city, then fade into the lava flow amidst a cacophony of dying monster shrieks. It was a sterling performance and I know it often brought tears to the eyes of all playing the game. Teddy was definitely cool.

St. Valentine's Day arrived and towards the end of the day the moms arrived with the cupcakes and punch and we each got a little paper cup with candy hearts and Red Hots. We sat at our desks while Tony acted as the mailman and delivered the cards from the Special Box to each of us. We couldn't begin opening them until they were all delivered. I scrutinized every envelope looking for Teddy's handwriting but couldn't really tell. The only writing I recognized was Eleanor's which was always neat and straight. The moment came and one by one I tore open my cards, reading the name signed on the back. Eleanor gave me a cute pony, she was still running with the Wild Stallion set, and Eddie gave me one of the nondescript cards. After many kittens and puppies and

bunnies I opened one with an elephant, just like the one I gave to Eddie, the one I considered the Worst Valentine in the pack. Then it hit me: I hadn't seen a card from Teddy yet. Could this be it? Does he think I'm an elephant kind of girl? What about those hours on the playground; didn't our dying scenes mean anything to him? I didn't want to turn it over and read the signature, but it had to be done. It wasn't Teddy's card. It was from a boy called Eugene who once kissed me on the cheek for a dare. Yuk. I did get a card from Teddy amongst the bunch; it was a basic nondescript one but it was better than the elephant. After school I met with my girlfriends to compare cards. I was outraged. Eleanor got the cutesy boy and girl kiss card from Teddy. I'm sure this was one of those Lessons in Life that you remember forever but all I knew at the time was that I was crushed.

We continued to play our Japanese monster games until the summer, expanding to include various other monster- and skiffy-themed movies in our repertoire. At some point the boys started playing more team game kind of things and we girls were given Barbie dolls. Things started changing in my relationship with the opposite sex and I went through various love'em/hate'em phases before entering the even more confusing world of puberty. The ground work was set though. There were to be many Teddys and Eleanors and Eddies in my life. The pains never got any easier but nothing will ever come as close to True Love than those moments I died with Teddy in the playground.



Donna Barr

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

or, those for whom we have addresses!

Binker Hughes, 5831 Hillside Dr., Doraville
GA 30340-1721

Linda Krawecka, 1A Mountney Road, Old
Town, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 1RJ
U.K.

Tom Sadler, 422 W. Maple Ave., Adrian MI
49221-1627

Alan Hutchinson, 6640 13th Ave. N., St,
Petersburg FL 33710

Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Ave.,
Hagerstown MD 27140

Rich Dengrove, 2651 Arlington Dr. #302,
Alexandria VA 22306

William Rotsler, 17909 Lull St., Reseda CA
91335

Sheryl Birkhead, 23629 Woodfield Rd.,
Gaithersburg MD 20882

Jay Kay Klein, 1233 Palmer Circle, Bridgeport
NY 13030

Bryan Norris, c/o **Challenger**

Dany Frolich, Rt. 1 Box 1182, Santa Rosa
Beach FL 32459

Charlie Williams, 1200 Woodcrest Dr.,
Knoxville TN 37918

Victory, 416 Westheimer, Houston TX
77006 *see also page 15*

.....

I

Harry B. Moore died last Memorial Day.

I never met Harry Browning Moore, but in this town he was Legend. Chairman of the first Nolacon, in '51, he became a virtual recluse after that convention, a source of weird stories of paranoid excess and perversity. The closest I ever came to actually encountering the man came in 1971, when John Guidry guided my girlfriend and me to his Orange Street mansion ... a dark, vine-covered dwelling. A single dim light shone behind yellowed shades and God knows what went on within. We did *not* visit.

Some did. Guidry had gone on a tour once, escorted by the somber Moore, who carried a .45 and wore Playtex gloves (because he was allergic to metal). The refrigerator door had been taken from its hinges and pushed back on; when removed, it revealed an icebox bare but for a single Coke. But Moore's craziness was only a barrier to the house's true attraction: a superb collection of pulps, first editions, and wonderful, wonderful original cover paintings by the likes of Paul, Finlay, Bok.

Also, among the mass of papers and trash crowding his new house -- in Harahan, a lower middleclass 'burb west of New Orleans -- was correspondence from H. P. Lovecraft and many others. There were original photo albums from Nolacon and

other events. The registration book from Nolacon lay amongst a pile of papers -- *original signatures* of all the attendees, from Leiber to Fredric Brown to Lloyd Arthur Eshbach to Bob Tucker to Lynn Hickman to my future teacher, Fred Chappell, then 13. What a marvelous keepsake! And like the letters, what junk, to anyone who didn't know. Such as the mundane relatives we'd heard had come down to clear up Moore's affairs -- and clear out his house. Worry worked its way through NOLA fandom ... what, we wondered, would happen to his collection?

We found our way to the little house on the corner. Someone had chopped down the grass Guidry said had grown knee-high. New screens were on the windows; John said Moore never had any kind of covering during his lifetime. No one was home, but it was evident that someone had been there. Lights were on inside, a broom leaned against a jamb ... and pulps were laid out in neat rows on the floors. Now why was that? Oh yes. We had forgotten. The May 9th flood. Was this Harry's own attempt to dry out damaged treasures? Was the flood the last straw that broke Moore's ravaged will?

A stroll to the tiny carport showed more. On tables were scores of damaged books and dozens of pulps, **Thrilling Wonders** and **Astoundings** and **Unknowns** and a slew of **Amazings** with covers bright and wonderful like young imagination itself, obviously drying out. Did Harry do this, or

You idiot, that's...

Editorial

his heirs?

There, of course, the matter did not rest. Haunted by the pulps in the carport, curious about the legend I'd never met, I returned to Moore's house several times. The magazines in the carport were a real mess. A box of *Galaxys* sat covered in white mold, and the beautiful pulp covers whose colors had enraptured me before were all torn or curled, flaking or filthy. The Oct. '39 *Astounding*, "Grey Lensman" the cover story, was black along the edge with grime. But ... what a cover! Skylark Smith, in full regalia, lens blazing on his wrist. And here -- "Black Destroyer" by van Vogt. I had to open the rotten old magazine and read the first line, even though I knew it. "On and on Coeurl prowled!" Moore had pencilled notes beneath each title on the contents. "Black Destroyer" was "very good," but a C.L. Moore story later that issue was "Excellent". I felt myself tearing up. Was it because of the waste of these wonderful old pulps -- or because they were so wonderful?

A magazine I hadn't seen before sat on a screen. This one was in better shape. It hadn't gotten wet; and though the cover was loose it wasn't torn or bent. Moore had reinforced it with tape, probably years before I was born. Attracted by the cover, I had to leaf through. How many boys had done the same when this *Amazing Stories* came out in August, 1928? What did *they* think when they saw the first chapter of "Skylark of Space," and "Armageddon -- 2418 A.D."? I almost fainted. "That crazy **Buck Rogers** stuff." Buck's first appearance. Ever. Right there in my hands.

I had to do something. All that wonderful Americana, all that glorious scientfiction, waited in a carport for the next rain to soak it or the next wind to tear it to pieces ... I called over Harry's next door neighbor, a nice young fella, wrapping the *Amazing* in a stray plastic bag. Could he

take this one magazine, maybe a couple more ... protect it for the heirs? (And give me the chance to buy it?) Of course he could.

I also bagged the driest and most salvageable pulps, and stashed them in Moore's laundry room. Just in time: a storm was booming overhead, and rain and wind whipped through the carport, pages flying off those pulps. I left a note for the cousin; later, his wife called, thanked me, and promised to see if they could sell me those three gems. (I've heard nothing since.) I referred her to Guidry regarding Moore's correspondence. What they inferred was too painful for me to hear.

Harry had been -- his neighbor tapped his head and said all. Weeds had grown three feet high all around the house, and neighborhood brats had bedeviled him constantly. The May 8th flood had left a foot of water inside Moore's house, but all he'd done was open the doors to let the floodwater drain out. He'd done no cleaning, pitched no trash, had just stayed there amidst all that rot ... and that's probably what killed him, Memorial Day, three weeks later. Maybe.

I couldn't help but wonder at this Legend who had lived invisibly among us. He'd obviously collected and owned wonderful things. I'd spent the day trying to save some of them. But he'd treasured none of them. He seemed to have treasured nothing. He'd let the wonderful things rot, and he'd let his house rot, and he'd let himself rot ... and I had to wonder, what for?

I look to a very different Harry, the one living in Hagerstown, and know that the fannish life can be rewarding and full. But not this kind of isolate and frightened life, where fandom is a hole in the world, dug into and pulled down around you. In fandom or out, you have to touch *people*.

You have to live in *the real world*.

II

There's a place I've wanted to go for a long time. In early August, during my driving vacation north, I got to do so. Driving east, on I-76 to Akron, Ohio, it seemed like I was diving back a quarter-century, into glowing fog, and a world of anger.

I remember that day. I remember Jackson Burgess, my writing teacher, announcing to our class that Nixon had invaded Cambodia. I remember how the owners of a bookstore abutting the Berkeley campus posted the **S.F. Chronicle** page with the pictures of the dead. I remember the white police cars belching thick clouds of snow-white peppergas from their exhausts. One group of kids scoped out their route and waited for them at a corner where they had to slow down. The cops escaped, but their car got overturned. *Then* things got serious.

There was a huge meeting at the Greek Theatre. I remember my co-op writing letter after letter to Congress, and the form letters, signed by machine, we got back. I remember walking the streets of suburbia, where I grew up, with Jackson Burgess, my writing teacher, and a cute black girl, with a petition in favor of the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment to end the war. We got a lot of signatures. And chased by a doberman. I remember how the efforts against the war, and against Nixon, practically stopped with the summer, as our generation became discouraged and just let it slide. I remember.

Akron seemed old and moldy. It gave way to farmland, corn, which in turn gave way to woods, and tiny blue flowers in the grass.

The exit was well marked. McDonald's -- Days Inn -- Super 8 -- the signs of middle America. That was the irony. This wasn't big-city rich-kid Columbia or

wacky west-coast Berkeley. This was corn country. Middle America. Safe. The rolling hills looked familiar.

I entered the campus along Rhodes Street -- ironic, since James Rhodes was the fascist governor who sent in the National Guard. (They have a Nixon Hall, too.) Quickly, since the pleasant, hilly campus was much bigger than I thought it'd be (20,000 students!), I got lost. I asked one kid where the shooting site was. "Shooting? Archery or guns?" "Uhh, 1970," I said. We laughed each at ourselves, old poop and young ignoramus. But then another sent me towards Taylor Hall, the student union.

I found the ugly memorial and a stand with brochures. Its map made the logistics clear. I walked around the student union to the killing ground.

A parking lot, beneath a wooded hill. "Is this the place?" I asked a security woman. "Yes," she replied, and went on defensively, "Beyond that I don't know *anything*." Let me know if you want to learn, lady. Because this place began to resemble the site I remembered from the films I watched and screamed at 25 years ago. The pagoda -- the metal sculpture -- the places on the tar where the 14-year-old runaway screamed over Jeffrey Miller's butchered head, where beautiful Alison Krause died, and Sandra Scheuer, the engaged girl shot walking to class, and ROTC student William Schroeder -- and 9 others, wounded -- they would be my age now. Careers, lives, children.

It's a bandbox. Up there -- mere yards away -- the National Guard turned and fired. Down the hill. Through trees. The unspeakable cocksuckers. Those kids never had a chance.

On the spot is a stone erected by faculty a year after the murders. IN LIVING MEMORY, it reads, with the names of the victims. It should bring a certain sense of closure to touch names engraved in stone.

Yet I felt no closure. Instead I remembered the line from Yeats about unabating anger: *the stone's in the midst of all*.

Yes, it's 1995 now, but the anger that rose in me May 5th, 1970, looking at the posted photos of Scheuer, Schroeder, Miller and Krause remained; in fact it rose more intensely than ever. I thought being here would cull outrage from me, instill a sense of peace. It's all over, isn't it? Nixon rots in his tomb. Cambodia -- no thanks to America -- is free of the Khmer Rouge. My generation has assumed national power. This place was part of our rite of passage into adulthood and responsibility.

But it's not over. My rage was only more immediate, more resolute. The stone indeed is in the midst of all.

Rage ... at what? At who? I realized -- but didn't like -- my answer. The dogs who caused the massacre at Kent are disgraced, out of power, in the worst cases, dead. But the people who *championed* it, *applauded* it, who worst of all *allowed* it, live on. The American people. A decent people, I felt, would have ripped Richard Nixon apart for what he caused at Kent State. And yet they did nothing. It was painful knowledge that the people I loved had shown at the moment of most extreme need that the approval of a paranoid, morbid would-be dictator with the moral sense of a drug dealer was more important than the trust, indeed the lives, of their own children. And didn't we who fought against the war finally, after spring, 1970, commit the sin of Pilate -- moral cowardice -- by washing our hands of the carnage in Southeast Asia, once we realized that our country was savage enough to kill for its crummy little war? Even 26 years later -- 20 years after the last American helicopter fled Vietnam -- is that forgivable? Ask Sandra Scheuer.

That was it. I was, I am, still fundamentally disgusted with my own folk.

It's an awful thing to think on.

A beautiful little black and yellow bird chirped and leapt up from the curb. It called me on. I got the hell out of there.

III

The verdict in the O.J. Simpson murder trial was a travesty, an insult to any idea of human justice. It's impossible to describe the depth of my disgust, but it's probably unnecessary. If I'm any judge, you feel the same.

Apologists for the Simpson jury have tried to hang their reprehensible decision on an alleged failure of the prosecution to establish a timeline for the murders of Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman. Like most of the O.J. defense, the idea is an insult to my intelligence. The verdict was 150% *racial*.

The prosecution lost this case when it elected to try it in an ethnic neighborhood. It was a tragic decision fatal to their chances of convicting O.J. Simpson, despite the overwhelming proof of his guilt. White people do not realize the depth of black animosity towards the society in which we all live. Because of police abuse and a general paranoia about life they regard criminality as natural and, in many cases, forgivable.

This is the reason the domestic violence evidence which established O.J.'s habitual brutality and obsessive stalking motive did not penetrate this jury's collective skull. Black people come from a matriarchal sub-society where men are pitied, looked upon as children, *expected* to be deviant from white mores; far from recoiling from their sexist violence, black women forgive it -- blame it on socioeconomic circumstance. That's even true when the abusive husband is as rich as Simpson; the jurors could not get upset when presented with proof of his brutality because to them, there was nothing

unusual about it.

White people like to think of black folks as being fundamentally white underneath social trappings. They are not. Confined by poverty, ravaged by drugs, besieged by violence, their sub-society has given them a far different concept of what social identity means. Marcia Clark was horrified by Simpson's actions; to the black women on that jury, they were only another fault of the white society, if they were noticeable at all.

This repellant case reminds me of a local disgrace -- the Neville murder. The son of Charmaine, wildly popular local singer, the nephew of Aaron, wildly popular international star, the defendant strangled his girlfriend and confessed to the police that he had done it. His defense was that the police had beaten the confession out of him, and his mother made a smooth plea to the jury, not that she knew anything about the facts, of course. All-black jury, filled with loathing for the police: they ignored the evidence and let him go. It's called *jury nullification*. We saw it before, also, in the whitewash applied to the thugs who attacked and nearly killed Reginald Denny after the Rodney King verdict. Those black jurors tried to give those would-be killers light sentences ... as a way of protesting the King fiasco.

(And lest anyone believe that senseless verdicts are the sole province of modern blacks, think back as I did on the KKK trial I observed back in Greensboro NC. A klatsch of Klansmen had slaughtered -- on video -- a group of posturing New Yorkers who called themselves Reds. The defense did what it had to do: seated a jury prejudiced in the defendants' favor, played to their bigotry, won atrocious acquittals. Then as now, the prosecution paid the price for overestimating their jury. They failed to take the community's collective bigotry into

account, and justice suffered for it.)

One recoils from one's own revulsion. It hurts to feel mob feelings. Racism is obscene because it's unfair, one to one, where life is lived, where people are touched. It's not fair to judge an individual by the society he comes from. To take the racist sting out of my anger over the Simpson verdict, I drove around town, and watched decent black folks in their daily lives. A lady hauling groceries home. A streetcar supervisor yapping with a driver. A bank teller making change. Just folks. One to one is the only answer.

Now what for the killer? Is life to be merely a series of **Playboy** bimbos and other sycophants for the Juice? No ... there is still a chance for a kind of justice. In the civil suits against him Simpson will not have the shield of reasonable doubt to hide behind; the standard of proof that he was responsible for his victims' deaths will only be a preponderance, or most, of the evidence. Having already faced criminal charges, he will not have the Fifth Amendment to shield him from the questions he never dared answer in the criminal trial. The plaintiffs will have the right to depose him, under oath, to find out where he was during the murders, how he got the cuts on his hand, what happened to his vaunted gloves, how it felt to beat up Nicole all those times ... and this time, the good guys have had the sense to file in his rich home area, so racial bigotry will not protect him. It'll just be him and the lawyers, and I only wish *that* procedure could be televised, so we could see this sick son of a bitch torn into a million pieces.

Simpson might be free -- at least until he smashes in the face of another fantasy slut -- but the good guys can keep him nervous. Time wounds all heels. God is not mocked. There will be justice. It has been told.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE: A FART OF A FIENDISH SCHEME

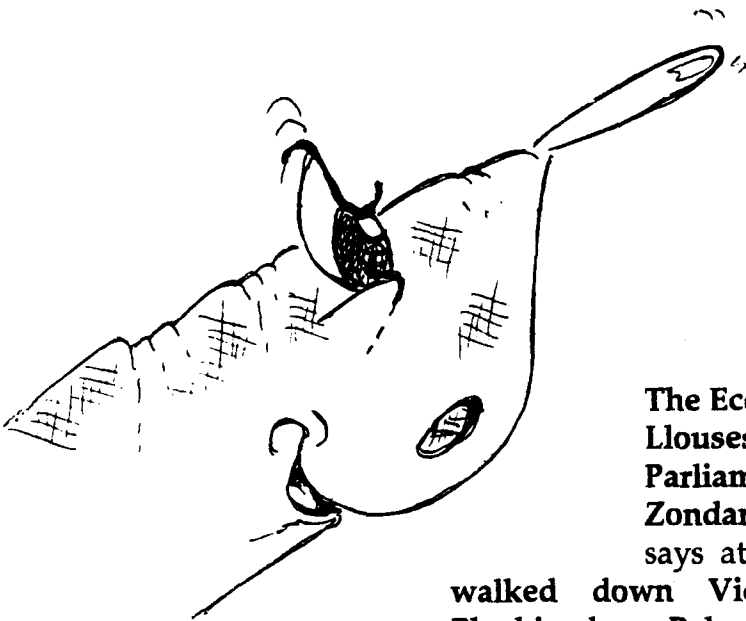
Central to this third **Challenger** is the extensive and entertaining London trip report by Dennis Dolbear ... or, should I say, **lszn ~ ~ 1ssn** trip report by Dennis **l:)lltar** ... since that's the way the article once read.

Dennis' epic account originally ran in **Bouffant Jellyfish**, his zine for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, in 1991. Since he'd long since erased his m.s. from his computer, when I decided to reprint the piece, I was faced with the daunting chore of retyping it ... until I thought of *scanning* it onto WordPerfect. To Kinko's I did go.

I had with me a second-generation xerox of two dozen pages, half of them printed in a smudgy font that wasn't easy reading for me, let alone the dumb flatbed scanner. The first page came out terrible ... and things improved only slightly once I started chopping out DD's original illustrations, page headers and numbers. The blobby typeface, wherein the crossbars in "H"s and "e"s had disappeared, was still producing idiocy when scanned. **Holmes** came out as **llolilles**; **local** emerged as **hxzal**. **The** became **Idle**, **k** became **ls**; **nodded** turned into **n()lltlul**. **Music** metamorphosized into **flus:c** and **scruffily** somehow became **z< ~ ~ mleB**. Translating scanner-ese back into English took hours, and since the damned article was so long, the sheer bulk of the file lay on my poor P.C. like a ton of electronic lead, to coin an exquisite phrase.

Sheryl Birkhead

Some of the scanner's transversions *did* make some sort of fractured sense. **classic** was read as **Arabic** at one point, and a **Fart of a fiendish scheme** really did appear. **Napoleon** became **Nab Allen**; **loo** was read as **Poland** (no offense). But the best words had editorial overtones. I wondered if the scanner had had a bad experience with some Brits.



The **Eco ~ ~ st anal Vizz**, for instance. Or the **Llouses of Partuafflnt** (for **Houses of Parliament**). You could get tood anywhere in **Zondar**, the machine quotes Dolbear, who says at another point, **After fubshinX3**, we walked down **Victoria strut** toward the shames. **Pluckingham Palace** is mentioned, and one of Dennis' hosts is variously referred to as **Eave**, **l)ave**, **Have** and **Rave**

(no doubt about **Streets o' Fire**).

The scanner was aware of peculiar British pleasures: I **caned Linda at her office**, it claimed (whereas Dolbear merely **called** her), and where Dennis **finally arrived at Linda's digs**, Mr. Scanner says he **Anally** got there. Tsk! No wonder the machine read the word **British** and -- no kidding! -- wrote it as **Fetish**.

Diplomat that I am, I corrected these horrendous goofs. A couple of lines baffled me, though. What, pray tell, is **zM(>narty ^ 1 n())lltlub?** And why do I wish I'd let stand **Tiownl o' P ;exxxl ... Ficnd w's)ut a Fax?**

Illustrating DD's article is **Brian Norris**, whom I discovered at the local Kinko's. Whilst waiting on customers, he was sketching illos for a story about a little retarded black boy encouraged by his mama to try out (successfully) for his school football team. Between my sentimental boohoos I marked Brian's talent ... and talked him into this.

Alan Hutchinson's genius endures. On hand was the work of **Bill Rotsler, Charlie Williams, Jerry Collins, DelMonte, Vic Hess**, Jan Gephardt; we haven't heard from **Donna Barr** since her drawings appeared in Nolacon II publications, but we'd love to. **Sheryl Birkhead** contributed out of the goodness of her ample heart. **Dave Ryan**, we miss you. Fan artists alert: more fillos needed. Gratitude and egoboo await all artists contributing to the **Challenger** cause. (Speaking of which, thanks to **Jay Kay Klein** for permission to print his photo of Ricia Mainhardt.)

Cover and interior artist **Dany Frolich** alone feeds my obsession with 1969 this issue. T'was then I met him, at meetings of the New Orleans Science Fiction Association, in those wonderful days when we were both boys and he had to be home by midnight. In the last 20 years or so, Dany has moved from doing art for NOSFA oneshots to become the heart of New Orleans' Mardi Gras, designing floats and posters and doubloons and cup after cup after cup ... taking time out between '84-'86 to assist his old friends in NOSFA and their worldcon bid with our most memorable ads. You may remember my color article about Frolich and his Mardi Gras work in **Let the Good Times Roll**, the Nolacon II souvenir book. Such egoboo is the least that we owe him.

As last time, apologies for taking so long to get this issue to print. Speaking of printing, it was handled this time by Kwik-Kopy of Metairie, print run 300.

Next issue: brilliant work by **Victory** (a.k.a **Victoria White**) will both front and back **Challenger**. You'll find her illo, "The Stars in Her Hair," on the last page of this issue. Contact Victory for prints at 416 Westheimer, Houston TX 77006, or through the net at <http://www.fine-art.com/artist/victory.html>.

*Publisher of his own fanzine, the excellent **Reluctant Famulus**, Tom Sadler weighs in with something very different ...*

TO CONTRACT OR NOT TO CONTRACT

Tom Sadler

Normally I'm not much one for politics. The activities of our elected officials do provide me with much entertainment and occasional aggravation at some of the jackass things they do. For the most part, I attempt to minimize their impact on my life because I have enough problems and frustrations without adding the ones they cause which are often out of my control. On occasion, however, I am brought back to reality and reminded of the fact that there are a whole bunch of people in Washington, D.C. who often seem to be space aliens. Too bad they can't be abducted by space aliens and taken to some other planet. But that's neither here nor there.

Anyone out there who happens to be familiar with a fanzine I publish, **The Reluctant Famulus**, will be aware of certain continuing characters who wander into and out of my life, unasked, and at the most inopportune times. I'd like to relate a recent anecdote about one of them, if I may.

I was busy at my computer in "The Black Hole" (which is what I call my writing/publishing room) one day a while back when I received a phone call. Sire that it was one of those irritating, pushy "phone salesmen," I was preparing myself to cut him off as quickly as possible so I could get back to more important matters. To my relief, it was not what I feared. Instead, a vaguely familiar voice came to my ear.

"Is this the publishing office of **The Reluctant Famulus**?" the voice asked. "Dr. Frederick Windlebeam here. I hope I'm not intruding on something important."

"Not at all, Dr. Windlebeam," I said. "Actually I was just about to take a break from working on my fanzine." (A lie, but I didn't want to hurt the old man's feelings. He is likable in some way even if very eccentric

most of the time.) "I haven't heard from you in quite a while. How have you been?"

"As well as can be expected for a man my age. I'll be seventy-five in a couple of months, you know. I've been quite busy. My colleagues and I have been involved in all sorts of research projects. We're working on an interesting angle to sub-atomic particles and such. Quite fascinating, really. And potentially very profitable, or so Hector speculates." ("Dr." Hector Balconie, 50-something and another eccentric who looks somewhat like a down-at-the-heels Hercule Poirot ... only greedy. Robert Edward Mortin, the third member of their trio, is a closet S.F. fan and as eccentric as his associates. And as profit-hungry.)

"I'm sure it will be," I said. "I can't imagine you working on anything that isn't interesting or lucrative." Especially lucrative, I thought. Sometimes I think their middle names are both "Money."

"Indeed not, my boy. But I wasn't calling to bore you with the details of our research. I had a very different reason for calling. I would like your opinion on something."

"My opinion? *You* want *my* opinion?" That was an unexpected first. But I knew it couldn't be anything connected with ways of making money. "I'm hardly a genius like you and the others," I said. "I'm really not very smart."

"You flatter me too much, but thank you anyway," I said, and the question came to my mind: so why didn't they let me in on some of their money-making projects? Ghu knew I was one of a lot of fans who could use extra money. Instead, I said, "What was it you wanted my opinion on?"

"Oh. Yes. Well, my boy, I had a minor realization the other day, nothing earth-

shaking, mind you, but interesting nonetheless. Normally I don't pay much attention to the news, especially when it comes to what those moneys in Washington are doing -- you know my thoughts on that, I'm sure! -- but I haven't been able to help hearing about one item in particular which has me deeply puzzled. It's something called a 'Contract with America' I keep hearing the Republicans talking about."

"I'm not sure what you mean." I was beginning to wonder if Dr. Windlebeam was off in a fantasy world of his own, or maybe in a virtual reality somewhere.

"Well, it's my understanding that a contract is an agreement between two or more individuals or groups. My colleagues and I have been involved with a lot of contracts over the years. In those cases, the parties involved have always affixed their signatures to the contract to show their agreement and solidarity to the principles of the contract. And both sides receive copies of the contract. To the best of my knowledge, neither my colleagues nor I have signed any such contract with the Republicans -- or the Democrats! -- or even possess a copy of said contract. Have *you* signed this contract? Do you have a copy of it we could examine?"

"Now that you mention it, no. I haven't signed any contract with newt Gingrich or anybody else and I certainly don't have a copy of the contract you're referring to. I've heard a lot about it and there have been claims that newt and the others have managed to fulfill their end of the contract, but you know how politicians are ..."

"Indeed I do! And you've confirmed what I suspect. I haven't seen or signed this 'Contract with America,' Hector and Robert haven't either, nor have any of the people working for us. In fact, all the people I've talked with the past few days assure me they haven't signed such a contract. Frankly, dear boy, I'm puzzled by it all. How can there be a contract which only one side has seen and signed? Wouldn't that be a little suspicious,

don't you think?"

"I suppose so. But I'm no lawyer, so I can't really give an opinion on the matter." I wondered why Dr. Windlebeam was bringing up some old business that was now past.

"I suppose not. And yet it seems odd somehow to have this contract and do all those things without having everybody involved agreeing to it and signed their names to it. Somehow it doesn't seem quite legal. I guess I shall have to consult our lawyers on the matter."

"I don't think that would do much good, sir," I said. "I don't think it's the kind of contract you're thinking of. It's something the Republicans figured would be good for the public and didn't bother to consult with anyone about it. They felt they were doing the right thing and trying to show the American people Congress could get things done."

"That's just like the monkeys in Washington," Windlebeam said with a disparaging tone to his voice. "Who is this newt Gingrich and his gang anyway? I've been a Republican for a good 54 years, even during the time of that damned Roosevelt and his administration. I've seen a lot of fool things in my time, and this one takes the prize. 'Contract with America' indeed! And whoever heard a politicians named after a type of lizard?"

"Well, Arlan Andrews seems to think highly of Newt Gingrich. I don't travel in those exalted circles and so I've never had the opportunity to meet the man. I guess I'll have to trust Arlan's judgment. He seems quite positive about the man."

"That's all well and good for you, my boy, but my colleagues and I have too much at stake. I don't think it would hurt to consult with our lawyers. We pay them enough money to enjoy a much better lifestyle than they deserve. I might as well get as much

see SADLER, page 90

THE AL SIDE

Alan Hutchinson is a dangerous man.



Picture a moose wandering the streets of Hagerstown, Maryland ...

Alaska, Poor Yorick

Harry Warner, Jr.

Northern Exposure seems to be irretrievably dead. I hope someday someone will write a book about the series that includes an accurate explanation of what happened to create its decease. Barry Corbin seems to be an intelligent and brave actor and it would be wonderful if he could give an inside explanation for the mysterious events of the final year. Or a graduate student who is hunting for a topic for a doctoral dissertation couldn't do better than choose **Northern Exposure** and its symbolism for what is wrong with the television industry as subject matter.

There are all sorts of questions buzzing through my poor head. Did all the writers who produced the fine scripts for the first couple of years simultaneously drop dead or go into seclusion to write the Great American Novel or sink into imbecility, to account for the inferior scripts of the penultimate season and the much worse scripts of the last season? Why did CBS never announce formally the cancellation of the series but auctioned off the props and costumes before the news became informally known? And why would the network throw away one of its most popular series after one of its worst overall-rating for all programming years?

The Nielsen ratings for the official television year cover the period from late September, 1994, through the middle of April, 1995, the months in which new network offerings predominate rather than reruns. During that period, **Northern Exposure's** ratings (11.2) tied for eighth highest among all the CBS programming. This was the outcome despite the network's replacement of **Northern Exposure** during many weeks with other programming and its shift from its traditional Monday evening slot to other days of the

week. Twenty-two other CBS series existed during the season. One was tied with **Northern Exposure** in ratings, the other 21 finished lower. Some of these low-rated CBS series have been renewed and others continued to enjoy reruns long after **Northern Exposure** had ended its regular appearances on the network. **Burke's Law**, for instance, had the distinction of being the lowest-rated offering from the three long-established networks during the season with a rating of 6.0 that left only Fox, Warner Brothers, and UPN offerings lower on the chart. Yet CBS continued to feature **Burke's Law** in reruns all through the summer. **Picket Fences** finished far below **Northern Exposure** in the ratings, at 9.5. Yet it received throughout the season immense publicity from CBS, lots of advertising in TV Guide, and it has also been given reruns all summer long, one week with more than one rerun episode.

Northern Exposure finished tied for 36th place among all the offerings of all the networks during the season, 132 in all. Not a single Fox offering had a higher rating, nor did anything on the schedule of the two most recent network efforts. But even the media with unpaid coverage of network television seemed prejudiced against **Northern Exposure**, which rarely got a feature story or even a brief mention during a year when there was enormous ballyhoo over **Star Trek: Voyager** (a 7.9 rating), **Connie Chung's Eye to Eye** (8.3), and **The X-Files** (9.2). So it seems that something other than popularity was responsible for the demise Of **Northern Exposure**.

The networks' obsession with attracting young viewers is frequently cited as the big factor when decisions are made over what

should air and what shouldn't. Obviously, **Northern Exposure** had no teenagers as regular cast members. It featured several recurring players who were positively old. But **Burke's Law** couldn't have had large viewership by young people, because of its abysmally low total rating and by the fact that its main characters were quite mature, and yet CBS continued to promote it to the end. **Murder, She Wrote**, **Ellen** and **Murphy Brown** were three of CBS's best-rated series during the season but none of these has been canceled due to the fact that its featured players are all in, or well beyond middle age. Fox, the most determinedly youth-oriented television network, has week after week total ratings that are hopelessly far behind those for NBC, CBS and ABC.

