

d i a s p a r # 1 8





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F A N S P R A C H

The worldcon in Kansas City was much different from what I expected. For one thing, along with everyone else I expected an incredible mob-scene, 5,000+ sci-fi freaks and a few hundred science fiction fans milling around looking for the action. (Meaning several hundred of them wanting to meet David Gerrold and the other several thousand looking eagerly for K. H. Scheer.) Actually there were fewer than 3,000 attendees, and many of them recognized even my name. In fact, so many people obviously knew me, even when I didn't know them despite peering at their nametags, that I quickly developed a case of social paranoia.

I remember meeting one young fan in the elevator at some odd hour of the morning; he read my nametag and said, "Hey, you're Terry Carr!"

"I hope so," I averred.

"God damn, I'm glad to meet you! I think you're a terrific editor, and I love the stories you write, too!"

"Hey, thank you!"

"I thought Orbit 18 was one of the best of the series, in fact."

"Uh, I think this is my floor."

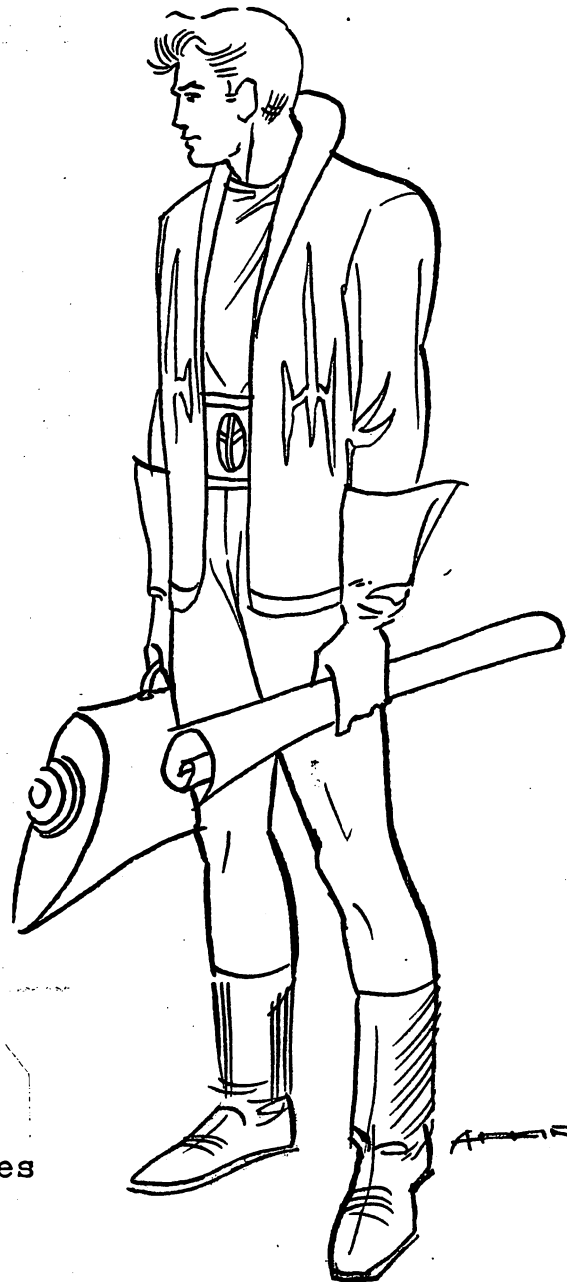
Damon Knight was there, as a matter of fact, and I got a chance to talk with him for the first time in years. First I sat next to him during the Women in SF panel (the 1970s equivalent of the "New Wave" panels of the 60s and the ones in the 50s on "Social Significance in Science Fiction"), during which he drew artful little doodles in his pocket program; later we chatted in the easy-chaired mezzanine outside the Crystal Room while Marta Randall read "Secret Rider" inside.

"I don't understand this whole business of reading stories aloud," Damon said. "They're not written to be heard." I agreed, and added that I didn't like to be read to anyhow: I've left during readings by Harlan Ellison and Bob Silverberg, among others, so I know it isn't just that I didn't like the quality of the readings.

"But Katie read one of her stories yesterday," I said. "Does she feel differently?"

He shook his head. "She decided to do it because she was afraid of it; she wanted to get over the fear of reading in public. I don't even know why she chose the story she read; it isn't one of her best."

