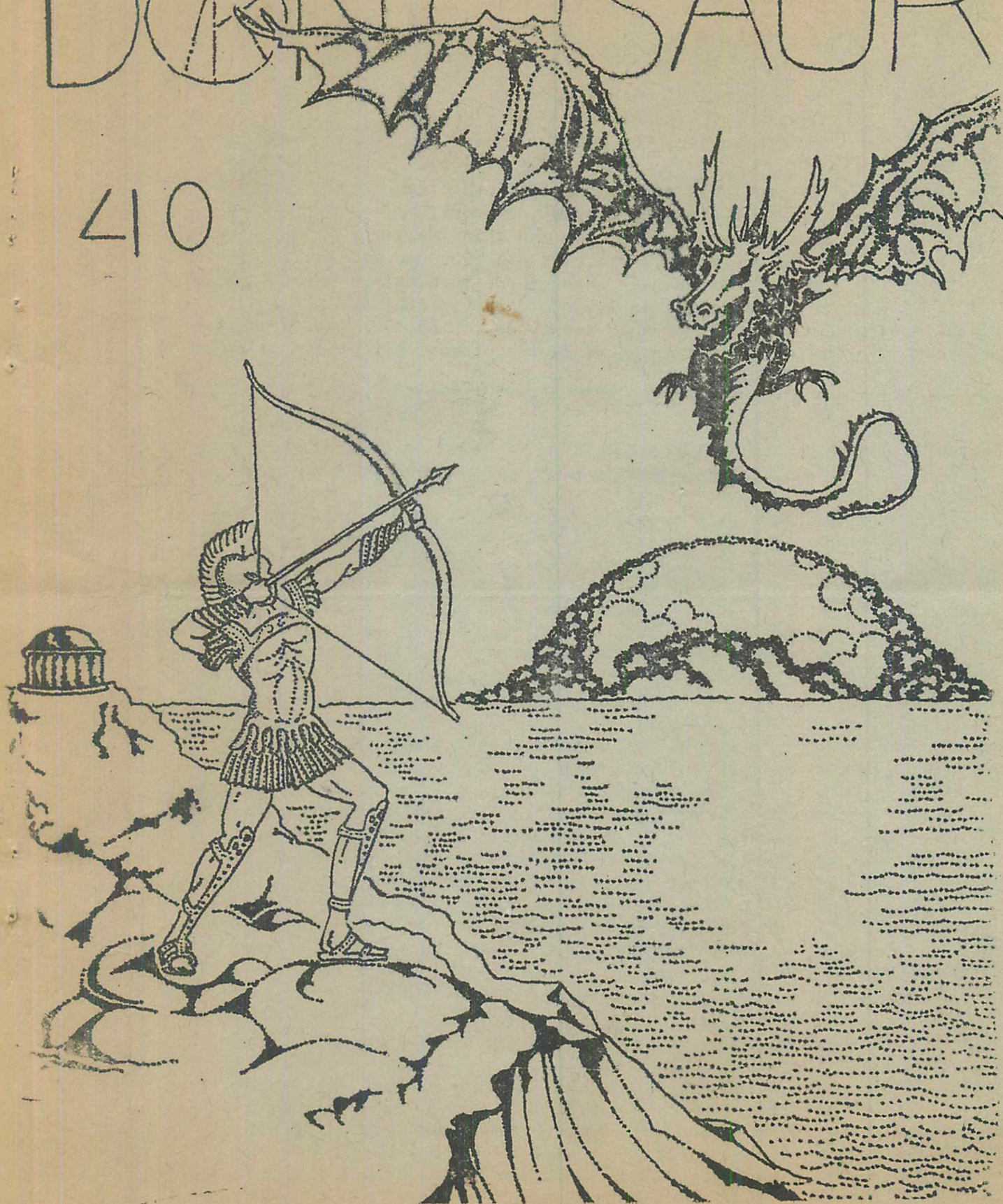


# DONOSAUR

410





## 49

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Available in exchange for other fan-  
zines, letters of comment, artwork, or  
almost anything else you can think of --  
including money. Price is now (because of in-  
flation and because I hope to be turning out more pages  
every two months than I used to each month) 35¢ per copy; a  
six-issue subscription for \$2, or a 12 issue sub for \$3.50. This issue is  
being produced using a combination of mimeo and offset. Print run is about 325.

[illegible]

It's been a long time since DOS 39 -- at least it seems like a long time to me. If it doesn't to you, there's nothing in the rules about your having to say so.

Anyway, I don't think I much like my new bi-monthly schedule. Part of the idea was supposed to be to give myself more time to work on it, to think about things more carefully and to do a better job -- and to produce a considerably larger zine. Now, I never said any of those things, for very good reason, but I was definitely thinking them when I adjusted my schedule. To no one's surprise, not even my own, things aren't working out quite as I hoped. Oh, I may have a few more pages, but that can be accounted for by a decision to print more letters, or more of the letters I do print, and by the fact that good artists are sending me some very good artwork, and I can't refrain from using it.

But in terms of time spent in careful preparation, this issue won't be much different from its predecessors.

With a whole two months to work with (oh, well, not really; not by a long shot because after all I was still working on DOS 39 clear through the first week in January, and my target date for completion of 40 is the middle of February; but still it's more time than I've ever had between issues in the past), I'm still not getting started on the actual writing until only a week or so before my deadline. And I have decided that -- once again -- I'll have to miss my preferred deadline, the Saturday of the DASFA meeting, in this case Feb. 15. I'll be doing well, indeed, if I can get DOS 40 in the mail during the last week in February.

There were extenuating circumstances, the most decisive of which I don't want to say much about. It was the fact that I was knocked out for a week by the most severe case of flu I've had since I was a child. It would be no fun for me to write about that and even less for you. Another of the circumstances, though, is one that maybe I will write about. It was a letter from my sister, Polly Ryan, whom I've mentioned previously. The letter came just a day or two ahead of the flu and its impact is indistinguishable in my mind from the effects of the illness. Actually I don't intend to say much about the letter itself or its contents or its consequences, but I'll use it as a spring board into something I would be writing about sooner or later anyway, just as another chapter



in the autobiography that seems to be taking shape so inexorably in these pages.

But first . . .

Oh, yes, it seems there nearly always has to be something first. I just don't feel right to plunge immediately into a discourse, and this particularly is one that I'm almost reluctant to begin.

So first, while I'm stalling, I'd like to inaugurate a new department of DON-o-SAUR. If this does become a regular feature, it probably will not normally appear this far forward in the zine. The logical place for it would be following the loc column, because this is as much a product of the mail as is the loc-col. The difference is that in this column I will not print any letters, only answers to them. I have always used DOS as a sort of letter substitute and I intend to continue doing so, but at a more efficient level, I hope. Many of the letters I receive are of general interest; I'll continue to print as much of as many of them as possible. But much of my mail is of interest only to me and the person who wrote the letter, but in many of these cases the letter-writer urgently desires a response; in some cases a personal reply is not just expected but virtually demanded. Lastish I made a feeble gesture toward dealing with the problem. Some of the names in the LAHF column had stars beside them, to remind myself that I intended to write personally to those people. Most of the names so designated did receive a letter or card from me eventually, but some did not.