Besides, I have never seen any statistics or read any reasoning that make me doubt my skepticism that appeal to young viewers is helpful to the advertisers on television. Everything points in the opposite direction. Young people are by instinct opposed to everything they're told to do, and they must maintain this attitude when they see television commercials ordering them to switch to this brand or rush out and buy that new product. They are mostly possessed of low incomes, so they don't have enough money to spend on the things advertised on television. A survey publicized recently in *TV Guide* showed that teens average 23 hours of television viewing a week, men and women from 18 to 49 average 28 hours, but women who are 55 or older average 45 hours and men in the same age group average 39 hours. So it's obvious there are fewer commercials watched by younger people, even if we assume that young people and old people behave the same way with respect to the amount of attention they give commercials.

Another explanation I've seen for **Northern Exposure's** cancellation is the defection of Rob Morrow. It's true that he

was the central focus of the series in its first couple of seasons. But long before he started to talk about taking a powder, the scripts were building up the importance of other continuing characters, were mentioning with decreasing frequency Joel's efforts to escape from his Alaskan assignment, and Rob's character was becoming just one of more than a half-dozen principals. There's the related fact that other popular television series have survived by years the loss for one reason or another of a major cast member: **The Waltons**, for instance, **Bonanza**, and **Three's Company**, among many others.

But Joel's behavior during the final part of **Northern Exposure's** existence typifies one of the worst tendencies of the scripts toward the end. His characterization changed abruptly and then changed again. Obviously, fictional characters should develop and shouldn't remain the same at the end as they were at the start. But the viewer or watcher or listener should experience the changing as it occurs, not be required to reconcile behavior that has changed abruptly without adequate cause. Joel suddenly went native and just as suddenly he decided to go back to New York City. A number of the other **Northern Exposure** characters were afflicted with similar reversals of nature. Maggie suffered the beginnings of an ulcer then she unwisely tried to be nice to people midway through **Northern Exposure's** run, and then one episode found her a Mary Pickford reborn. Walt became overnight a model citizen instead of the ne'er-do-well character he had been. Shelly metamorphosed from a dumb blonde to a fearfully efficient model NOW member.

I try to restrain my television watching to serious music, baseball, and one regular series at a time. I had been using *Newhart* as my one series of each week then **Northern Exposure** made its tentative debut as an occasional replacement series, so I didn't

watch those early episodes as a whole. But I did catch snatches of them during commercials while watching baseball games and I sensed that here was something different on television. The cinematography was startlingly superior: innovative composition, big splashes of bright color instead of the pastel hues favored by most series, longer intervals between cuts than normal for today's television filming. The dialog used references that any normally intelligent person should be aware of, without explanations for the imbeciles of the mentions of historical figures, first-rate writers, and scientific terms. The humor grew out of the characters and their activities, instead of relying on smartass references to political leaders and conservatives. I remember in particular my amazement when my two minutes of attention between innings seemed to show the **Northern Exposure** characters out of their roles, discussing how this episode should end. (It was a year before I saw that episode complete and realized this is what actually happened.) About the time **Northern Exposure** found a regular slot on the CBS schedule and Newhart got hit on the head by that golf ball, I was able to watch **Northern Exposure** regularly without violating my one-series-at-a-time limit. At that point, I began videotaping each episode. Thanks to reruns of the first partial season I believe I have every episode on tape, most of them in the order in which they were shown, although I regret having put a few early episodes at the end of partly filled cassettes containing other stuff. I had a major scare in the final season when PBS telecast an opera on **Northern Exposure** night, and I decided to tape the opera and leave the episode untaped until it turned up on a rerun. When the cancellation of the series became known, I thought I was doomed to weeks or months of checking the start of every episode in syndication until it happened to turn up. But by some miracle, the episode I neglected

for the opera was one of the only two **Northern Exposure** reruns during this past summer. Even more implausibly, it filled completely the remaining space on the last cassette I had reserved for the series.

From the outset, there was very little about **Northern Exposure** that didn't satisfy me. One element bothered me, though. It was the frequency with which the characters rushed to The Brick and ordered something alcoholic after they'd encountered some sort of problem in their lives. Television scripts don't cause characters to beat up their spouses and kids when they encounter something that is troublesome. There would be a tremendous uproar if this behavior were regularly utilized, because it would be construed as contributing to the family violence that occurs in real life. But reliance on drinking as an anodyne for troubles can have just as serious consequences for family life as punches and slaps. **Northern Exposure** gradually cut down on this particular sort of drinking episodes as the years passed, which was good. But another bad tendency replaced it, the large number of episodes in which swallowing some sort of liquid or solid caused one or more characters to experience wonderful things. I don't know if the script writers were doing it to show how much they liked illegal drugs but it certainly seemed that way.

Of course, **Northern Exposure** can be faulted for the way it didn't recognize the realities of life in its locale. I don't remember if it was in SFPA or some other apa that I grumbled about the lack of anything in the sets that could be identified as heating devices for building interiors, the way the characters usually wore outdoors only the skimpiest of cold weather garments, the lack of any real snowfalls during the nine months of Shelly's pregnancy, and so on. I realize the problems that snow on the ground creates for photographic purposes and the expense that would have been involved in doing more

shooting in Alaska itself instead of in the milder climate of the state of Washington. But surely the people in charge could have supplied themselves with a backlog of snow and ice exteriors by a few days devoted to that particular purpose and spliced them into episodes shot later in more congenial weather conditions.

But in general, this was nothing new to me on television a series that avoided almost all the cliches of series-making, that didn't depend on gorgeous women and handsome young men for major characters, that showed Caucasians and Inuits living and working in the same area the way diverse peoples should do instead of capitalizing on the racial situation as a source of conflict and prejudice, and frequently blurring the dividing line between reality and fantasy. It was the brief nightmares and other imaginary flashes that intrigued me most: Joel and Maggie sparring with one another in an igloo, Shelly chatting with Medea, and so on. It's a sad commentary on how far the scripts decomposed that one episode during the final year fooled me in this respect. When I saw the Cicely men and women active in a bowling alley, I thought that this was a really brilliant nightmare interlude, the most fantastic thing that anyone could conceive of these individuals doing. It was a sad, sad night for me, after I realized that this bowling tournament was supposed to be reality, the major element in this particular episode.

I think I know where the rot first began to eat away at the series. It was the introduction of the Bubble Man. To this day, I haven't decided if viewers were supposed to take him seriously or consider him a figure of fun. Was the newcomer supposed to be a parody of the excesses of environmentalists and conservationists? Or was he a sincere effort of the script writers to propagandize for those callings? Certainly, his choice of a site for his bubble, out in the middle nowhere

without any protection from surrounding trees or hills, seemed ridiculous. So as the way his farewell speech turned out to be a pastiche on Tom Joad's final speech in the film version of *The Grapes of Wrath* whichever way it was, I found the Bubble Man tiresome and he typified the fact that **Northern Exposure** was usually better off when its episodes restrained themselves to the people in the Cicely community and immediate surroundings. Chris's brother was a surprise when he first appeared but he didn't seem to belong on his returns, the new doctor and his wife never seemed anything but a frosty overgrown and rather awkward Barbie and Ken, the criminal violinist gave the impression of being a desperate attempt to get some bad guy into the community (and besides, when he played the Guarnarius, he didn't use vibrato but listeners heard vibrato from the soundtrack), and most of the other people from elsewhere seemed as out of place as Maggie and Joel did in that one episode set in a continental big city. Of course, the whole series' basic premise was the coming of an outsider to be the community's physician, so I don't know why I was always uncomfortable with the later intruders.

I was tempted just to tape, not to watch, the final episode, because I knew from program listing descriptions of it that it would be a bad summing-up of the series. But I was getting six episodes on each L-750 videotape with no space left over and if I taped the finale unattended, the commercials would cause the remaining space to be too short for the missing episode I told about earlier. The main problem with the last episode was the fact that its hurriedly revealed marriage intentions were unbelievable and it didn't tell us things we would like to know. Maurice's decision to marry that state policewoman with whom he'd fought so often was highly improbable. Maurice was so greedy for money, so proud of his possessions, that he would

never have risked losing a major part of them to divorce by entering into a marriage whose success prospects were slim. Similarly, Maggie and Chris deciding to marry is beyond the bounds of reason. He was an extreme introvert, not always sound in his mental balance, possessing a strong element of metaphysics. She had suddenly turned into a nice girl who wanted nothing more than to have a romantic, devoted spouse, and then there was the O'Connell Curse which hadn't been mentioned for many episodes but still must have been firmly planted in her memory. Instead of those unbelievable couplings, I would have liked for the final episode to tell me what happened to Adam and Eve after we lost touch with them a couple of years ago, if Ed was destined to become a showman or a shaman, if Alaska's senators and representatives decided to build a four-lane superhighway through Cicely, and why its inhabitants apparently didn't suffer the extremely long nights in winter that predominate in the remainder of Alaska.

So all I can do is think back on and occasionally re-view the **Northern Exposure** episodes that were absolutely first-rate: the one about the founding of Cicely, the two or three devoted to Chris's amazing useless giant structures (I get too emotional over the destruction of a piano to view again the moment then it catapulted over the tundra), Joel's capture by the wild man of the wilderness, and dozens of others. It's gratifying to know that the series is available in syndication (it's currently showing on two over-the-air stations in Washington and Baltimore) and I assume that after a year or two, it will show up on one of the cable channels that specialize in rerunning network series. But any of these reappearances will almost certainly mean the loss of some minutes from each episode to make room for more commercials, which leads me to wonder all over again why some cable channel or

other hasn't pioneered by running old stuff complete and simply abandoning the useless tradition of starting every program item on the hour or halfhour. Three half-hour series episodes could be run in a two-hour slot by giving each a 40-minute time period, permitting them to run uncut and not reducing the time available for commercials and promotions. Three hour-long shows could be arranged in a four-hour slot, by allowing each 80 minutes for uncut showing plus ads and plugs.

But I haven't heard any word yet about a concerted effort to save the series after the model of the **Star Trek** campaign. TV Guide didn't include **Northern Exposure** among its group of shows-that-should-be-saved-by-public-demand last spring. Occasionally a cable channel has ordered new episodes of a series that a network has abandoned, and then shown both the original series and the new adventures. But I suspect that **Northern Exposure** was a particularly expensive series to produce, because of the location shooting, large cast, and occasional need for scads of extras. Some of the dream interludes that lasted only a minute or two on screen must have cost six-figure bills by themselves because they required special sets, costumes and supers. So I'm not optimistic that there will ever be a new **Northern Exposure** episode.

Barry Corbin should have a good future because of his prominence on the series. He undoubtedly wouldn't have been chosen as narrator for the Turner Television special on lunar exploration if he hadn't been a retired astronaut in the series. I expect to see him at least guesting in other television series and perhaps some day winning a series of his own as some sort of fictional authority or other. But I feel uneasy about the future earnings as actors for most of the other cast members. After all, **The Waltons** was one of the most phenomenally successful and longest-

running television series ever, and none of the children and few of the adults in the cast went on to big things later on. Richard Thomas had moderate success in several made-for-TV movies, Michael Lerner had somewhat lesser success in the same field of endeavor, and John Ritter can't credit his career entirely to **The Waltons** because he was only an occasional character for three or four years, not a regular from beginning to end.

And after all this rambling, I still haven't tackled head-on the early question about why the series was allowed to die while it remained in excellent health (except for the serious cases of the mumbles that afflicted some cast members in the final year, particularly Janine Turner, of whose dialog I could understand only about one word in ten). I always confuse Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough because they were so much alike, wrote some books together, and in several seem interchangeable, so I can't remember which of them wrote in a book about the job she held for several years with one of the huge-circulation, slick-paper women's magazines. During her employment there, she was baffled for a long while by decisions and policies of the editor. The changes the editor ordered, the material she accepted and rejected, questions of format she decided, didn't seem to have any relationship to the desires of the readers or even to the wishes of the big advertisers. Either Emily or Cornelia observed this point for many months and then came a blinding flash of comprehension. The editor wasn't influenced by the interests or will of the people who paid for the magazine through purchase of ads. She made decisions for the benefit of editors of other women's magazines. She was much more interested in trying to impress or surprise her competitive editors than in anything else.

I suspect something like that exists in the television industry and accounts for

Northern Exposure's end. At any given time, the people who make the big decisions in network television are like small boys who want to be one of the gang but simultaneously want to be superior in one or more of the gang's common causes. This decade, television has been riddled with decisions leading to more violence, more promiscuity, more attacks on authority, because they're current preoccupations of the gang. Previous decades gave us the epidemic of family sitcoms, the outburst of western series, the music-variety hours, the production of new non-series dramas, and so on. There was no valid reason why those trends should have been popular when they were or should be so completely vanished from the tube today. It was just the grownup authorities retaining the gang instincts of boyhood, doing what the others were doing and occasionally trying to do something better than the others.

Northern Exposure wasn't relevant to any of the current television gang shibboleths. It had some appeal to intellectuals, who haven't had a television series of their own since **Information, Please** went off the air. There were no small children to make insolent jokes to their parents' faces, adultery was difficult to find on **Northern Exposure** because so few characters were married, Cicely didn't have a resident law enforcement officer so it was impossible to make him or her crooked, and other possibilities for violence were meagre for one reason or another, mostly the fact that most of the cast members liked one another to some extent. The series was a maverick which really didn't belong in commercial television, and I suspect that to this day, there are accusations and charges being made among top level television executives who are still trying to place the blame on someone for allowing such a series on the tube in the first place.

The Challenger Tribute



photo by Jay Kay Klein

Unforgettable the way Ricia Mainhardt introduced herself. It was at the 1987 DeepSouthCon in Huntsville, Alabama. Seated in the hotel lobby, I examined with George Wells his special hardback edition of the worst science fiction novel ever written (or so he claims), **Werewolf vs. the Vampire Woman** by Arthur N. Scarm. The edition -- a hardback published by John Guidry, and illustrated by Alan Hutchinson -- was very limited, and Ricia wanted one.

How to make this desire known, and undeniable, yet remain the lady she is and always will be? Ricia did so in the most astonishing of ways. She sat down beside me ... and covered my hairless head with overflow tresses from her own.

She got the book. And I got to meet Ricia Mainhardt.

At that convention she found me space in Kirby McCauley's suite, because the hotel was full and I had no place to crash. In times since we've watched the sky lighten over Phoenix, and wandered the empty wintry streets of the Chicago Loop on a frigid New Year's Day, huddling in doorways like the homeless. She did that for me so I wouldn't feel lonely while waiting for my train. We've patrolled the French Quarter with her friend and mine, the great Julie Schwartz, and when the Jules turned 80 earlier this year, she assembled a book of greetings from his friends, to which I was privileged to contribute. This December, we're bound for Broadway, and **Show Boat**.

Ricia gets lots of books now -- in the mail, from hopeful authors. She's an agent, active in the business world of science fiction, with many sales to her credit. She lives in Brooklyn, and when I visit, I can always count on her couch space ... and warm, wonderful company. At worldcons she's a blur, dogging editors and babying would-be writers, but even a glimpse of this wonderful lady is a blessing.

Never have I been so glad to be bald.

Jim

Guy Lillian

As I deal with the clients who come into the public defender's office, *archetypes* appear. One of these was Jim, whose trial for murder I watched one memorable week in one memorable mid-April.

Jim was 30, kind of small, curly-haired, fairly intelligent. He had some talent, too, as a photographer, but found it difficult to make a living and lived off his family's largesse. He was unfocused and frustrated. His longterm lover was named Karla. She was a Texas blonde, not unpretty, about 6 years younger. She had come from a country background and her parents' bitter divorce. She had problems with booze and cocaine. On October 11th, 1992 they were at the trailer home of Jim's parents, then away on vacation. That night Jim killed Karla.

In one respect there was no doubt about what happened. Karla was sitting in a wingback chair. Jim shot her with a powerful deer rifle. The bullet caught her in the right crease of her nose and came out near her left ear. Her left eye was vaporized and her left cheek blown out. The bullet passed through the chair, the wall of the trailer, and lodged across the way in a neighbor's van.

Jim immediately dialed 9-1-1. Those numbers were bloodied on their touchtone phone. The call was recorded and was ghastly. Jim was in hysterics. He called on his mother to help him. He begged Karla to breathe. He asked the operator if he should kill her, presumably to end her suffering. Only when he was asked his phone number did he begin to sound calm, almost robotic.

The cops showed in a very few minutes. Jim met them howling. One claimed he said he'd "had enough of Karla's shit." One said he told him he and Karla had had an argument over that night's political debate, and whether they should

instead watch a porno movie. Jim pissed on the interrogation room floor, slammed his head against the wall, kicked out the transom. His photograph was hideous. He was covered in Karla's blood and hair and brains. His eyebrows seemed to meet. The look in his eyes can only be described as prehistoric.

The question was, what *really* happened?

Farley Jenkins was assigned the case for the public defender's office, against Anne Durham, a favorite assistant district attorney. It was a good match and promised a good contest. I sat in, gave Farley unsolicited and undoubtedly irritating advice, and nurtured Jim. I've found I'm good at that. When the 9-1-1 call was played and replayed, I shushed his racking sobs. When he had a comment or question I bent my head close to his to listen. And as I often do, I sold myself on his case. Yes, I told myself, this was an accident. This wasn't what Durham said it was: a second-degree murder.

She didn't seem to have much evidence. The rifle was a bolt action Mauser with a Winchester stock. It had belonged to Jim's late grandfather and had probably stayed loaded since the old man last used it. There was no other ammo in the house. Jim had little experience with guns that Anne could prove. Her own firearms expert admitted to Farley on cross-examination, "Accidents can happen."

The gun case lay at the dead girl's feet. Even as drunk as she was, would Karla have sat still had Jim taken a rifle out in front of her? The 9-1-1 call sounded genuine, and neighbors hearing the shot and seeing the cops proved that the call had been made right after the bullet tore into Karla's head. Jim's self-damning statements could be explained as the ravings of a man in

anguished shock. A murder conviction requires proof of the specific intent to kill. Where was it?

Where it was -- well, there were problems, evident when Farley put on the defense case. You see, a defense lawyer should always resist the temptation to go too far and say too much.

Remember that the prosecution's expert -- cute girl -- had told Farley that the shooting *could* have been an accident. Sweet words for the defense. But Farley wanted to give the nail one more tap. So he called a defense firearms expert: a lawyer and hunter. He conducted his own tests ... and Jenkins didn't bother to find out what they showed. They showed a gun that was tough to fire. Our expert "hung a Buick from the trigger" -- just some weights -- and learned that the trigger needed substantial pull to go off. It's self-evident what that proved. Then came the biggest mistake of all. Jim took the stand in his own defense, and all that went before was erased. Jim, you see, was an asshole.

On cross examination, Jim came across as smart-assed, over-prepared and snide. He claimed the cops who heard him "confess" were either lying or mistaken, whereas he should have just allowed that he was out of his mind when they heard him rave and liable to say anything. Anne scored points when she began to list the people Jim claimed were lying -- all of Karla's family, who claimed he'd abused her, all the cops, everyone else. And she made a very big deal out of the way he said he'd held the rifle at the fatal moment. Not lazily, but at port arms, like a tough guy -- *a real man* -- would.

Farley grimaced. "He's convicted himself," he groaned to me after court. The next day, though, he gave a far better closing argument than Anne did, and again I had hopes for a verdict like manslaughter or negligent homicide, or even Not Guilty. The jury was out for 2 1/2 hours. When they

came back that soon I knew that there would be no good news for Jim.

The jury told us later that they didn't like Jim, but that wasn't what convinced them he was guilty. The 9-1-1 call had made no difference, either. It was the *trajectory*. The bullet just couldn't fly from the hole in the wall to the van if the gun had been held the way Jim had claimed. Only if he'd shouldered the rifle before firing could it have taken the path it did.

I could have argued that, and those PDs who griped that the jurors were just more Jefferson Parish bigots ... well, I've griped that way myself. But I watched Jim as he was being taken away, in cuffs, as his mother wept. He seemed eerily composed. An innocent man would have lost it. He would have been shouting, "It's not fair." Jim was just blank.

The true story became clear, and it was familiar ... archetypal. I had come to know Karla in the course of the trial. I knew she was a lost and sad and addicted soul, and one of the things she was addicted to was a punishing and mutually destructive relationship with a lost and sad and addicted loser, Jim. It was familiar: mutual dependency, love and loathing. Jim was a guy who hated himself -- his snottiness to Durham and his macho posturing were sure signs of latency -- and wanted to hurt. She was a girl who hated herself and wanted to be hurt. They fit. Two self-destructive people in a relationship guaranteed to destroy them both.

I looked at a couple of portraits Jim had taken of the two of them. In one they looked intense. In another they smiled. Two sad, flawed people who came together and went down together. In his lifetime at Angola, the state penitentiary, Jim will no doubt think about Karla a lot. They were, after all, mates.

LONDON

Dennis Dolbear
art by Bryan Norris

**"The man who is weary of London is weary of Life itself."
— Dr. Samuel Johnson**

I

Great cities, of which London is assuredly one, and perhaps the greatest, exist in several different forms. There is of course their physical existence: the London you experience directly, with the senses. But there is also a London that exists in the country of the mind, as she has been depicted by hundreds of writers, artists, cinema *auteurs*. Since her founding somewhere around AD 50 as the Roman city of Londinium, she has been the capital of England; for several centuries she was the capital of a great empire; and for nearly a century she could lay fair claim to being the capital of the world.

London is no longer the capital of the world and there is no longer a British Empire to rule. But this city is still the capital of the English-speaking literary world. How many great writers have described her? Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Sheridan, Hazlitt, Addison, Steele, Johnson, Boswell, Delafield, Sayers, and a host of others less well known but perhaps not inferior in their descriptions. We know full well the London of Dickens and Conan Doyle: vast, labyrinthine; forbidding, but not without possibilities: economic for Dickens' characters, intellectual for the immortal hero of the science of detection.

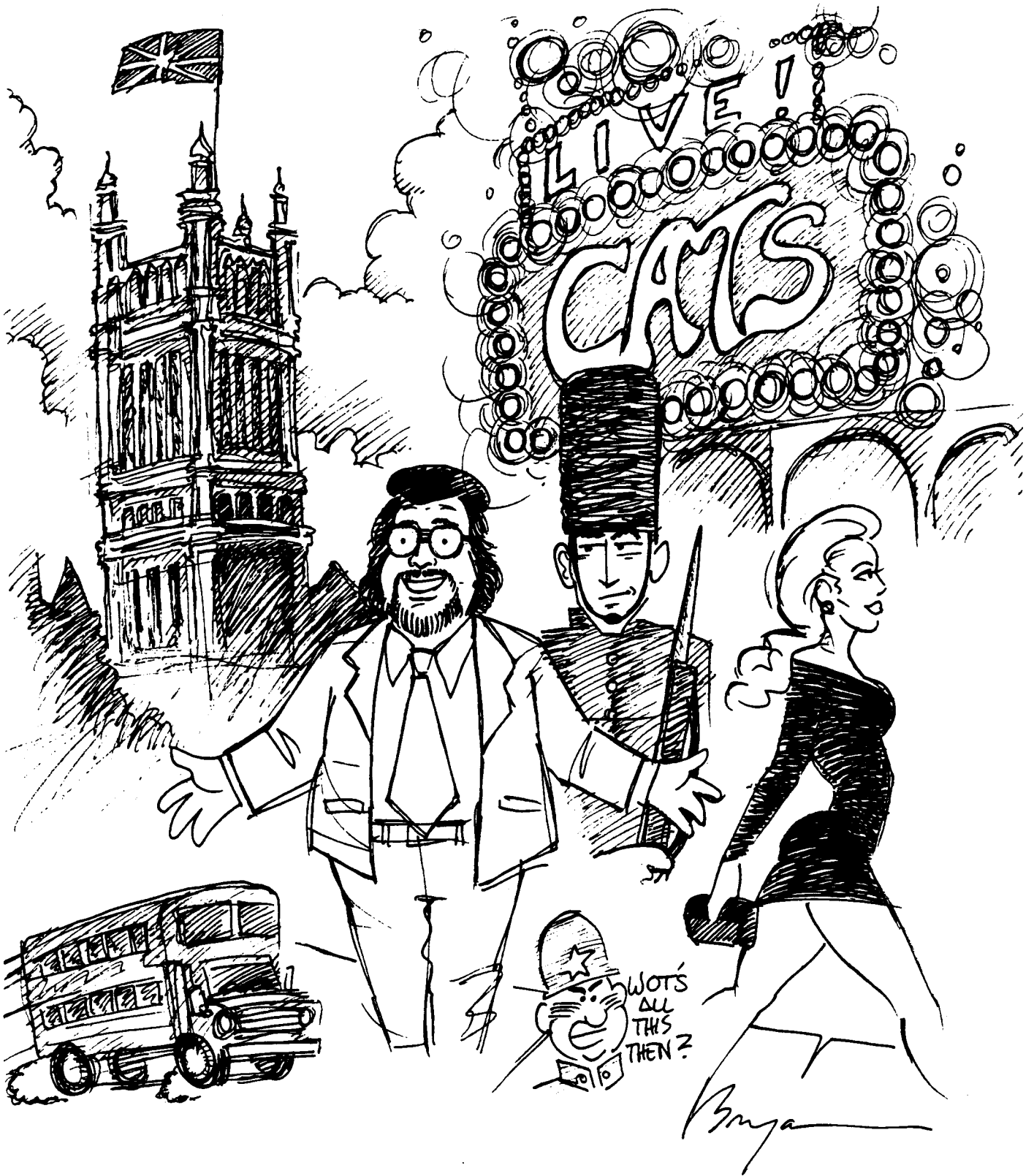
And there is the London of history, the center of a cultural and political heritage that had more to do with the shaping of America than any other. During nearly two weeks there, I was to travel through all of these Londons, often simultaneously, for

they coexist, and it is precisely this sort of experience that makes a visit to London unforgettable.

I was there as a side-effect of the Gulf conflict; trans-Atlantic travel had dropped so badly the airlines were begging for customers. What could I say to a \$375 roundtrip fare? Try "Sure!" Particularly since I could stay with friends -- particularly Linda Krawecka -- while I was there, thus freeing up large amounts of money for spending on my favorite subject: myself.

And so I booked passage on Wednesday, May 8, 1991. That was cutting it somewhat fine; I'd had my usual blowout Jazz Fest party just the weekend before, and quite frankly, I was exhausted. But my parents nobly pitched in to help with packing and such and they got me to the airport in time. I flew out through Miami, getting some duty free stuff for my hosts at the shop there. The flight over was better forgotten; jam-packed onto the 747, with hardly any room to stretch. I was carrying more than I had planned, too. A last-minute call to Linda's office in London (I spoke to her officemate, *Glynnis*, and when she answered the phone I thought she said, "Dennis," and I thought, "How did she know?") provided the information that the weather in London was dismal -- cold and wet -- and expected to remain that way for the foreseeable future.

I was greeted at Heathrow by weather as delightful, sunny, and mild as any I'd ever experienced. The customs man told me it had been foul up till that morning. I'd missed the bad weather by about four



hours.

At customs I got another surprise: my **Fodor's** was quite out of date as far as British customs restrictions were concerned. Following the advice in that book, I'd purchased two liters of Jack Daniels and two cartons of Silk Cut Extra cigarettes, but the allowances were now only half that. And the duty was absurd: more than the price of the items! Fortunately, I was simply able to surrender custody of the goods to British customs and reclaim them when I departed. An important side benefit: what with all of the forms about the items I readily declared, the customs man didn't search my luggage and find full fifth of gen-u-wine Tennessee moonshine, purchased at an appropriately secluded location by Sam Collings, brought down as payment for lodging during New Years, and carefully wrapped and hidden in the depths of my suitcase. I had a feeling this fluid would be appreciated in England, and I proved to be absolutely correct.

Dragging my kit through customs, I immediately made for the newsstand. I'd come provided with several hundred pounds in AmEx travellers checks, and wanted to cash one to get some walking around money. I broke the check by purchasing the latest issues of **The Economist** and **Vizz**, the British comic weekly, thus providing myself at one fell swoop with (a) information on the latest international financial, diplomatic, and political developments, and (b) the latest installments of such graphics classic as "The Fat Slags," "Johnny Fartpants," "Finbarr Saunders (and his Double Entendres)" and other brilliant, subtle examples of British wit.

So equipped, I called Linda at her office, and made arrangements to meet her; located the underground terminal, bought a "single to St. James' Park," but got off at the Acton town platform. Waiting was a familiar blonde figure, whom I was very glad to see: Linda Krawecke. We caught the next train

into town, and traded gossip and breathless stories on the way in.

We disembarked at the St. James' Park station, very near to what was to be my lodgings. Linda had made arrangements for me to stay with her Significant Other, fantasy artist Dave Carson. I had been a little leery of this beforehand, not wanting to impose myself on a stranger. Linda had reassured me, and that was fortunate. Staying at Dave's place yielded two major benefits: it was superbly located, just a few blocks off Victoria Street, conveniently located to any of a number of major attractions. The other benefit was the company of Carson himself; a handsome, fairhaired, easygoing Irishman with an excellent wit, superb artistic talent (he's won six British Fantasy Awards, and no wonder) and we were both deep admirers of 19th century fantasy illustration, American slasher/horror movies, **Lifeforce**, the writing of Karl Edward Wagner and Joe Bob Briggs, and Linda Krawecke. What can I say about a man with such impeccable taste? The guy was a Bro!

Dave lived in what are termed "Trust House" estates, apartment blocks built in the latter part of the 19th century. They're generally for low-income tenants, and are administered on a basis of need. Dave lived on the 5th floor. Elevator? There's *no* elevator, Linda informed me with grim satisfaction. I was to know those steps well after a few days.

Dave wasn't home when we arrived, so Linda showed me my quarters: Dave's flat was a compact two bedroom number, very neat if you don't mind a lot of bugs. Of course, it wasn't so bad because the bugs were all in *display cases* -- Dave collected them when he was younger, and they're all skillfully mounted and meticulously tagged. But they're *big*, sinister, spooky-looking bugs, not little butterflies or anything like that, but

stuff that looked like it belonged in some horror movie -- which of course, given the tastes of our host, made sense.

We decided to get a few winks whilst waiting for Dave to return. Linda said that I was so tired that I was snoring just a few seconds after going into my room! I was pretty jetlagged. But a hour of rest at least partially revived me, and when Dave returned I was ready for some action.

The three of us did what was soon to become natural in London -- we went to a pub, to have a pint and discuss our next move. I went to a lot of pubs while I was there, something like 30 of them, by my count, maybe more, maybe less, and I don't really drink. The pub we adjourned to was located on a short commercial street just cattycornered to Dave's apartment block, a short stretch crowded with shops -- the English have a genius for fitting more in less than any other nation -- and with a street market in the middle. The pub was called the Grafton, and it was a fitting introduction to the sort of history I was talking about earlier: the pub was a favorite hangout of the **Goon Show** crowd, Peter Sellers, Charles Crichton, Spike Milligan and others. The walls were festooned with pictures of **Goon Show** members, letters, and other memorabilia.

First Impressions: Capt. Blood & the Big T Club

A fast pint later -- the first of a series -- we decided to take a walk. We headed towards St. James' Park, a beautiful expanse of green in the middle of the city. London is particularly blessed with its parks; they are a necklace of emeralds in the urban landscape and add immeasurably to the city's beauty. Before we reached it, we walked by a small pocket park fronting on Victoria Street itself. Dave informed me -- check *this* out -- that reputable authority has it that *Captain Blood*

is buried under the greensward. Not Errol Flynn, of course, although he could have played the character, in his later years anyhow -- we're talking about the Capt. Thomas Blood who nearly stole the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London, in the time of Charles II, and who did all sorts of other things in an unbelievably colorful life. (See George McDonald Fraser's **The Pirates ... Blood's** a character).

Nowadays, the park is inhabited mostly by the "Big T Club," as Linda terms them, street drunks who mainly hang about and drink Tennant's Lager. The can has a huge red "T" on it, thus the name. After navigating these treacherous waters safely without being hit up for spare change, we went directly through St. James' Park's center, me admiring the beauty of spring and Linda pointing out sites of interest. "Over to your right is *Whitehall*, and at your left" she said, pointing, "is *Buckingham Palace*." The Palace! And Whitehall, the center of British government, where M had his office...