Later, at dinner at an excellent Indian restaurant on the outskirts of K.C. (the Taj Mahal, in case anyone ever wants to go back to Kansas City), I asked Katie about it. She explained that as a girl she'd had a stammer and she wanted to be sure she was over it now. "I didn't have any trouble with that, but I hated reading aloud anyway; now that I've done it once I don't feel the need to do it again."



"Why did you choose the story you did?"

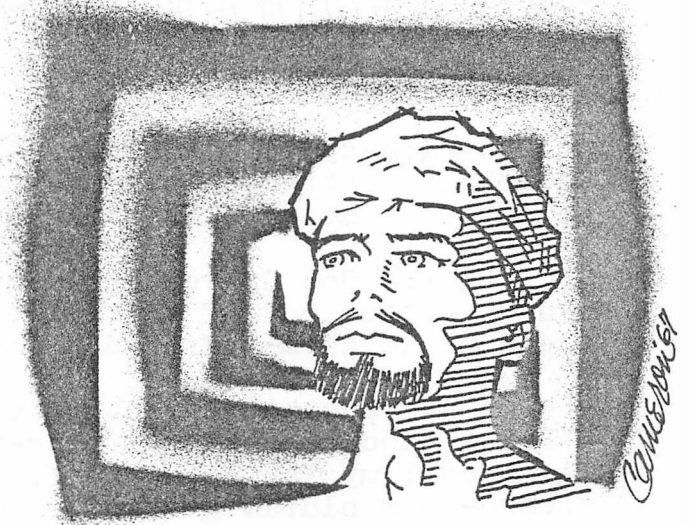
"Oh, I was going to read a different one but I forgot to pack a copy. This one was the only one I could get a copy of quickly."

Katie had been on the Women in SF panel too, which went very well despite the background drone of Jerry Pournelle's voice coming over a loudspeaker in the room next-door where he was appearing on a "Life in Space" panel. I heard later that when Jerry introduced one of his co-panelists, Marion Bradley, he said, "Here's a woman who's contributed so much to science fiction that she doesn't have to appear on Women in SF panels." Marion, you shoulda shot him down.

This conreport doesn't seem to be developing very linearly. I do have to tell you about my introduction to Kansas City, though. Well, actually it starts even before that, when Bob Silverberg and I and others boarded our plane in Oakland: Bob made a point of not checking his luggage, fearing that they'd lose it, but I pooh-poohed this and checked mine through. On arrival in K.C., I stood at the luggage carousel and watched with growing unease as my suitcase kept not appearing. Finally the carousel was empty, everyone had grabbed his or her luggage, and I was left watching a barren rack. I thought, It's bad enough I may have to spend the weekend without a change of clothes or shaving gear, but I'll have to hear I-told-you-so too. (However, Bob exercised impeccable restraint.) I went to the claim desk and filled out forms for the retrieval of my suitcase; the man behind the counter said, "We'll get it back for you soon if we possibly can." I said in my best saintly voice: "Please do -- I kill." He looked very startled. Four hours later they delivered the suitcase to the Muehlebach Hotel.

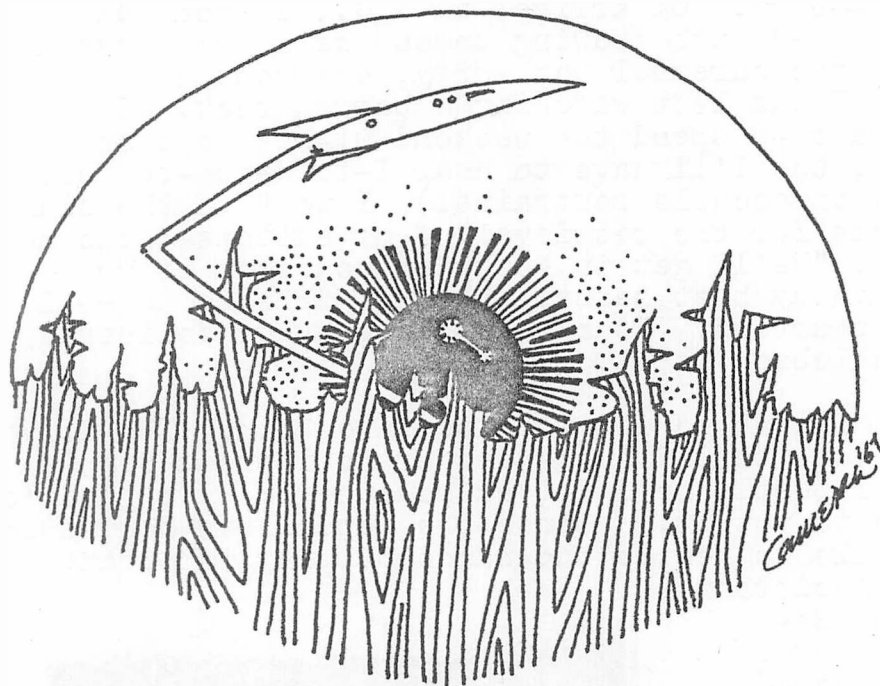
Feeling disgusted, I grabbed a limousine into town. The driver was one of those gregarious taxi-drivers, eager to impress with a recitation of the famous people he'd driven somewhere. (Or "had 'em in my car," as he liked to put it.) Since the Republican Convention was just over, he was able to recite the names of many important people like the Second Assistant Undersecretary of Iguana Resources during the Eisenhower administration. But he saved the best for last: "And you know who I drove back to the airport after the convention? Liz Ray! She was with Tony Orlando!"