So now I'm going to try a different approach. Let's just see how it works. Guess I'll call the new column simply:

## P E R S O N A L S

to CHRIS AND SHARI HULSE:

I've had several reasons for feeling that I had to write to you personally. (But unfortunately no good reasons for not having done it). For one thing, you asked some very specific questions, some time back, in a long-buried letter, about some of the technical aspects of art reproduction -- electrostenciling, particularly, as I recall. I really intended to give you some answers; they might have been helpful if I'd given them right away, but so much time elapsed that I finally decided you'd already gotten the information from someone else. And then you had a specific inquiry about my S\*C\*O\*R\*P\*I\*O\*N book and magazine business that I intended to reply to but never did. (What was the question, do you remember?) And finally, skipping over such reasons as that I think you're awfully nice to continue writing to me with such warmth and enthusiasm (I positively bask in your letters!), I have been meaning to tell you how much I delight in Shari's artwork. At her best, as epitomized by those animals on your stationery, she is nothing less than magnificent! Now to answer the specific question in your latest letter, I have in fact given quite a bit of thought as to what happens to my books and magazines when I depart. My magazine collection will be donated to a university library -- probably Metropolitan State College, where I teach. My survivors will get first crack at my books. The three children can fight it out among themselves over who gets what. Anything that's left will be auctioned and/or offered to various book dealers. (Except I'd like to arrange it so my friends could have a chance to pick over the books before the dealers get to them). Thanks for reminding me: I must remember to get all this written into my will.

to HANK & LESLIEGH LUTTRELL:

The address in Madison was 747 Williamson, and I don't know how to account for it but there were sure-enough cockroaches in that apartment. Remember that it was 1951-52, and I dare say urban renewal has made a difference.

to FRED PATTEN:

DASFA will want an ad in the Aussiecon program book, and I'll be sending the copy and the payment to you very soon; it may reach you ahead of this. Chuck Hansen (701 S. Grant St., Denver 80209) has pictures of the 1941 Denvention --not just stills, but also a 16 mm movie that runs about five minutes. There's only the one print of that in existence that I know of, and I've been intending to propose that DASFA foot the bill for a copy, but maybe World Con should do it. The film is an historical treasure and really belongs in the WorldCon archives.

to BRUCE CLINGAN

Sorry if my lack of personal response bothers you, but as I was trying to explain in introducing this column, I'm simply not a letter hack; writing letters is hard work for me -- just as hard as producing a fanzine if not harder. Still, as I'm trying to demonstrate here, I do have a conscience of sorts; it bothers me, too, that I can't reply personally to all the mail I get. Please be assured that I have been getting THE DIVERSIFIER and enjoying it very much. But it may be a while yet before you receive an actual loc from me.

to GRAHAM ENGLAND

Big Name Fan. You have no idea how superior it makes me feel to be able to explain that to you. If your offer to serve as European agent still holds, I'm about ready to take you up on it. The idea of building up a credit balance of UK funds really appeals to me (Britain is fine in 1979, and I hope to be there). I'm still a little uncertain as to how this works. Would I just send a certain number of zines to you and leave it up to you to find the subscribers? -- or would I be expected to have the subscribers first and send you the exact number of zines for them?

Hell, I don't know why American fans are polite -- if they are. They seem aggressive enough to me.

to GIL GAIER

The reason I didn't respond to GUYING GYRE #1 (which honestly did impress the hell out of me, and which I truly intended to do something about) was that I took it to school last quarter to show to my science fiction class, as part of a sort of lecture on fanzines -- and I lose track of where the excuse goes from there. GUYING GYRE is still in that pile of fanzines in my office, waiting for me to get back to it, but it doesn't look like I'm going to soon. Nor does it look like I'm going to respond to your proddings to become involved in The Project (though I wholeheartedly approve of it and wish it well). It's a matter of time. Spelled l-a-z-i-n-e-s-s.

to MOSHE FEDER

My excuses to you are at least as feeble as my excuses to Gil. I was deeply honored and flattered and downright astonished to be put on speculation for TAPS, and I was so overwhelmed by that cover on the copy of the Terrean that you were responsible for that I intended to write you a warm personal letter of appreciation for that, at the very least. And then there was your DNQ letter on the proposed FAAN awards, which I intended to respond to but never did, followed by THE ZINE FAN, which I read with avid interest but haven't done anything about -- except this. If it's necessary to write a postcard in order to keep getting the progress reports on this matter, then I will send a card. Thanks for thinking of me.

Maybe I'll have more Personals later on in the zine; there are several others I'd like to give personal greetings to, but for now, let us move on to other things.



I've thought of another delaying tactic, another excuse to postpone writing about the topic that I hope to focus on eventually but somehow dread beginning because I'm not sure how to handle it. It's been a long time, seems to me, since I've done any book or movie reviews in DoS. In fact some of you may have the impression that I never talk about books or movies, but there was a time in the history of Don-o-Saur (particularly when it was Don-o-Saur Coprolites) when the emphasis was much less on personal reminiscences and more on the literary and artistic world of science fiction. Just so you'll know that I'm not doing anything unprecedented here.

I've been doing quite a bit of reading recently -- more than usual -- and my motive for reading the books is virtually the same as my motive for telling you about them now -- to postpone temporarily having to face an unpleasant reality.

Science fiction is escapist literature-- always has been for me, since I first discovered it, though for that matter all reading has always served an escapist function for me; it's just that science fiction has been my favorite form of escapist reading. But when I read The Genius by Theodore Dreiser it was as an escape, nothing else, and I became as engrossed in that terribly long, rather dull and very awkwardly written book as I've ever been in anything.

Anyway . . .

Actually, what I want to talk about first is not a book but a movie, one that has been mentioned previously in these pages and about which there have been a number of questions but not many answers. Well, I still don't have the answers to any of the questions asked here, but at least I have now seen and can therefore tell you something about:

*DARK STAR, Produced and directed by John Carpenter (who also wrote the music); starring Dan O'Bannon, Brian Nacelle, Dre Pahich and Cal Kuniholm; written by Dan O'Bannon and John Carpenter; special effects by O'Bannon. Executive producer Jack H. Harris, and released by Jack H. Harris Enterprises Inc.*

The picture showed up in Denver with no advance publicity except for a small ad that ran the day before the film opened in one of the downtown theaters and in several of the suburban shopping centers. It's been playing for about a week already and I hope the reason it seems to be staying on is that people are going to see it. It is sure as hell worth seeing.

Ed Bryant told me (without saying where he got the information) that this started as a film school project. I can almost believe that. Along with the experimental aspects there are occasional slight touches of amateurishness bordering on triteness--touches that were probably so much fun to do and which turned out so well that the temptation to leave them in overcame the artistic judgment that must have argued for omitting or trimming. (What I have in mind here particularly is a rather long sequence in which Sgt. Pinback, one of the Dark Star's crew members, gets caught in an elevator shaft aboard ship, and is in danger of falling to the bottom of the shaft or being crushed by the elevator. Sure, I was





aching with laughter throughout the entire bit, but even at the height of my merriment it occurred to me that it was, essentially, just the sort of thing that Harold Lloyd and Charlie Chaplin and Abbott and Costello did a million times--and just as irrelevant to the story but that's about the only example I can think of, and that charge of irrelevance can't hold much water because in a way pointlessness is the point of the story).

Ed Bryant also said something about a \$20,000 budget for the film, and that I can't believe, whether he was talking about the total budget or just for special effects. I'm no expert on movies, and I don't even see very many, but I know that \$20,000 is virtually nothing to most film makers. But the only movie I have seen with more impressive special effects, giving as convincing a feeling of being in outer space, was *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

I suppose everybody knows by now what the basic situation is: the Dark Star is a bomb-ship that's been away from Earth for 20 years (three years, subjective time) and which is beginning to malfunction, its original captain having been killed by one of the malfunctions some time previously. The mission of the Dark Star is the scour the galaxy destroying "unstable" planets-- a term that's never clearly defined.

The destruction is done by sentient bombs, one of whom (they've got personalities; you can't refer to them as which!) develops a god complex at the end of the picture, after having been taught phenomenology by the acting captain, who in turn was instructed to take that emergency action by the dead former captain, who has been preserved in the cryogenic unit and who is, in fact, the only survivor when the God-bomb blows up the ship at the end.

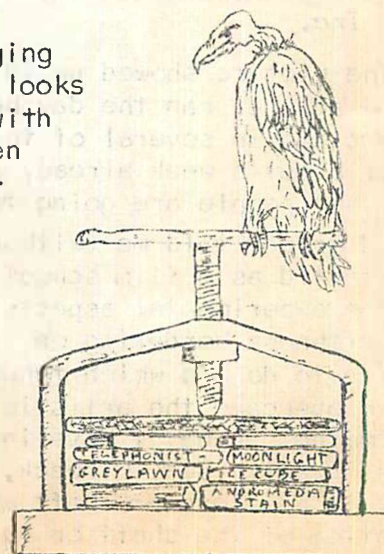
The only time the human members of the expedition function efficiently and talk and behave rationally is during the bomb runs, when they're plugged into the ship. The rest of the time they are all totally mad, unable to communicate with each other, each of them lost in their own dreams.