We cut through several other governmental buildings, past the Duke of Cambridge Steps and emerged...

Well, is there anyone who wouldn't know what *Trafalgar Square* looked like? On that Thursday it looked wonderful; Nelson on his column, the magnificent quartet of lions (sculpted by Sir Edwin Landseer) guarding the steps, giant bronze panels illustrating the admiral's great victories on the four sides of the base. The square's fountains sparkled in the brilliant sunlight, the benches were crowded with folk, mostly young, some playing instruments, crowds of pigeons flocked everywhere and what was the urge irresistible urge to whistle "The Grenadier Guards" as I walked around Horatio's statue?

We had a late lunch at a Greek joint, and my vacation -- and possibly my life -- almost came to a precipitous end when I

tried to use the loo. I'll have more to say about the dangers of English toilets later. But this particular one -- the proprietor said it was behind a door he indicated. But that door simply led to a dark corridor; to the left indeed led to the toilet, but to the right was a yawning open trapdoor to the cellar, guarded by a very flimsy looking grate. A fall through would've broken my neck for sure. I didn't realize the deeper, sinister significance of this until Carson pointed it out the next day ...

Anyhow, back to the apartment, for a post-meal nap. We awakened at about 8, and walked over to another nearby pub, the Albert, located on Victoria Street itself. The Albert is a truly magnificent, Edwardian pub, with most of the original fixtures -- beveled windows, crystal gas lamps, brass fittings on a glorious mahogany bar. Unfortunately, when we got there, it was crowded with German tourists.

Linda, however, was experienced in such things; she asked the bus driver how much longer they were going to stay, and then advised a short pint at yet another nearby pub, the Greencoat Boy. This isn't extraordinary; wherever you go in London, you're near about a half dozen pubs. The Greencoat Boy, located on Greencoat Lane, was a nice establishment, the crowd gone, quiet. Good conversation; already I felt as if I had known Dave for years, and it was the first time in many years I'd had a chance to speak at length to Linda.

After finishing our pints, we returned to the Albert, vacated now by the Germans, returned to the locals. It had now been

some hours since our lunch, and we decided to have dinner at the Albert. That was a change in the last few years; with the advent of the microwave oven, pubs now serve a lot of food, and mostly it's quite good. It's prepared at a central location, shipped to the pub, and simply reheated.

I also got a good experience of what Shaw meant when he described England and America as two nations separated by a common language. The standard offer was a meat dish -- the stew looked good -- with two vegetables on the side. I pointed to what looked like a pile of au gratin potatoes, and inquired. The barman, in reply, said something that sounded like "suet."

Jesus! I thought. Suet! An entire pile of shredded, greasy animal fat, and they serve it as a side dish! Is there nothing so disgusting that these English

won't eat it? (Actually, as Sylvia Starshine, another expatriate friend of Linda's, pointed out, the answer to that question is "No," but that was inapposite here, as it turned out.) I got my food and retired to a side room with Dave to eat, and Linda showed up with a plate of lamb and ... suet? Nah, it turned out to be "swede" (sp.?), a sort of shredded turnip with butter and cheese. Not tasty by New Orleans standards but by no means bad.

Nightcrawling

After finishing, we walked down Victoria Street towards the Thames. I had a



pleasant buzz from the several pints of brew I'd consumed in the past few hours, as well as being still somewhat stoned from jet lag; I was in a cloud, and felt like I could have walked for hours. And we almost did just that. Down Victoria Street to the Embankment, and we were back in the historical time warp again. *Big Ben* ahead of us. *Houses of Parliament* just beyond, and that means that church had to be -- *Westminster Abbey*. Then this must be *Parliament Square*, yeah, statues of great British P.M.'s all around -- Disraeli, Churchill, Gladstone. At the far end of the square an oddly familiar profile caught my eye; I made a mental note to check out that statue later.

We reached the Embankment and there, before us, a silent mass flowing in the darkness, was *the Thames* itself. We walked up the river; in the distance, we could see the lit dome of *St. Paul's*. At *Waterloo Bridge*, we crossed the river on a special pedestrian crossing, and returned via the far bank. Quite a bit of walking, but a wonderful, clear, mild, magical night, and quite still; London is almost deserted from midnight to dawn, without the all-hours night life that characterizes cities like New York, Los Angeles, or New Orleans. Not that I could have taken advantage of any night life; when we got back to the apartment the five story climb took the rest of the strength out of me and I hit the pillow like a ton of lead. I was lost to the world until morning.

Woke about 10:00, stirring myself about the same time as Dave. We went down to a local fish & chips shop for some eggs and sausage, and then out wandering.

The first order of business was to get me a transit pass, since I was going to be making extensive use of the tube and the local busses. No problem, Dave indicated -- we can get one at "the station." We walked down Victoria Street and finally arrived at a

massive building, with yard-high letters reading:

VICTORIA STATION

I could only shake my head. How many times had Holmes and Watson departed from this very spot to rescue some damsel threatened by her greedy stepfather, or to foil some malevolent plot of Moriarty's?

The transit pass was easy enough to obtain, once you had a photograph of yourself. And there was the rub; all of the photo booths in Victoria Station were disabled somehow, either out of order or simply not there because of renovations. Dave had an explanation:

"Moriarty."

I nodded. The tentacle of the Napoleon of Crime reached throughout London. My near-death in my attempt to use the Greek restaurant loo was now no longer seen as an accident, but as a part of a fiendish scheme. Would we even live to see the sundown? But cognizant of the risk, we set out in search of a photo booth.

We finally found one at a local Post Office, where I paid a couple of pounds -- outrageous -- for four color wallet photos in one of those sit-down booths. And for the first time but by no means the last, I fell in immediate love, in this case with a gorgeous gal in a very short plaid miniskirt with a short haircut and delightful glasses that gave her that sexy bookish look I love so much. London has more attractive women than any other city I've ever seen, L.A. included -- I prefer the look of the English women.

On the way back, we stopped at a small arcade bookstore, and I made my first book purchase of the trip: **The Book of Horror from Fantasy Tales** with illustrations by, among others, a certain Dave Carson. Also in this joint was a small alcove separated by swinging doors, "Adults Only"

above the door. "Think I'll take a look in here," I said to Dave. "I figured you would," he replied. Man -- it's no lie, those Brits are really into leather, latex, rubber, and *bondage*. Dozens of magazines devoted to those interests. But one thing caught our attention: how many magazines -- and I'm talking about at least five on display for that period alone -- featured articles or interviews with **Clive Barker**. And of course we immediately had new shorthand: any porn magazine became a "Clive Barker" magazine, and we'd say -- usually to Linda -- "just looking to see if there's anything on Clive Barker here," while looking through some of the hardest-core magazines I've ever seen.

Finally legitimate for travelling on the underground, we set out on an erratic tour of London, finally (after stops at a couple of pubs, the Lord Burleigh and The Anchor) arriving at the Fantasy Centre, London's finest sf/fantasy bookstore. The shop itself had no great style, but the selection was superb, including amongst other treasures complete sets of Doc Smith's Fantasy Press works. Very nice, but the prices, while not outrageous, were nonetheless stiff and I limited my purchases. As usual in the U.S., local fans hang around the place, and that was interesting -- they looked as if they'd stepped untouched out of the 50's.

After some talk and some more purchases, Dave and I fell in with one of the habitués of the shop, a very nice guy named

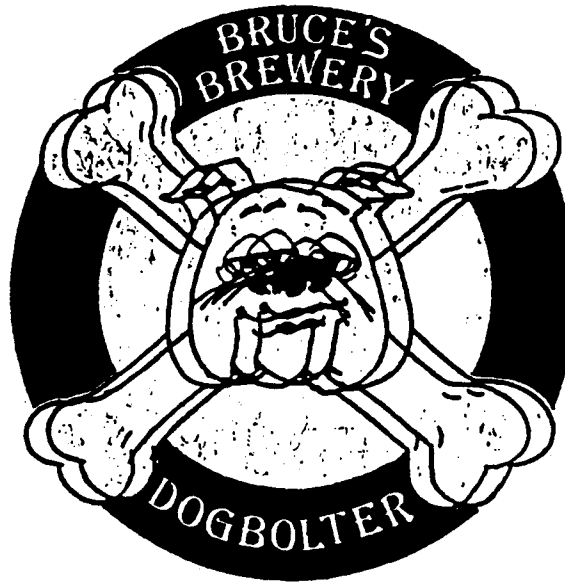
Eric Arthur. The three of us walked across the street to the Firkin and Flounder pub, one of the Bruce's Brewery chain. I should explain here that most pubs have a connection with one of the major English breweries, and they serve that firm's product: Guinness, John Courage, Abbot's, etc. Those that have no such connection are called "Free Houses", meaning they're free to serve whatever beer they like. The Firkin and Flounder is one of the Bruce's Brewery chain, and that chain is, as I appreciate it, somewhat unique: they are minibreweries,

and each establishment makes its drink on premises. All are distinguished by the "Firkin and" name; Firkin and Flounder, Firkin and Frigate, etc. They serve several brews, including one called **Dogbolter**.

Now I got the impression from Linda that Dogbolter was a particularly treacherous concoction, since she made Dave promise to drink no more than a half-pint and told me to make sure he kept his promise. It seems that

some time before Dave and one of his mates had suffered a run-in with Dogbolter and had come off considerably the worse for wear, somehow involving a large plate glass window...

So how could I not try Dogbolter? And I found it to be my favorite English brew. It's strong yet very smooth, and I can see how it would be treacherous -- you could get utterly shitfaced before you had a right idea of what was happening. But two half-pints could do no harm, so I had same,



whilst passing a fine time with Dave and Eric.

I expressed a desire to see the British Museum, and Eric -- a very nice guy -- ran me to it in his Citroen, since he was going that way, also giving me a running commentary on the London neighborhoods through which we passed.

Unfortunately, I didn't get to spend too long at the Museum: I'd arrived too late, and there is one particular characteristic of British museums and galleries that you should remember: they close *early*, often as soon as four or five o'clock. In any case, I got a longer chance at the British Museum later.

After leaving the BM, I walked over to New Oxford Street, a large commercial avenue. I wondered exactly what to do for the next couple of hours; I was supposed to meet Dave and Linda near Linda's home in Haringey, at a pub called The Suffolk Punch, but it was far too early to leave. Always trust to serendipity, though: while aimlessly walking, absorbing the ambience of the city, I found myself in front of *Forbidden Planet*, probably the leading new sf/comics bookstore in the country. Browsed for a while, and bought a Vargas portfolio. Following that, I had a pint and a sandwich over at The Plough, a nearby pub.

After that I was ready to take the bus over the Linda's. On the surface, this should not have proven to be a challenge; I was looking for #28, a bus with a convenient route: near the residences of both Linda and Dave, even though they're located quite some distance from one another. The problem was: take #28 in which direction? This was a real quandary, because, more so than any city in the U.S. (N.O. included), central London is an absolute rat's nest of short streets, converging at odd angles, and frequently, unmarked. (This was explained to me later: the street signs had been taken

down during WWII, for security reasons, and simply had never been replaced.)

Finally, after discussing the matter with some people in *Forbidden Planet*, I decided on where to catch #28. As it turned out it was the wrong #28, and a transit official sympathized with me: people born in London sometimes have difficulty navigating the myriad of buses the city offers. But with a bit of luck and some trying I was on my way, and let me tell you: if you have the time and you're certain about the bus, take it instead of the tube. The London subway is extremely fast and efficient, as well as cheap, but the bus is the way to actually see the city, in a splendid compromise of speed and efficiency.

The buses, of course, are the famous doubledeckers, and watch it: the drivers tear around the streets like maniacs; they love to catch you climbing the stairs to the upper level. After a couple of days I could time my movements so I had myself braced when the inevitable sharp turn came. Not unlike maneuvering on a sailing ship in a storm.

A journey through the byways of London and its suburbs brought me to Haringey, Linda's suburb, and to The Old Suffolk Punch. My fifth pub of the day, by my slightly boozy count, but the best, all things considered. It had a warm, homey feeling; very nice, relaxed decor: lots of woodwork and small alcoves for private conversations. It was a Free House, with a huge billboard listing the various independent breweries of England, their product lines -- and the specific gravity of each!

I had a pint of Royal Oak and joined the company, which included not only Linda and Dave, but Texan Howard Waldrop. Howard had been another American pilgrim benefiting from Linda's hospitality, his sojourn close to an end. Also present was Linda's close friend, another American

resident in England, artist Sylvia Starshine (!). Eric arrived later, along with a number of other Brit fantasy fans. I drifted in and out of the conversation. I have the ability to nap unobtrusively in public (well, unless I start to snore); I took advantage of that skill and the soft couch to catch a few snatches of catnap during lulls in the talk.

After one such pause, though, I opened my eyes to see this tall skinny guy sitting opposite me ... wearing a *Tipitina's* T-shirt?! I mean, I had crossed the ocean and one of the first printed T-shirts I see (they're not as big in England as here) is from the legendary New Orleans bar and blues club? (Wherein, less than a week before, I had danced to the music of long tall Marcia Ball, with even longer and taller Lynn Collings?) What sorcery was this?

Actually, no sorcery at all, just Dave Hodson, who'd picked up the T-shirt at Nolacon; he was a blues fan and had fallen in love with the joint. More on this later.

Well, the brew kept flowing and so did the conversation. One of the nice things about being from New Orleans is that the city has a worldwide reputation -- not wholly deserved, I must be honest, but what they hey. Any visitor always has a fund of cultural shock stories.

After a while, the party broke up, and we decided to go eat. This of course, is a reversal of things in the U.Ss: there, we eat first and then go drinking. In the U.K., where the bars close early by law, you have to get your drinking in early; the restaurants stay open later to accommodate the flow of bar patrons seeking solid food to put on top of the already-considerable amount of beer previously consumed.

Accompanied by Eric, we went to an Indian restaurant nearby and devoured curries and tandoori chicken and I just don't know what all; what with the curry and the Royal Oak I was probably an explosive

mixture. Fortunately, we didn't have to take the bus home; Eric's trusty Citroen brought us all the way. Thanks again, old boy. Must return the favor some time. *Buuuurrrrp*.

Marketing Major: Born to Shop

After sleeping off the previous night's excesses we decided to spend Saturday marketing. The first stop was the notorious Kensington market colloquially called "the Ken Market", beloved of Karl Edward Wagner. To get ourselves in the properly Wagneresque mood we stopped by The Catherine Wheel, a pub mentioned in one of his more *outré* (and that's saying something) Kane stories, where Kane journeys to modern London and meets two vampire hookers in *this pub*.

Afterwards, we visited the Ken Market, which is sort of an indoor flea market/alternative mall; that is, dozens of tiny little shops crowded into the subdivisions of an old building. All sorts of punk gear and bizarre stuff: leather, hippie clothes, chains, fetish gear, tattoo shops, record shops with alternative bands I never heard of, fortune tellers, loud music, punks, leather boys, weirdness. I can see why Wagner was fascinated with the place. I was fascinated with the woman in the leather shop whose leather pants were so tight her vulva was outlined against the material...

"Let's go!" I finally said after purchasing Betty Page and Mrs. Peel T-shirts. "A little bit of this place can go a long way!"

From the Ken Market it is possible to walk to the most famous outdoor market in London, the Portobello Road flea market. This is an affair on a par with the great antiques markets of Paris. As the name would indicate, it stretches weekends along Portobello Road, on its sidewalks and in its shops. We walked it, from one upscale end to the decidedly downscale other. At the

upscale end I priced a set of four stained glass windows by -- get this -- *William Morris* -- with four pre-Raphaelite maidens representing four artistic endeavors (poetry, weaving, stuff like that) as well as the seasons. A steal at \$5,000, but for me it might as well have been \$50,000. Nice, though; I might go back just to look next time I'm in London.

That was at the head of Portobello Road, just about a block down from The Sun in Splendour, a pub that was unfortunately closed when we went by -- but the name has stuck with me; does anybody know the reference?

Down Portobello we went; I acquired a neat satin jacket, with an absolutely cool figure of a jaguar on it, at a crowded shop. Of course, at any flea market, you're going to find some guy selling Clive Barker magazines, so I bought a selection. I also stopped in at a tony old-clothes shop; bought a fine pair of suspenders for only a couple of pounds each, an excellent bargain.

After Portobello, we returned to Linda's neighborhood, a delightful subsection called "The Ladder" because the straight streets (very rare in London) running between two major thoroughfares, on a map, resemble such a thing. The whole area is quite lovely, two story double Edwardian structures line either side of the street like sisters, resembling each other but different in subtle ways. It's up a steep hill; with a few drinks in them, Dolbear and Carson found it slightly tough going.

A small river -- just a creek, really -- runs through the middle of the neighborhood, bisecting the streets. Linda told me to look over the stone wall of the bridge: the vista was one of those hidden, small delights that most tourists never experience. The winding tiny river, with a mini-cathedral at a bend, built to the form of Chartres, but just about as big as a two-

bedroom house -- tall grasses, a cat moving through them, and in the middle of the river, almost too good to be true, a swan cutting through the wavelets: something that a kitschy painter might conceive as "nature in the midst of the great metropolis" or somesuch. But enchanting; that rare sort of experience that makes a trip unique.

We finally arrived at Linda's digs on Duckett Road, a room rented from Conspiracy co-chair Chris Atkinson, in one of the Edwardian sisters mentioned above. It's a perfectly lovely home. After Linda had packed a weekend bag, we descended the hill again, visiting a grocery -- most groceries in London seemed run by Lebanese -- and a Greek bakery, where we purchased honey-laden pastries obviously incompatible with any pretension of dieting or even aversion to gluttony -- but like who gave a damn? My excuse was that I was in London, and Linda's was that I was visiting her in London, and Dave just felt he didn't need an excuse so he didn't invent one.

We returned home and prepared what we had bought: sausages, stuffed along with dressing and veggies into pita bread; cheese; and of course the pastry. For the rest of the night we talked, played music, watched some incredible video, and just had a goddamn great time. And of course, further punished the liver of Jack Daniels and the fifth of moonshine. We retired very late and I slept, as usual, like a log.

Everybody awakened late on Sunday and moved zombielike through the small apartment. After some very black coffee, and some picking at the ruins of the Greek pastry, we decided to go to the Camden Road market. On the way, though, I took care to add to a collection I was building: *hooker advertisements*. You see, the way prostitutes advertise for business in London is to leave stickers, with their ads, in phone booths. They used to leave business cards,

but too many lowlife dirtbags took the cards and, unchivalrously, never called the girls for an appointment. I mean, these ladies have to earn a living, right? So now they use stickers. Now and then you find one that you can peel off. Gave some thought to calling the public school girl ...

Camden Road is a younger, hipper, and definitely rowdier version of Portobello. It's not only a street market -- with the shops actually on Camden road and the vendors set up on the sidewalk -- but several flea markets, set up in open lots, in addition to several shops. How many separate establishments? Hundreds. Maybe a thousand. All tucked away in the most interesting crannies.

I never would have found the comic book/record store in the basement of what appeared to be a ruined house; Linda showed me that, going down a narrow, twisting stairwell into two tiny basement rooms packed with stuff. Plenty of kinky clothes that I'm no longer young enough to wear -- a glum admission on my part. Jewelry I was probably never young enough to wear. And all sorts of other things: rugs, furniture, books, pottery; a veritable Bazaar of the Bizarre. I didn't buy much at that time; I was to visit Camden later in the week and make *my most important find* there, but that's another story.

Today what I bought was mostly food, some interesting Indian dishes sold from stands and a great Singapore noodle dish, which at about £ 1.25 turned out to be one of the best bargains I found in London -- food's expensive there.

We stayed late at the market, returning home in the late evening. Of course, this had nothing to do with the light, because London, being in a much higher latitude than N.O., has more hours of sunlight in spring and summer; it got light in the early morning about 5, and often

wasn't dark until near 10:00 p.m. We must have eaten somewhere that night; where, I'm not sure, because every now and then my memory sort of fogs. But we wound up pubcrawling later, stopping at the Stag's Head and at least one other (I was getting used to this), finally winding up at one of the more picturesquely named pubs: the Slug & Lettuce.

The pub-sign for which featured a slug, nattily attired in round glasses and top hat, standing in front of a head of lettuce. Linda told me that the name was a reference to the vegetable market -- still in existence but much reduced -- across the way. The S&L wasn't a bad pub, very nice woodwork, but needed to turn down its sound system. It also gave me a chance to check out the British taste in knickers, or panties, as we'd call them over here.

Knickerlooker Holiday

It fell out thusly: as the three of us were staggering from pub to pub, I happened to note, out of the corner of my eye, something in a rubbish pile that looked familiar. And it sure was: an old edition of **2000 A.D.**, the premiere Brit comic weekly. I retrieved it and carried it with me. When we got to the S&L, we located what appeared to be an unoccupied booth in the corner; it had jacket on one bench, but the people in the next booth said its occupants must have left. I threw my magazine down on the table as a sign of possession. We busied ourselves getting service from the overworked barman.

When I returned to our table, two quite comely young ladies were sitting at the booth. Not averse to a good turn of fortune, I mentioned that my friends and I had the booth, but they were welcome to remain. They informed me that they'd been there first; the jacket belonged to the boyfriend of

one of the pair. I apologized, but mentioned that I'd left a copy of **2000 A.D.** on the table.

"Oh, we're so sorry!" they chorused in those beautiful English accents that melt the heart. "We threw it behind the bench!" And both, being well-bred lasses, went to fetch my magazine, kneeling on the bench and leaning over the high back to try and reach the book. This motion caused their (short) skirts to hitch up over their well-shaped *derrieres*, presenting my eyes with the sight of their knickers-wrapped rears (one striped, one floral, and the striped one was lace-

trimmed) in the full and appreciative view of Dolbear, for at least a full minute. I turned to Linda and Dave, who were watching this with rapt attention.

"I knew you had an ulterior motive for picking up that **2000 A.D.**," accused Linda.

"Is this the way Americans meet girls?" inquired Dave.

At this point two things happened almost simultaneously: 1) One of the ladies fetched my lost magazine, presenting it to me triumphantly, and 2) the boyfriend (big) came back from the bar, pints of ale in hand, just in time to have viewed the scene. He had a "What's all this, then?" look on his face. Before the scene turned ugly, the three

of us excused our-selves quickly to sit in the evening air.

On a bench outside, we enjoyed not only the evening, but, after a moment, the pints of ale that the couple at the next table abandoned. After an intense personal discussion that apparently ended in some sort of emotional reconciliation, they left hurriedly, probably to commemorate their new found understanding with some sort of physical intimacy -- well, good luck to them, and we'll enjoy your ale. Whilst we were doing so, some elegant yuppies were

standing on the sidewalk near our table, discussing the rest of the evening, when another of their group (female) approached. One of the standing group (also female) greeted her



with a mock cockney screech:

"Well, are your knickers bunched up your arse, then, dearie?"

-- which produced gales of laughter. Again, sleep was not a problem.

On Monday, I struck out on my own. I first went to Charing Cross Road to check out the bookstore scene.

There were plenty; but sad to say, CC Road is no longer what it was. Just twenty years ago both sides of the street were

crowded with bookstores: over a hundred in a few blocks, one next to another like sardines.

High rates forced out many of the stores along one side of the street; that expanse is now dominated by, amongst other things, fast food restaurants, that bane of mankind.

The prices were high, too. But that didn't prevent me from spending a small fortune, returning to Dave's place -- not far -- to drop off my treasures before heading out again.

My next stop was that repository of the artifacts of civilization:

The British Museum.

In its class -- museums of natural history -- the BM is probably supreme, as the Louvre is the greatest of the art museums and the Smithsonian the greatest of scientific museums. Who can tell of its wonders? *The Magna Charta*; an original manuscript of *Beowulf*; the *Rosetta Stone*; the great head of a pharaoh (Ramses?) that inspired Shelly's "Ozymandias"; great winged man-lions from Assyria; the Lion Gate from Ur of the Chaldeans (the home of Abraham -- yeah, *that* Abraham); the Elgin marbles from the Parthenon; Roman and Medieval British metal and glasswork; Egyptian mummies, including cat mummies; and hundreds, no, thousands, no, *hundreds of thousands* of other, lesser marvels. I even peeked in at the Reading Room, which I understand is no longer part of the BM proper, but is of course, still right next to it. The magnificent dome is impressive. How many influential books were researched in that vast room? I can name one: **Das Kapital**, by Karl Marx.

I can't tell you the emotions I felt when gazing at the Magna Charta, the necessary predecessor of our own Declaration and a truly critical document in

man's history. Or the Rosetta Stone, which opened the world of the Egyptian pharaohs to our scrutiny. Or passing through the glass doors of the Duveen galleries and viewing the sculpture that once graced the pediment of the Parthenon, the most influential building in the history of architecture ... in a sad state, unfortunately, which lead me to some sympathy for the British position: if it hadn't been for Lord Elgin, those statues wouldn't exist at all. A walk through such a place heightens your awareness of the great ebb and flow of human history.

But you can take only so much of that, and so finally, emerging from the shadowy interior and blinking like a mole in the brilliant sunlight outside, I staggered across the street to the Duke of Ormonde for a pint and some quiche. Finishing, I walked through the streets, enjoying the beautiful Bloomsbury area, until I finally entered onto Russell Square, a fine extensive green space set with winding paths and towering trees. At this time of day it was crowded with students from the nearby University of London, taking advantage of the splendid weather to study, sketch, or just lie about on the grass. And every now and then I saw these black and white cats ...

Got an ice cream at the park refreshment stand, ate it under the trees and ogled the coeds. And every now and then I saw these black and white cats ...

Finished, walked aimlessly toward one end of the square, going nowhere in particular, and glanced at the towering, Victorian building before me: **RUSSELL HOTEL**.

And it all made sense: "*up, up, up past the Russell Hotel, up up up to the heavyside layer ...*" those black and white cats I'd been seeing were the cats of T. S. Eliot's **Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats**, the famous Jellicle cats (or their descendants) who

inspired the world-famous musical. Naturally; Eliot lived and studied in Bloomsbury and would have walked through this square often. I headed to the Russell Hotel, because its sight had reminded me: Eric said that there was a book fair held there this weekend, ending on Monday.

The Russell Hotel is a magnificent old structure with plenty of marble and brass. Entering it is stepping back into another, and more genteel age. Despite the fact that I was rather scruffily dressed, the hotel personnel greeted me warmly, took my bag, and steered me to the main ballroom, which was filled with book dealer displays.

Which proved to be a wonderful browse, but that was all, because the prices ... *arrgh*. *Seven hundred pounds* for a copy of **Andersen's Fairy Tales** illustrated by Kay Neilsen. That's nearly \$1300! And other books published by Hoddard and Stoughton (the leading British children's book publisher of the late 19th/early 20th centuries) were comparable. Lovely to look at, and I took some valuable notes as to editions, but I'll seek such works on my side of the Atlantic, but I couldn't possibly meet those prices.

Exiting the book fair, it was somewhat after four -- and how could I leave England without having *high tea* at least once? So I had tea at the Hotel Russell, choosing some very nice pastry over the offered scones and clotted cream -- I read enough Conspiracy reports to tell me that particular "treat" is well left to the English. High tea at one of the classic English hotels. *Right up on top, D.D., right where you belong!*

After returning to the apartment, I joined Dave and Linda and went over to The Angel to join a number of fans, including another visitor from America -- Paul Williams, founder of **Crawdaddy** and sometime fanwriter. Dave Hodson and

several others were there as well. We sat around downing brew until I decided to accompany Dave Hodson and Williams over the legendary Marquee Club -- about a six or seven block walk -- to take in a concert for the evening.

Okay, it's not the *legendary* Marquee Club. It's another location. But the old posters of previous Marquee dates are still on the walls: Rolling Stones two nights only; The Yardbirds opening for The Who; the Spencer Davis Group; Led Zeppelin's second gig; King Crimson; Cream, and a dozen other famous names -- like I said, this is one of the legendary music clubs, right up there with the Vanguard in New York and the Dew Drop Inn in New Orleans.

No such greats were playing that night, or maybe they just aren't great yet. We arrived just in time for the second stage of a three-part show, and listened to a fairly competent blues-based hard rock band named Thee Blessing. The three of us were approached by the band's manager, a tasty-looking blonde named Tracey, who turned out to be from California. She'd noticed Williams' behavior down on the dance floor -- he actually *moved around and boogied*. I was further back and did some of that, but was intimidated by the rest of the crowd; just standing stock still looking at the band. What was it with these people? If a band is even half competent down in N.O. we *move* with the beat; if it's somebody like Marcia Ball or Fats Domino or the Neville Brothers we sway deliriously, our spirits wholly under the power of the music. It must be all that Mediterranean blood.

I had to leave, so I only saw one set. But I did get to go to the Marquee Club. Had I had only known, I would have stayed. For ahead of me, when I returned to the apartment, lay ...

My Night of TERROR

It took a bit of time to get back to the house. The London bus system goes haywire after midnight, and no bus goes where it went during the day. Most stop at Trafalgar Square, and everything is totally screwed up even for the natives. The underground stopped running hours before I left the Marquee, about one o'clock. And then, of all things, I decide to walk home, got fouled up with those twisting streets, and got lost.

I would have stayed lost -- I didn't have my maps with me, stupidly -- until I looked up and found that, once again, I was in front of Forbidden Planet! I hadn't noticed, because London streets are so busy during the day and so inverted at night they seem to give a totally different aspect. Now I knew where I was and was able to navigate home quickly.

When I dragged my very weary butt into the apartment -- the ten flights of steps seemed like a hundred -- Carson was still up, in the living room, door closed, the music of the *Streets of Fire* soundtrack blaring. I crept into my room, undressed, and fell immediately asleep.

But not for long. Shortly thereafter I was awakened, when the light went on -- blinding me -- and Dave staggered into the room, going for the videotape cabinet located, as luck would have it, next to the bed. "Oh -- didn't know you were back," he slurred, as I scrambled into some clothes. Yeah, he'd obviously been punishing the moonshine -- the liter of Jack Daniels was long gone, it's corpse having gone to join the collection of empty JD bottles atop Dave's kitchen cabinet (and it's a damned impressive collection). Dave was in the mood for some boozy conversation, so I reluctantly followed him into the living room floor what proved to be about two hours of incoherent

(me tired, him blotto) talk while watching Dave's favorite movie, *Streets of Fire*. Well, not the movie, exactly, but a long promo trailer that featured all of its songs against clips of the action. Better than the movie, actually. Dave staggered, nearly blind, around the room; nearly destroyed his beautiful wicker chair by falling into it at an angle, propping it up on two precarious legs, while he flailed the air and I wondered if he was going to kill himself. It was great seeing him try to operate the video machine when he obviously couldn't see anything. After a long time, and it seemed longer, I finally got Dave to go to bed and gratefully fell into bed myself.

And less than an hour later, *it began again*. Dave awakened, blundered into my room, again, and roused me into the living room, again. He had apparently forgotten the previous two hours, because he started asking when I'd gotten in, and finally, "Have you ever seen *Streets of Fire*?" Yeah, Dave, not only in America, but in this living room, just a little while ago. But it was no use and it was, as Yogi Berra is alleged to have said, "Deja Vu all over again." We repeated the conversations, watched the *Streets of Fire* trailer several times, and finally I convinced Dave to get some sleep so I could do the same.

And less than an hour later, *it began again*. Now I finally knew what an abused child feels like, lying in his/her bed while the inebriated parent blunders around the house -- will he come into his room? And of course, he finally did, and by this time he had beaten the moonshine almost into extinction. He had also just about lost the power of walking or even standing unaided, as he staggered against the wall, flung the door open and hitting the light switch. He sat down heavily in front of the tape cabinet, mumbling something about "*Streets o' Fire*," but I wasn't falling for that again; I simply

laid in bed, face down, pretending that I was *dead*, not asleep. I'll never forget the sensation of just laying there while Dave, his Belfast accent thickened and rendered almost comic by the liquor, browsed through his tape collection and I fervently wished he'd just let me get some *sleep*...

"Wizard
o' Blood
... Fiend
wi'out a
Faaace ..."

Finally, he found what he wanted, and, having wholly lost the power of standing upright, crawled from the room, hitting at the light-switch with the tape as he exited. I finally got a few precious hours of sleep.

II

(When we left our hero [such as he is] he'd just passed out after surviving a boozy nightmare of an evening with Dave Carson.)