Welcome to Kansas City, I subvocalized. (You may get the impression I didn't like Kansas City. You'd be right. Aside from everything else, you'd expect I'd at least have enjoyed some first-rate steak and roast beef, right? Wrong; two consecutive steak houses, including the Expensive one in the hotel, served steaks that were tough and gristly. I assume they export their best meat to South Africa.)



I had an Adventure or two during the con. Mainly, there was the night I was riding up in an elevator, heading for the SFWA suite (the pros' analogue of the N3F Hospitality Room), when the elevator broke down between floors. It broke down because too many people had crowded on...well, Kelly and Polly Freas asked if there was room for two more, and who can say them nay? The elevator could, quite evidently: we got stuck between floors 6 and 7. It brought me a feeling of deja vu: just a year or so ago, in Los Angeles, I was in an elevator with Harlan Ellison when it got stuck between floors. On that occasion, while we were waiting for the building engineer to come and get us out, Phil Farmer kept hollering cheering things down the shaft, like, "Hey Harlan, if you don't get out, can I have your collection?"

This time it was a little better, the engineer being on the premises and therefore able to get us out sooner. But elevators do get uncomfortably hot quickly, and even though I had high-class company like Kelly Freas, Bob Silverberg and Damon Knight, I quickly developed an antisocial streak and was quite relieved when we were finally able to climb out.



I tarried a bit in the halls, savoring the restoration of space around me (can it be that Kirlian auras when forced to overlap with too many others set up stress patterns?), then hied myself to the SFWA suite to tell the tale of my Adventure. --Only to find that Damon had gotten there before

me and already told the story and left. Nothing was left for me but to make up outrageous stories of Damon panicking and screaming, "Let me out, let me out, this is worse than a Clarion workshop!"

Later, Bob Silverberg remarked, "Do you realize that if we hadn't gotten out of that elevator, the entire original-anthology field would have suffered a mortal blow?"

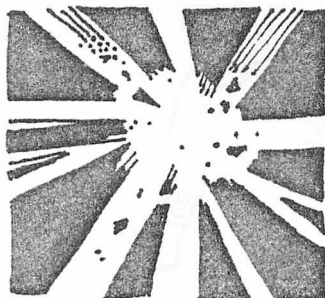
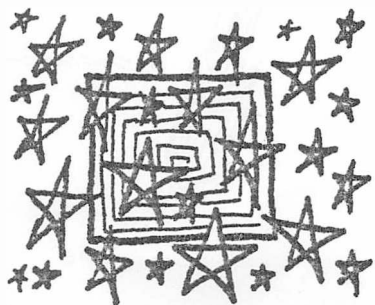
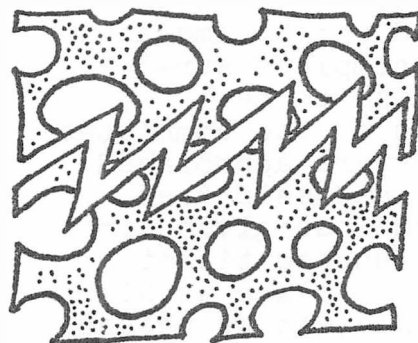
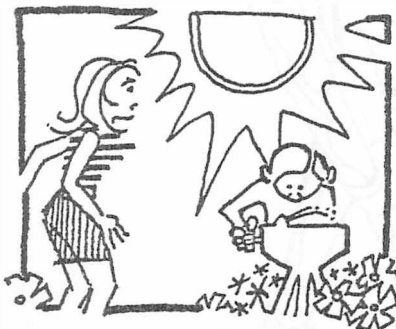
I had another Adventure of a sort when I finally got to attend a First Fandom meeting. Long-time readers of fanzines like VOID may recall my faunching to find out what goes on at those mysterious closed-door oldfan parties. Well, Susan Wood was able to get me into one because she's an Honorary Member of First Fandom. (Never mind that chronologically she has better credentials for membership in Apa-45; she ran the Fanhistory Room at Torcon and gained her Honorary Membership there.) On entering, I found a large room