The acting, incidentally, is, in my amateur judgment, superb, with no trace of film school amateurishness that I could detect.

One of the real stars of the show is heard but never seen -- the sexy female voice of the HAL-like ship's computer. And certainly some of the sanest dialogue is between the computer and Bomb 20, which keeps getting instructions to prepare for a bomb run, whereupon the computer must convince it that the instructions are erroneous and that it should return to the bomb bay. She doesn't have to resort to teaching the bomb phenomenology.

Another prime attraction of the movie is the engaging little alien called Beachball (because that's what it looks like and of course in studio-reality is--painted and with claws attached.. Nevertheless it's a convincingly alien alien, and the enjoyment of it is certainly not diminished by the recognition factor. When the alien is finally shot and destroyed following a nightmare-like chase through the ship, of which the elevator episode is only a part, it zooms around exactly like a collapsing beachball, and that just becomes part of the humor.

Humor. That's a key ingredient in the production, and the humor ranges from primitive slapstick through subtle and sophisticated verbal humor (that philosophical discussion of Doo-little's with the bomb on the nature of reality



is a masterpiece) right up through the most avant garde theater-of-the-absurd black humor.

See this film. It's an instant classic.

And now, more briefly, I hope, I'll tell about some of the books I've been reading.

*THE NIGHT CREATURE*, by Brian Ball, Fawcett Gold Medal 1974, 95¢, 159 pp.

The front cover, the title page and the copyright page contain the information that the original title was *The Venomous Serpent*, but nowhere is there any indication of when or where the story appeared under that title. That sort of thing irritates me.

There was something hauntingly familiar about the opening section of the book; I think I may have read at least part of it before. Maybe I read the whole thing previously, and it's not at all impossible that in a few more years I may pick it up again if it's published under still a third title and read it with a vague feeling that I must have read this somewhere before.

It just isn't a very memorable book. Not so bad as to discourage you from reading it, particularly if all you're looking for is a momentary escape, but nothing at all about it to stick in your mind. Neither of the two main characters (a young unmarried couple, artists, who have moved into a small English village and opened a crafts shop) ever achieve three-dimensional status. I was unable to care whether either of them is scared shitless by the brass rubbing that Sally brings back from the old, old abandoned church she discovers, or even whether or not they turn into vampires -- as in fact they do.

Part of the problem (I think I might find if I took the time to analyze it) is that the stock horror elements are put together in an illogical, unwieldy and unexplained fashion.

You see, that brass rubbing shows a picture of a woman with no head (that is never explained, or if it is I missed it) -- and an unidentified beast partially concealed behind the woman's skirts. In moonlight, woman and beast come to life, and the beast goes around killing kittens and other livestock. It turns out that a few hundred years ago a witch (or vampire, or vampire-witch) and her familiar (do vampires have familiars?) were slain and buried in that church but the good townsfolk somehow neglected to drive a wooden stake through the vampire's heart.

That detail is finally taken care of but not before Sal has been bit.

The front cover describes this as "a modern horror tale." It isn't all that modern, and the horror is tepid at best.

*THE HEPHAESTUS PLAGUE*, by Thomas Page, Bantam 1975, \$1.75, 217 pp.

Apparently this one has been around for a while. It was first published by Putnam in 1973 and went through four printings in hardback before getting into paperback, so maybe everybody out there has already read it. No?

This was not in the science fiction of the book store where I found it, incidentally, and I have no idea what it proves that general fiction books are priced higher than science fiction. I have often bypassed sf books in the general fiction section just because of the higher price, but there was something about this one that enticed me to take it anyway.

Actually, I'm not sorry that I did. It's not too bad a book. Much better than I thought I had any right to expect, what with it being written by a non-sf author using some of the oldest and stalest of all sf themes and materials.



For starters there's an earthquake that brings to the surface of the earth a type of cockroach that has evolved deep underground, in conditions of extreme heat and high pressure. These monsters, starting fires and eating the resultant carbon, constitute the plague that threatens to burn down the nation's cities. And then there's this mad scientist, James Lang Parmiter, and his dedicated assistant Metbaum. Parmiter works first to save the world from destruction but gets so carried away by his researches that he develops a new super breed of intelligent roaches that pose an even more deadly menace than the first ones did.

Nothing new in all this? No, I guess not, but somehow Thomas Page manages to avoid all the obvious cliches and to present a story that seems fresh and original. *Hephaestus Parmiter* is the most plausible insect menace that I've come across in science fiction in a long time. The explanation of its incendiary capabilities satisfied me, though I don't know whether that's because Page knows a lot about entomology or because I don't. It doesn't matter.

It's Parmiter who really makes the book work. He really is the maddest mad scientist that I can think of in sf, but it is an individual madness, not a stereotyped; and because of the fully fleshed nature of Parmiter's insanity, the plot is not permitted to follow the expected courses, either.

A surprisingly satisfying novel. I expect there'll be a movie version, because Page apparently has motion picture connections.

I'll be really surprised if the film manages to avoid any cliches.

*THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVES DOWN THE LANE*, by Laird Koenig, Bantam, \$1.50, 214 pp.

This too was in the general fiction section of the book store, but I don't know where else it should have been, since it is neither sf nor fantasy, nor occult, nor is it another possession/exorcism exercise. The front cover strongly hints that it is a child monster horror tale, in the Bradbury-Bloch-Shirley Jackson manner, but that's misleading and the illustrator should be chastized with a horse whip.

The thing about *Little Girl* that makes it worth reading is that Rynn is an extremely courageous, wholly admirable 13-year-old. She enlists the reader's total sympathy from the very start, and as her human weaknesses are revealed, along with her brilliance, maturity and eccentricity, the bonds of sympathy are strengthened.

As Rynn commits her first murder that the reader is aware of, said reader is somewhat shocked but nevertheless understanding. When the reader learns that Rynn has previously murdered her own mother, said reader feels that he should be shocked but really isn't. And by the time of the third murder, at the end of the book, the reader is cheering Rynn on, every poison drop of the way. Wild

*DEMENTIA*, by Keith Parnell, Zebra Books, \$1.25, 247 pp.

This was in the occult-horror section of the book store, for no good reason that I can think of. It has no elements of the supernatural and none of psychological horror, despite the title and the cover illustration, and the fact that the central character is a murderer-rapist who is being used as a guinea pig by a mad scientist with three (or four, as it turns out) beautiful daughters.

The writing is about on the level of the average pornography novel, but with all the juicy descriptions chopped out.

And the plot is a virtual rip-off from . . . well, the last time I read it was in Roald Dahl's "The Visitor" (in Playboy originally and included in *SWITCH BITCH*, Knopf, 1974, \$5.95) -- in which the overnight guest of the millionaire wonders which of the beautiful women in the household had come to him in the



night and given him hours of sexual ecstasy -- only to find out that it was the daughter that's kept hidden from the world; the one with leprosy.

*DEMENTIA* is a bad book. I can't recommend it unless you're absolutely desperate for something to read.

Under normal circumstances I would never have finished it.

As I mentioned previously, circumstances were not normal. I was recovering from a bad case of flu and from the shock of Polly's letter and so I was reading anything.

And now there seems no way to further postpone my main discourse for this issue. However I can and will postpone for a while yet anything about the letter. I'll reveal its contents at the end of my narration and maybe make an effort to express how I feel about the situation (or maybe not; let's wait and see).

What I want to write about is Polly, or to be more precise and because this is part of my autobiography, about me and Polly.