Ooogh ... my head aches ... I'm tired

all over ... I feel like I've been sleeping the sleep of the Black Lotus, which Robert E. Howard tells us is indistinguishable from death ... and the nightmares... "Ever heard of *Streets o' Fire*?"

Arrrgh, that's right ... those weren't nightmares ... that was Carson, bombed out

of his mind ... Christ, is he still up? No, it's morning, and Dave's snoring peacefully in his room. Okay. Time to get my act together and slip out while he's still asleep. Throw on some clothes and put some stuff together in my ditty bag and



lemme outa here. But first: is there any moonshine left? Damn, not much more than a few spoonful. Nothing to be done about it now except hide the bottle behind the sofa, and close the door lightly when I go.

Down the stairs and out onto the

street in a wash of beautiful English morning sunshine. Stopped for a fresh-baked roll and some milk at one of the street shops and walked to Victoria Station.

At Victoria, I headed on the Underground towards the Covent Garden area. I intended to see some London theater whilst I was here, and now was the time to buy the tickets. Of course, you could get them from the English version of Ticketron, but why bother? Better seats are available by applying at the theater box office; especially if you're alone and can relieve them of some of their singletons.

I alighted at the Covent Garden stop and got my bearings. Just a block or two beyond the tube stop is the Covent Garden Market Square itself, tamed in song and story. It's no longer the vast flower market it was; there are still some flower sellers, and a sort of flea market selling jewelry and the like there. But I was looking for a specific theater that should have been visible from the square itself, and sure enough, I glimpsed what I was looking for in a corner, just around a building huge banners with a pictographic character proclaiming **Miss Saigon**.

Which was one of the musicals I was intent on seeing -- particularly since the show had just opened in NY and it was absolutely impossible to get tickets -- and expensive if you did, at over \$100 for the best seats.

The London production of **Miss Saigon** was housed in the historic -- and I use that word with no reservations -- Theater Royal of Drury Lane, a magnificent old building with huge pillars and beautiful woodwork. The ticket office was a tiny window off to the side and they did things the old way -- they marked off sold tickets on a large diagram of the theater seats, and when you ordered a ticket, they fetched the proper preprinted ticket from a vast array of

pigeonholes, stuffed with innumerable small pasteboard boxes, each with the performance date and seating sections marked on it. I managed to get an excellent seat for the Wednesday matinee, right in the middle of the dress circle, and had a brief conversation with the ticket seller about the age of the theater -- he said the basic structure was built about 1810, and renovated after a fire about 1818. He advised that I come early so I could look about the theater, and I resolved to do just that. I left after getting directions to the New London theater.

The New London is London's newest theater building, looking something like a suburban movie house, but it does have the advantage of quicker ticket processing. They do it by computer, and can show you on a screen what seats are taken. Again, I got an excellent seat -- one of the first four rows for **Cats**, a musical I'd been trying to see for years -- for that night's performance.

After getting the ticket, I walked back up Russell St. to Covent Garden square, and went into the London Transport Museum -- really interesting place, all sorts of neat old posters, models of subway cars, diagrams of and a history of the construction of one of the world's great subway systems ... but when I emerged, I saw something I had missed, and slipped back into that "many Londons" mode I described in the first lines of this report -- about how the present-day London co-exists with the historical London and literary London ... or in this case, *cinematic* London.

For what I was looking at, dead on, was the portico of a long deserted but still standing church, and I remembered the scene in **My Fair Lady** when Rex Harrison, playing Henry Higgins, stands behind a pillar -- of that church -- and listens to the speech patterns of the "flahr gahr!" Eliza Doolittle... Now, that was a Hollywood set, as I realized on reflection -- in **MFL** the

pillars were much larger and seemingly made of black marble; these were common gray fieldstone. But a moment's thought and I realized that in the straight cinema adaptation of Shaw's play -- **Pygmalion**, starring Leslie Howard -- the scene was almost undoubtedly tamed on location, which means Ashley would have been standing about ... here? I bought an orange from a fruit seller and ate it while leaning against the pillar, pondering my next move.

How about some bookhunting? And why not at Charing Cross Road, the famous bookselling center of the most literate city in the world?

Alas, the street is not what it was; due to typical governmental screwing around, many of the shops have been forced to move, unable to pay the new rates (property taxes). But what remains is fascinating, perfect for an eccentric book collector like myself; curious little shops with attics and basements -- sometimes subbasements -- stuffed with all sorts of interesting books. Unfortunately, the really good stuff is quite expensive, and I experienced a well known Travel Shopping Syndrome -- the money starts flowing as if you're intoxicated. I had done this in Chicago, and I repeated the process in London, and it wasn't helped by the fact that you're slow to translate the fact that the tag that says £18 50 means almost \$36.00 -- next time I'm going to bring post-it notes and put the actual price on every book, and think a damn lot before buying **Gentleman's Sauce**, the companion to **Gentleman's Relish**, for £10; I only paid \$5.00 for **Relish** in the U.S.

It was about 2:00 p.m. when I finished up; I got a sandwich and a pint at a nearby pub and headed back to the apartment to drop off my purchases. Dave was up, moving about sorta slow, and we talked a bit before I headed off again -- this time back to Trafalgar Square to visit the

National Gallery.

If you are ranking great art museums of the world, the British National Gallery would certainly be in the first rank -- right up there with the National Gallery in Washington, the Metropolitan, the Prado, the Uffizi, etc., in a select group headed by the Louvre. And one of the more outre delights is a mosaic that adorns the steps leading up to the main galleries; one panel depicts a distinctly pudgy figure that resembles Winston Churchill, dressed in a sort of WWII air raid warden uniform (complete with tinpot helmet) engaged in mortal struggle with what looks like a giant serpent; I think that panel was "Steadfastness" or some other British virtue that was being celebrated.

If you were in the Gallery that day, and if you closed your eyes, you'd think you were in the Louvre; the Frogs had over-run the place. (You see, after nearly a week in London I was in close touch with my Francophobic English heritage; when I visit France I'll return the favor and start despising Les Anglais in deference to my French ancestors. Although Sylvia pointed out that if I actually had been in the Louvre at this time and closed my eyes, I'd have thought I was in the Metropolitan; Paris is usually flooded with Americans at this time of year. Sort of musical countries.)

Inside, I did my usual museum thing -- drifted until I found something that really caught my eye, and concentrated on that. Rather than simply say, "I saw the National Gallery" I'd rather come away with some sort of specific insight. I can't see everything, no one can, and you've got to accept that.

What struck me most was:

-- Gainsborough's brushwork, unbelievably delicate and subtle. Reprints in art books cannot do him justice. The National Gallery has, of course, got the Blue Boy, but I was more impressed with Mrs.

Siddons, his portrait of the leading actress of the late 18th century...whatta fox.

-- Constable. Remember all those beautify detailed English countryside scenes from Art History class? When you see his work in person you get what you've been missing. Constable realized that the vegetable kingdom is mostly water -- therefore, when the sun strikes forest, etc., you get a sort of gleam off the innumerable droplets of water that make up the cells of leaves, bark, etc. Beautiful work; easy to lose yourself in any one of his pictures.

-- Turner. Again, art books cannot do him justice; the subtle shadings of his colors, presaging the Impressionists. "Rain, Steam and Speed" was powerful in its original; the sunset in "The Fighting Temeraire" is exquisite.

The major disappointment was that the museum's extensive Renaissance collection was, for the most part, not accessible at the time; the new Sainsbury wing, donated by the leading English grocery chain, was due to open in a week or so, and the collections were being moved. I'll remedy this omission next time I visit.

After leaving the National Gallery, I took the opportunity to walk about for a while, getting the pulse of the city and soaking in the atmosphere (heavily larded with carbon monoxide.) Luckily I glanced at my watch -- and saw that it was time to get back to Horseferry Rd. to dress for the theater.

Which is when disaster nearly struck. I mean what is, this, some malign entity didn't want me to see this play? I'd missed it three times in New Orleans due to various circumstances, and when I was dressing for the evening I sprang one of my messy nasal hemorrhages.

I wasn't going to let this stop me. With tissue paper shoved up one nostril, I took off for the underground, getting off at

High Holborn, the deepest station in London -- the ride up the escalator was something like four stories. And then I got faulty directions to the New London theater -- and had to run, despite the nosebleed ... and panting and puffing, I made it into the theater with only a minute or so to spare.

I barely had time to take in my surroundings ... *Cats* is an "environmental" show, in which the decoration of the theater is specifically designed to create an ambience that will be essential to the experience. In this case, it's decorated like a junkyard, the meeting place of the Jellicle Cats -- and the junk is oversized, so you're reduced to cat-size. The decorations on the high levels loom ominously to simulate a cat's foreshortened vision.

And one other thing became apparent immediately: no orchestra pit. In fact, no proscenium arch at all. The orchestra is behind the stage and only a few feet separate the actors from the front row... you could reach out and touch them if you wished. I was close enough; fourth row, the last row on the "rotating platform." I found out about that a few seconds after the overture; the house lights were killed, the overture began, hundreds of small bulbs -- to imitate cat-eyes-glistened in the darkness, and the ring on which our seats were fastened rotated through the darkness -- eerie enough, let me tell you--but a second later, when I felt a sort of scratch on the top of my head an a "MEEEEEROWR!" directly in my ear, I nearly jumped out of my seat! And turned just in time to see the white -- and unmistakably female -- catsuited form disappeared, with a mocking laugh, into the darkness. Yup -- this wasn't going to be your ordinary theater experience.

You know the general "plot" of the musical, insofar as there is one: mostly it consists of musical numbers based on poems from Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical*

Cats. There are almost no spoken parts except for a few lines of connecting dialogue; the characters communicate their interrelationships through mime and dance, which made my seat all the more valuable -- I could appreciate the feline mannerisms much better from close up. The makeup was spectacular and the bodies of the dancers -- men and women, although I concentrated my attention on the latter -- were absolutely flawless. And the show continued to reach out to me, in particular -- when the Rum Tum Tigger -- who plays his part with a sort of campy gay outrageousness -- wandered into the audience, flouncing around, he went up to a woman in a row behind me shouted "MOM!" and embraced her -- I diverted my attention back to the stage for a second, and that damn bald spot of mine must have caught his attention. I felt my head grabbed on either side and he planted a kiss right on my bare crown ... what is this about me?

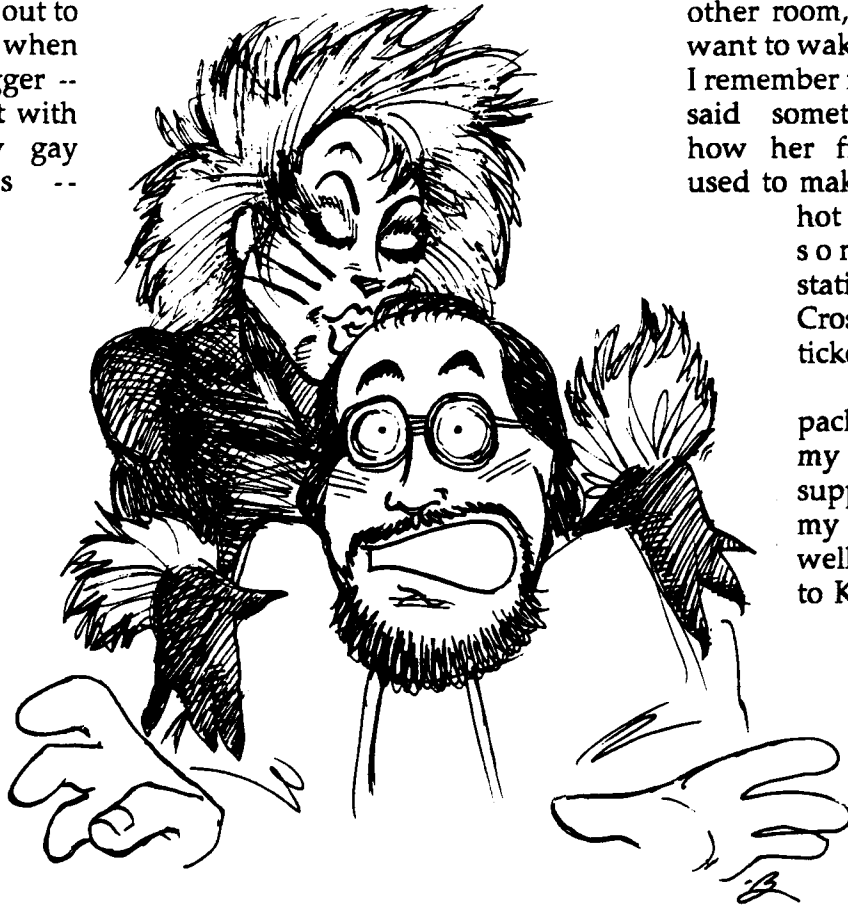
Anyhow, all things considered, the musical creates theater magic, and we can't ask for more than that; \$32.00 more than well spent, and another \$18.00 for the T shirt; I staggered back to Horseferry Lane totally content. Too late for a bath, I decided to wash in the morning and fell right asleep.

I woke up in the morning before Dave, and got to the bathroom. I was by this time in serious need of a wash; I had that grimy, sweaty feeling you get after too much walking around and not enough soap and water. Trying not to wake Dave, I drew the water -- and noticed that the water wasn't getting hot very quickly. Or at all for that matter. Christ, this stuff is *ice cold*. Has his hot water heater gone out? Jesus -- and he's sleeping like a log in the other room, and I don't want to wake him ... hey, I remember now ... Linda said something about how her friend Sylvia used to make use of the hot showers at some train station -- King's Cross? That's the ticket ...

So I packed not only my usual day's supplies but also my toiletries as well. When I got to King's Cross I couldn't locate the showers, so a quick call to Linda was in order. She gave directions and I

finally located a small sign: "To Showers". Ahh, I thought, water hot is a noble thing. Right now there's could be nothing so pleasant as to let a flood of boiling hot water flow over my body cleansing and parboiling me at the same time.

Down a flight of stairs, looking like nothing so much as the locker room for a



swimming pool, attendant behind in a glass booth reading a newspaper. "Uhhh, I'd like to, uuuuhh, shower?"

"No showers. Repairing hot water pipes."

"Pardon? "

"No showers. Understand? No hot water. Repairs." Paper back in front of his face.

"Well, do you know when they might...."

"No." Without lowering the paper from his face.

In other words, fuck off, yank; sit in your own reek. I returned to the ground level, bought a soft drink and thought very black thoughts for some time. Was there more than three gallons of hot water in this whole damn country? Because if there was I'd pay any price for it.

I called Linda again, who was sympathetic. We agreed to meet later that evening at her place.

Okay, so what to do until the matinee of *Miss Saigon* that afternoon? I decided to walk around the Piccadilly Circus/Oxford Circus area and check out shopping London -- this is where Harrod's, Fortnum & Mason, Smallbone's, et al are located. For some reason I never really went into any of the stores -- maybe fearing a permanent case of sticker shock.

After a bit of this I decided to get into historical London again. And where better than Westminster Abbey?

The holiest spot in England -- this church was erected in something like the 12th century, but an earlier church had been there at least since the 7th century; and before that there seems to be evidence of worship of the old religion. What is there, though, is impressive enough; the weight of history is palpable, even though at some spots the place is so crowded with monuments that it looks like a stonemason's yard. I wandered about the front area -- which is free -- noting the various brasses,

statues and plaques, and suddenly, for no particular reason, glanced down at my feet: set in the floor was a plaque about a foot and a half square:

O RARE BEN JONSON

... Shakespeare's contemporary, and eulogist, buried standing up. I'm damn sure they didn't have to embalm him -- all those years at the Mermaid Tavern probably pickled him quite nicely. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro danced on his grave; I contented myself with merely kneeling and touching it.

One thing they're right about -- the place is probably the clammiest, dampest, chilliest church in Christendom -- it was a fairly pleasant day outside and the place was still cold and damp. When Queen Anne was crowned here, one of the reasons she wore leather petticoats underneath her coronation gown was to ward off the dank chill. (The other reason was because she liked wearing leather petticoats.)

After that it was time to pay a few pounds to get into the crypt and chapel areas of the Abbey. And I walked slowly into the area behind the high altar, the Holy of Holies, resting place of the Plantagenets; saw the throne of Edward the Confessor, with the Stone of Scone, upon which the King of Scotland is crowned, below it; saw the effigies of the Plantagenet kings: tall, longbodied with thin faces and deep-set eyes. After circling the crypt, I walked through a narrow, long hall, leading to the rear of the cathedral, and in the low hall there was another sepulchre, with an effigy that was unmistakably that of a Plantagenet -- he had the family look in spades, good looking guy with sharp high cheekbones. No inscription, though ... who ... and then my eye caught the small, unprepossessing card affixed to the wall:

HENRY V

Here and in front of me; the warrior king who almost conquered all of France, the national hero whose story was filmed by Olivier (who better?) as a rallying-point for embattled England in WWII. The paths of glory lead but to the grave, but what a grave. The signs asked you not to touch the effigies; in any other case I'd have complied, but I couldn't resist stretching out my hand to the ancient bronze ... leaving one Henry, I walked back to see the chapel of another: the seventh of that name, first of the Tudors, successor of Richard III, father of Henry VIII.

Henry VII's chapel is justly famous as one of the landmarks of architecture, one of the greatest monuments of the late medieval era -- you could see the presaging of the renaissance. The stonework is so delicate as almost to defy belief; much of it done -- although the Brits don't boast about this -- by Italian craftsmen. Henry wanted it done properly and didn't trust the locals with the more spectacular effects.

Faded heraldic banners, some of obviously great age, hang from the walls; and against the walls at the ground level are the stalls of the Knights of the Garter -- this is their chapel. The Garter -- limited to something like 32 members, not including the sovereign -- is the most distinguished order of knighthood in history and, as I told one Brit, probably the second most exclusive honor in the world. "What's the first?" he challenged me. "Honorary citizen of the United States," I answered. "Been awarded twice in two hundred years, to Lafayette and to Churchill. You really gotta *earn* that sucker."

On the way back out, I checked out the smaller rooms to either side of the central passageway. One holds the magnificent tomb of the first Elizabeth, good Queen Bess herself -- all things considered, probably the best ruler in English history. On the other side is the tomb -- equally superb -- of her

great rival, Mary, Queen of Scots, interred there after her son acceded as James I of England. The twists of fortune; they saw each other something like twice in their lifetimes, always contended for the prize of the English throne, one was executed by the other, and here they lie, interred in mountains of marble, a literal stone's toss from one another.

Checked my watch -- holey moley, time to get going to **Miss Saigon**. Hopped a fast freight and made it to the Theater Royal of Drury Lane just in time for the first number.

The Theater Royal is as unlike the New London as it's possible for two theaters to be; the Royal is a cavernous thing, with tier after tier of seats, magnificent chandeliers, heavy carpeting, grand staircases. And **Miss Saigon** was a more conventional show; but spectacular. Yeah, I cried at the end -- buckets.

Miss Saigon T-shirt safely stowed in my faithful backpack, I caught the old Number 28 out to Haringey, and met Linda and Sylvia Starshine, her fellow American exile, at the Mortimer Arms pub. We downed another pint or so there and adjourned to Duckett Rd. where two things awaited me: dinner, cooked by Linda and Sylvia, and more importantly -- because while you could get food anywhere in London, hot water was infinitely harder to find -- a good shower, and promised all the hot water I could use.

Ah, *water hot* is a glorious thing ... cascading over my body, parboiling me, as I shampooed my hair as I just stood there and let myself steam-cook; when I left the bathroom I had water vapor coming off of me as I walked into the kitchen.

The dinner was wonderful, just a relaxing sort of thing with two American expatriates, telling of their lives in England -- now their home, but never quite home, if

you get what I mean -- the sort of things they might only be able to tell a countryman ... the same way I might be able to discuss the shortcomings of New Orleans with Justin Winston, but would take umbrage if an outsider would mention them. And one other, very pleasant surprise. I kept getting semi-cold water from the tap until Linda mentioned "Would you like some ice and a Diet 7-up? I've got some ice cube trays in the freezer."

Linda said I looked as if I were about to cry when I poured the soft drink into a glass tilted, nay, packed chock-full of ice -- gorgeous, sublime, transparent, superbly frigid *ice* -- which I'd not had since leaving the U.S. How do the English ever have parties?

After a while, we were joined by Chris Atkinson, Linda's landlady and the co-chair of Conspiracy. The four of us sat and talked late into the night, and I slept that night at Duckett Road, on the foldout living room couch.

Got up the next morning and accompanied Sylvia first to breakfast and then to see where she worked -- an establishment that did interesting commercial displays for shops and the like.

Sylvia put me on a bus going back into central London and I settled back -- well, as far as I was able. This was an older bus than the others I'd ridden on, with an open back end -- it didn't halt at bus stops so much as slow down so people could jump aboard, and if you were sitting in the back, you were in danger of being pitched out the back door to the street and certain death. Certainly helps prevent you from dozing off and missing your stop ... but I got to read the daily paper I'd gotten at Sylvia's and saw an ad for the London revival of **Show Boat** -- last few days, it said, at the London Palladium. I got off the bus near Oxford Circus and located the Palladium; as usual,

there was a terrific singleton ticket available -- first row of the dress circle.

After stopping back at Horseferry Road and checking in on Dave ... still alive, or a reasonable facsimile ... I went out again. It was the first day in London that I didn't enjoy glorious weather -- the day was grey and drizzly, but not oppressive. Good day for visiting a museum.

And the one I chose was one of the out-of-the-way ones -- Sir John Soane's museum, located next to the Lincoln's Inn Fields. Justin Winston had told me about this, and I could see why -- Sir John Soane basically is the same sort of guy we are -- better heeled, of course, with a much higher social position, but the same sort of incurable, and voracious, collector.

Soane was an architect, living in the first few decades of the 19th century. He wasn't a successful architect, *per se*; I mean, we're not talking Hawksmoor or Christopher Wren here. He built some homes, a few public buildings, and also had a successful architecture school, which he held in a room in the building next door. The museum is basically his house, a Georgian terrace row house of three stories, and it's made simply wonderful by all of the additions that Soane made, and by the things he collected to fill it -- you can do that sort of thing when you're friends with all of the leading artists and illustrators in England. Original Greek and Roman artworks, and many reproductions; prints; paintings; casts and sculptures; and the prize of the antiquities, the sarcophagus of the Egyptian pharaoh Sety II, a huge, magnificently carved (limestone? -- looked like it, but more translucent) casing, inscribed over every inch of its surface with quotations from the Book of the Dead. Soane got the thing after it the British Museum voted against its purchase (they later regretted their actions) and Sir John snapped it up. He held a three day party to celebrate,

and redesigned the house -- the sarcophagus sits at the bottom of an atrium, and from the "first" (actually second -- the British call the first floor the "ground" floor) you can look down into the sarcophagus of Pharaoh. No signs against touching the sarcophagus, but they'd probably disapprove -- ah, joke 'em if they can't take a fuck -- I ran my hands over the inscriptions, exquisitely carved by craftsmen more than 12 centuries before Christ -- each hieroglyph a miniature work of art.

I ascended by a narrow back staircase and was generally wandering about when one of the guards beckoned to me. "Sir? Would you step this way, please?" Oh shit -- that's it, guilty of first degree touching of a sarcophagus, put into Wormwood Scrubs with all the IRA terrorists -- but as it turned out he was about to conduct a showing in the picture gallery, and wanted to know if I was interested.

Soane collected a lot of paintings -- amongst them Hogarth's great "Rake's Progress" -- and, like a lot of us, had a shortage of wall space. So he solved the problem with his "picture gallery" -- the four walls have great recessed, hinged panels, four pairs to a wall, that open up, forward and out to display his collection. As you open each set of doors, you see not only what's on the inner door of the panel you are opening, but also paintings hung on the reverse sides of the next set of panels. And on one wall, the doors keep opening, finally to reveal a beautiful bronze Roman nude under a skylight, surrounded by plants, and a small fountain. Just beautiful. As the catalog says, this house gives a good example of how a early-19th century English gentleman of intellectual bent lived. Ah, to dream -- I could see myself, sitting after dinner in his beautiful dining room, discussing history or the latest advances in science -- "I say, Sir Dennis, did you see

where Faraday claims that the forces of magnetism and electricity are fundamentally the same? It scarcely seems credible, but..."

The museum closed early on Thursday, but I'd seen all I wanted to see. But the curtain for **Show Boat** was still several hours away -- well, why not see *St. Paul's*? It was not too far and easily accessible by tube.

Okay -- Westminster Abbey is historic and magnificent and by no means small, but it's utterly dwarfed by *St. Paul's*, which is almost oppressively large. Remember a few paragraphs ago when I said that Soane "was no Christopher Wren"? Well, this is Wren's masterpiece -- he's buried in it, and as a magnificent building it has only a few equals -- I would guess only *St. Peter's*, really; or maybe Chartres or Notre-Dame de Paris or *Sancta Sophia* in Istanbul.

The dome is colossal; and under directly under its apex, in the crypt below the main floor, Nelson is buried. No, you buffoon, not *Ozzie* -- Horatio. So is Wren, builder of *St. Paul's*, (and of many other churches, besides) and the planner of modern London. On the floor itself is a huge bronze disc, inscribed with Wren's epitaph: **Reader, if you seek his monument, look about you.** Kinda hard to miss, that monument.

The cathedral was thronged with visitors. I engaged an assistant dean in conversation, and we talked about the architecture of the church and the people buried therein. I guess he was surprised to find an American that had even a pretense of an education on such matters. I did ask about one particular crypt ... "Nothing for the 'Iron Duke'? He's just as important as Nelson, surely?" A sort of wry smile flickered over his face. "Look behind you."

I can see why I missed it; I mean, the thing is only about three stories tall and the letters carved in bronze -- **WELLINGTON--**

are certainly not over a yard high, so it's practically unobtrusive.

Anyhow, the Duke of Wellington's funeral car/memorial is truly magnificent. There are many other memorials, as well; this is where the heroes of the Victorian and Edwardian Empire are buried, or at least memorialized. Kitchener (just the tomb; they never found the body), Fred Roberts, Henry Havelock -- all these damn names I remember from *Flashman* -- *Charles Gordon*?! -- like, in *Gordon of Khartoum*?!

My history buff synapses, nearly jaded after more than a week in this damn city, were firing all over the place. And then I started thinkin' ... if I could get in here one night, and put up a suitably-weathered marble plaque in some not-obvious location, inscribed "**Gen. Sir Harry Flashman, 1822-1915**" ... nah, these assistant deans have eagle eyes, better not try it ...

As I was leaving, a spot of color, bright red against the drab grey marble caught my eye. I walked over; it was a very red, quite large rose, laid below the plaque honoring Field Marshal Viscount Slim, the great British commander in Southeast Asia. A note was attached, in a strong, yet unmistakably feminine hand: "Remembering General Slim, from a child who grew up in Singapore." Slim ... Singapore ... the great empire upon which the sun never set, back when that really meant something ... gone maybe, but there are still those living who were a part of it; and that rose was left by one such.

It was still light when I left St. Paul's; and still about an hour and a half to go before showtime at the Palladium. Casting about for something to do in that relatively short space, I happened to glance at a map of the underground stations, and one caught my eye: Golders Green. That name rang two bells. Firstly, Linda lived in that neighborhood when she first moved to

England; secondly, Calvin Trillin, the great food writer, said that a Chinese restaurant "across from the Golders Green tube station" had the best dried beef on the planet.

Well, it was worth a try, wasn't it? I took the tube out to Golders Green, wondering exactly what it would be like. That was the great thing about the underground -- you'd take the tube right next to St. Paul's, right amidst the stone canyons of the city, in the dense heart of London, travel for about 12 minutes, and come up in ...

... well, what could almost pass for a beautiful, rural English town -- two story brick row houses, with charming gardens, lovely trees, the air soft and scented with flowers. There were, as it turned out, three Chinese restaurants across from the tube station; none served dried beef, so I assume that Trillin's restaurant is no longer in operation. But it was nice to walk around suburban London for a bit, see how the Yuppies lived; I gathered that last from the number of BMW's I saw, most with child seats; some things are identical on either side of the Atlantic.

Took the tube back to London, got to the Palladium in plenty of time.

The point of this revival of *Show Boat* was that it was the *restored* version ... I wondered exactly what that would entail. The overture was played -- a powerful brooding, operatic piece that was different from the later more conventional overture used in the movie -- and the curtain came up on a levee scene, all tophatted and crinolined southern ladies & gentlemen and a line of powerful blacks with cotton bales on their backs:

*Niggers all work on de Mississippi
Niggers all work while de white folk play
Loading their boats with the bales of cotton
Getting no rest till the Judgment Day...*

*Cotton Blossom! Cotton Blossom!
Love to see Thou blowin' free
but when they pack you on the levee
you're a heavy load to me*

*Cotton Blossom! Cotton Blossom!
Love to see you growin' wild
On the levee, you're too heavy
for this poor black child...*

Yup, it's different all right. I'd always read that **Show Boat**, more than any other musical of its time, even the Gershwins' **Lady Be Good**, was the watershed musical; the one that really broke new ground and created vast possibilities for other artists, and, incidentally, gave them a new standard against which to compete. After seeing the incredible London production, and buy the 3-CD set of the **Show Boat** project, with artists like Frederika von Stade and Teresa Stratas, I understand why. In a time when "musical comedy" meant a light-hearted romp at Long Island estate with the major question being whether a poor but honest chorus girl could find happiness with the scion of old wealth, this was a musical drama with themes that include racism, miscegenation, spousal abuse and abandonment. It was Kern's magnum opus and the work that matured Hammerstein ... he began it as a promising but basically callow writer and finished as the best lyricist on Broadway -- Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and Ira Gershwin not excepted.

Scenes long deleted to "lighten" the musical were reinstated, restoring the dark tone of the work -- particularly the original ending, in which Gaylord is reunited with his wife and child not a few years after abandoning them, but something like 25 years later, meeting a daughter who barely remembers him and a wife who isn't totally sure that she wants to see him again.

And most of all, songs deleted for

purposes of brevity, or other reasons, were restored -- most notably "Misery", an ominous, spiritual-influenced number sung by Mammy, the musical theme for which recurs strategically.

It was with the restoration of that, and a number of other previously-deleted numbers that I realized one of the things that Kern and Hammerstein -- particularly the former -- were doing: they were charting a history of American popular song through the musical. Numbers are introduced and performed in the styles current in that period, American popular song of the Stephen Foster variety, black field chants and spirituals, etc., and reprised as blues, ragtime, jazz, etc ... whatever form was popular in the period corresponding to the timeline within the work. This exceptionally important theme had been lost over the years with the bowdlerization of the work; the restoration of the lost numbers lifts **Show Boat** right up there into the stratosphere with Verdi and Wagner, as far as I'm concerned. When the curtain came down, I was on my feet and shouting "Bravo!" as lustily as I could.

I exited the Palladium late -- the show, although it had started early, was extremely long -- and I found myself in a situation I hadn't experienced since I was in New York in 1980 -- walking in the midst of the Theater District when the shows are letting out. The excitement, the glamour, the power is palpable in the air and you are part of it, even if you're not dressed as well as the beautifully gowned and jeweled women and the tuxedoed men. I just walked along, drinking in this heady mixture, until the streets were nearly deserted. Just enough time for a pint, and then home to Horseferry Lane via Victoria Station. I walked the way back to Dave's singing "Old Man River" and fell asleep immediately.

FRIDAY: I can't remember when I got started; time wasn't important today, I had

nothing whatsoever planned, and I certainly felt as if I'd gotten my money's worth out of my trip ... wandered about for a few hours, doing some shopping, window- and otherwise; stopped a couple of times to wet my whistle in an interesting pub or two. I finally found myself around Trafalgar square again, and walked over to the famous church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

St. Martin's, of course, used to be in the fields, but now it's right in the heart of governmental London. It's beautiful; a baroque church on a human scale, goodly sized but still smaller and more intimate than either Westminster Abbey or, God forbid, St. Paul's. No, the Academy of St. Martin's -in-the-Fields wasn't playing; the Apollo Consort, though, was: rehearsing a program of works by Haydn and Mozart that would be performed later that evening. To sit in that wonderful interior and listen to music that was current soon after it was built, on instruments true to the period (the Apollo Consort is of the "authentic instrumentation" school, which in this case means a lighter, more transparent sound than our modern versions of the same instruments) was lovely.