full of Sam Moskowitz, Dave Kyle, Lester del Rey and various others. I struck up a conversation with Bob Madle. "Gee," I said, "I always imagined these parties consisting of conversations about Ed Earl Repp." He looked surprised, and said, "Well, we did mention Ed Earl Repp earlier, when we were talking about who should get next year's First Fandom Award." "Ed Earl Repp for the First Fandom Award?" I cried. "Why, G. Peyton Wertenbaker is long overdue!" He looked askance at me and went back to a conversation about the literary influence of Ralph Milne Farley on Samuel R. Delany.

I also scored another First at this con by taking part in the Front de Liberation de la Piscine's skinnydipping session Sunday night, or rather Monday morning, since it took place about dawn. This was lots of fun, and culminated in John Berry and me lazing about in the shallow end of the pool and admiring the intermittent flashes of light in the sky. "Wonder if that's lightning," John mused. "Yeah, I guess it is," I murmured contentedly. Then both of us looked again as another flash came, this one seeming much closer. Simultaneously we decided it might be a good time to get Out of the Pool, and we did.

Subsequently I heard from several people who'd been looking for me all through the con that the only time they'd seen me was in the pool. "But that's okay, it was pretty dark out there," said one. Hell, what's the point of exhibitionism in the dark?

After we left the pool, a real lightning-storm developed, sending waves of thunder over the hotel. Sid Coleman told me the next day that at 5:30 a.m. he'd been wakened by a particularly loud crash followed immediately by the sound of everybody in the hotel saying "Wow, what was that?" etc. "It's quite astonishing what a hubbub can be raised by 2500 fans talking at once," Sid told me.