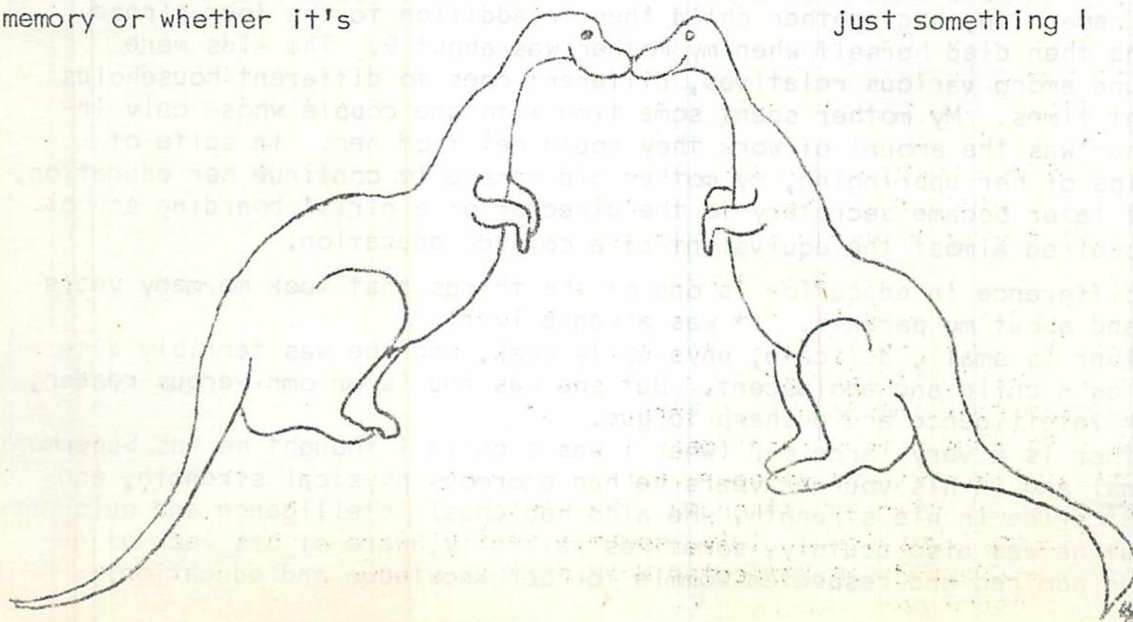
In a way, this even has something to do with science fiction, in case anyone feels that some justification is needed, because it ties in with the origins of my interest in sf, and certainly with the origins of my attempts to write science fiction.

Polly was born in October of 1930, which makes her almost three years younger than me, lacking less than a month. I can even remember a little about her being born. I recall visiting my mother in the hospital, though I don't remember knowing she was there because of a baby. I remember that Laura (my older sister) and I spent a couple of days at least with a family friend known as Aunt Lulu, and what I remember about that is being embarrassed and indignant at Aunt Lulu seeing me naked and insisting on drying me off after a bath. And then I remember Polly being brought home from the hospital -- or rather I remember looking at her in her crib after she'd been brought home. Somebody asked me the stupid question: "Do you know what that is?" and I gave the inane answer: "It's a baby."

And then I can't dredge up another clear memory of Polly as a tiny infant -- not until she was walking and talking.

The most vivid mental time is one that I'm not memory or whether it's

image of Polly from that even sure is a true just something I



heard my mother tell about so often that I provided the memory visualization to fit the description. Anyway, what I seem to recall is Polly at a time when she was just barely able to walk (though she was probably at least 2 years old, and maybe more, because she was talking clearly enough). We are outside, playing on the front lawn and sidewalk. Polly must have wandered off a little way, but not out of sight, I'm pretty sure. There's a sudden loud, threatening noise -- the roaring of a truck motor, or a cement mixer; something like that. Polly comes running to me, screaming, "Save me, Donnie, save me!"

As I say, I'm not even sure that I remember that, and I'm certain I don't remember what I thought about it, if anything special. It seems likely that I knew there was no real threat, so I probably didn't feel called upon to perform any act of heroism and I doubt that I felt any particular burden of responsibility. Maybe I didn't even feel inadequate, though that seems much less likely since I honestly don't remember a time in my childhood when I didn't feel inadequate.

I was a very insecure kid, in spite of having a big sister whom I counted upon to save me from loud truck noises and other monsters -- and Laura, basically, was probably more inclined to be protective toward me than I ever was about Polly.

In order to put this into some kind of perspective I've got to tell more about our parents:

They were Virginians -- hillbilly Virginians, not eastern plantation Virginians. Russell and Buchanan counties are still home to them.

A key fact about both the parents is that they were orphans. My father's mother died when he was 11 or 12. His father remarried and the stepmother then had a child of her own upon whom she lavished all her affection, having nothing left for my father and his two sisters. Daddy -- (that's what I always called him; it's what I still call him, and it's how I shall refer to him hereafter; and my mother was and is Mommie, though for several years I thought that sounded babyish and managed to shorten it to Mom, but over the long haul only Mommie sounds natural; but this sentence is about Daddy, isn't it?) -- ran away from home when he was 12, having finished only fifth grade. Though he returned home, off and on, thereafter, he never stayed very long and never went any further in school.

My mother's story is strikingly similar. Her father died when she was 6; her mother remarried, had another child then in addition to the four already on hand, and then died herself when my mother was about 9. The kids were passed around among various relatives, different ones to different households at different times. My mother spent some time with one couple whose only interest in her was the amount of work they could get from her. In spite of the hardships of her upbringing, my mother did manage to continue her education, and in fact later became secretary to the director of a girls' boarding school and thus acquired almost the equivalent of a college education.

That difference in education is one of the things that took me many years to understand about my parents. It was an equalizer.

My mother is small, delicate, physically weak, and she was terribly disease prone as a child and adolescent. But she was and is an omniverous reader, has a quick intelligence and a sharp tongue.

My father is a very large man (when I was a child I thought he was Superman; hell, he was) and in his younger years he had enormous physical strength, and he had great pride in his strength. He also had (has) intelligence and quickness of mind, but he was also acutely, sometimes painfully, aware of his lack of education. He admired and respected Mommie for her knowledge and education;



she admired and respected him for his strength. They were equals.

As a matter of deliberate policy, Mommie never took advantage of her superior learning, and this is something I didn't understand when I was growing up, but do now and love my mother all the more for. It would have been awfully easy for her to have made him feel small and stupid, intellectually inferior.

But she never did, no matter how strong the temptation might have been. She never corrected Daddy's pronunciation or grammar, and most certainly never made any attempt to get him to change his "hillbilly accent" though she must have lost hers quite early.

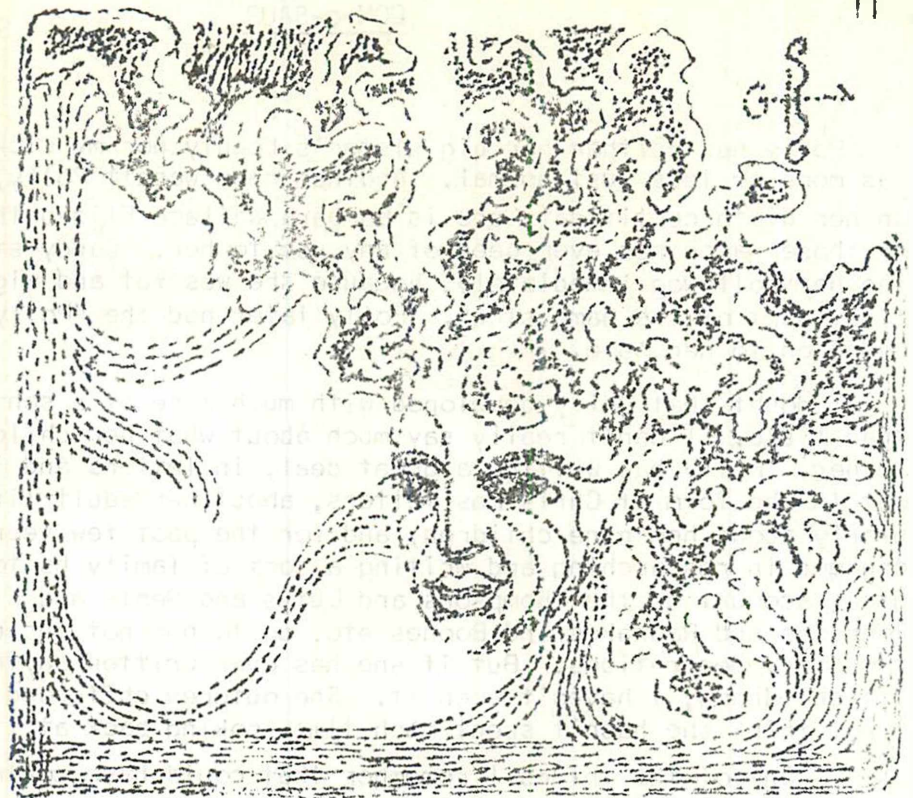
On the contrary, I think my mother must have gone out of her way, almost, to assure Daddy that just because he hadn't finished school was no sign he was dumb. She had known college professors who were ingor-amuses.