It was about noon, and I'd had no breakfast. I wandered down into the crypt of the Church and found a photographic exhibit, and interesting restaurant (I had a stuffed aubergine, something like an eggplant -- good but sorta bland) and a brass-rubbing center...

Wow, look at all the stuff they have for rubbing. Having a couple of hours to spare ... all day, really ... I bought some materials, enlisted the help of one of the ladies, and set to it; a few of these would make good gifts, I thought. If you've never done a brass rubbing, it's pretty simple. Ever put a piece of paper over a nickel, and produced an image by rubbing a pencil or something over it? Right. A brass rubbing is done in a similar fashion, with black paper spread over an engraved brass image; you use a stick of wax ... and, with a little luck --

the risk is of tearing the paper -- voila, you have an image. I made several, including, with the extensive assistance of one of the ladies who staff the booth, a huge image from the tombstone of a Belgian abbess.

I exited and consulted my copy of *Time Out*, the entertainment magazine of London, for ideas. And that's when I realized ... like, how can I be in London, with (calm down, Hank Davis) *Diana Rigg* appearing in a play, and not go to see her? Mrs. Peel live and in the flesh -- so to speak. I took off by underground for the Altamira, and made curtain with about 20 minutes to spare; this show was a rare Friday matinee, a benefit for some foundation that I think Rigg is involved in.

The play was John Dryden's *All For Love*, and the less said about it the better; I really don't like Dryden, never have, must be something left over from high school ... the story is that of Antony & Cleopatra, and is frankly inferior to Shakespeare's treatment of the same. (Although, naturally, previous generations thought otherwise.) La Rigg was great -- not overwhelming, and none of the reviewers said this was her finest performance -- but she's a seasoned pro and one of the best treading the boards at this time and it was a rare privilege to see her. (For which I paid about \$14.00.)

After I left the theater, I went back to Horseferry lane, to meet Linda and Dave. We spent the evening in a good old British tradition -- getting tanked at a pub, in this case in the company of a huge number of British fantasy fans -- it was their monthly gathering at the Duke of Connaught Arms. Met some great people, and had some great conversations, and discovered that in many ways, Londoners treat the glories of their city as do Orleanians -- the stuff is just there. Japanese jazz fans come halfway around the earth to visit the house where Buddy Bolden lived; I don't even know where it is. Few of the fans I spoke to at the D of C Arms had ever visited Westminster Abbey. We agreed

it was because if you live in a city, you're too busy with the mundania of existence to bother with "tourist" attractions. Maybe the key is to take a week off and spend it visiting your own town.

Dave left early; Linda and I returned to Horseferry Lane some time later, after getting some takeout Chinese at a small shop. *Snore...*

SATURDAY: We spent another day wandering as we would; the weather wasn't quite so good so we wound up fairly early at the Suffolk Punch, near Linda's, and spent much of the rest of the daylight hours drinking. Dave and Linda finally introduced me to the delights of NewKey Brown -- that is, New Castle Brown Ale, the preferred drink of blue collar Englishmen from the industrial north.

Yaarrgh, that's powerful stuff; it practically erased all memory of that afternoon from my mind. Linda took a bunch of photos; we chatted about a number of topics and added to the legend of Brown Bottle; and then we did something else that evening that has slipped my mind, because the darn NewKey Brown wiped it out. I seem to remember we spent the evening not at Horseferry Lane but at Linda's digs, because I did some laundry there. Blame the beer...

SUNDAY: Dave stayed home while Linda and I whiled away the day -- she'd be working tomorrow, when I left, so this was our last day together. We went by the Fantasy Center again, and drank a last pint of Dogbolter across the street at the Firkin & Flounder; I also had a ham & corn quiche and a half-pint of Theaxton's Old Peculiar ... a bit harsh for my tastes, but the name is great ... after that, the Camden market ... and a beautiful day it was, sunny and breezy and the market had about a zillion people there.

I bought some stuff for folks at home -- including a beautiful painted-glass perfume bottle for Annie Hebert -- and Linda got some clothes. It was good for books; amongst other treasures, I got a first British edition of *The Silver Locusts*, known to me as *The Martian Chronicles*, for only about £12 1/2. But it was at another shop



I found the treasure of the trip...

The bookshop was relatively new and clean; it had a varied stock and some nice stuff it was. But for some reason my eye was attracted to a taped spine of a massive tome, and I pulled it down.

I've spoken of that transcendent moments of collecting: when you come upon a treasure -- the rush of adrenaline, the beating heart ... not unlike sex, actually... which is what I felt when I read the inscription on the cover:

PETRONIUS
The Satyricon,
With One Hundred Illustrations by
Norman Lindsay.

Lindsay! One of my favorite illustrators -- I turn the pages, saw the date -- 1915, but the paper was in excellent shape, and utterly unyellowed; the rag content on this stuff must be very high. Further revelations -- it was signed, not only by Lindsay, but by the printer (it would've been tough to get Petronius's signature), and the edition was a limited one indeed: 265 copies, of which only 250 were signed and numbered; the copy number was inscribed by, apparently, Lindsay's hand -- #73.

I inspected the book itself. It was beautifully printed, the illustrations everything I had expected and more; the text alternated between the original Latin and the earliest English translation. What fortune were they asking for this volume?

But the book had been offered for sale before, it seemed, and to little interest. The original price, £300, had been erased; a new price, £150, was scratched out; the current price was a mere £50.

But I couldn't resist; I argued them down to £35. And with the Satyricon safely in a cloth tote bag I bought specifically for the purpose, I left with Linda to go meet some folks -- including a few American tourists -- at the Duke of Cumberland pub.

Now, the Duke of Cumberland is an interesting place, at least on a Sunday evening. Incredible women, including the shortest miniskirts I've ever seen on any women -- plenty of leather (including the skirts) and also lots of punkette style. We sat with a number of other folks -- including American book dealer Greg Ketter -- showed off my finds of the day, and generally talked shop and other topics. It was then I learned of this town in Wales which is -- get this -- *almost all bookshops*. My feverish mind raced.

O.K., the flight is at 2 p.m. tomorrow; I can go to the town on the night train, be there when they open, do a few hours of shopping, race back ...

Naaah, not even I was that crazed.

MONDAY: Departure date. I'd spent so long here I felt like a native -- but it seemed like I'd hardly been here at all, so quickly did the days pass. As I often do when I travel for a long period, my existence in New Orleans seemed almost unreal, dreamlike. There were a lot of things to do before leaving, though. Get a box, for one thing, and a sturdy one -- all those books had to be packed. Carson took care of most of that -- amongst his many other talents, he's a very good box packer, and he did an outstanding job on this day; his carefully taped box held up under intense punishment halfway around the world, and arrived safely in New Orleans.

Get this; get that; drag all this stuff to Heathrow, accompanied by Carson, who the night before, asked me if I really wanted him to go with me. "Why not?" I asked. "Well, you never spoke to Wagner about his last visit here?" Carson, in leaving Wagner at the airport, made some offhand, and he thought, obviously joking, comment that Wagner was a "known terrorist" -- unfortunately he made this to some sort of airline employee who reported it to Security ... with the result that not only was Wagner thoroughly searched before takeoff, two government agents sat on either side of him the entire trip over the Atlantic!

To the airport, and I made it just in time -- the lines were unbelievably long, the security tight as a drum. ("Look out, here's another of Carson's friends!") On top of that I had to go claim my whiskey and cigarettes, left when I entered England. The upshot of it all was that I was the last person on board my flight, I plopped down in the seat as the plane was taxiing off the runway. Fortunately, there were several empty seats;

I chose a section with three empties, to stretch out a bit. I fell right asleep; after all of yesterday and all the hectic packing, I was exhausted. The events of the two weeks preceding passed through my semi-conscious brain in a pleasant dream. The nightmare started after I awoke.

I looked at the sea far below. Curious -- it was covered with what looked like *grains of rice*, hundreds, in all directions. But those things must be enormous; what could they be? I found out later: *icebergs* the size of city blocks, hundreds of them, covering the sea. Then we hit the turbulence.

Technically what it was was a 90 degree wind encountered about the longitude of Greenland; what it felt like was an awful shaking and rocking, a general movement that sickened you.

But that I could take. What I shouldn't have done was look out my window -- and see something about as bad as what Bill Shatner saw in *The Twilight Zone*. Not only were the wings flapping, but the huge engines were swinging back and forth on their mounts like pendulums. *Shit!*

This went on for like over an hour. The upshot was that we got into New York late, and I missed my flight back to New Orleans. A series of frantic phone calls got me in touch with Toni Weisskopf, and \$40

for a cab got me to palatial Baen Books in the North Bronx. \$40 -- something like twice what I spent on nearly two weeks' worth of transport in England. Well, it was wonderful to see Toni, and sack out on the Baen couch.

Pan Am had booked me a flight leaving late the next afternoon. Okay, I was stuck in NY for the better part of a day. Why not make lemonade out of lemons? Toni took me to *The Cloisters*, perched high on the Hudson palisades nearby.

The Cloisters was absolutely delightful -- a modern structure built on a

medieval plan, with certain authentic architectural elements -- colonnades for cloisters, etc. It houses the Metropolitan Museum's medieval collection, and it was a good wind-down to wander through the high, spacious halls, enjoying spectacular stuff like the



Unicorn Tapestries, beautiful altarpieces and carvings. But mostly, I loved the architecture -- the cloistered gardens with herbs and flowers, the comforting coolness of the massive stone walls, the distant sound of Gregorian chants, seemingly from nowhere. Yes, I could see myself wandering about in an abbot's robe ...

Toni had arranged my transport back to JFK. I made my flight without incident, my parents picked me up at the airport, and as I told the cats, "Well, I'm back."

Watch it ... Rich Dengrove's getting medieval on you again.

WITCHES

Rich Dengrove

I have a different approach than most people to the Witch Hunt between maybe 1420 and 1720. When most scholars write about witches, very understandably they write about the Witch Hunt era. And very understandably they write about the most sensational events, like the Salem witch trials. However, I wonder what sparked the Witch Hunt. What factor was present then, and not before and after. To find out, I will examine events Before and After.

This article was inspired by Norman Cohn's **Europe's Inner Demons** (1975). He approached the witch by studying events Before the Witch Hunt Era. His book is a classic that has changed all scholars' ideas, even scholars he lambasted and who were intellectually opposed to his approach. Then Cohn's book was allowed to go out of print. Others, however, have followed in his footsteps, as does this article modestly. As for After, the accounts thin out here. But Kors and Peters, **Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700: a Documentary History** (1972) proved useful, as well as other readings.

All the makings of the witch hunt were present more than a thousand years before. There was the folk witch, also known as the peasant witch or the crone. Since time immemorial, many have been suspected of practicing harmful magic, known from the early Centuries A.D. on as "maleficium." Women in particular have been suspect, and their magic seen as special. It overturned the established social order where men ruled. Although males have been accused of malevolent magic and called witches, there have been more females accused than males.

The ancient Romans and Greeks believed in crones who practiced powerful, malevolent magic; they were called strix, striges and strigae. Strictly speaking, these were birds who dragged away babies from their cradles, and disemboweled and ate them.

But, sometimes, sorcerous old women transformed themselves into strix. One was Ovid's Dipsas and another Apuleius' Pamphile. In addition, Dipsas could resurrect the dead, and specialized in destroying chastity in the young. As for Pamphile, she could trouble the planets and disturb the gods. Any young, handsome man who repulsed her advances would be killed or turned into a beast. Although Ovid may have written about Dipsas for a sardonic laugh, many peasants in Italy believed, as did many Germanic peoples.

The crone's method of flying changed over the centuries. Later peasants claimed she rode animals and, later still, broomsticks. But she retained her magic and malevolence.

The witch as crone survived into the 17th Century when the accounts of them are more complete. She was often an older woman considered a troublemaker. She had a reputation for cursing everyone and never being satisfied. Periodically, an accused crone would brag about taking magical revenge. The precise pressures that created the peasant crone are unclear. But it helped that peasants believed her magic worked.

The ancient Romans may have lynched witches, but we first hear about that happening during the early Middle Ages and about the Germanic tribes doing it. We know they did it in general and a few specific instances. In 580, the Merovingian Queen Fredegone accused a woman of cursing her and killing her two sons. She had the woman burned alive. Much later, during the 10th Century, an English woman was convicted of driving iron stakes into a man's image. The woman was drowned. In Ghent during the 12th Century, an accused witch was eviscerated and her stomach paraded about town.

Also, by late Antiquity, the Church had the essentials for the Witch Hunt witch: the Devil worshipping pagan, heretic and

magician, as well as the pact with the Devil. St. Augustine (354-450) was very influential here. He claimed Pagans were Devil or demon worshippers; a short hop from claiming heretics were too. In addition, St Augustine claimed all magicians were, even when they scolded and coerced the demons. Even when they claimed to deal not with demons but angels, star spirits, spirits of the four elements, etc.

Someone else was a Devil worshipper, according to St. Augustine: anyone who made a pact with the devil. This could be taken literally. From the Sixth Century comes the story of Theophilis, a steward of a Church who was slandered and dismissed from his position. In despair he went to a Jewish sorcerer who brought him to the Devil. Theophilis signed a pact renouncing his baptism, denying his God and pledging himself to the Devil. In exchange, the Devil secured his reappointment.

Many would be tempted to make St. Augustine a monster. No, just a skilled polemicist. He mostly Christianized common pagan beliefs. By his time, the demons, or daemons, were considered evil. They were invisible beings who lived between the Moon and the clouds, although they periodically stepped foot on Earth in human or monstrous shape. At one time, they might have been considered neither good nor evil, but by St. Augustine's time they were considered evil. St. Augustine did not have to go far to make them more specifically tools of the Devil.

Magicians were also thought of as evil by St. Augustine's pagan audience, and for similar reasons. First, magicians were often supposed to use demons or misuse respectable gods. This was considered impious, the Pagan equivalent of worshipping the Devil. Second, the pagan Greeks and Romans associated magicians with an enemy country, Persia; all St. Augustine did was have them change their allegiance from the Sassanian king to the Devil.

St. Augustine can be absolved of

responsibility for the Witch Hunt for another reason: it did not come for another 1,000 years.

A further component of the Witch Hunt were ancient Romans ideas about antisocial groups. They were typical of the libels and hypocrisies which, throughout history, have been mustered against despised minorities. Before the Christian era, some ancient Romans accused the followers of Catiline of drinking human blood mixed with wine. Later, others accused the Christians of gathering together for incest, eating babies and drinking their blood, and using body parts for ritual purposes. In 177 A.D., such accusations justified the persecution of Christians at present day Lyons, France. Of course, the Christians later accused pagans and heretics of the same crimes. During the Witch Hunt, the witchhunters added that the body parts were used for black magic as well.

You may ask: why were people still making the same accusations in the 17th Century? Their admiration for the Classical world, like we Moderns' for the latest fad or scientific finding.

Despite having a Witch Hunt ideology, the Church was actually more lenient toward witches than the average person before 1000 A.D. It stressed the spiritual world known through the mind, through revelation. To the Church, witchcraft affected us mentally; magic was an illusion of the Devil. You fought it mentally, doubting its existence. The Christianized Laws of the Lombards, 643 A.D., warned against accusing anyone of being a striga, and thus fought not the striga but the belief in her.

The Church even urged you to doubt personal experience. In the 11th Century, Burchard of Worms warned women to doubt that they go out at night through closed doors, kill people, eat their flesh, leave straw in place of their hearts, and then bring the hearts back to life.

You also fought sorcery mentally in another way, with religious ritual and works.

This is shown in the Church's attitude toward impotence. According to the Monk Gratian in 1140, if a sorcerer or sorceress has made a man impotent, the man should have Church rituals performed: penitence, exorcisms, prayers, almsgiving, and other "works." I know the thought of Masses said over a penis sounds very bizarre. But the Church's interest was not prurient but practical: power then was based on inheritance not merit and peace based on intercourse and heirs. The Church felt it very worthwhile to use the mind, and through it the spirit, to preserve social peace.

Even the pact with the Devil, you could fight mentally. The story of Theophilis ends this way. After Theophilis spends many years in harsh penance, a Church ritual, and remorse, the Virgin Mary intercedes with God and God miraculously wrests the pact from the Devil.

Even the "Devil worshipping" pagans were fought mentally. Some missionaries were militant and destroyed the symbols of the pagan religion: trees, wells, temples and feasts. Others tried to turn them into symbols of the Christian religion: convert their temples into churches, build crosses with their sacred trees, and consecrate their sacred wells to some saint. They also replaced days of animal sacrifice with Christian feasting on the animals slaughtered.

The Church's attitude then was very much like Norman Vincent Peale's positive thinking, and Napoleon Hill's **Think and Grow Rich**. Mind over matter; in fact, matter might even be mind.

After about 1100 A.D., this changed. The world became more worldly. Now the Devil and his demons not only fought mankind with illusions, but also with weapons perceivable by the senses.

For example, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274) believed in demons as flesh and blood creatures. He claimed people in their right senses had seen demons with their eyes, and these demons had led magicians to real gold.

St. Thomas did not discard the old view of demons totally. In that backwardlooking time, nothing was discarded. However, a number of people might see illusions simultaneously. For instance, in one tale, a magician cursed a man so everyone who saw him thought he was a horse. Such illusions may as well have been flesh and blood. Witchhunters later used this type of delusion to circumvent the old view.

For St. Thomas, Church rituals were not 100% effective against the Devil. The religious Sacrament of Matrimony was not against a magician who made a groom impotent. Not even the Rite of Exorcism was. Later religious men cast even greater doubt on that rite. Many 16th and 17th Century Protestants even considered Exorcism itself a form of demon worship.

Still, while demons, magicians and heretics could not be fought mentally, they could be fought materially: by jail, the torture chamber, the rack, the stake and the hangman's gallows. Or, privately, by vigilante action. Later the witch could be fought that way too.

Like St. Augustine, many might think of St. Thomas as a monster. No, he was the Great Doctor, one of the greatest theologians of all time. Regarding magicians, he merely reflected prior Church views. There are also two further extenuating circumstances. First, the process that created the Witch Hunt had already begun. Second, the idea that spiritual beings can exist as flesh and blood is not unknown today, for instance among occultists. Of course, modern day occultists do not divide



the world into good and evil spirits, but think of most spirits as in between.

In the centuries before the witch hunt, heretics, magicians, et al were not only demonized in theory but in practice: they were thought to have dealings with actual flesh and blood demons, including the Devil himself.

Heretics were demonized first, by the 11th Century. The Devil in the form of dogs, giant frogs and goats was claimed to preside over their meetings. Also, they were accused of behaving like the ancient Roman stereotype of the antisocial group, with its orgies, cannibalism, human sacrifice and incest. To this was added blasphemy and black magic.

The first heretics demonized was a group at Orleans in present day France in 1022. They were apparently men and women of great piety and learning, and according to the actual court testimony their views resembled the Quakers' centuries later. However, a contemporary chronicler claimed that they had eaten the ashes of dead children and that the Devil came to them as a black man and the angel of light. He gave them heaps of money, and ordered them to deny Christ and abandon themselves to every vice.

The Cathars and the Albigensians were similarly demonized. But the accounts of their supporters and honest opponents gave the lie to this view. The same is true of the Jews.

Conrad of Marburg has the dubious distinction of presiding over the first "witch hunt," 1231-33; he believed any and all accusations of heresies. After he accused a Count Henry of, among other things, riding a crab at a nocturnal orgy, he was assassinated, probably by one of the Count's followers.

During the 14th Century, magicians came to be demonized. In 1320 the Pope John XXII authorized the Church's investigative wing, the Inquisition, to move against demonic magic as a heresy. There was actual demonic magic, manuals for controlling demons called grimoires. While they more often had the demons bound and scolded rather than worshipped, Churchmen, like the Inquisitor

Eymeric, acted as if the latter were more numerous. Sometimes demonic magicians were accused of convening antisocial meetings like the heretics.

In the Alice Kyteler affair (1324-25), the magician was fully demonized. Supposedly, Alice led a group of ten men and women whose practices included blasphemy, curses, black magic and rather gory animal sacrifices. Also, Alice had a private demon with whom she copulated, a black man known as Robin of the Art. The major difference between this affair and later witch persecution was that Alice's accusers did not claim she had direct dealings with the Devil himself, only his demons.

It was not until the 1420s that the demonized magician and the heretic, and the peasant crone, combined into the Witch Hunt witch. The witch of the educated and powerful and the peasant became one. The full power of the State was added to the private efforts of commoners.

So ends my account Before the Witch Hunt; now for my account After. Ultimately, the modern view arrived that the witch is an illusion, again existing mentally. And that destroyed the Witch Hunt.

I must emphasize it was only the demon and demonic magic that became an illusion, not evil conspiracies. Many in the 20th Century have found those. The first part especially was the golden age of conspiracy theory: Jews, Catholics, Communists, Trotskyites, Masons all were accused. It is not that the 20th Century has not killed suspected conspirators either. Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia killed millions. It is just our conspirators do not deal with flesh and blood demons -- even when, as recently, some conspirators are claimed to be Satanists.

The witch hunt ended in some men's mind before others. For some it ended when the Witch Hunt was at it height, the 16th Century. Then Pietro Pomponazzi, Reginald Scot (1538-99) and Michel de Montaigne (1533-95), claimed once again witchcraft is an

illusion: lies, tricks, imagination, madness, misinterpretation. Pomponazzi said that we should reject witches in the name of a purified Aristotle. Scot in the name of a purified religion. Montaigne in the name of a purified common sense.

Not until 1640 did this view become popular and the Witch Hunt and witch belief decline. At the same time, other spiritual beings became illusions too: the spirits of the stars, fairies, and angels. They became fears, hopes, ignorance, foolishness, superstition. The dematerialized demons and devils were to be fought with reason; the dematerialized Angels were to be converted into virtues. Slowly a voluntary admission of witchcraft became madness. An accusation became the lie of some vicious individual. Unchurnable milk became the milkmaid stealing the butter. An involuntary confession became a statement extorted by torture or deceit. The death of a child or animal after an argument became not a curse but a coincidence -- likely in that era of high mortality.

Throughout the 17th Century, various thinkers pushed the view witchcraft is an illusion. Alonso Salazar de Frias, the Grand Inquisitor of Spain, noted in 1610: "There were neither witches nor bewitched until they were talked and written about." Thomas Hobbes in 1651 claimed that the Devil did not even appear in the flesh to carry Christ to the pinnacle of a temple in the Holy City. Even that trip was merely metaphorical. Pierre Bayle in 1703 lamented how people become impotent when they suspected someone has tied a magic knot against them, "knotted their braid." And the impotence lasted until the spell was raised to their satisfaction. Balthasar Bekker in 1691 thought there had to be good angels to protect us against pacts with the Devil.

From the late 17th Century on, believers, like Henry More and Joseph Glanville, complained of ridicule. And, as the 18th Century progressed, it became rare for an 'enlightened' man to believe. The last witch

execution in England occurred in 1689. The last in America in 1692 with the hysteria in Salem. The last in Germany in 1775.

There was a reason why these views took so long to sink in, and at first only the very enlightened would absolutely deny the material existence of witches. It was thought the Bible supported it: for example, one interpretation had it say "Do not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18). While Joseph Addison in 1711 claimed he knew of no particular instance of witchcraft, he believed witches did exist somewhere.

For even longer, the peasants continued to believe witch crones were plentiful and next door. They were coopted much later into the world view that science built. Lynching of witches lasted until the latter 19th Century. Also, as late as 1860, a policeman in an English country district used a divining rod to find a witch.

The peasant witch continues to exist today, especially in Germany, where the witch persecution had been severest. The German witches even retain a patina of the Classical Witch of the learned and educated. To fight witches, German Peasants read the **Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses**, written no earlier than the Eighteenth Century but containing Medieval lore. They also employ "hexenbanners" to fight witches. The witch is still thought to hurt livestock, raise storms, and cause disease, among other curses. In 1976, a neighbor set a poor, elderly woman's house on fire because he accused her of being a witch. Of course, even in Germany, witch belief is waning.

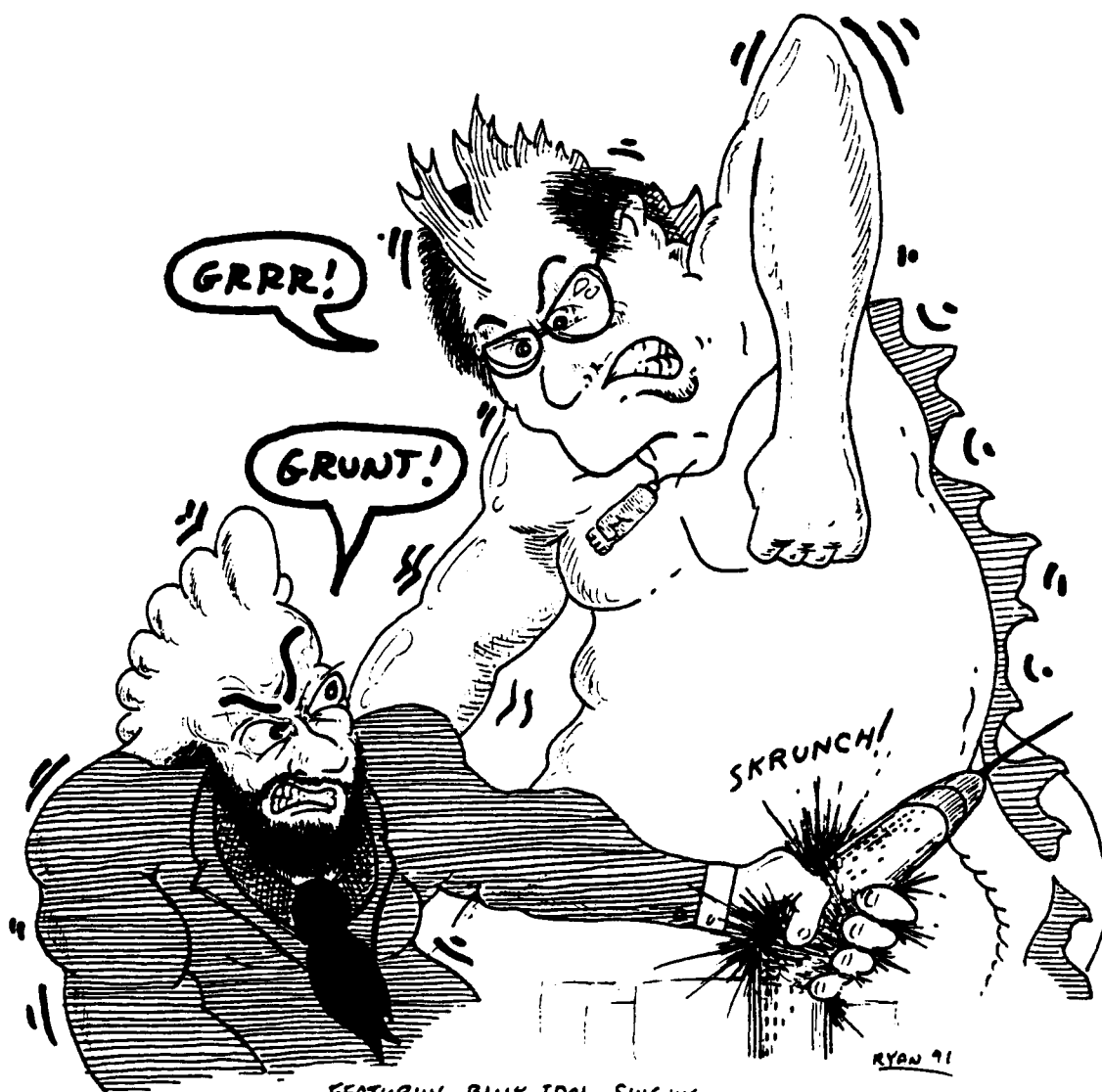
What sparked the Witch Hunt? Common theories are that it was an attempt to wipe out Mother Goddess worship or for men to gain control. But Christians would have always disliked the Mother Goddess and men have always sought to control women. These could very well be causes, but not the spark. However, whether the witch was regarded as material or mental could have been.

THE RYAN MOMENT

Dave Ryan's peculiar humor was at its most pointed when directed at his bros in Southern fandom. Here he interprets an idea by David Schlosser, starring Lon Atkins and myself. Looks like MegaLon's getting *personal*. Ouch!

GoyZILLIAN vs MEGALON

IN NUTRACOLOR!



FEATURING BILLY IDOL SINGING
REBEL YELL 91 !!!

MIDNIGHT RAMBLER

A few idle, exhausted notes on 11/17/95, the night before this third **Challenger** heads for the printer. Since I do this thing so sporadically (only three issues in three years) and spend so much printing it (96 pages times 300 copies times 2.5 cents a shot ... you figure it out) I tend to bombast only on huge and bombast-able topics. I need to let my mind go numb and yammer on lighter subjects from time to time. So how about *the creation of the universe*?

I'm sure everyone has seen the Hubble telescope's astonishing photograph of the Eagle star-making nebula. Towers of cosmic dust and gas *6 trillion miles* in height, bubbles swelling forth to pop forth stars like diamonds from boiling mud -- man oh man. Nothing I have ever read, even in the grandest space operas of E.E. Smith or Edmond Hamilton, prepared me for the sudden rush of raw awe the picture engendered.

The size ... the power ... Metaphorize those gaseous figures to the human form, and our entire solar system, sun-center to Pluto's rim, has the equivalent proportion of a mole. The Earth itself? Less than a pore. And a person? Not even the DNA in a virus.

It puts Creation into perspective. But forgive me if I call it a *false* perspective. Because a 6-trillion-mile-tall tower of gas and dust is only *stuff*. Just like the dust the vacuum missed in the corner ... only more of it. We cosmic microbes may be sub-atomic in relation to the size of these star-making pillars of cloud, but we mites alone can care about one another and try to understand this universe, no matter how big or how beautiful it is. It's big, it's beautiful, but it's only material.

Nevertheless, it's *damn* big, and it's *damn* beautiful, and it's damn wonderful to see. This is an astonishingly great time to be alive. Yay Hubble. Go, God, go.

I must note here the passage of a personal fannish milestone. With the November mailing of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, its 188th, I will have completed 25 years of continuous membership there, having never missed a mailing or owed pages, and having been Official Editor on three

different occasions, including the period which saw SFPA produce the greatest -- and largest -- apa mailing of all time: 1750- page SFPA 100. You see, I may have done but three issues of **Challenger**, but I've done *150* issues of **Spiritus Mundi** ...

Apas ... I'm also in KAPA, now, and have ridden rosters in FAPA and SAPS and K-a and LASFAPA and, briefly, Myriad and RAPS and probably a few others I've forgotten. So I speak from some experience when I advise those new to fanzining to try an apa first. The expense is less, the expectations more generous, the yield in egoboo much quicker ... and you get to put a fanzine together. If you're real lucky, you'll chance into a crowd like SFPA, an *open* in-group, with traditions and personality accessible to anyone willing to do the zines and talk to the other members. Apas may be a dying form -- the Internet performs similar functions instantaneously and without the necessity of paper -- but dying or not, I recommend them to any fan with a big mouth and the urge to flap it in print. And it's great training for the genzines.

I figure that, presented as we are with an amazing quantity of material in the various genres, one should start with the best. And how do we know the best? Well, by review, by reputation, by the advice of respected friends, and ... by what's won an *award*. Naturally, awards being subject to the same vagaries of human frailty as any other group judgment, you'll occasionally waste time on mediocre clinkers, and miss some gems, but by and large the award winners you read will be

*see **RAMBLER**, p. 90*

EPISTLES

We begin with the two anonymous responses I received to last issue's request for defenses of recreational drugs. This remains a question of great interest here, so if you want to chime in for our next issue, feel free. Same routine: I won't use your name and I won't claim the last word.