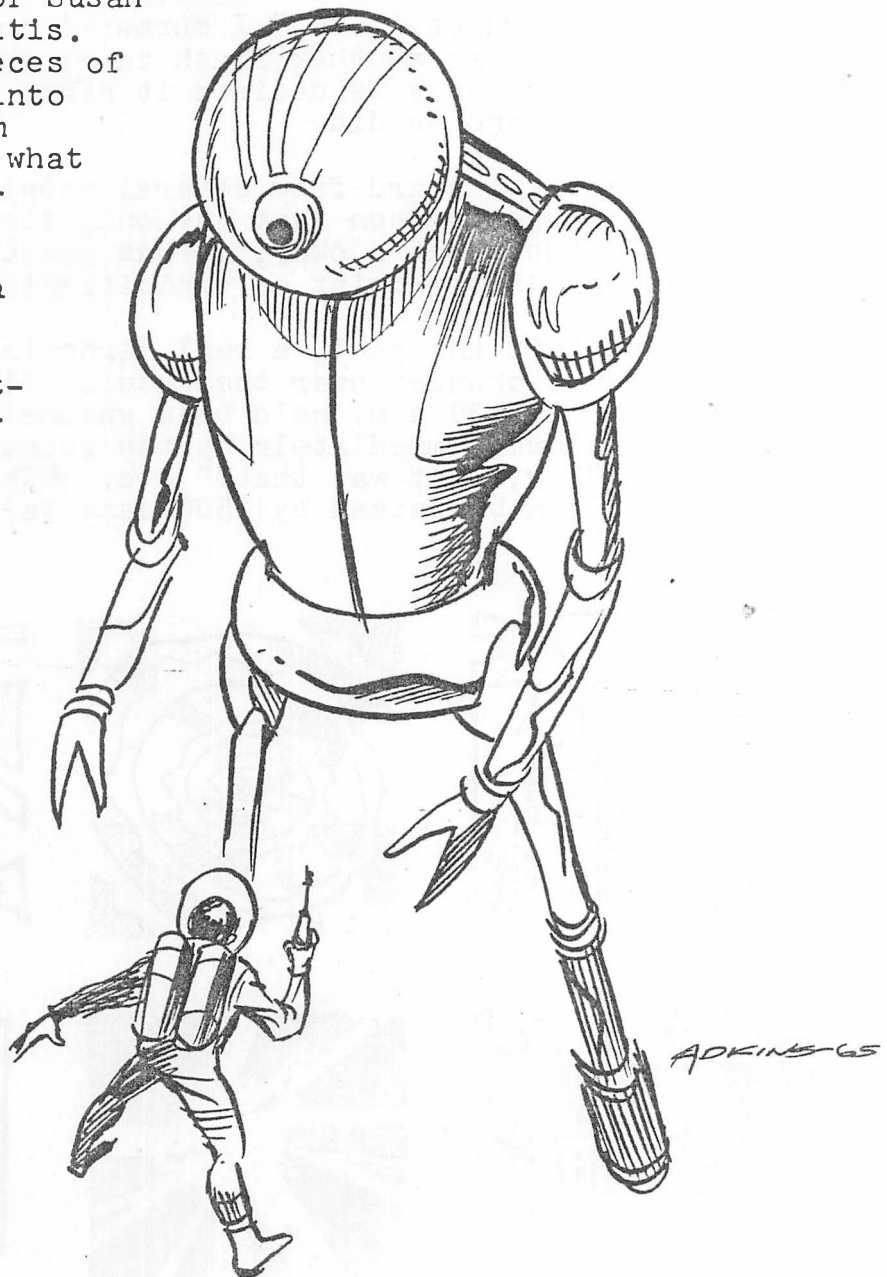




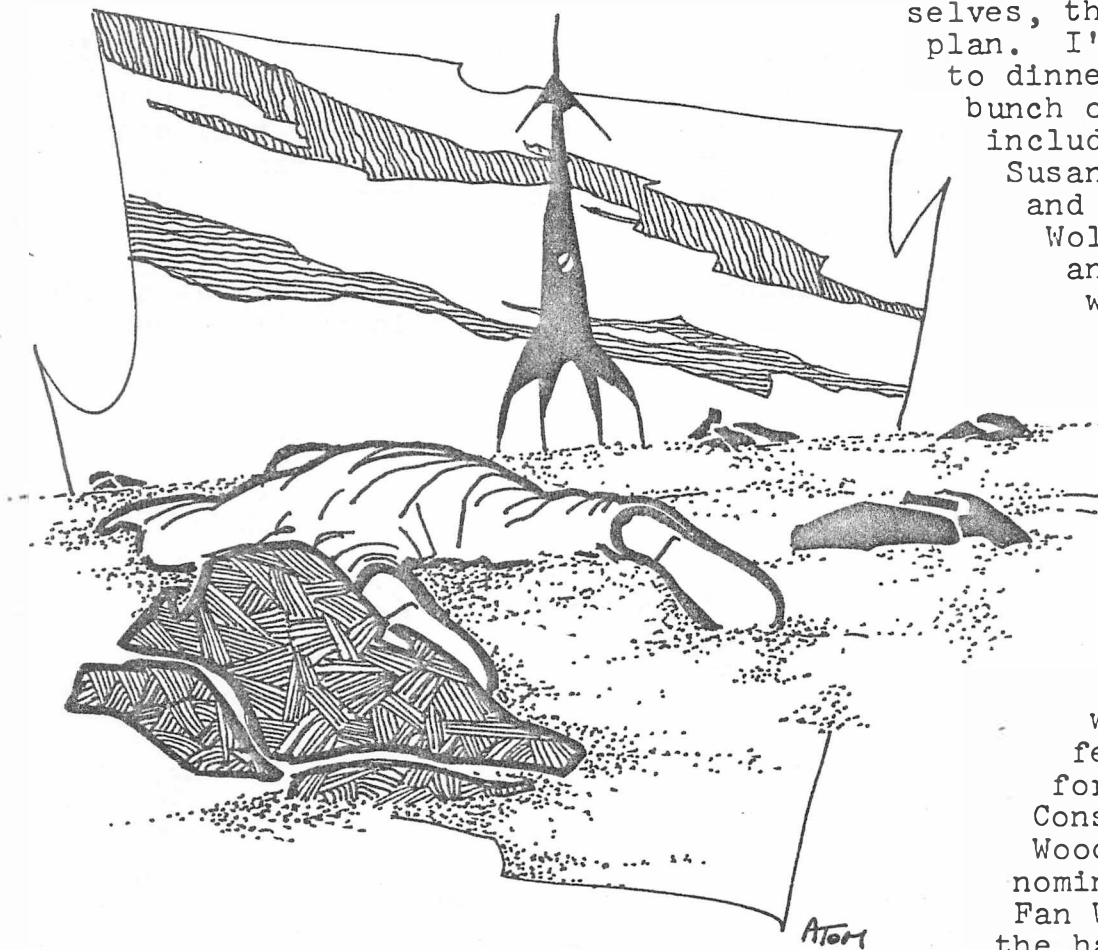
Another highlight of the con, for me, was the Neofan Room, organized by Ro Lutz-Nagy. In addition to the expected piles of miscellaneous fanzines scattered about, this featured a TV set that continually repeated a 40-minute TV tape of a program in which various whacko fans explained the meaning of fandom and its language, wearing false noses instead of propellor beanies. It was a hilariously witty show, interspersed with commercials for products to combat gafia, banquet indigestion and elevator halitosis. I dropped in several times but never caught the tape complete from beginning to end: pity. It was better than anything else I saw on the official program.