Mommie and Daddy were married in 1923. Their first child, a girl, was born several months premature and lived only a few hours. Laura was born in April of 1925.

Laura was a gorgeous child. With her reddish-gold hair in ringlets she looked a lot like Shirley Temple a decade or so before Shirley Temple came along. She was also a very healthy child, and she developed secure in the knowledge that she was beautiful and healthy and that everyone loved her -- particularly her Daddy.

I was born in November of 1927, and my early baby pictures show a cute chubby kid with a shiny bald head, but when I was about a year old I became very seriously ill and made life miserable for everyone for quite some time; I don't know how long -- actually, I never recovered. From that time on I was never chubby. In fact I looked like a survivor of a Nazi death camp a decade before the death camps existed. It was only many years later that my illness was diagnosed as polio. It left me with a slightly twisted spine and a scrawny physique but no real crippling, so I consider myself pretty damned lucky. But I developed with the feeling that I was ugly and basically useless, and though people sometimes seemed affectionate I just knew, deep inside, that no one could possibly love me.

Polly was born in 1930; October. It was a fairly difficult delivery, and Mommie's health was precarious at best, and the doctor was adamant in his insistence: "No more babies; not if you want to live to raise the ones you have."



Polly had neither her big sister's beauty nor my sickliness. She was more or less just normal. And her name wasn't Polly, incidentally. On her birth certificate she is Barbara Wallace Elizabeth Ann, but none of those names has ever been of any use to her. Daddy started calling her pollywog immediately, because she was fat and wiggly, and the first part of the name stuck. Polly later had the "Polly" legally added on to her name.

I doubt that Polly developed with much more of a sense of security than I did. I can't really say much about what her childhood was like to her. Polly has written a great deal, in letters and in journals sent out in the form of Christmas letters, about her adult life and particularly about her nine children, and for the past few years she has been engaged in researching and writing a sort of family history -- a genealogical account of the Thompsons and Dutys and Gents and Fletchers and Johnsons and Rasnakes and Boones etc. up to but not including the contemporary generations. But if she has ever written anything about her own childhood, I haven't seen it. She outgrew childhood rather quickly and I think she hasn't spent much time looking back at it.

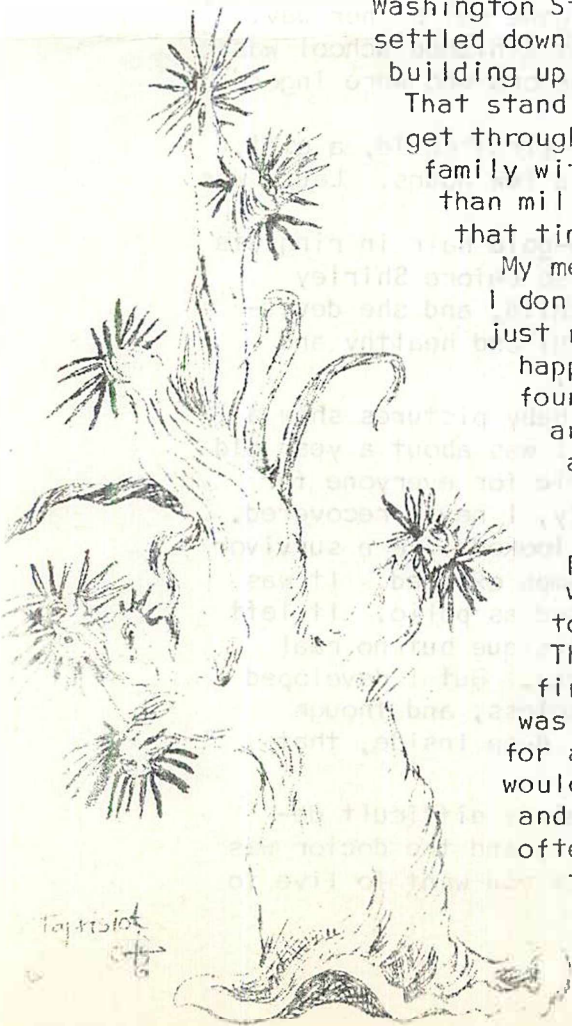
One of the things I remember that could have contributed to anyone's sense of insecurity was that we seemed to move around an awfully lot. Sometimes it was hard to keep track of where home was.

Our parents left the back hills of Virginia as soon as they were married. I know they lived in Cincinnati for a while. When Laura was born they were living in a lumber town in Washington State. By 1927 they had pretty much settled down in Laramie, Wyo., where Daddy was building up seniority on the Union Pacific.

That standing with the railroad enabled him to get through the Depression and to provide his family with something much closer to security than millions of others were able to do at that time.

My memories of the Depression (and of course I don't really remember "the Depression"--I just remember my own childhood, which just happened to coincide with an era that I later found out was the Depression) don't include any feeling of ever being deprived of anything. If we were poor I didn't know it at the time.

But we did live in a lot of different places, it seemed to me. I don't think we were ever evicted for not being able to pay the rent, or anything like that. The problem was that while Daddy was a fireman with the UP, the railroad business was in a depression too. Daddy would work for a few months and then be laid off. He would try to find some other work in Laramie, and if he did there was no problem. But often there was no work, and in that case the family would pack up and use the railroad pass back to Honaker, Va. (Surely that free train pass was





a valuable asset in such times, but I guess I never appreciated it. Some of my early memories are of train ride exhaustion, though they are balanced by other memories of being rocked to sleep by the swaying and the rhythmic clacking of the train. I know that I never shared my father's "sense of wonder" regarding trains -- a feeling of awe and mystery and magic that (so I have been told) has gripped literally millions of people. My father caught train fever when he was very young, and he has never outgrown it. I think he was very disappointed in me for not having the same feelings. Well, I have been disappointed in my children for not having been gripped by the magic of science fiction and the dream of space travel.

I'm pretty sure it was not the grunting of a locomotive or the angry hiss of its escaping steam that brought Polly to me screaming "Save, me Donnie, save me!" It had to have been a truck. She was no more in awe or in terror of locomotives than I was. To a child, they say, whatever is is right and natural. And trains just were -- a perfectly proper and natural part of the environment, but not something to be either in love with or afraid of. They served the useful purpose of getting us from Laramie to Virginia and back.

Polly's real passion, from a very early age and enduring into adulthood, was horses. That's what she liked about Virginia. A lot of people used to think, and I suppose many still do, that anyone who grows up in Wyoming automatically learns to ride horses -- bucking horses; hell, it's the Cowboy state, isn't it? [the answer is NO; it's the Equality State, but that's a serious misnomer, too]. Polly may have fallen in love with the idea of horses in Wyoming, but there wasn't much she could do about it while we were living there. All our parents' friends were other railroaders, not ranchers. In Virginia it was different. In Virginia there was Granddaddy, and Granddaddy had horses. Well, not horses exactly; they were mules and mine ponies, but they were close enough to being horses to make Polly very happy.

(Back when I was talking about Daddy's orphanhood, I'm not sure that I made it clear he was only half an orphan. His mother died; his father remarried and lived to be ninety-something).