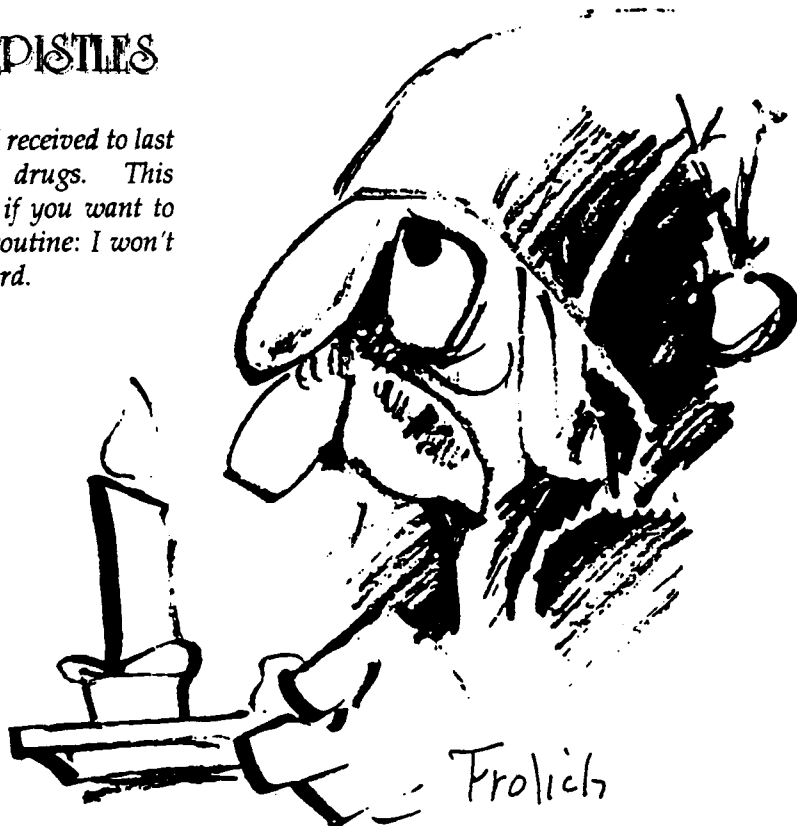
I

Perhaps the most serious difference you and I might have would be the subject of substance abuse. Unlike Ted White, I would never allow that argument to bias our friendship, however. Let me address this issue candidly ... but keep in mind my cultural background, that of a white, middle-class suburban liberal, who went to college in 1970, right at the flash-point of the cultural revolution.

First — *legalize drugs*, or at least decriminalize the stuff. It's like prostitution — the "victim" is also the "perp", which defies logic. Further, I've seen **Prozac** screw up three friends, but I don't know anybody among forty or so reefer-heads of my acquaintance who have ever suffered worse than bronchitis from the stuff. Cocaine is a far overrated and overpriced experience, and in a whole different dimension than marijuana. And in a different universe *altogether* are the hallucinogens. *I've enjoyed all of them*, in careful and quite clinical *moderation*, except for pot, which — along with tobacco — I enjoy to excess, even as we speak, in fact ... *

I've never struck an "attitude", such as you imply, in any kind of "freaks" versus "straights." I don't *drink*, but I don't feel any disdain from imbibers around me when I order an iced tea or a ginger ale. By the same token, I would not *insist* that a non-smoker have a toke, when I twist one up.

But I know what you *mean* about "attitude" ... Once, at a party, a young lady



stupidly accepted two Quaaludes from a pre-med student (!) and washed'em down with a martini. We had to force her to puke'em up, then walked her around until she recovered. Another friend took several hits of Orange Barrel Acid and drank Tennessee Moonshine all afternoon; he was found two days later on a ledge in a Gatlinburg hotel, with *no idea* how he got there. Both cases demonstrate an arrogant disdain for the consequences.

However, I've had *many* grand and illuminating experiences, augmented or even produced by *careful* and *prudent* use of controlled substances. I've had out-of-body experiences, visions/revelations, telepathy, and a humbling, zen-like understanding of my own *place* in the cosmos. One must be a brave warrior to take psychedelics, however, and I've not touched the stuff since 1978. (I wonder what *tripping* at a big convention would be like? Naaah — overwhelming sensory input

and no privacy for contemplation.)

II

Central to your condemnation of drugs [in **Challenger** no. two] was aggravation at the indifference of "middle class druggies" to the chaos "caused" by dope in the lower classes. I believe you'd be hard-pressed to justify connecting the drug use of the ghetto with the recreational doping of the middle class – and it's unfair, I think, to make a *causal* connection. The lower class – can I just say *black people* and get it over with? – has sought solace in dope of various kinds since long before either one of us was born. Before crack there was heroin. Before – and beyond – heroin there was that pervasive crutch of the poor, everywhere and everywhen: booze. So the underclass did not learn doping from middle class users; if anything, the idea swam up to the middle class from "below", as a byproduct of the interest in black culture which arose from the birth of rock'n'roll.

Also, you make too much of the alleged condescension of drug users. Surely you acknowledge the pressures on people who

engage in behavior condemned by society, especially *harmless* behavior, and can understand why they're paranoid and can seem obnoxious. Is it so surprising that people who believe, quite accurately, that they're being put upon will draw the wagons, huddle together, and seem to shun those who aren't "with" them? Their rudeness and their seeming arrogance are understandable under the circumstances. As a safe member of the straight majority, you're in no danger, and shouldn't be so sensitive.

As for legalities, you are quite correct to place the onus for the shrivelling of Constitutional rights on the authorities. I am convinced that the police class has both instigated an irrational fear of drug use and used that fear to attack the independence of our people. This is *their* fault, not the fault of "druggies," who want nothing more than that most basic right, the right to be left alone. To attack druggies for the injuries done to the Fourth Amendment by the war on drugs is to blame the victim. As for the medical dangers of drug use, I assert they stem from ignorance of their effects. I know too many productive and happy users to believe that drugs cannot be beneficially enjoyed, without harm. Of course, some will misuse drugs, but I put these people in the same category as obsessives of all sorts; it is the obsessiveness that is the hazard, not the *object* of the obsessiveness.

Finally, I ask you to remember our mutual youth and the drug revolution of the sixties. I gather from your "People's Park" article that you lived through the heart of those times, albeit on the outskirts of the action. Much drug use then stemmed from an honest attempt to explore and expand human consciousness. Such is the core meaning of the word "psychedelic" ... mind expansion. This was a serious endeavor, a serious attempt to move beyond the strictures to a better understanding of human consciousness and its place in the world. I imagine you would say that it came to naught, but I would blame that on the repressive society which was completely



unwilling to accept the positive aspects of *truly* changing one's mind.

And now, on with our regular program ...

Roger Sims
34 Creekwood Square
Glendale OH 45245
received 3-18-95

Kudos to Associate Editor Dennis Dolbear for the excellent layout. It is gorgeous and one that I hope to be able to duplicate in the next issue of **Fantasy-Scope** due any day at your door, p.o. box or mailbox. However, not before I mail it. (How clever I am to work my zine title into the very first paragraph of a LOC to your zine.) I could say that it is a very good first issue but I would have expected no less from a faned of your calibre. While I am not sure I agree with all of the philosophy, the writing and presentation is flawless. The title pages for each article are works of art. But it is hard for me to decide which is the best illo. When I look at the cover I think that the best is Peggy Ranson's, however when I look at Kelly Freas' character assassination of you ...

On the way home tonight I heard two silly-talking ex-sport guys who now have a radio show on the local station. One expressed the opinion that men are like microwave while women are slow crock pots. I'm not sure where this should go in this LOC, however this is as good a place as any.

Funny what we remember about Worldcons. Since St. Louiscon was your first you remember lots. To me since it was not my first it was hot, bad elevators and the highlight was going to the Zoo. But then I was not-too-long married person and therefore not looking for any "adventure."

I can well understand your discomfort with the "spray." Shortly before his untimely death, Jackson our male cat would have the urge to urinate while sleeping next to my warm body sometime in the middle of the night. His

box was one floor below and the heat was off so he decided that the bed made an excellent litter box.

If this letter reaches you, you will have an application to First Fandom which I had Ray Beam send me for you.

Thanks loads ... but then, since my first fanac was more than thirty years ago – a LOC in a '62 issue of The Flash – I qualify for Associate Status in First Fandom, at least!

Roger adds a P.S. to his letter, obviously a LOC to Chall #1, saying that he'd forgotten to send it when he wrote it – on December 16, 1993!

Teddy Harvia
701 Regency Drive
Hurst TX 76054-2307
received 3-23-95

You need a better abbreviation for your fanzine title. "Chall" sounds like a medieval demon. Unless that is what you want.

If the two creatures with Linda [Krawecke] at the bar represent you and Dolbear, I understand why she fled New Orleans screaming.

I've never seen anyone review Worldcon p.r.s before. They are functional documents with little individual personality.

Your editorial writing seems a throwback to the 60s. I haven't read about first-person "the kid" in decades. And first-person "they" is disembodied.

The photos of the World Fantasy Awards designed by Gahan Wilson convince me cartoonists have no business trying to be serious. But seriously, folks, it's goofy.

Buck Coulson
2677W-500W
Hartford City IN 47348
received 3-23-95

I don't think anyone has an answer to the drug problem. Time, possibly; eventually something new – and probably worse – will

come along. Since I'm not a city dweller, it doesn't affect me too much. There are drugs out here, of course, but street shootings are unknown in Hartford City and rare in Marion, which is a larger town. We get the Marion newspaper because there's nothing much in the Hartford City one. (Also, since I'm not a city dweller, I probably know less about drugs than do city dwellers.)

Thoroughly enjoyed Hogan's tale, though I figured out the joke well before the end of it. Us small-time authors don't get that sort of treatment. Now I *have* shared a room at a convention with four women – but one of them was Juanita, so there was no hanky-panky.

Excellent article on People's Park. I have no idea what I was doing in May 1969; I checked a **Yandro** for that month and the big news was that Juanita had sold a novel to Dell. We heard the news about the Park, of course, but it didn't seem so important in the midwest. Bunch of Californians; you know what they're like.

"My First First Degree" was very well done, but how will you feel if Victor gets out and kills somebody else? Unlikely; sure. Impossible? Not at all. I'm afraid I'm well to the right on murderers; never mind how they got that way, what's their probable future if they're left alive?

As for your answer to my letter; I find nearly all black "excesses" understandable. Which does not mean I condone them. If a black (or white) man broke into my house, intent unknown, I'd do my best to kill him. I think I'd probably succeed, I certainly wouldn't regret the act. It's unlikely ever to happen; people don't act like that out here, which is one reason I live here. (All this is assuming he kept coming, of course. Would I shoot a housebreaker in the back? Maybe.) I really don't believe that having a bad home life should make any difference in judgment of criminals; the penalty should be strictly on what they've done. Blacks have been given a bad deal in this country ever since they've been

here, and were never more lawless than whites until recently (if they are now; I get such a variety of "statistics" that it's hard to be sure.) So why should a bad home life be an excuse? Most of our noble pioneer forefathers had lousy home lives, by our standards. The same laws should apply to whites, of course.

You're wrong about Jack Kemp being the only Republican hope. Indiana senator Richard Lugar has announced that he'll run. If he gets the nomination, I'll vote for him. Otherwise I'll probably vote Democrat again. Lugar isn't well-known outside Indiana because he's never made a lot of idiotic statements to the press; he tends to business. (He's also the only man who ever won four terms as a senator from Indiana.)

I don't consider myself a feminist, but I did get an offer to join NOW recently. I thought about it; how many males can say they belong to both NOW and the NRA? But in the end I didn't take it up, partly because Juanita considers NOW too radical.

On my letter; did I actually type "Herbert" Couch, or did you miscopy it? It should have been Norb, anyway.

Juanita Coulson
2877W-500N
Hartford City IN 47348
received 3-23-95

Allo,

I was active in the civil rights movement in the early '50's, before Selma and Montgomery. (There was plenty to do in the North as well as the South, back then.) I'm a Depression Baby and a War Kid who worked hard for their voting, schooling, and legal rights with the elders of today's run-amok segment of the black population. As a result I have, to put it mildly, mixed feelings about some of the youngsters' behavior. They ain't got in *bad* at all, not compared to what their grandparents went through. Indeed, life's tough, but it's been lots tougher. Their grandparents put up with far, far worse without resorting to violence

... and so ...

Re Gettysburg and "human valor": Didn't black Union soldiers who fought at the infamous Crater demonstrate an equal, if somewhat different form of phenomenal valor? Demonstrate it throughout the war, come to that? Bravely confronting death even while being despised and denigrated by one's own comrades and many leaders of the cause one served seems proof of truly uncommon courage.

The Crater is part of the well-preserved fortifications at the battlefield in Petersburg, Virginia. Indeed, as you say, it is a striking and unforgettable place, but the overwhelming aura about the place is one of rank stupidity and tragedy. Perhaps an historical aside is in order.

The last great battle of the Civil War, at Petersburg, was a siege of some eleven months, with the Federals dug in outside of the Confederate lines. (The battle provided European generals with a model for the trench warfare they would be fighting within the term of a lifetime.) Tiring of the wait, ingenious yankee engineers dug a tunnel from their lines to a spot beneath the rebel fortifications, which destination they loaded with high explosives and which explosives they then ignited. The explosion was the loudest and most awesome in the history of warfare. Not until the Brits tried a similar stunt in World War I would it be surpassed.

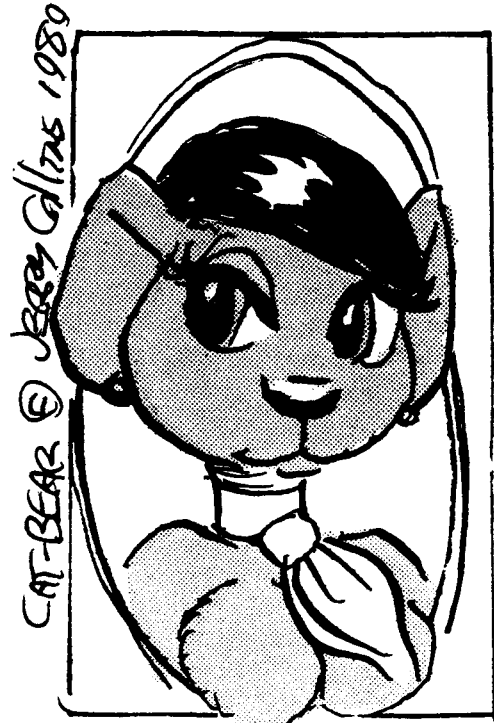
Anyway, the plan was for well-trained U.S.C.T. —

United States Colored Troops — to charge in **around** (note) the resulting crater, opening the Confederate lines. However, political correctness was even then, in 1864, a menace to sound thinking; Grant decided that it would be poor public relations to sacrifice black soldiers in such a risky charge, so he substituted regular troops at the last minute. The explosion came, some 400+ rebel soldiers went home to Jesus, and the Federals charged ... **into** the Crater. These troops, y'see, hadn't known they were supposed to run around the great hole they'd popped in the Confederate breastworks.

They ran in — and couldn't get out: the sides of the Crater were too steep. After the boys in grey

recovered their wits and rallied, they surrounded the Crater and poured fire down into it. Do I hear comparisons with fish in a barrel? 2000 yankees exchanged their rifles for harps.

I've been there. I walked the length of the Tunnel, which is undoubtedly intact in places; here and there along its span sinks betray spots where it has collapsed. I stood on the lip of the Crater, which has been meticulously preserved, and wondered, just as I did at Gettysburg ... could I have done



it? Charged in, like my Indiana greatgreatgrandfather may have ... or like my rebel ancestors, stood above that milling crush of panicked men, and butchered them? I don't know. (By the way, my old teacher, the late John William Corrington, gave a splendid account of the battle in his novel, **And Wait for the Night**.) But the courage of the black Union soldier is not to be denied. Consider the assault on South Carolina's Fort Wagner, immortalized in the

superb film, Glory. Men who were fighting for something personal as well as ideal – such as the very concept of liberty – were capable of heroism stunning, wondrous, terrible ... and inspiring. That's what attracts me to the Civil War, the incredible people who fought it.

Sheryl Birkhead
23629 Woodfield Rd.
Gaithersburg MD 20882
rec'd 3-30-95

The merman on your cover was at first reminiscent of Peggy Ranson's style – then, I thought words might be hidden in the fish texture. Nope – not that I can find. Nice.

Sounds [from Jim Hogan's article] as if the Baycon com *has* a sense of humor – gotta watch out for that type! Rich Dengrove – haven't seen a Jomp Jr. lately ...

Huh?

Brad Foster
P.O. Box 165246
Irving TX 75016
received 4-9-95

On your question of recreational drug use, I don't use rec-drugs, or drink alcohol, or basically do anything to "change" my mental state – I figured it's enough off-center as it is. But I've no problem with anyone who wants to use such stuff. On the other hand, being a tried'n'true conservative-liberal, though I believe anyone should be allowed to do anything they want to do as long as it doesn't cause harm to anyone else or anyone else's property, once they step over that line, for whatever reason, I'm all for caving in their skulls so they don't do it again. Sort of a fascist free-willer, or something? God, labels can be soooo difficult to hang sometimes.

Hogan's BayCon speech was wonderful, I had to read that one to Cindy while we were driving back from the post office the day the issue came in.

On the question in the **Epistles** to me.

Nope, I've not gotten any grief in fandom from my own erotica, but then most of fandom isn't really aware of it, or the other dozen things I do. Actually, aside from people giving me some disdainful looks as they pass my tables in dealers' rooms, I've been lucky to only deal with folks who don't make it a personal crusade to let me know how much they dislike my stuff. Small favors and all that. (So, you wanna buy a feelthy postcard? Well, actually, it's sophisticated erotica for discriminating adults, don'tcha know.)

Speaking of which, got to get back to the drawing board.

Rodney Leighton
R.R. #3 Pugwash
N.S. CANADA B0K 1L0
received 4-12-95

Thank you for **Challenger #2**. If I am not mistaken, it is one of the most beloved tenets of science fiction fandom that a person can publish his zine whenever the hell he has the time and desire to do so. How can one be late?

As per my normal procedure, I skimmed the entire zine, decided it wasn't quite as impressive as #1, then checked my own loc (doesn't everyone?); read the rest of the locs, the editorial, the zine reviews and then started at the front and went through the zine. Might as well follow my trail.

I liked those toons by the lady named after your city and state [Nola Frame-Gray]; they're cute. This is a good way to handle locs, with your comments included. I saw [wrestler] Bobo Brazil quite a bit on TV and a couple times in person.

Life in Pugwash? Gosh, I don't know. I live 2 1/2 miles away. Seriously, it's a very quiet spot. If we consider the area and not just Pugwash, which is only a village, it's very quiet and maybe, dull. In 21 years of living in the area, I've only had a couple of brushes with the law, both due to traffic accidents. That Victor you mention committed one more murder than

I have heard of in this area for 20+ years. Of course, I don't mingle much and thus don't hear much. Pugwash is a small place, with two grocery stores, a bank, post office, two garages and a few other stories. The internationally known maker of pretty doodads, Seagull Pewter, is the major employer along with the famous salt mine. Lots of lobster fishermen and a few fools like me who work in forestry. We have a lawyer, but he travels about forty miles one way to practice. Cyrus Eaton was born here and Anne Murray has a "cottage" about four miles from here as the crow flies.

But I can't think of much to say. I know quite a few people don't have any friends, which is a personal statement rather than a statement about the community. They hold dances, bingo games and various meetings, none of which I ever attend. There's a cop shop with 3 or 4 members of the RCMP there; most of their work is traffic-related or chasing pot growers. There is some crime; stores are occasionally broken into but it is a sufficiently quiet place that it is a common sight to see parked vehicles running with their owners nowhere in sight. I never take the keys out of my truck when I go into the village. We have a few potheads and a few growers. Very little hard drugs that I am aware of. It's a moderately depressed area, economically. Only one homeless person I've ever heard of. The weather sometimes sucks, like now, April 3, and it's snowing. What else do you want to know? Oh, street signs in Pugwash are in English and Gaelic.

And let's not forget how physicist Joseph Rotblat brought the cream of western intelligensia to Pugwash in the fifties, to protest nuclear proliferation -- an act which led eventually to Rotblat's 1995 Nobel Peace Prize.

I've never experienced racism in person. There was a black guy in the community where I grew up; the only difference anyone ever mentioned was that he was taller than anyone else. In college, one of my classmates was from Kenya; he was treated just like everyone else.

That joke about only being able to see a black person in the dark if he smiled was proven true when the lights went out. Somebody said, "Smile, Charlie, so we know where you are," and he did. He thought it was a great joke.

After that Patri pup [who? huh?] suggested in **The Zero-G Lavatory #3** that I might be related to Ted White, I got to wondering if Ted is so vicious in fanzine reviews due to disappointment and frustration. Perhaps he keeps trying to find fanzines which resemble those of the '50's and '60's and when whatever he reads doesn't measure up to his standards [or differs from them], he lashes out blindly in all directions. Which still doesn't justify things like an attack on Southern fandom in general and making fun of Franz Miklis' use of English but it is an idea.

I think too many trucklers have heaped praise on White's vitriol, with no mind to the fairness or truth of what he has to say, and he responds to that unfortunate reinforcement. If he possessed a trace of balance or tolerance or humor or grace, it might lend his criticisms greater value, in that their point wouldn't get lost in a fog of hostility. I'm too old and too fat to worry about him.

Or print anything more about him, at least not until he attacks me or mine again. Challenger is about much more than the abusiveness of Ted White, and now that my readers have had their say, those other matters will have our exclusive attention.

Hey, "Filthy Pierre" is a character I created for a wrestling zine. What's this **Analog** thing? [It's a magazine edited by Stanley Schmidt, but never mind that now.] Who is this person who dares to rip off my character? Who was, by the way, a Canadian lumberjack.

Who doubtless "sleeps all night and works all day." Tall, genial Erwin Strauss has been known in fandom as "Filthy Pierre" for at least 20 years (I met him in '76). Does your character tootle on his own mouth organ?

Can't comment on drugs. I haven't smoked a

joint. I've met a few hopheads and I once used to visit someone who grew some pot in her basement and liked to smoke it. And some of my family knew a guy who got high on pot and red wine and took a shotgun and blew an old storekeeper's head off for refusing him credit. I've always considered that my head was sufficiently fucked up without chemistry inducing still more confusion.



No. No. No. The real beauty of fandom ... especially fanzine fandom ... is that each and every person is given his say, regardless of how bigoted, idiotic or damnfoolish it is. If you can't find a publisher who will print your dissertations, well, publish your own damned zine. Somewhere in the world are people with similar views. But, opposing views are always accepted and considered. 80% or so of the

LOCers who mentioned Ted White's reviews in **Habakkuk** nos. 3 and 4 had negative or downright derogatory comments to make. Yet, some people liked them. Bill Donaho is apparently happy. I can't imagine White doing more but maybe he will. But I don't believe it's due to tolerance, or weakness or neurosis. It stems from a heartfelt believe in freedom of speech and acceptance of other views ... as well as debate. Or, at least, that's my view.

Good article on medieval rhetoric. Rich Dengrove should have connected his article to the rhetoric in modern day life. SFanzines in particular.

"People's Park" was interesting but didn't really grab me, possibly because I have nothing to relate it to. I think it was 1969 when I stared down the leader and walked unmolested through the middle of about 50 Hell's Angels but that's the closest I've ever come to a street fight or riot or anything like that.

Do you mean the "Mirror,Mirror" I recently read?

Maybe, if you're thinking of the excellent Jerome Bixby Star Trek.

Oh, surely you know an Aurora is the Canadian version of the Hugo. I think.

What's the Aurora look like?

Fred Chappell
c/o English Department
UNC-G
Greensboro NC 27412
received 4-14-95

I'm glad **The Lodger** reached you okay and I thank you for **Challenger #2**. It's the first actual fanzine I've seen in years, though I do see **Locus** and **NYRSF** pretty regularly. (Teaching sf I try to keep up, though these days the job is utterly impossible.)

But I enjoyed the zine. Had to recall some of the ancient lingo (LOC, etc.), but it came back pretty quickly. And the Rotsler illos brought back memories too; seems like no fmz of the '50s was without at least one. And I

enjoyed all the political comment, as well as the sf and fandom stuff. And it's good to see that feuds are still abundant. I'd hate for fandom to lose its fighting spirit!

To explain: Fred sent me a copy of his '94 World Fantasy Award-winning story when I lamented to him that it was impossible to find. A worthy read indeed; as always, though, Fred's fantastic subject masks his true theme: the poetic mind.

Dr. Henry L. Welch
1525 16th Ave.
Grafton WI 53024-2017
received 4-19-95

Thanks for **Challenger** no. 2. As expected a much better zine than Ted White's review in **Habakkuk** would have led anyone to believe. I found the discussion of the death penalty interesting, but you have a tendency to repeat yourself and take too long getting to the point. As an engineer I generally prefer short and incisive.

Not possible when you're dealing with intensely personal moral matters like whether or not a man deserves to die. Such questions aren't quantifiable, and "short and incisive" isn't always possible. Or desirable.

Gene Stewart
HQ USAFE - IN
PSC 2 Box 6151
APO AE 09012
received 4-19-95

Challenger #2 reached me yesterday, and I'm forced to write at once to say how much I enjoyed it. Also, please note new address; I've moved to Germany for the interim. Castles on every hill, villages on ridges and valleys, and dark, misty forests surround me like a frightbebeit.

With its variety of illustrations, articles, and subjects, your 'zine directly addresses some points I'd intended for the apparently-vaporized fanzine known by the old blues song, **Rastus**

Johnson's Cakewalk. The following five paragraphs are what I wrote.

Most of **RJC 5** devoted itself to lamenting fanzines' general lack of genuine articles, and I'm forced to agree, judging from the narrow selection I've seen of late.

Someone made the point that, as writers become more professional, or professionally accepted, they tend to start thinking of fanzine writing as automatically second-rate. This mistakes cart for horse in my view. What distinguishes fan writing — good, bad, or indifferent — is not quality, but subject matter.

If you've an idea fit for **The Times Literary Supplement** or **The New York Times Review of Books** or **GRANTA**, by all means, write and submit it there. If, on the other hand, you've something to say to or about fans, fandom, fanzines, or things they'd like, then it'd be irrelevant to submit it to a publication other than a fanzine. Sober up, folks. **The New Yorker** ain't interested in fanac or con reports, alas.

And as for the lack of articles in fanzines, it seems that anyone with something to say and the ability to say it with some passion or style or wit will, indeed, say it, so perhaps the trouble is not in our 'zines, but in ourselves. Too often fanzines decay into grumpy letters of complaint about ill health and world ills: why? With the scope, color, and amazement of science fiction from which to choose, why focus on one's bodily decrepitude, one's mental malaise, one's discomfort with the *Weltanschauung*? Such behavior is perverse.

We ought to be embarrassed by the wealth of our choices. We fans have entirely too much to discuss; over which to squabble; with which to come to terms. SF has exploded from its old constraints, yet we remain in the open cell, cowering; why?

And along comes **Challenger** into my field of awareness, addressing many of these very things, righting wrongs, and in general showing crudzines where to get off, if not how to hop on.

Illustrations and typography were well-chosen and executed, and I like the black-on-yellow. Good use of white space, too, and varying the appearance of the page among articles and sections works quite well for me.

Linda Krawecki's Karl Edward Wagner reminiscence was sensitive and as good a salute as I've seen in the genre. His untimely but unsurprising death is still cause for head-shaking and regret. Even with doom and self-sabotage writ large in that huge guy, he managed some good work. Just before his death I had a grouchy note from him concerning a submission; I hope I haven't lost it.

Combined with the letter from Robert Bloch, this issue packed some emotion. And that's on top of the editorial and some of the articles. Are we, then, entering a fannish period of Southern Gothic?

Guy Lillian – Your apology to Ted White was very white of you, pardon ancient usage and no racism intended. (Anyone offended, go look it up, and besides, PC be damned.)

Thanks – but again note how specific that apology was. I retract nothing of what I said about the tone of White's reviews or the epic arrogance, inaccuracy and stupidity of his attack on Southern fandom.

Please try to avoid exploitative sensationalizing in your book about the rapist. ("Serial" is a superfluous PC add-on, in my lexicon.) If you write as sensitively and perceptively about the crime, the criminal, and the clashing systems as you did about saving a man from the death table, People's Park, and Gettysburg, then you'll do fine, but I'm chary of publishers – their motive, their preferences, and the temptations they might proffer.

James P. Hogan's tale of how they "got" him at Baycon would never have made it into the marginalia of **Rich Dengrove's** Medieval Rhetorics, methinks, but I enjoyed both. Did notice quite a few typos in the Hogan piece, and one of them – a tendency to place an "m" after a comma, as in ",m" – showed up again

sporadically elsewhere, but not as densely. Just a picked nit.

"People's Park" was an evocative article. You managed to place yourself amidst the events and times quite well, and achieved a perspective both personal and instructive – a difficult feat of writing. Good going.

Toni Weisskopf, whom I sort of yelled at a couple times last year, offered a refreshing gush of enthusiasm that left me smiling. It is cool at times.

Alan Hutchinson's satirical linking of postal violence and death by elephant cracked me up, but the side-bars are what convinced me. What ho, research!

"My First First Degree," while not as melodramatic as Grisham or Turow, proved compelling, and underscored its points elegantly. Having written some about death row and its unavoidable cruelties, I'm particularly gratified that your article didn't whitewash the "... pathetic, stupid, drug-mangled murderer..." whose life you saved. All too often in such matters people opt for a sort of parallel to Save the Cute Animals environmentalism, in which criminals are assessed and judged largely by the social impression they make. This leads to such idiocies as the judge apologizing to Ted Bundy – same judge would've snarled had he faced a deranged, scruffy Manson type, probably. And that's too bad. We can't base our laws or their application on social conformity or appearances. Excessive crimes don't validate excessive punishments, and general ugliness ought not affect legal decisions.

Comments on the unconscionable Simpson verdict elsewhere.

You mention **And the Sea Will Tell** – have you read John Berendt's **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**? I think you'd like it.

Chuck Lipsig and **Milt Stevens** – Howdy fellow Bucketeers.

Dennis Dolbear's account of the meeting with Dennis Hopper/Frank Booth was great fun to read and the autographed beer a

great touch.

Your Gettysburg article, **Guy**, reminded me of the times I visited there as a child. Have you read **Lincoln at Gettysburg** by Garry Wills? It's full of stuff I'd not known before, a regular exegesis on the subject, and the points made about the importance of both the cult of death and the Great Tyrant's Gettysburg Address are worth considering in the context of the nobility of Pickett's Charge and the enduring central truths of Lincoln's vision. *[Wills' book is grand reading, recommended to anyone with an interest in American history or the principles of great rhetoric.]*

It also sounds like you'd enjoy a visit to Stone Mountain, Georgia, if you've not already been there. *[Yes, and wish Gutzon Borglum had finished his facade.]*

So keep up the diversity, the good writing, and the quality of **Challenger** no. two and you'll soon find your 'zine being mentioned by awards committees.

Curt Phillips

21800 Green Springs Rd.

Abingdon VA 24211 (Note: New Zip Code)
received 4-23-95

Good cover by Mark Fults. The perspective and anatomical rendering seem perfect (not that I'm any expert on the anatomy of mer-people, but it looks right to me). In fact your artwork and graphic design generally are much improved. I particularly like Dave Carson's work. (Have you seen his artwork in **H.P. Lovecraft's Book of Horror**, which he edited with Stephen Jones? Excellent and highly recommended.) His caricature on pg. 5 is disturbing but made me flash on Karl Wagner instantly and I suppose that was the whole point. Karl sure enough had the devil on his back for as long as I knew him, and in the end maybe the devil won, but I'll bet Karl gave him one hell of a fight.

Thank you, Linda Krawecka, for giving us these stories about Karl. You've written about him better than anyone else I've read so

far.

I only really knew a different side of Karl Edward Wagner. Of course I was aware of the drinking and some of the other things that troubled his life, but we had a common interest in old books and pulp magazines, in science fiction and fantasy, and in the writers who wrote dark fantasy in the days gone by. I knew the Karl Wagner who collected pop bottles as a kid so he could turn them for the penny deposit and buy old copies of **Weird Tales** with the proceeds. Did you know that Karl was one of the few people on this planet who owned a complete set of **Weird Tales**? For pulp collectors (like me) that's one of the supreme accomplishments. And it should be noted that Karl became a small press publisher (along with David Drake and another partner) to make sure that Manly Wade Wellman's best stories were preserved in hardbound books. He damn near bankrupted himself doing it, but those four volumes that Carcosa House produced are among the most magnificent books of their kind ever published. Sure, Karl Wagner had demons that gouged him, but he also had a passion for the world of fantastic literature that — to me — was far more important. He followed Wellman in the sub-genre of Appalachian fantasy — usually set against the myths and legends of the mountains of Tennessee, Virginia and North Carolina. Since he was a native of that region himself he was able to bring an authenticity to his stories that Wellman — who was raised elsewhere — was never able to achieve. The only time I ever told Karl that I thought his stories were better than Wellman's he dismissed the suggestion immediately and refused to take it seriously, but I stand by my assertion. David Drake is the only other writer I know of who's written the same sort of dark Appalachian fantasy as well (**Old Nathan**, published by Baen Books, is an excellent example) but unfortunately he doesn't publish in that field very often.