Well, I really didn't see much of the official program. I did catch the Women in SF panel (called "the girls' panel" by the con committee, who insisted that it should include "no strident Joanna Russ types"), which was fine even if moderator Susan Wood did have laryngitis. I caught bits and pieces of the rest. Wandered into the main meeting-room one afternoon to see what was going on and discovered it was the banquet. I've never missed a banquet at a worldcon since 1958, but since this year the committee separated the Hugo presentations from the banquet, I deliberately skipped the latter ...forgot all about it, in fact, so the clatter of knives and forks came as a complete surprise to me. One of the committee members approached me and said Fred Pohl had given him an unused ticket for a place at his table, to be passed on to some worthy, and would I like it? I said no thanks, having just had lunch, and went away to the Neofan Room feeling terribly liberated.

I missed the Hugo Awards them-







selves, though not by plan. I'd gone out to dinner with a whole bunch of people that included Sid Coleman, Susan Wood, Damon and Kate, Gene Wolfe, Lois Metzger and so on, and we'd trekked out to the edge of Kansas City to an Indian restaurant called the Taj Mahal. The food was excellent, but when we called for two cabs to take us back we had to wait fergoddamever for one to show. Consequently Susan Wood, Hugo Award nominee for Best Fan Writer, entered the hall just in time to meet hordes