Granddaddy lived in a big white house snuggled in among green wet hills that the people thereabouts called mountains. There was a cornfield off to one side of the house and the entrance to a coal mine not far down the road on the other side, and the hill/mountain rising steep behind it.

We lived in a tiny white house on the other side of the road, down by the creek -- Swords Creek? That sounds right. There was a garden by the house and on the other side of the creek another corn field, some pasture land and another steep hill.

There was a rail line running parallel to the dirt road, which in turn ran parallel to the creek. A train went by maybe two or three times a week, some weeks.

There were relatives--aunts and uncles and a vast quantity of cousins--all up and down the creek and back in the hills. Up, past the coal mines, were Aunt Edith (Daddy's sister) and Uncle Clarence Wilson and their kids (about five from my earliest memory, plus four or five later). And on down, past the little country general store that Granddaddy owned and ran, and even on past the little one-room school where I attended parts of first and second grade, there were Uncle Jack (Daddy's brother) and Aunt Ola and their four or five kids.

I was in love with all my female cousins but especially with Uncle Jack's two girls, Onalee and Jean. Polly was in love with her cousin Charlie Wilson even though he was much older, because he was willing to take a lot of

time helping her ride the ponies. Polly also loved Granddaddy very much, and he was inordinately fond of her; they shared a mutual interest. Polly at the age of 3 or 4 was on a first name basis with all of Granddaddy's animals -- the cows and their calves, the pigs, the chickens even, but especially the mules and ponies. I can't remember the names of any of them now, but I'll bet that Polly still can. I was thrown by one of the ponies and a little later bitten by a mule and that pretty much stifled any enthusiasm I might have had for equine quadrupeds. Polly was kicked in the chest by a cow and rendered unconscious for five or ten minutes, but it didn't slow her down.

The stays in Virginia sometimes seemed very long, but they were never long enough for me to really begin to feel at home there. I liked my aunts and uncles and cousins and my granddaddy well enough, but all of them talked funny and I understood only about half of what they said. And it rained an awfully lot.

I was always sort of glad to get back to Laramie, and the fact that we always seemed to come back to a different house from the one we'd left didn't bother me as much as I may have hinted; but it contributed to my feeling of always being somehow off balance.

Even so, I may be exaggerating the trauma of frequent moves, particularly upon Polly. After all, by the time she was 6 we had pretty much settled down in a little frame house on the West Side (of the railroad tracks -- sort of the "wrong" side, but not exactly). What Depression? In 1936 my parents started buying a house! I think the price on it was about \$1,500. With a 10-year mortgage.

Can that possibly be right? It seems too far-fetched. I'm not at all sure of the price of the house or of the mortgage.

I do know that the house my parents bought in 1939 (on the good side of the tracks, at 1120 Sheridan, where they still live) cost \$3,000, and it did take them 10 years to pay it off.

Moving to that house, and especially moving into the different school in that part of town, made a tremendous difference in my life. Probably less for Polly because she was only in second grade and school was no problem for her; still less for Laura because she was already in junior high and she would be attending the same one no matter where we lived. But I was just starting fifth grade and up until then school had been nothing but painful for me. What with moving back and forth between Laramie and Virginia, and what with not learning in second grade in Virginia the things I was supposed to know at the beginning of third grade in Laramie, it had taken me five years to complete four grades, and everybody at Lincoln School on the West Side knew that, and the teachers thought I was dumb. At Whiting School, on the East Side, the kids all assumed I was in the grade I was supposed to be, and if the teacher knew different she didn't care.

I had a wonderful and beautiful fifth grade teacher. Miss Milroy managed to convince me, not only that I wasn't dumb, but even that I just might be of at least average intelligence. I'm grateful to her for starting me on the long, arduous, bumpy road (which I'm still trudging) toward self-confidence.

This bare beginning of self esteem might have made a slight difference in my relationship with my sisters, especially with Polly, but I can't say for certain.

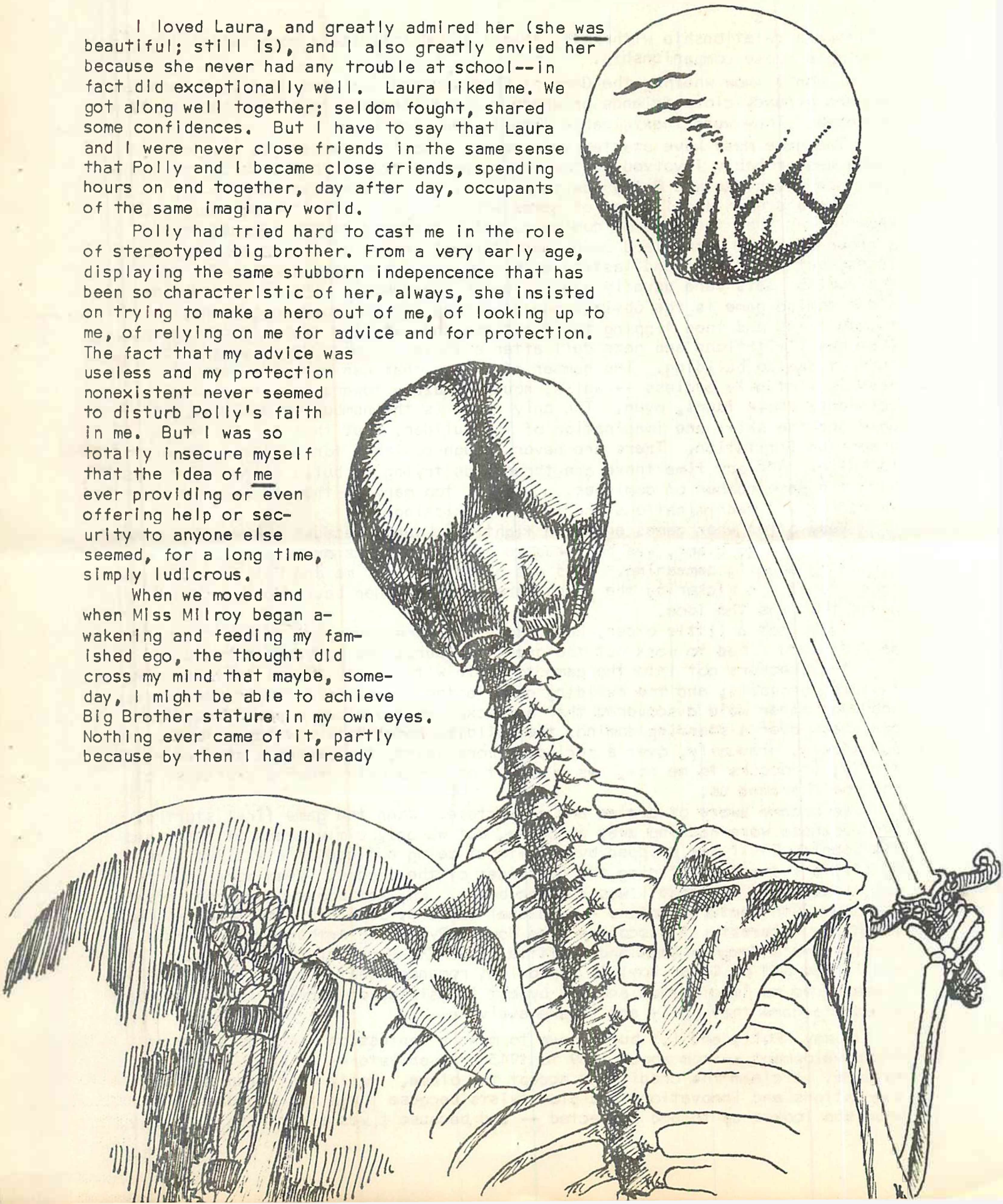
Laura, as I've mentioned, tended to be somewhat protective of me. Well, I needed all the protecting I could get, or felt that I did, but the problem was that Laura, being older and on a different schedule, was never around when bigger kids or teachers started picking on me, so I'd already gotten used to the idea that I couldn't really rely on her for help when I needed it.