Dave Drake's horror stories set in Vietnam are some of the strongest tales of either type I've ever

read. "Best of Luck" ... "Something Had to be Done" ... "The Dancer in the Flames" ... all superb. Fine guy, too.

You ask if recreational drug use has a place in Fandom. Well, if that means having to put up with Ted White I say "hell no". Seriously, a big reason you don't see me at the SF cons anymore is the increasingly widespread tolerance of the drug culture at the events. (Okay, I'll admit that a much bigger reason is that I can't afford to pay \$75.00 to \$100.00 for a Worldcon ticket anymore.)

Do as I do, and join by balloting in the site selection contest. Cheapest way to join a worldcon.

I took up science fiction fandom because I was interested in science fiction itself, but the

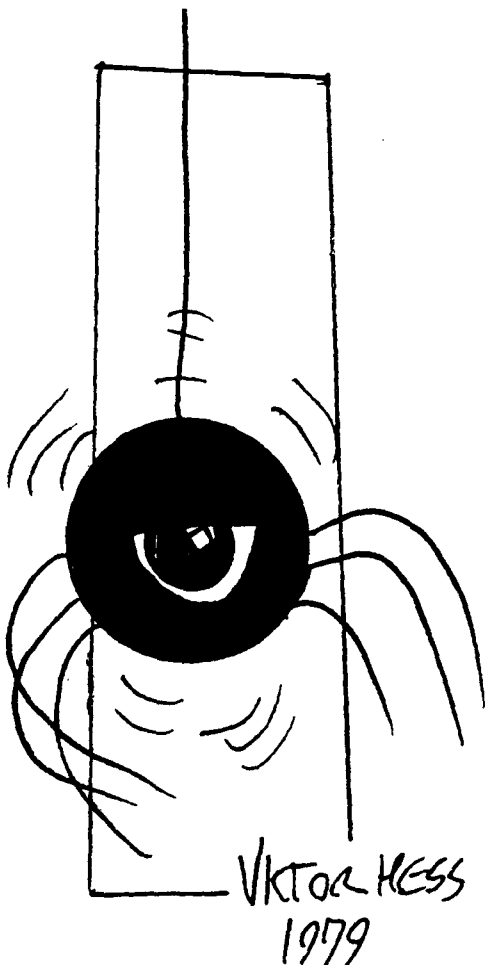
SF world's traditional tolerance for folks who are different has made our cons a refuge for far too many dopers to suit me. I remember going to a room party at a small con in Virginia specifically to meet the con's GOH. I hadn't been in the room 5 minutes before he pulled out a pipe, packed it with marijuana, and started puffing away on it. Big pipe too, like Basil Rathbone used in the Sherlock Holmes movies. It was bad enough that he would smoke pot in a room full of fans, but then he started passing the pipe around the room and allowed anyone who wanted to take a hit to do so. Some of the fans who took him up on his offer were friends of mine who I knew to be as young as 14 at the time.

As you see, I've excised the name of the con and the GoH from your letter. All I can say about the story is that I'm not surprised; the man you mention is infamously arrogant and irresponsible. He could have -- and later did -- get himself into trouble that reflected badly upon all of fandom. But here's a moral question for you: what should you have done about this? Bawled out the doper who shared his stash with the underage? Chased the kids out of the room with a stick? Complained to the concom? Called the cops?

I'd object only to the latter.

In that regard, though, Carroll O'Connor's grief over the drug-related death of his son brings a new and disturbing thought to mind. It's very probable that, in the aftermath of Sean O'Connor's death, his father sicced the cops onto the dealer from whom his boy had been buying cocaine. In the terms of the sixties, he narced ... informed. In the terms of the nineties, he struck back. Should others do the same?

I can see justification for it -- in cases like O'Connor's. There the loss was real, personal, and intense. There one can understand the need for legal vengeance. But what of social situations -- like cons? There I suspect the best action is griping to the concom if you're worried or offended, and letting them handle it. After all, they are the ones liable if any harm comes to someone, especially a minor, at their convention. If they do nothing, stay away next year, and be sure to write and tell



them why.

I don't think you had to apologize for mentioning Ted White's criminal record in **Challenger #1**. [*Didn't. It was in Habakkuk.*] I understand that you want to be completely fair to Ted even though he went far out of his way to attack you in his **Habakkuk** review, but his drug conviction is a matter of public record and is serious enough that it ought to be mentioned in fandom from time to time. After all, new people come into fandom every day and they'll have no idea that Ted White even has a criminal record unless somebody tells them. Indeed, the way that Ted runs around representing himself as the lord high pooh-ba of SF fandom ("Dr. Fandom," indeed!) someone needs to tell the simple truth about him. Are you comfortable with the idea of Ted White introducing new fans to fandom? I'm certainly not.

Frankly, I can't understand why fandom continues to tolerate someone like Ted White in its ranks. Maybe it's because he used to be associated with some good fanzines in the past like **Quip**, and **Void**, and his own **Stellar**. But that was 30 years ago. Maybe it's because he used to edit **Amazing** and **Fantastic** – and for a while he did a good job on them. His issues of those mags were some of the first SF mags that I read regularly. But that was 20 years ago. Since then, when you read anything that Ted White has written chances are that he's trashing someone's fanzine in a review or fighting a bitter blood feud with someone in a fanzine, or ruminating bitterly about how fandom – as he sees it – hasn't been worth a damn since the early 60's when all the fannish world revolved around Ted White's latest apartment and the fanzines that rolled off his mimeograph.

(By the way, have you ever seen Ted White's first fanzine? It's 8 pages - quarter sized pages at that – on bright orange twilltone and is titled "**ZIP! - THE FANZINE THAT MOVES RIGHT ALONG!**" Someone should reprint "**ZIP!**" someday just to show what a "gosh-wow" fan-boy Ted used to be.)

I still find it odd that Ted attacked southern fandom as a class in his review. I've always found that the true fans from the South (not the above-mentioned dopers who just go to cons but the fans who write & publish zines, join **Myriad** and **SFPA**, and usually run the southern cons) are warm, friendly, and generous, and would do anything to help a friend. They are not, however, a people who will tolerate a pompous ass gladly. [*This might not be the case; after all, I've been in Southern fandom for 25 years.*] This makes me wonder if Ted might have had an experience or two down South which has turned him into the rogue elephant of fandom. Anybody know? [*Or care?*]

Enough about Ted White. We all know him for what he is now, and he shouldn't rate the printspace we've been giving him. *Right – and he'll get no more Challenger ink after this issue.*

Interesting article on medieval rhetoric by Rich Dengrove. "Bizarre rhetoriker..." "...painful to read..." "...absurd tirade." Judging by those critics, Anselm of Besate sounds like the Ted White of the Dark Ages. (Oh, all right. I'll stop.)

I'm sorry to hear of the death of Lee Pelton. We never met but we were both in **Myriad** for a time and like you I thought he seemed like a decent person. I remember that he was deeply into pop music and we exchanged a couple of tapes. I sent him something silly – Elton John's first album I think – and asked in exchange a tape of some of his favorite music. The tape I got back was a wild compilation of singles from bands like **The Psychedelic Furs**, **U2**, **Berlin**, & others. I still listen to that tape. That boy should have been a D-J.

Your article on **People's Park** is powerful. I was 10 years old when this incident occurred and I remember that all that unrest in Berkeley was being reported on the evening news as ... well, you know how it was reported. Even at that age I could tell that Chet Huntley and David Brinkly weren't telling me the whole

story but to be honest all I was paying attention to in 1969 was the moon landing and *Star Trek*.

A friend told me that the Park merited a daily mention in The Jerusalem Times, as if the put-upon people of Israel recognized what a fundamental precept of liberty was under attack at People's Park.

I enjoyed reading Toni Weisskopf's speech. I used to think Toni was a native of Huntsville but she told me once that she was born in Brooklyn. (Hope I'm not spilling a closely guarded secret.) Still, she is a southerner in spirit, for sure.

Well, I was born in California.

"My First First Degree" has a fascination for me that I usually find in the novels of John Grisham or Earl Stanley Gardner. Excellent detail and sequencing. I firmly believe that a murderer ought to be punished by death, but you had me feeling sorry for your client and I'm afraid you might have been able to talk me into voting for a life sentence rather than death. You seem to be mighty good at that sort of thing.

You and Jerry Page mud wrestling?
Now I'd pay good money to see that.

Believe me, you'd have to pay a lot of it.

I can't agree with Buck Coulson that the Pickett-Pettigrew-Trimble assault at Gettysburg was a "major military blunder". By the morning of the third day the Federals had finally brought up enough troops that Longstreet's suggested flanking moves of the first day were no longer practicable. Lee couldn't even pull back any part of his line without inviting a massive Federal attack and so he had to advance somewhere. By the morning of the third day he didn't have many options left. Lee won at Chancellorsville the month before by a far bolder move than this one seemed to be and here at Gettysburg the stakes were far higher. A fatal move, yes. But not a blunder. Lee knew what he was risking but the prize if he'd won at Gettysburg was too great not to try for.

There's a mistake in my LOC this issue. You quote me as having written that Lee's mistake at Gettysburg was "in attempting an

'end run around the Union right ...". I certainly meant to write that his mistake was in *not* attempting that "end run" as Longstreet urged him to do. The mistake was probably mine. I've participated in battle re-enactments at Gettysburg the past two years and plan to return again this July when we'll re-create the Culp's Hill portion of the battle. You'll be pleased to know, Guy, that I'll be a Confederate this time. You'd be amazed at how much re-enacting specific battles helps you to understand exactly how and why the real battles proceeded as they did.

I wish I could disagree with Buck about displaying the Confederate flag but he's right. Hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan have poisoned the spirit of that flag beyond redemption. This is a difficult thing to accept for a Virginian whose people fought under that flag, but Robert E. Lee himself would urge the people of today to "do the right thing" in all matters.

About your comments to Teddy Harvia concerning war protesters: I'm certain that most people who protested the Vietnam war were good and decent folk who simply wanted the killing to stop. However you yourself point out that some (certainly a minority) in the anti-war movement were "...campus radicals ... more interested in posturing and bullying than in ending the war..." (*Challenger #2*, Pg. 18) and some, no doubt, were easily manipulated, simple-minded nobodies caught up in the turmoil of the moment like the "fat hippy girl" who stomped up to my uncle, Marine Corp PFC Buddy Phillips, in a Washington D.C. bus station in the early 70's, screamed "Baby-killer!" at him and slapped him in the face. Uncle Buddy never went to Vietnam, he was obviously just a uniform to that "war protester". Any justice there? There were plenty of saints and sinners on all sides of the Vietnam war as there are in all wars. It's interesting that the people who can still provoke the most serious anger today are the extremists like Lt. William Calley who was involved with the massacre at My Lai, and on the other extreme, Jane Fonda

who went to North Vietnam and "gave aid & comfort to the enemy" – a treasonable offense that some people (including me) think she should have gone to prison for.

I remember watching Klute during the Vietnam war and gauging the reaction of some of my fellow filmgoers – they seemed to resent the fact that they were watching a fine performance by an actress they despised. I think Fonda showed more criminal taste in visiting then-North Vietnam than criminal behavior; she had every right to resist that reprehensible war in every non-violent way she thought proper, but her lack of sensitivity to the suffering of the POWs was itself reprehensible. We opposed the war, not the warriors.

Very good lettercol this issue. Particularly the contribution of Steve Jeffery. Best letter of the issue.

Excellent article by Dennis Dolbear. Makes me want to run out and rent **Blue Velvet** but I have to admit that when I do watch that film again I'll be paying a lot more attention to Isabella Rossellini than to Dennis Hopper. ("Daddy's comin' home!") My favorite Dennis Hopper film is **O.C. & Stiggs** where he plays a hopped-up paramilitary/ survivalist with a huge stockpile of munitions in his backyard. I wish Hopper had been cast as Lamont Cranston in **The Shadow** instead of Alex Baldwin. Wouldn't that have been suave?

Nothing could have saved that script. They should have concentrated on The Shadow's origin and canned the dippy Genghis Khan business.

Charles Broerman
2815 School St.
Alexandria VA 22303
received 4-24-95

I appreciate the copy of **Challenger #2**. It's great to find out that Dennis Hopper is a regular guy. Like just about everybody else I first saw him in **Easy Rider**. I was 12 or so at the time. Who would have thought the Hopper would still be a star, going on thirty years later,

and Peter Fonda would have completely dropped from sight? Of course no one back then could have guessed that Jack Nicholson would become an even bigger star than either one of them. Not exactly a flattering portrait of the Good Old Boys in that movie, though.

Have you guys seen the movie **True Romance**? Don't let the title put you off if you haven't. It's written by Quentin Tarrantino, though directed by someone else. There is a great scene with Dennis Hopper and Christopher Walken, dealing with the ethnic background of Sicilians – it's worth seeing the movie for that alone. **True Romance** is so good in fact that even Christian Slater in the starring role doesn't ruin it, which is high praise indeed.

Bob Dole's idiocy notwithstanding, I liked it too.

Tarentino is nothing but talent and nerve.

Speaking of rare, raw cinema ... who's seen El Topo? Or this year's grim masterpiece, Seven?



Your description of Victor's neighborhood in "My First First Degree" really captured how strange those places are, strange at least from a

middle-class white perspective. I had a job one winter a few years ago where I would spend a couple weeks at a time in different neighborhoods in and around D.C., including some places that people of my race and background tend to avoid, which in Washington is probably three-fourths of the city. I saw the same schizophrenia, as you put it – well-maintained houses next to bombed-out buildings; hard-working, middle-class people living among tribes of homeless men. And in this job we never went to the very worst parts of D.C., like the housing projects. One neighborhood had been destroyed in the '68 riots and still had boarded-up shells of buildings, untouched for all those years since.

It's hard to know how that all can be changed. Even if we admit that welfare and affirmative action haven't done the job, it's doubtful the current panacea of more police and more prisons will either.

I'm glad to see someone have a good word for Farrakhan. His anti-Jewish opinions are not as extreme as generally believed, if you find out what he actually said. I wonder if Farrakhan's doctrine of racial separation isn't the solution, or the beginning of a solution, to the plight of African-Americans. Of course I'll probably be accused of being a follower of Louisiana's own David Duke for even suggesting separation as a possible solution. Speaking of Political Correctness, the only people allowed to publicly advocate racial separation are ... the Israelis!

Well, if I haven't angered enough people with that last bit, let me say respectfully that I think this worship of Robert E. Lee is a load of hokum. IMHO of course. War is not a game, like chess or football, where we can admire brilliant tactics or valor in the face of overwhelming odds. Wars are fought to achieve certain goals, "the continuation of politics by other means," and it's absurd to admire warriors independent of what they were fighting for. People who idolized Confederate generals while simultaneously abhorring slavery remind me of those who admire the German generals of WWII, even though (they say) they hate

Naziism – not that I equate the Confederacy and Nazi Germany. Who, for example, says they admire the genius and the courage of General Giap, and consider him a personal hero, even though they oppose Vietnamese communism?

So how about admiring Vietnam vets for their courage and sacrifice whilst opposing the imbecilic policies that sent them into harm's way?

My own opinion of the Civil War is summed up by the old saying, "It's a rich man's war and a poor man's fight." But if the war had to be fought I guess the "right" side won, and therefore General Sherman is just fine by me. I certainly wouldn't compare him to the founders of the Klan, whom I once heard Shelby Foote describe as "freedom fighters."

A couple years ago I got the chance to talk to a woman who had been in Berkeley during People's Park. I enjoyed your article very much.

Lloyd Penney
412-4 Lima St.
Brampton ON
CANADA L6T 4B6
received 4-24-95

Many thanks for sending me issue 2 of **Challenger**. It's a good hefty zine, and one that seems to have gotten the assorted fanzinish masses talking. I also just wanted to let you know that I still have plenty of good memories of Nolacon II. Anyway, on to the fanzine at hand...

The Linda Krawecka article is a fine tribute to Karl Wagner. I've read much about his death in **Locus** and **SFC**, but no matter the cause of his death, he certainly did great things with his life. I only met him once in Ottawa, a real party man.

I know some former and current drug users, and in talking with them, their fairly objective opinion of what they did was that the thrills they obtained from drugs, whatever they were, were ephemeral and nothing substantial in the long run. They would just as soon not discuss it, or put it behind them in an effort to

reassemble their lives. That might be a good policy here for Ted White's sake. I will now leave the defensive, and say that Ted's KTF fanzine reviews offer nothing really constructive. Perhaps the fanzine is a filtered reflection of its editor, and if that's the case, the reviews say even less. Carry on, and act when something constructive and useful comes in. Perhaps the review can also be a reflection of its writer.

Jim Hogan's tale of Baycon was a good laugh. Just shows that you should be careful what you ask for ... you just can't be too specific.

In 1969, I was 10 years old, living in a rather sheltered family and a rather sheltered country, right next door, but still a spectator to the madness going on in powderkeg USA. In this overly rights-sensitive era of the '90s, 1969 California sounds like a fascist country, or another planet.

Right both times.

Is Toni Weisskopf still interested in receiving fanzines? Say yes, Toni, and I'm sure they'll come flooding in.

I'll answer for her: YES.

Harry Andruschak might want to study the history of postal violence. In the lettercol of a recent zine, Harry reported that one of his fellow workers went a little crazy and hurt a few folks by lashing out with a knife. I wonder what it is about working for the post office that makes people flip out?

The descriptions you provide of Victor and Lottie portray the saddest part of society. I've never heard of clicker until I read about it here, and wouldn't have known about it being marijuana laced with formaldehyde if you hadn't defined it in the article. No doubt it's a drug that will be on this country soon. What does the formaldehyde do for the marijuana anyway?

I'm no neurologist, although I did consult one in the Victor case. Basically, he told me that formaldehyde -- or PCP, another ingredient often added to grass to make a clicker -- destroys brain

cells and makes the smoker psychotic. The first indulger I myself, saw, really did lick the floor while under the influence. Convinced me.

At one point, you mention Dan Knight, the Canadian Lafferty fan. I know Dan, too, and he'd even taken a dealer's table once at Ad Astra to try to distribute Lafferty materials. Unfortunately in this age of media SF too many people say "R.A. who?" If anyone has an up-to-date Lafferty bibliography, it would be Dan.

Just to answer your question about Andrew Murdoch's fanzine cover...an Aurora Award is the Canadian national science fiction award. In fact, I was pleased to win one for Fan Achievement (Organizational) this past September. The Canadian national convention, or invention, was held concurrent with the Worldcon. At one point in the fanzine lounge, I had my Aurora on the main sales table, and Dick and Nicki Lynch had their Hugo on the same table, and Andy Porter had his own rocketship on another table ... we looked like we were sitting in a trophy case. Both Yvonne and I were nominated for the award ... Jane Jewell wrote up the Aurora ceremony in a previous Issue of **Locus**. I can also break the news that Yvonne and I have been nominated for the same award this year.

Well, that's a loc. and that's a wrap. Many thanks for a good read. If a copy of **Challenger** #1 is lying around could you ship it my way? Future issues would be greatly appreciated too. See you nextish.

George Flynn
P.O. Box 1069
Kendall Square Station
Cambridge MA 02142
received 5-12-95

Sorry, I can't help much on your drug question; I don't use mind-altering substances (including alcohol and nicotine, of course) myself, but that's a personal idiosyncrasy, not a moral judgment, and I have no criticism of

those who do so indulge. On this matter I'm a thorough libertarian (small "I", please).

Rich Dengrove's piece is delightful. One quibble, though: in the Middle Ages someone referred to as a "clerk" (i.e., cleric) could be a lot of things other than a priest. (Indeed, many were just lower-level bureaucrats, whence comes the modern meaning of "clerk.")

Well, since my previous letter I did get to copyedit *Norstrilia*, and the book is now out. I wonder if Charles Lipsig knows that NESFA has also published *The Best of James H. Schmitz*.

You really think "every American male above the age of 9" knows the layout of Gettysburg? You have a lot higher opinion of American historical legacy than I do. (Hell, I'd bet I didn't know it till I was at least 12.)

Milt Stevens

5384 Rainwood St. #90

Simi Valley CA 93063

received 5-26-95

In your editorial in *Challenger* #2, you ask for opinions on what to do about the drug situation. At work [for the LAPD, note], we sometimes play the game of what we would do if we could do anything at all. Some of the possible solutions we've discussed are far more likely than others.

The first possibility is the Chinese method. (You round the dope dealers up and shoot them.) This is a tried method, and it works. China has virtually no drug problem. However, the American people is just soooo squeamish when it comes to rounding people up and shooting people that this solution isn't likely to be popular.

Secondly, the government could go into the business of selling phony dope. A variation of this idea would have the dope laced with poison. (Again, a solution not for the squeamish.) Of course, the government would announce its intentions prior to implementing the program. In the case of the poison alternative, you could merely make the

announcement and follow it with reports of how many dead dopers had been discovered. You wouldn't really have to circulate the poison at all. In the case of dissatisfied customers with the merely phony dope, we can refer back to solution one. The disadvantage of this method is that it would only scare off marginal drug users.

This sounds like the paraquat ploy Nixon's DEA came up with - salting Mexico's marijuana crop with a dangerous poison. Remind me to tell you a story about paraquat ...

The government could also go into the business of selling confiscated dope at bargain prices. We once calculated the four tons of cocaine we had at that moment in the basement of the police headquarters would finance the entire city government of Los Angeles even if we charged half of the street price. This approach could well break the drug infrastructure (which is expensive to operate), and it would be a dandy source of revenue.

The United States could use military force to root out the cocaine trade in Columbia and South America. I feel the United States would be justified in doing it based on the thousands of dead, tens of thousands of ruined lives, and billions of dollars in damages we suffer every year. By comparison, the attack on Pearl Harbor was chump change.

To move on to your description of your first first degree murder trial, it shouldn't be surprising that working class Blacks hate dope dealers. They suffer more from dope dealers and gang bangers than anyone else. South Los Angeles lives under a permanent reign of terror, and life is exceedingly cheap. The working Blacks generally don't go out at night and don't even look outside at night.

[Grossness Alert!]

In regard to your discussion of "cruel" and "heinous," I just got back from the state crime analysis conference where I got to see the crime scene photos from the Black Dahlia Murder of 1947. After seeing the photos, I can understand why the murder was so notorious, even though

the details were never reported in the press. The woman's body was naked with legs spread apart. She'd been left in a vacant field. The corpse was entirely cut in half at the waist with about a foot between the upper and lower halves of the body. There was a major wound to the left side of the neck which appeared to be from teeth. The upper body had a number of puncture wounds. There was no mutilation to the face and no blood in evidence (which would indicate the body was moved to that location after having been cut in half).

The newspapers of the time reported the Black Dahlia as a sadistic murder, but the profiler who was making the presentation at the conference pointed out that was not the vase. The woman was actually killed with a single knife stroke to the heart. The rest of the busywork was done to a corpse. I think defense would have a tough time convincing a jury that corpse mutilation on that scale wasn't pretty heinous. Under current California law, the Black Dahlia wouldn't have qualified as "special circumstances," and the murderer could have gotten out of prison in six years (presuming the murderer had ever been caught at all).

What I find compelling about the Black Dahlia is that the two detectives assigned to the case on the morning the body was discovered spent the rest of their careers — years — working on it. The lead guy swore he never set eyes on the killer, and made public his belief that whoever he was, he died soon after the Dahlia was found. Energies that great and terrible, he implied, could never sit silent.

Newspapers report many "brutal" homicides, but I've never yet seen them report a *nice* homicide. I suppose holding a gun on someone and forcing them to eat prime rib until their arteries clogged shut might be fairly nice. Unfortunately, it would take so long the suspect's ammo would get too old to be functional and the victim could waddle away without being shot.

Now, about paraquat ... Back when the issue was

*hot and the chemical was barely drying on marijuana leaves throughout Mexico, a couple of local entrepreneurs — names withheld for reasons to be made obvious — decided to create and market a **Paraquat Identification Kit**. The chemistry was simple, the tools — a test tube, an eyedropper, some reagent — cheap, so why not? A huge investment was made and the kits assembled. Trouble was, though the reagents did turn blue a solution in which paraquat-laced grass was placed, the test required a *whole lot* of paraquat ... practically one's entire stash. And of course, the *cannabis sativa* was unsmokable afterwards.*

So, said one of the would-be businessmen, the experiment was a noble failure. "And I've got all these eye droppers," he said. "What am I going to do with all these eye droppers?"

"You could give them away on Halloween," I suggested, "instead of candy."

"Yeah," he agreed. "And the kid would say, 'What am I supposed to do with this?' and I'd say, 'You can stick it, up your ass!'"

Ned Brooks

713 Paul Street

Newport News VA 23605

received as part of SFPA 185, 6-5-95

Good genzine! Your editorial about drugs still leads, as far as I'm concerned, to the same old non-solution — freedom is better than coercion. There are cocaine wars only because the stuff is illegal — we do not see much in the way of alcohol wars or tobacco wars. Do recreational drugs have a place in society? Well, they always have, back to the prehistoric Beaker People, who apparently invented the Beaker to keep their beer in. But there are people who cannot handle alcohol — should that make it taboo for the rest of us? There are, after all, people who cannot handle tomatoes ...

Fascinating antique horrors by Rich Dengrove. The text would look much better if you reduced the column width on *both* sides of the inserted quotations, and better yet if you changed the typeface there.

I have been in the MRI machine myself. The noise seemed more like a knocking than a banging to me, but I was surprised to hear anything. You say it is the coils banging together – I asked the technician about it, but I did not understand the answer and got the impression he may not really have known. If the noise is merely a casual byproduct of the process, you would think they would have eliminated it. I am not surprised that the MRI showed nothing in [murderer] Victor's brain – I don't think it would have shown anything about his autistic brother either. The family you describe might well have driven a genetically normal person insane.

Love the back cover!

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit
Avenue
Hagerstown
MD 21740
*received as part
of SFPA 185, 6-5-95*

As another consistent non-consumer of drugs, I doubt very much if you missed anything by following my example. I've seen in both fandom and mundania too many sad events and situations involving people who admit to drug use. My only exception to this general impression is when people go to rock concerts and get under the influence of drugs there. I can understand that they need something that will prevent them from suffering the experience with a clear mind.

Tsk, Harry!

Rich Dengrove
2651 Arlington Drive #302
Alexandria VA 22306
received as part of SFPA 185, 6-5-95

I liked your editorial, while partially disagreeing. My experience on the borders of the '60's drug scene was that people "destroyed by drugs" had a great deal of help from their mental problems sober. So much so it's even hard to say whether they would not have been destroyed without drugs. I do suspect, however, that drugs provided a more easily available method for destroying themselves than otherwise.

The same thing happened to me to a lesser extent. I remember not taking marijuana if there was anything else, *anything else*, that was more important. Mainly I took it at night in a group. The times I started taking it during the daytime and alone, I felt adrift yet afraid to

change the course of my life.

Linda Krawecka writes about an instance [in "Memories of Karl"] where drugs hid self-destruction. But did not hide love and imagination. Karl Wagner must have been a complex

individual: hellraiser, self-destructive, imaginative, faithful friend. A real human being with megawarts and megalove.

James Hogan struck a lighter note. I'm glad to see that he has such a great sense of humor even when the joke was on him. I like him more and will try to put his books on my agenda.

Your account of the People's Park struck a heavier note. I remember those heady days, although both sides were more restrained in Boston. Still, the revolution affected us: it gave us students an almost ecstatic feeling, a sense that the millennium was around the corner. The ecstasy was as great as the fear it incited



among bourgeois citizens.

The downside was that it dehumanized them in our eyes and us in their eyes. I know in the alternative papers paranoia against them ran rampant. **Them** were never human beings with motives, but monsters doing evil. From the behavior of the police and the right wing, I would imagine the same dehumanizing process was going on against us.

Never was this made more clear than at Kent State, a year after People's Park. Nixon's psychopathic administration had stirred up a phobia against those who opposed its policies, an unreasoning terror that had the ignorant idiots of the Ohio National Guard convinced that they were facing Communist demons, not college kids. The dumb bastards came onto that campus ready to shoot anything that moved. But time has spoken. Nixon is dead and in Hell, and the Vietnam war is over, its rationale abandoned. All that's left of those days are the courage — which should be treasured — the lessons — which should be remembered — and the bitterness — which must be discarded. The present is too important to be overburdened with the past.

But as you see elsewhere, for me as well as for anyone else, that burden is tough to put down.

Your letters are more of a mixed bag: some heavy, some light. Some comments:

(1) Too often soldiers were the objects of abuse by antiwar demonstrators during the Vietnam War. And what is worse, by people who supported the war. To the latter, the soldiers were seen as losers, who lost the war. Only later was the public universally sympathetic to them.

(2) Opposition to political correctness is not disloyal to your Berkeley heritage. See it rather as a blow for common sense. No ideology should allow people to check that at the door.

A recent paper told of the travails of an academic who dared question one of feminism's axioms, that the crime of rape is simply an act of rage and control with little relation to sexual desire. He wished to explore that idea through the gathering

of data — and has been castigated as a racist and sexist for daring to raise the question. P.C. is a brittle ideology; its onrushing downfall is a direct corollary to its inability to withstand even the mildest opposition. Of course, the winger ideologues rushing (haha) to take P.C.'s place are just as nonsensical, and probably more dangerous.

(3) So one of Robert E. Lee's strong points was being able to keep the peace between some of the most egotistical people in the Confederate Army. Sounds like Eisenhower. Of course, Ike was not as good a strategist, maybe not a strategist at all.

(4) Steve Jeffery believes the true divide between the North and South is farther south than the Mason-Dixon line. Actually, my experience is that it is farther north ... that New Jersey is spiritually divided between North and South. That is why it is the State with the least state loyalty: the southern part sees it as northern and the northern part southern.

Well, I don't see it at all.

(5) I thank your letterwriters for the nice comments about my article.

On the lighter side again: **Flashman**. Fraser has gotten a lot of mileage with the same protagonist and same plot in different settings. The setting is the thing and Flashman's roguish cleverness.

*Check out the review of Flashy's latest by my onetime Yeats professor, Thomas Flanagan, in a June New York Times Book Review. The latest book, *F and the Angel of the Lord*, was a fine outing, but I admit that my favorite moment came when Flashy and a companion rested for a moment beneath a Pennsylvania roadsign, which portended a future battle for him and a future masterpiece for Fraser's readers: GETTYSBURG.*

On the lighter side too is the time you and Dennis Dolbear met Dennis Hopper. One man for whom myth and reality are in tune. Of course, with actors, isn't the myth more important than the reality? Isn't the myth of O.J. or Roseanne or Madonna — or even Hopper — far more important than their reality? People pay money to see the onscreen myth but not

the reality. And those individuals would be nobody without the onscreen myth.

Not really. Hopper would be a nifty and powerful person no matter what he did for a living. His chosen field, however, enables him to let more people know it.

Michael Whalan
P.O. Box 55422
Metairie LA 70055-5422
received 6-7-95

OK! What is wrong with **Challenger**? I'm confused. I didn't see the **Habakkuk** review, but did read about it in that zine's lettercol. So – I enjoyed **Challenger 2** enough to ask again, What's wrong with **Challenger**?

As far as I can understand, Ted White hated Chall's first issue because ... well ... I think it was because I'm a Southern fan (and having been Fan GoH at a DeepSouthCon in 1980, he's an expert on our failings), I used the term "femme-fan", and he had just praised Greg Pickersgill to the skies in Habakkuk and wanted to "balance" his column with a heavy negative. Which makes it seem like his review was pitched towards the nasty for reasons having nothing to do with me or my zine.

Actually, I think White just wanted to project spleen to cull applause from his circle of sycophants. Judging by the response in Hab, he failed in that respect.

I seem to have enjoyed every bit of it – not that I didn't expect it, mind you. Though I did have some trepidation, I think it was more because this is the first fanzine I've read from you. It's great.

I like your writing style. [Regarding the article on People's Park,] I must admit that I still don't completely understand the movements of the sixties, but you were able to bring it alive for me. Coming from an observer's point of view, the sixties can easily look like a bunch of anti-Americans out to thwart the government. I think that many people have this *[idea? concept? bad handwriting here, Mike]*. In fact, I know people right now who say "Look at that (insert undesirable person here)! How can they live

like that?" It's got to be the "grass is greener" syndrome. Well, maybe if we got the opposite viewpoint, we could understand better. That's what the article did for me.