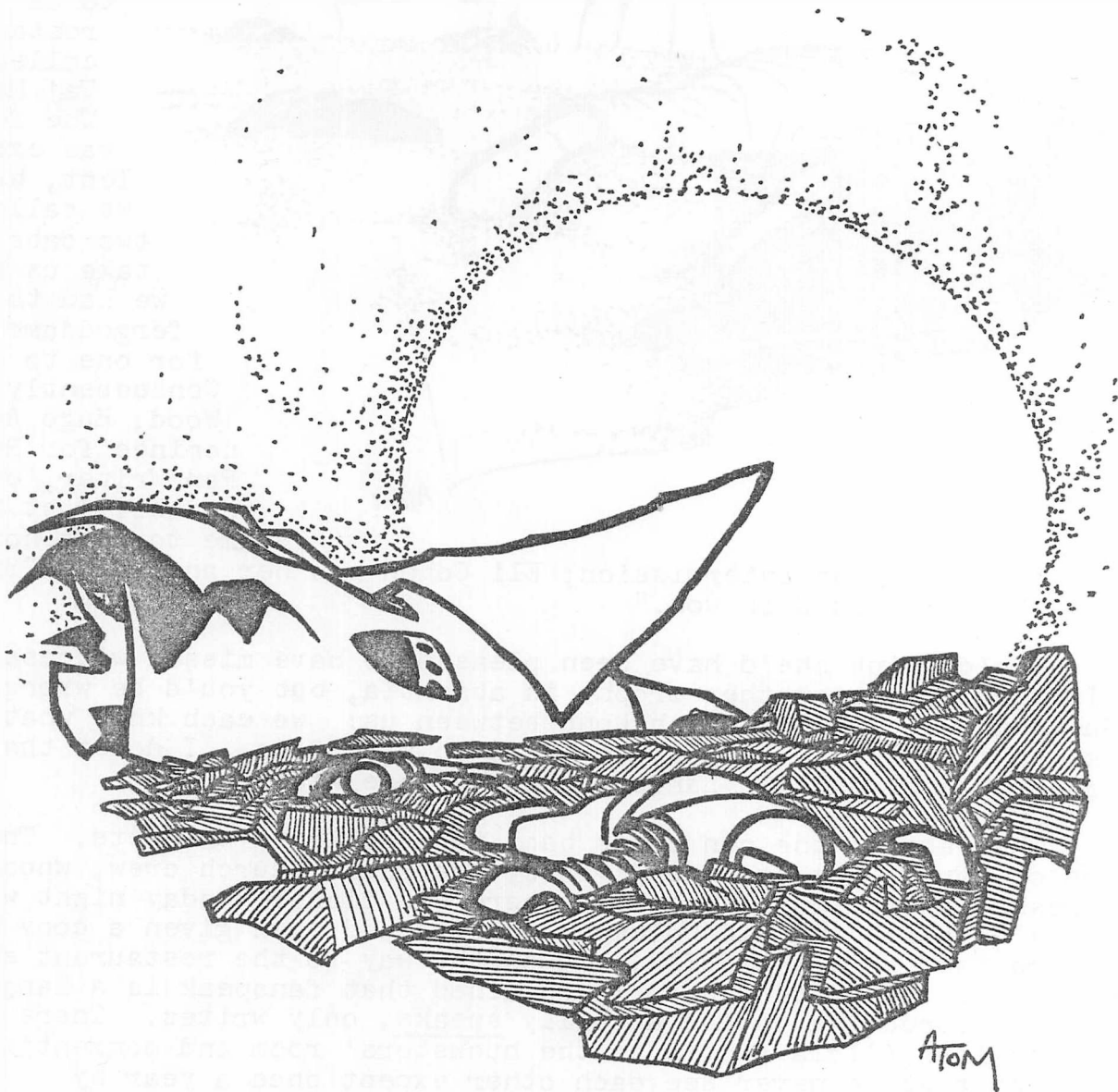
of fans exiting at intermission; Eli Cohen saw her and said, "You lost, Susan; Dick Geis won."

You'd think she'd have been pleased to have missed witnessing Geis winning yet another trophy in absentia, but you'd be wrong. (Susan and I have a fannish bond between us: we each know what it's like to lose a Best Fan Writer award to Dick Geis. I doubt that Herbert Hoover and Alf Landon felt the same kinship.)

The rest of the con comes back to me only in snippets. There were of course the parties given by the Falls Church crew, whose refreshments couldn't be beat. There was dinner Monday night with Sherry Gottlieb and Sid Coleman: Sherry had been given a copy of the revised NEOFAN'S GUIDE, and on the way to the restaurant she referred to fans as "fen." I explained that fanspeak is a language no self-respecting trufan actually speaks, only writes. There was running into Alicia Austin in the hucksters' room and commenting on the fact that we never see each other except once a year by accident at cons -- thereafter we ran into each other every hour or two, and finally had to agree that we must stop meeting like this. I saw Tom Perry again, fresh from his re-entry into fandom at a recent British con, and explained to him that Peter J. Vorzimer had really existed, it was only the "last issue" of ABSTRACT that was a hoax and I'd been fooled by it too. (Ron Ellik pulled that one.) Seeing Gene Wolfe for the first time in years, I said, "You know, you're such a terrific writer that I've become a big fan of

yours, which makes me uncomfortable because I dislike you personally." He stared at me nonplussed for only a moment, then said, "Well, I see you have more taste than I suspected," a neat double-entendre. There was the ride out to the airport going back, which I shared with R. A. Lafferty and during which we had the only real conversation I've ever managed with him. At the airport I ran into Jay Kinney and we talked all the way back to San Francisco about people, reality and Life.

I guess there's something about spending five days at a science fiction convention that makes you ready to philosophize about existence.



THE ILLUSTRATIONS in this issue have been by Gray Morrow (cover), Dan Adkins (pp. 2, 3 and 7), Colin Cameron (pp. 4, 5 and 6) and Arthur Thomson (pp. 8 and 9).