I loved Laura, and greatly admired her (she was beautiful; still is), and I also greatly envied her because she never had any trouble at school--in fact did exceptionally well. Laura liked me. We got along well together; seldom fought, shared some confidences. But I have to say that Laura and I were never close friends in the same sense that Polly and I became close friends, spending hours on end together, day after day, occupants of the same imaginary world.

Polly had tried hard to cast me in the role of stereotyped big brother. From a very early age, displaying the same stubborn independence that has been so characteristic of her, always, she insisted on trying to make a hero out of me, of looking up to me, of relying on me for advice and for protection. The fact that my advice was useless and my protection nonexistent never seemed to disturb Polly's faith in me. But I was so totally insecure myself that the idea of me ever providing or even offering help or security to anyone else seemed, for a long time, simply ludicrous.

When we moved and when Miss Milroy began awakening and feeding my famished ego, the thought did cross my mind that maybe, someday, I might be able to achieve Big Brother stature in my own eyes. Nothing ever came of it, partly because by then I had already





achieved a relationship with Polly that I found infinitely more satisfying--that of simple close companionship.

I don't know whether the Game of Checkers and Dominoes developed because we were already close friends or whether the friendship developed because of the game. They were inextricably intertwined, for sure.

The game must have started very early; I don't remember its origins. Laura was probably involved in the beginnings of it; in fact it's quite likely that she taught me and Polly how to play it, in its simplest form.

There are an awfully lot of games you can play just with dominoes, you know (other than the game of dominoes, which scarcely counts because that's a grown up game; Mommie and Daddy went through phases of liking to play dominoes, but their real and lasting enjoyment was two-handed card games, so the domino sets were usually available for kid games). The first and simplest domino game is the obvious one of lining the dominoes up, on end, in twisty lines and then tipping the first one and watching them all fall down. That has limitations and gets dull after a while. A more durable game is that of domino building. The number of things that can be built with dominoes is virtually endless -- walls, houses, mazes, towers, castles, skyscrapers; whole towns, even. The only limit is the number of dominoes available and the skill and imagination of the builder. But that first item is a serious limitation. There are never enough dominoes for whatever you want to build. And any time there are three kids trying to build different things with the same number of dominoes. . . Well, too many of those games broke up in rancor and recriminations and tears and kicking.

Very often when games ended in fighting, Laura, because she was the oldest and therefore to blame, was banished to do her homework or to wash dishes or something equally demeaning. This was punishment for me and Polly too because in spite of the bickering the games were more fun when Laura was in them; I guess that was the idea.

As we got a little older, Laura more and more had other things to do, and so Polly and I had to work out the games for ourselves as best we could.

The checkers got into the game to begin with as additional building materials, probably; and the building game lasted for quite a long time--years; and even after we'd discovered that a checker rolled along a smooth surface can knock over a standing domino, the building game still had top priority. But slowly, gradually, over a period of more years, the emphasis shifted -- partly, it occurs to me now, as a result of our slowly growing awareness of the world around us.

We became aware of armies and of warfare. When the game first started, the Japanese were hacking away at China, but we only dimly aware of that, and the Spanish Civil War slipped by me without being noticed at all. But little by little I started noticing the headlines of the papers. Even more important, I suppose, was that I was reading books. Oh, not books on current events or about 20th century warfare -- medieval warfare, both real and mythical, had caught my interest. I discovered the Howard Pyle King Arthur books; I read Harold Lamb's *Genghis Khan* and a little later *The March of the Barbarians*, and I read all of Conan Doyle's historical romances that I could find. All these fired my imagination and bit by bit I insisted on working them into the elaborate game that Polly and I were evolving.

I say "Polly and I," but I have to make a confession: at this stage of its development --from about 1939 to 1943 or even later-- it was basically my game. I claim the credit and accept the blame. Polly went along with my suggestions and innovations and plot twists because I was the Big Brother whom she looked up to and respected -- and because I was a ruthless Big Bully.



If Polly didn't like my ideas or if we disagreed on the course the action was to take, the matter was easily settled: I simply threatened to quit playing. It was pure bluff. I couldn't have quit playing and I'd have been willing to make concessions to keep Polly in the game; she was essential to it; I needed her. But she didn't know that and so she gave in on most points, and so it was essentially my game.

The game got more and more complicated. Marbles made fine weapons, too; they could knock down dominoes better than checkers could. Pick-up-Sticks were used originally as lances for knights on horseback, later as projectiles for armies in the field. Kraft cheese boxes could be used as building materials for forts and castles and also for troop-carrying ships. (Our armies never became mechanized; I managed to keep them pretty firmly in the Middle Ages in spite of some of the modern weaponry and tactics.

The dominoes had become personalized at a very early stage, when we decided that a domino falling face up was merely wounded and could fight again while one landing face down was dead and out of the battle. Once the militarization of the game was clearly established it was obvious that the numbers of the dominoes designated rank. All of the doubles (even the double blank) were officers; all others were enlisted men. The double nine was the commander-in-chief, the dictator, the Great Khan, the emperor. Eventually he became Graqu the Great, but that was in the final stage of this decade-long epic.

By the time I was 15 and Polly 12 I would sometimes feel vaguely embarrassed by the fact that I would much rather play with my little sister than with kids my own age. But I was also defiant about it because the game had become something of an obsession by then and nothing like a little embarrassment was going to keep me away from it.

Also by this time I was irrevocably hooked on science fiction and had been working more and more science fictional elements into the game. I had persuaded Polly that all this domino adventure was taking place on some other world, and she'd agreed, and it had been at that point where the game took on extra dimensions of vividness and realism and a kind of feverish excitement, at least for me, though I believe Polly was almost as caught up in it as I was.

Polly and I created a new world, and in its details it was as much Polly's world as it was mine; we populated the world and its inhabitants were as much Polly's as mine, as was its geography, history, mythology . . .

As we worked all this out, pushing the dominos through unprecedented adventures, my imagination was stimulated as much by Polly's ideas and inventiveness as by my reading. I developed a deep and genuine respect for her ideas.

And I became so stimulated and excited by the world building that I decided I had to write it all down.

That, of course, marked the beginning of the end of the game.

When Mommie found out I was writing a novel based on the domino-checkers game she said, "That's nice. That's fine. But you ought to write about the game itself; about the boy and his little sister who invent this fascinating game and how it brings them close together and they become such good friends that . . ."

I interrupted with a "yehcch" sound and went back to the novel.

But it was kind of sad. Mothers are, after all, sometimes right. It was impossible to keep both the novel and the game going, though we tried for another year or so. But the writing took more and more time, so there was less and less for the game. And the more I wrote (because I had even less skill at fiction writing then than I do now), the less real any of the adventures seemed. After a couple of hundred pages or so, I gave up.

So . . . I respect Polly's decision; I admire her for making a decision; and even if I weren't in basic agreement with it I would know better than to try to change her mind once she has settled on a course of action.

I feel sorry for Polly's family, but she and Howard did a fantastic job of raising nine children. They have been taught to accept responsibility; they're accustomed to taking care of each other. They'll manage all right.

I feel sorry for the world because it needs more people like Polly, not fewer; but she has managed, I think, to transmit many of her characteristics and values to her children, so even that works out as fair enough.

Mostly I feel sorry for Mommy and Daddy, for Laura and for myself.

I write as a catharsis, to put things behind me. But my childhood won't stay behind me. I'm still dragging it around with me.

And I keep hearing a very little girl crying, "Save me, Donnie, save me!"





# NEW YORK

## IN

### '77

BID COMMITTEE

## The City: NEW YORK!

New York is the cultural center of the East Coast, with more to offer than any other city in the United States -- or North America, for that matter. Broadway and the Theater District are well known, of course, but then there's Off-Broadway for exciting plays by up-and-coming playwrights.

In addition, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and City Center delight the eye and ear with a continuous extravaganza of dance, symphony orchestra, opera, and rock concerts.

First-run movies abound, and for cinema buffs, there are always the classics and the oldies. Many museums show films, and SF features are not hard to find.

Don't forget about food! Who doesn't get hungry? You can satisfy your ravenous appetite any hour of the day or night at hundreds of restaurants. Every type of cuisine is represented, in every price range.