Terry Jeeves
56 Red Scar Drive
Scarborough YO12 5RQ
U.K.
rec'd 7-4-95

Many thanks for the copy of **Challenger**. Winter issue, no less – and it's only June! It arrived from Brighton so I assume you have a U.K. agent.

Indeed – Linda Krawecka.
I thought the cover illo one of the best I've seen in a long time – interior art also good.

Not so happy with Linda's piece, it seemed too much "drop out society". Re the editorial, I am anti-drug for various reasons. 1, it's not "cool", but simply an attempt to keep up with a peer group and not seem a wimp. 2, I hate not being in control of me. 3, "Soft" drugs almost inevitably lead on to the hard ones. An acquaintance of mine got hooked, his habit worsened so he broke into a drug store to feed it – went to jail and still getting drugs, attacked and killed another inmate who he thought to be "talking about him". He ended up a "lifer" in a mental hospital for the criminally insane. Would "druggies" call that "cool"?

I doubt it, but would anyone call that typical?

The problem with debating drug use is that we almost always end up arguing anecdotally, as you just did, and trying to glean some sort of general truth from an individual case. That's dangerous, since everyone knows an example which could serve to prove an opposite point. The most valuable arguments on this subject, to me, are those that address issues that effect every case – such as your second point. Do recreational drugs help us or harm us? Individually, it varies – but legally and socially, I don't think there's any question.

Nice selection of zines in trade, I wish more fanzines covered fanzines. Also liked the idea of giving the artists a plug. Nice LOCs,

but best of all an excellently produced zine with something for everyone.

Walt A. Willis
32 Warren Road
Donaghadee
N. Ireland BT21 0PD
rec'd 7-9-95

Challenger #2 came as a very pleasant surprise to me. Without being influenced unduly by Ted White's review, I still had no reason to expect a fanzine so bright, intelligent and thoroughly interesting as **Challenger**. It is one of the best fanzines I have ever read.

Linda Krawecka's article was enthralling, though more for the light it shines on her relationship with Greg Pickersgill and on her own circumstances than on the fate of Karl Wagner, of whom I had never heard.

Your editorial is broadminded and fair. Your mention of Ted White reminds me of a remark I used to make during a period of fannish feuding, that fans are boxers with killer punches and glass jaws.

Hogan's article about the kinky redhead was marred for me by a feeling that he was cruel to the young girl fan to whom he made the request. It was interesting to me because of his mention of Bushmills whiskey, a local product. Even after bringing bottles of Black Bush as presents to American fans it still seems strange to me that one of our local products should be so big in the States. On the TAFF trip of Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden I took them through the village of Bushmills, on the way to James White's house, and they recognised the factory immediately from the illustration on the bottle.

Your article about People's Park is fascinating to me. At the time I tended to regard it as nothing more than an anti-establishment stunt, but your account makes me re-evaluate it.

Toni Weisskopf was charming, and Alan Hutchinson delightful. But for me your own

article about First Degree Murder was the high point of the issue. It was enthralling, and left me with the strong feeling that could follow in the steps of that author whose name I forget (Grisholm?) who made a fortune writing novels based on his legal experiences.

That's John Grisham, and I thank you. I must say, though, that I'd rather write as well as Walt Willis.

Jack Speer
3636 Menaul NE
Albuquerque NM 87110
rec'd 7-29-95

My efforts towards retirement are finally bearing fruit in a little more free time at the office. I read parts of the **Challenger** you sent, and have time to comment.

Apparently, in addition to wanting to do the best job you could as advocate for Victor, you are opposed to the death penalty. I see no value for society in what you accomplished — if life is worse than death, then let them have death — but I respect your conscientiousness.

I'm not categorically opposed to the death penalty, but would restrict it — as the law implies — to cases of murder for profit or advantage, or wanton conscious disregard for human suffering. Ted Bundy, to use an obvious and easy example, qualifies as a candidate for the chair in my view. So do the Menendez brothers, who pretty obviously slaughtered their parents for gain. I disagree with the death penalty when it's applied to people suffering from what common law states call "diminished capacity" — who can't understand the gravamen of their acts or stop themselves from acting. So where would Susan Smith fit in?

As a general practitioner [in the law], I occasionally have to take criminal cases but I avoid them when I can. The only murder charge I ever defended was nolle prossed. [Or "dismissed," in non-lawyereze.] I was surprised that yours was a "white middle-class jury."

About all one can get in white, middle-class Jefferson Parish, Louisiana.

What is the John Wilkes Booth question? He knew what he was doing (and should have seen its futility)?

It's a mitigating defense in Louisiana that if a murderer is drunk when he commits his crime, he can be presumed to lack the specific intent to kill.

Booth got himself loaded prior to assassinating Lincoln to work up enough courage to act – so I worried that my jurors might think Victor smoked his clickum before he attacked his victim for that same purpose.

The state is restricted in what it can say. My impression is that the defense is less restricted. One also hears that the jury decides most cases on the opening statements.

I don't recognize "we grieve with you" [from *Star Trek*] though it suggests "On that day I will grieve" at the end of "Requiem for Methuselah".

It's a semi-quote from "Amok Time", T'Pol to McCoy on the alleged death of Kirk. And isn't Spock's line in "Requiem" "On that day I shall mourn"? (Sorry. Couldn't resist nitpicking fandom's most famous nitpicker.)

You write well. If this were in FAPA, there are several passages I'd copy into Highlights.

I also read "On the Spot". When I first visited Gettysburg in 1936, Dad hired a ride-along guide. On a subsequent visit, chronicled in FAPA in 1943, I was on my own and afoot. Last year I was there in a car, but the morning was foggy and I was as lost as you were, so I boarded a tour bus.

I don't buy Jack Chalker's explanation [for the failure of Pickett's Charge]. If on the third day [of the battle] there had been simultaneous attacks at the north and south ends of the line (I don't believe one was even planned at the south end), Pickett's Charge would probably still have failed. Lee should have taken Longstreet's advice the night before and slid his forces to the right, putting them between the Army of the Potomac and its capital.

"Is it blasphemy still for a heart claiming Southern heritage to catch at [the Gettysburg Address]?" No. But I am more moved by the First and Second Inaugurals.

Thanks for sending the **Challenger**.

Stforever, Jack

And congrats to you on sharing Glasgow's First Fandom Award with Harry Warner.

David Langford

94 London Road

Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU

U.K.

rec'd 8-29-95

Eventually my immense, cosmically fannish mind noticed your plea for **Ansible** tucked away at the back of **Challenger 2** (sorry, I've been functioning a little slowly this year). Thanks for sending it.

Linda Krawecka's memorial piece on Karl Edward Wagner is very fine. That's the real Karl, not some kind of sanitized version painted up in twee flesh tones for a tasteful open-coffin display. Honesty makes these things so much more moving. I was fond of him, though contact was mainly through correspondence (he several times showed Superb Taste in selecting my stories for **Year's Best Horror**); failed to meet him in person anything like often enough, alas.

Your Ansible eulogy for John Brunner – met and greatly enjoyed at the 1979 DeepSouthCon – struck me as one of the most powerful heartcries

I've ever read in fandom. I can see why we neophyte fanwriters have been eating your dust for so many years.

Elizabeth Osborne

137 Emerald Lane

Lima OH 45802

received 10-18-95

Thanks for sending me a copy of your zine **Challenger**. Your zine was very good and I look forward to seeing more of it.

In truth, the reason that I got your zine was that I heard about Ted White's terrible review. Since I am not that impressed by Ted White, I wanted to see what he hated so much. An interesting note: while it was easy to get a

copy of your zine, I haven't been able to get anything that carried Ted White's review, despite sending them a letter and a check. I haven't been able to read White's review either but I am getting bits and pieces of it from other zines. I am looking forward to when **File 770** comes out with a report of the tussle.

But there's no "tussle" here with Ted White!

When I think about him I touch myself.

From what I gather so far, White spent most of the zine banging on Southern fandom and Southerners in general. I am born and raised a Yankee but I just finished living for 8 years in rural Florida and Southerners are just like everyone else, good and bad. I was also a member of Southern Fandom, although I never went to too many conventions, except in Florida.

Southern fandom hosts several major regional conventions. The "core" con is DSC, the DeepSouthCon, which tends to be small in size but incredibly rich in energy and traditions. Ken Moore's Kubla Khans have been percolating along for over 20 years; Rivercon - which debuted as a DSC - celebrated its 20th last summer; Chattacon has kept the home fires burning for at least that long; NOSF₃ is entering its second decade here in NOLA ... and so on and so forth. Lots of conventions, lots of different themes. Great fandom. Home. Tell you what: info on the next DeepSouthCon will conclude this lettercol.

Curious or just close by, come one, come all.

I was also pleased to read your trip report [*The Heroic Route*, a SFPazine]. I was surprised at how close you came to my new home (in Lima, Ohio) and how close you came to my old grounds in Florida on the Gold Coast.

On the other hand, I have little support for your story of your legal case. Maybe the result of working in Corrections for nearly six years has colored my viewpoint. The problem is that unless your client attacks a staff member (which is a common event) he will be walking around free in around ten years. I think that you were also helped in the fact that he killed a black drug user and (possibly) a hooker. It would

have been a different story if he had raped and murdered a white middle-class Mom out shopping at the local Mall. Sadly (and unfairly) the type of victim also determines the punishment.

As does the type of jury, as we all saw to the detriment of the truth in the O.J. Simpson case.

You're absolutely right: a white jury will react more viscerally - and more angrily - to the death of one of their own than to the death of a black person. Could I have won the penalty phase in the Victor case had the victim been less "suspect" herself? Beats me ... I just know that I'm glad I did win.

I would be interested in your views on the O.J. trial and verdict. Personally, I think that he was guilty but Marcia Clark failed to prove it. I think there were enough questions that can lead a person to wonder. Most wife-beaters don't stop and leave; they keep hitting until they are stopped. Many of them end up killing. You can read my current thoughts on the repulsive Simpson case elsewhere in this zine. As for wife-beaters, check out the story of "Jim."

Also writing were: Harry Andruschack, David Drake (a moving, powerful letter he asked kept DNQ), Joe Green (thanks for the shuttle dates), David Schlosser, and several members of SFPA and KAPA.

DEEPSOUTHCON INFO '96

BeachCon - DeepSouthCon 34

P.O. Box 1271

Brunswick GA 31521-1271

(912) 638-1486

April 26-28 1996

\$25 through 3-31-96

\$30 at door

Hotel: Best Western Jekyll Inn

\$74/night

\$99 one bedroom suite

\$124 two BR

SADLER ... continued from p. 17

good out of them as I can. Who knows -- maybe they can figure out a way to prevent those Washington monkeys from springing another one-sided contract on us taxpayers!"

"That's a reasonable enough goal, I guess, but I wouldn't put too much hope in succeeding."

"Still, one must persist and persevere. Sometimes success comes at the mostly unexpected times."

"I'll take your word for it. But back to the 'Contract with America,' sir. It's all history now anyway. Their Hundred Days were up a little while ago, they proved their point, and now they're off in a new direction."

"It is? They are? Oh dear." There was a long silence at the other end. It stretched on and on and I became concerned about the old man.

"Hello?" I said finally. "Dr. Windlebeam, are you still there?"

"What? Uh -- yes. I'm, still here, dear boy. You say the contract has expired. Well that's certainly news." There was another pause, then, "Well, time to ring off now. You really must come up and visit us one of these days. You know you're always welcome."

"Thanks for the invitation, sir. I'll give it some thought. But I wouldn't want to intrude on you and the others."

"Nonsense! You would be no intrusion at all! Push the thought from your mind. Well ... time to go now. Work to do, you know. Take care of yourself, my boy."

"Thanks. You too, sir." I hung up the phone. I returned to the Black Hole thinking what a strange person Dr. Windlebeam was. He may have been a genius but he sure managed to come up with some strange ideas at times.

As I sat down at my computer, I couldn't help thinking that sometimes even the most brilliant people aren't up to date or completely in touch with reality. I stared at the screen for a bit and tried to pick up the

thread of thought but my mind wouldn't focus in that direction. It kept returning to Dr. Windlebeam's call. After a few seconds, I saved the file, shut down the computer, and left the room. On the way out, I hoped Dr. Windlebeam wouldn't waste his time chasing a phantom cause, and I wondered just how much of the Contract with America would be remembered a year or two from now. Society's collective memory is very short sometimes -- thank Goo! Or Foo.

RAMBLER, cont. from p. 64

representative of the field, at worst. And it's fun to collect them.

In a future issue of **Challenger** I'll go the whole route on this subject, and write about how my fascination with awards began with the Oscars, moved on through the Pulitzers (ever read **Honey in the Horn**? How about **Scarlet Sister Mary**?), to the Hugos and Nebulas. (Someday I may even try the Edgars again.) I'll tell about my 35-year quest to seek out every Oscar-winning best picture (a chore you can now accomplish in a few days at the local video store) and how I chased down all the Hugo winners (still tough, unless you can find **They'd Rather Be Right**). Recently I became enamored of the *World Fantasy Awards* and *Bram Stoker Awards*, given out by the World Fantasy Convention and Horror Writers of America, respectively ... and have been collecting same, in earnest.

Having discovered that one can write to used book stores as well as personally scrounge through them, I easily found most of my booty. Three books, however, elude me. Can anyone help? I need James Morrow's **Only Begotten Daughter**, Ellen Kushner's **Thomas the Rhymer**, and Kelley Wilde's **The Suiting** to finish up both collections. As an obsessive, I'd be most grateful. It'd improve my article, too.

Okay ... here comes 1996. During its span I'll hit DSC, perhaps Corflu, worldcon ... but wherever, say hey. I'll be glad to see you.

THE FANZINE DUMP

Send us more. Send us *everything*.

Aces #3/4 / Paul McCall / 5801 W. Henry St., Indianapolis IN 46241 / Profusely illustrated pulpzine from the "ace of illustrators," with splendid color covers by McCall himself. #3 features a portfolio of metal-girl art from Ron Wilber. Superior graphics all through.

Ansible / Dave Langford / U.S. Agent: Janice Murray, P.O. Box 75684, Seattle WA 98125-0684 / Langford responded generously to my wail in **Challenger's** second issue that I wasn't receiving his Hugo-winning fanzine. Though it marks me as the father of all neos, I admit that these are the first issues of **Ansible** I have seen ... and it's a surprise. The winner of the '95 Hugo is slim and devoted to news'n'gossip. We see little of the 11-time Hugo-winning author until his report on the Glasgow worldcon, when his anguish over the death of John Brunner burns with impassioned intensity. Overall, Langford is a happy and generous presence, and I'm glad to be in his loop at last.

Ben'zine Five / Ben Zuhl / 2239 Highland Avenue, Falls Church VA 22046 / Internet: Benzine@ix.netcom.com / The usual. / Ben says the theme of this funny issue is "Fans and What They Do," but one aspect common to its articles leapt out at me: foreign travel. Francesca Kelly, a new fanwriter, contributes funny -- and I hope, fictitious -- squibs on being a wife in the foreign service ("His flaming manhood [was] doused by the soggy call to ... duties ..." Wow and Ouch!) and Dick Lynch recounts his adventures in Russia. Zuhl's "Kinko Nights" has nothing to do with foreign travel, but strikes the proper familiar chord with this devotee of copy shops.

Corflu Vegas / Mike McInerney / 83

Shakespeare St., Daly City CA 94014 / Mike's rather glum first-person account of the convention described more enthusiastically in Katz's **Silvercon Memories**. Clearly, it ain't the con, it's who you know at the con, that makes or breaks the event.

Cube #60 / Hope Kiefer c/o SF³ / Box 1624, Madison WI 53701-1624/CubeNews@aol.com. / Post-worldcon issue of Madison fandom's newszine. Good, personal Glasgow reports and chatter about local fandom, excellent movie reviews (**Apollo 13** and **Waterworld** -- they think more of Costner's **Moist Max** than I do), critical (to say the least) scan of Dragon*Con/NASFiC by Perianne Lurie. Their come-on for WisCon 20, "the greatest confluence of Feminist SF ... Ever!", actually makes such an event sound like fun.

De Profundis #280 / Tim Merrigan, LASFS, 11513 Burbank Blvd., N. Hollywood CA 91601 / LASFS clubpub lists its many meetings and activities; listings of other clubs and their zines pepper its pages, which makes this a valuable source of trade information for faneds. Alas, though, for the eyestrainingly feeble electrostencilling.

Empties nos. 14-15 / Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG U.K. / 5 pounds (of what? *oh!* or The Usual.) / New, "cheaper" format for this nifty Britzine. Good cari-covers by Shep Kirkbride, especially on #14, which contains an obscene, obvious, and very funny genital pun. That issue's theme is "first times," and it's royally entertaining, reminding me that the most important and personal of my articles about 1969 remains to be written. #15 abandons the theme concept for a number of rants and reminiscences; my favorite

title is "Sod Off Mr. Chips", Marc Orltley's disgust-ridden account of his teaching career.

File 770:109-110 / Mike Glycer, P.O. Box 1056, Sierra Madre CA 91025 / \$8/5 issues, \$15/10. News'n'gossip from the faned who made it fashionable again. I most enjoyed Mike's surprisingly moving and heartfelt comment (in #109) on the Oklahoma City bombing, following a visit to the site. Surprising sentiment from one of fandom's premiere wiseguys. A sour report on NASFiC -- is there any other kind? -- dominates #110.

For Dickheads Only No. 5 / Dave Hyde / Ganymeadean Slime Mold Productions, P.O. Box 611, Kokomo IN 46903 / A most necessary zine for Phil Dick fanatics, starving for a fix since the apparent demise of Paul Williams' PKD Society.

Fosfax #174 & PhosGene 1 / Timothy Lane c/o FOSFA / P.O. Box 37281, Louisville KY 40233-7281 / \$3 or. / Fandom's most reliable dittoheads were a bit subdued after the Oklahoma City bombing, but one has faith they'll recover their ferocity the closer we get to the '96 elections. Fine, serious lettercols and reviews (where else can you find an analysis of **The Secret World of American Communism**) and amazing productivity; these guys churn out more in a month than I can manage in a year. Even this confirmed old hippy can applaud their energy and ability even while recoiling in horror from most of their politics. **Phosgene** is the "occasional, authorized **Fosfax** parody," by the same crew; it works *much* better than an "authorized" parody should.

Frog & Tadpole Times 18 / Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, S. Tottenham, London N15 4JU U.K. / Trade. / The. / What is it about *frogs*? Not only do these folk name their fanzine after the amphibian, but so does Benoit Girard, and local fringe and jazz buff Dan Meyer has founded a religion based on the precept that

Frog Died for Your Sins. Whatever, Joseph Nicholas opens this issue with an anecdote about pond hoppers (none named Dennis) in his backyard. Good, non-froggy articles follow; Zena Hanna's first-person account of a volcanic eruption is frightening, and Bruno Orgorelec's piece on Bosnia is heart-rending, as he recalls the lost beauty of the country he once knew. The lettercol involves incomprehensible British politics, but since I like seeing the world as others do, that's in this pub's favor. As are the closing articles, a long account, well-illustrated, of Judith Hanna's jaunt through Indonesia, and "town mouse" Jilly Reed's story of her acclimation to a country lifestyle. Charming.

The Frozen Frog #11 / Benoit Girard, 1015 Gillaume-Boissat, Cap-Rouge, Quebec G1Y 1Y9 Canada / E-mail:frozfrog@lic.org / \$2 or. / This is the May, '95 edition of Girard's saddle-stitched personal zine; he announces plans to visit Glasgow (and Paris, and London), but if he's published since returning I haven't seen it. Since envy is a sin, Benoit may just be looking out for my soul. As he admits, **FF** is mostly lettercol, but it's an excellent lettercol, with a large (but hardly) exclusive) emphasis on my first love, comics. Even Ted White is fun to read as he discusses comics distribution (I recently had the pleasure of touring Diamond Distributors in Baltimore), and disses Mormonism. I'd welcome a sensible believer's response. Lots of other topics hit, including Rex Stout, underwear chain letters, and the true meaning of "R." in "R. Laurraine Tutihasi." I know what it stands for, and consider it beautiful, but know better than to reveal its meaning.

The Knarley Knews #51/52 / Henry Welch, 1525 16th Ave., Grafton WI 53024-2017 / welch@warp.msos.edu / \$1.50 or. / Nifty zine, lots of energy, fine lettercol, good book criticism, which the editor wisely rates as more worthy than bad-mouthing fanzines. (I'm with him there; if one wants to argue with a faned or critique his

way of doing fanzines, do it directly; that's what LOCs are for.) Issue 52 apparently shuts the door on yet another spat with **Blat!**

Mimosa 17 / Dick & Nicki Lynch, P.O. Box 1350, Germantown MD 20875 / Internet: lynch@access.digex.net / \$3 or. / New look for the multiple Hugo winner, a wraparound Steve Stiles cover and *professional* printing. (On this subject, check the very funny **Chat** cartoon by Teddy Harvia on p. 36.) The usual emphasis on fan history (by Ackerman, Kyle, Grennell, Willis, Zuhl ... guys like that) and another installment of Sharon Farber's Hugo-nominated series on the horrors of medical school. Neat article logos and a chatty, feud-free lettercol. The nicest people in fandom produce one of the nicest, most affirmative and most readable fanzines on earth. Anyone who doesn't love Dick & Nicki Lynch must torture chihuahuas for kicks.

Nova Express Vol. 4 No. 1 / Lawrence Person, P.O. Box 27231, Austin TX 78755-2231 / \$10/4 issues / First issue in two years of a truly *sterling* publication hahahaha ... devoted almost entirely to Bruce Sterling, bibliography, daunting essay, fascinating interview ... and a cover straight from somebody's MRI. Are we *literally* "inside the mind of Bruce Sterling"?

The Nova Scotian Hermit / Rodney Leighton, R.R. #3, Pugwash, Nova Scotia B0K 1L0 Canada / Trade. / Unstapled letter substitute and perzine. We discover herein the meaning of his "Patri pup" reference in this **Chall's** lettercol; Patri's another Canadian faned.

Ozy (and Harriet) Mandias / Bruce Pelz, 15931 Kalisher St., Granada Hills CA 91344-3951 / ecz5pel@mvs.Oac.Ucla.Edu / Trade. / Neat (and detailed) report on Bruce & Elayne's trip to Egypt, with nifty photos -- not repros -- taped to the cover. Bruce looks amazing on a camel.

Phassionate Fulcrum 3 / Mike Whalen, P.O.

Box 55422, Metairie LA 70055-5422 / MikePTEN@Aol.Com / \$2 or. / **PhF**, as Mike calls it, is saddle-stitched and expensive-looking, a handsome publication. It's also one of the year's most personal and candid zines. Whelan's anguish over his divorce and subsequent therapy are all but palpable. This is no failing; **PhF** is a powerful and important pub because it makes its author real to its readership.

Proper Boskonian 33 & 34 / Kenneth Knabbe, NESFA, P.O. Box 809, Framingham MA 01701-0203 / NESFA membership + a \$16 subscription, \$3/issue or the usual. / Outstanding publication of the awe-inspiring Boston club. Wide variety of s.f.nal topics and treatments: very detailed con reports (Evelyn Leeper seems to dissect every panel), a fine multi-focus examination of Cyril Kornbluth's career, even some readable fiction. Joe Mayhew's satirical cartoonery is sharp and skillful. Back to Boston in 2001; this time I'm *definitely* visiting Old Ironsides.

Purple Publishing / Ned Brooks, see below / Ned's Slanapa zine. "[I]nchworms and bagworms are two different bugs." N.B.

Quest for the Green Hills of Earth / Purple Mouth Press, c/o Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News VA 23605 / No price given. Good atmospheric illos by Alan Hunter. Received as part of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, handsome wraparound printing. Ned reprints Moore & Kuttner's "Quest of the Starstone" and various verses from various sources to "The Green Hills of Earth," along with the tunes by George Heap and Joseph Kaye. It's a hoot, especially since I well remember hearing the poem sung to an old Coca Cola jingle: "It's the real thing ... that's you're hoping to find ... when you're reading Heinlein ... it's the ree-all thing SENSE O' WONDER!"

The Reluctant Famulus #38-40 / Thomas D. Sadler, 422 W. Maple Ave., Adrian MI 49221-

1627 / Tom's fanzine seems at first to be constructed along classic lines: editorial pontification by the editor, articles by sundry, lotsa LOCs (good ones, too, very loose and funny; his readers seem to trust Sadler), reviews, so forth. But then one notices the peculiar satiric edge to Tom's Dr. Winklebeam squibs (a sample of which runs in this **Chall**), the excellent contributions of Terry Jeeves and the aforementioned Birkhead ... and **Famulus** becomes quickly a zine like no other. I like the way he reviews fanzines, acknowledging the editor's particular interests. Sadler seems to enjoy fanzines for the variety of points of view they bring to one's mailbox, a perspective of this hobby which I share.

The Rogue Raven 47 / Frank Denton, 14654-8th Ave. S.W., Seattle WA 98166 / Trade. Excellent, clean repro and a sane, decent editor go a long way in impressing me; I've been fond of this personal pub since Frank and I shared a SAPS roster more than a decade ago. This issue details Denton's travels about the fascinating southwest and attendance at local Indian "pow-wows" (I'm pleased Frank isn't intimidated by political correctness into saying "Native American").

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin / Sue Francis, 5503 Matterhorn Drive, Louisville KY 40216-1326 / The farewell issue from the president emeritus of the SFC, recently succeeded by Tom Feller. Lots of con reports.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin / Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson MS 39236-3626 / Prodigy:CCWS74A / SFC membership or the usual. / Tom's **SFC Bulletin** is a lot looser and less self-conscious than his genzine, **The Reasonable Freethinker**. Tom lists Southern fanzines, "Mad Dog" Madden enumerates forthcoming Southern conventions (14 in '96, and it's an *incomplete* list), Bill Francis discusses Southern clubs. Amusing review (by Tom) of

some old ('70-'71) issues of **Nolazine** he found; I had articles in all. As a former SFC prexy and **Bulletin** editor, I'm impressed. By the way, Feller is looking for a new SFC symbol, since he thinks the Confederate battle flag might offend some people. *sputter* *snarfle* *fume*

Spent Brass #28/29 / Andrew Hooper & Carrie Root, 4228 Francis Ave.N. #103, Seattle WA 98103 / Lots of baseball talk (Andy's eulogy for Mickey Mantle is moving), results of Hooper's latest fanzine poll, John Bartelt's incomprehensible GoH speech at Corflu Nova (a physicist, John had fans demonstrate particle spins on the stage), a nice piece on walking by Ms. Root ... and at least two especially delightful squibs. The first compares Chip Delany's **Dhalgren** with **Northern Exposure**; the second is Elizabeth Hooper-Lane's wistful and justifiably horrified account of her introduction to life in Houma, Louisiana. (As ghastly as she found the bayou and its people, she really dug on Mardi Gras.) As I found when I moved here in '68, Louisiana has a distinct way of living ... and as I found after a year or so here, it's a friendlier, crazier, far more interesting place than any other I've ever known. Hope her experience is similar.

Sticky Quarters 24 / Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit MI 48224 / "The Sarah Chronicles", detailing Brown's enraptured state of new parenthood, dominate this issue. Sarah is obviously a charmer, and I am bleak with envy.

Taboo Science Fiction #1 / Richard E. Geis, P.O. Box 11408, Portland OR 97211-0408 / \$3, 4 for \$10, over 21 only / "[A]n outlet, a oplace for my uninhibited experiments and self-indulgences in science fiction and fantasy." SF, satirical and serious, of a definite sexual bent, well-written and worth reading. Dick's accompanying note almost shook with worry that I wasn't over 21, and so it with sadness that I must inform Mr. Geis that I am, indeed, only 19 years of age.

Trash Barrel / Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Ave., N. Hollywood CA 91606-2308 / Trade. Two pages of fanzine listings, containing by far my favorite review of **Challenger** no. 2. "From Berkeley to Gettysburg." I like that.

The Ultimate Unknown #1 / David D. Combs, P.O. Box 219, Streamwood IL 60107-0219 / \$4, 4 for \$14. / First issue of a literary journal devoted to the genre. Lots of fiction, a good article about nuclear testing, a strange portrait of the editor's wife's Aunt Vanga, a Bulgarian mystic ... the only fannish material deals with a local Klingon klub, which should tell you everything you really need to know. Very earnest, and different from anything else received, for sure.

White Trash vol. 2 no. 2 / Tom Longo, P.O. Box 8890, New Orleans LA 70122-3037 (last known address) / Ran into Tommy at a Nawlins bookstore last spring; we'd had a whole conversation about Dan Simmons' **Endymion** before we recognized each other. Commentary on cigars, here, not your typical fanzine fare. **WT** is a strong libertarian pub -- even his personal writing, though touching and beautiful (as on the loss of his mother), has political overtones. Tommy is no punch-puller.

Wild Heirs #s 3-10.5 / Arnie & Joyce Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas NV 89107 / Marvelous fanzines from the Vegas crowd, full of excitement and light. I don't know what impresses me the most, the volume of their production (there will undoubtedly be more issues by the time you read this), the ease with which each of their pages sits on the eye (great artwork by Ross Chamberlain, Bill Kunkel and, of course, Rotsler), or their ability to produce champion fanac *by committee*. Much of the current output revolves around the Corflu they put on last year, and even if their adulation of Ted White mounts towards iconography, the sense of a bonded krewe of trufans is sincerely delightful. A later **Wild Heirs** orates against the Chicago-based

Vegas-in-'99 worldcon bid; like me, the wild ones back Australia for that year. Anyway, everything these people do is highly recommended. Chamberlin, in fact, deserves a Hugo nomination as a Fan Artist.

CODA

Have any of you ever read Richard Brautigan's wonderful book, **The Abortion**? I love it because it's set in Berkeley, and evokes the same feelings towards that wonderful place as my fondest memories; but it has more to offer than that. The central metaphor of the novel is, surprise, *not* an abortion but a unique sort of *library*. People don't check books out, they bring their own books *in*, books they've written, drawn, collected ... their own hobbies, their own dreams, whatever they want, and they all get to put them on the shelves.

That's an apt metaphor for fandom, and it's the way I see fanzines. Fanzines are what we put on that library's shelves ... that library based on freedom and tolerance. They're not written to any standard, they're just expression and exchange, freeflowing and unfettered.

My attitude towards what we do in fandom is very simple. *Let'er rip*. Say what you wish, as you feel, print what you wish; if there's a free method of communication on this planet, fanzines should be it. In short, don't let anybody or anything keep you from adding to that shelf *what you will*.





When I first met her, she was a goddess. She moved in the quarters where science fiction dreams are born: consort to its creation, steeped in its business. She hearkened to a career in the field, a business career, and when I met her, she was pursuing it. She was lovely and smart and dedicated and funny, and for some reason, because of then-pending Nolacon II, I imagined, my company didn't repel her. I admired; I basked; she was a goddess, above me, beyond me.

When I saw her again, she was down, things not so great inside the perimeter of ambition and class. We shared our sadness in deep, human talk and the goddess became a friend.

Then, in the time before we saw each other again, I had a dream. It was an angry and ugly fantasy about the lady and the worst person in the genre. In my squalid imagination the connection made sense, and I awoke convinced of it; never mind the truth; never mind faith or hope. Those are two words I've never really comprehended all that well.

Maybe they should be learned.

She called from Birmingham, on the road with the selling job she worked to keep body and soul together while chasing her science fiction dream. She was on her way to Florida, she said, and would be passing through Mobile. Would that be close enough? Could we meet, have dinner, talk Nolacon II?

I walked into the restaurant and there she was, reading. We went to dinner, where she charmed the waiter and showed off her opal necklace, and we talked about New Orleans and the convention we were both working towards. Then, in the deep chill of late evening, we went to where she was staying. Neither one of us knew what would happen, or perhaps we both did.

Faith and hope. She awoke me in the cold of the morning, and sent me forth, crimson fingernails wagging farewell from the safety of the covers. The chill was bone-deep as I drove home from Mobile; I pulled my sweater up over my hands, and watched my breath blossom against the windshield. Faith and hope, and their eternal companion, surprise. There's a lot that is wonderful yet to learn about being human.

Fog ghosts danced on the bayoux. The day dawned mauve over my left shoulder. I drove on – freezing cold; warm as toast.