For you bibliophiles, New York probably has more bookstores per acre than any other city. Many of them stay open into the wee hours of the morning.

New York has one of the largest and most varied fan communities in the United States. Any one who has attended one of the East Coast conventions in New York has only to look around him.

These are only a few of the reasons why NEW YORK is THE CHOICE for 1977.

## *Hotel: The STATLER HILTON*

Conveniently located on Seventh Avenue and West 32nd Street, the Statler Hilton is across the street from Penn Station, and within one block from most of the major subway lines in the city. The Port Authority Bus Terminal is only 8 blocks away.

The Statler Hilton has served as host to many science fiction conventions in the past, and welcomes fans to its doors. We will have the full convention facilities of the hotel -- the entire ballroom floor, the floor above it, and all ballrooms on the lobby floor.

One of New York's finest hotels, the Statler Hilton provides full hotel services at the reasonable convention rates.

## The Committee

As traditional in fandom, our committee is New York based. Chairman Thom Anderson is currently Vice-Chairman of the 1975 Lunacon. He was director of the Lunacon art show in 1973, and worked on their book exhibit in both 1973, and 1974. Thom has been a member of the Lunarians for many years and has aided at many other conventions during the years.

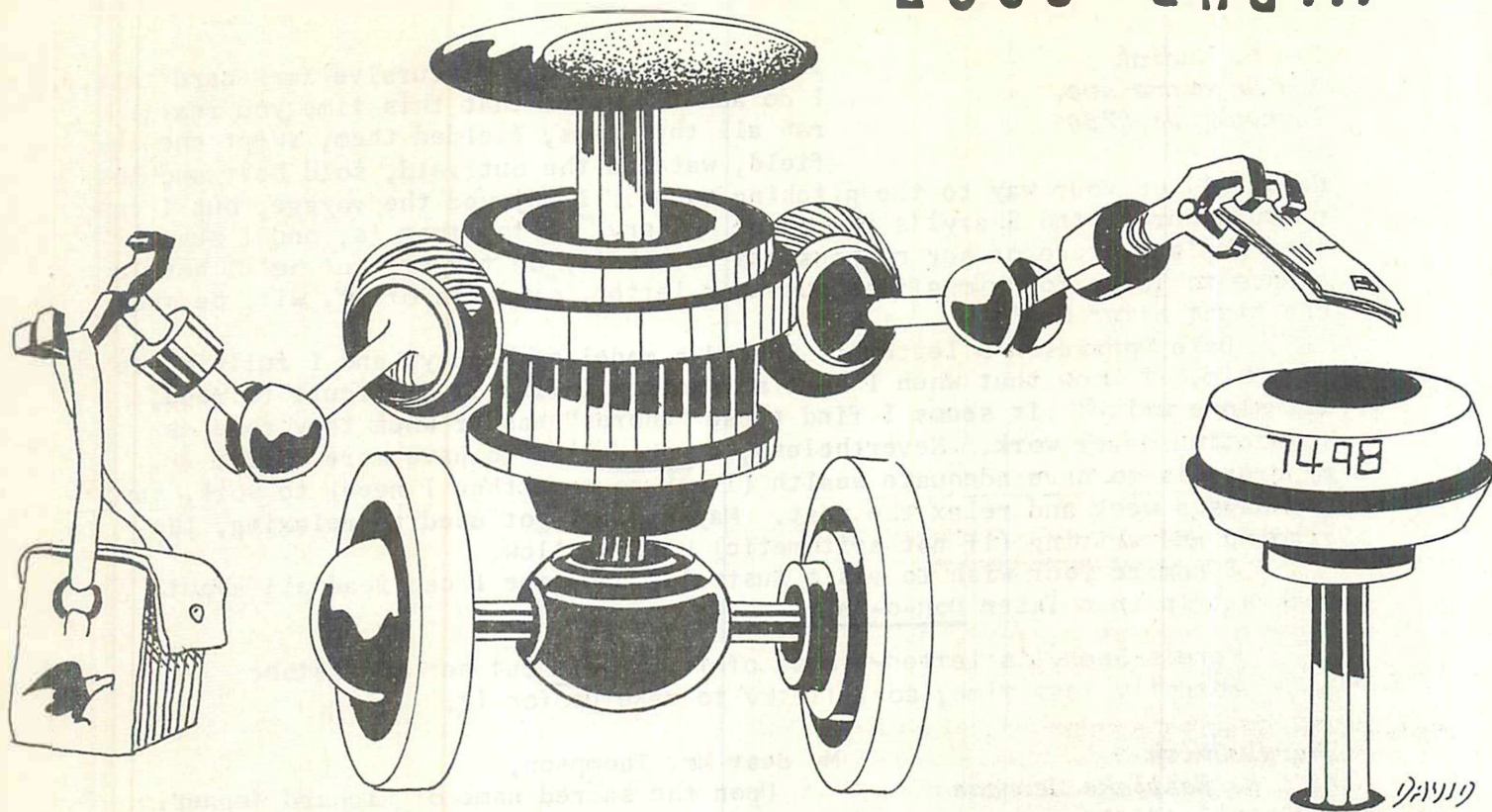
Other members of our bid committee include:

Dana Anderson	Current president of Lunarians, Director of Art Show and Book Exhibit, 1973 Lunacon, Book Exhibit, 1974 Lunacon, helping out at Discon II Costume Ball, as well as other conventions throughout the year.
Stu Grossman	Dealer at all New York cons since 1969. Has written articles for various fanzines.
Stu Hellinger	Member of Lunarians. Has worked on Lunacon for several years. Has attended most cons on the East Coast, as well as others around the country.
Devra Langsam	Art Show Director, Lunacon 1974, Treasurer, Lunacon 1973, Advance Registration, Lunacon 1970 - 1972. Fan Guest of Honor, Mile-Hi Con V, 1974. Member Lunarians, NESFA, SCA Eastern Kingdom, Georgette Heyer Appreciation Society. Co-Editor/Publisher <u>Spockanalia</u> , Editor/Publisher <u>Masiform D</u> .
Elyse Rosenstein	Member of Lunarians, Lunacon Committee, 1974, worked on Lunacon 1970, 1971, Co-Owner Nova Enterprises, Dealer at most conventions.
Steven Rosenstein	Member of Lunarians. Lunacon Committee 1971, 1972, 1974. Co-Owner Nova Enterprises. Dealer at most East Coast conventions.
Ben Yalow	Member of Lunarians. Worked on Lunacon, 1973, 1974
Dave Simons	Lunacon Committee 1973. Attended most East Coast conventions 1973 and 1974.
Joan Winston	Press Room, Lunacon 1974. Attended most East Coast conventions 1972 - 1974. Dealer.

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## Locs and...



## ...unlocs

I almost feel that I have arrived as a faned. In a recent issue I was able to present a letter from Bob Tucker, which I thought was just about the ultimate in BNF recognition. But just take a look at this card that showed up in the mailbox:

Robert A. Bloch  
2111 Sunset Crest Drive  
Los Angeles CA 90046

. . . Your memoir on the Christmas card flap strikes a responsive chord -- I too lived in a small town in Wisconsin during the period following your residence (1953-1959) and

while I didn't depend on any local business for my livelihood and was thus spared your involvement on the economic level, I do know what the atmosphere was: after all, I resided 12 miles from where Joe McCarthy had practiced law, and my congressman was Melvin Laird, so you can imagine the local attitudes. Amazingly, I was accepted though and spoke often at Lions Club and Kiwanis affairs without compromising my attitudes. But it was indeed a strange environment!

[One of the things I most regret about my two years in Wisconsin is that, both in Madison and in Mauston, I lived only about 35 miles away from August Derleth, in Sauk City, and never even tried to meet him. I could have, easily enough. My friend Ralph Collins (he was the probation and parole agent in Mauston) knew Derleth personally and offered to introduce me. But I was too chicken. This has nothing to do with Bloch's note except that Bloch and Derleth, I'm positive, did know each other. And I bought Robert Bloch's first book, *The Opener of the Way*, from August Derleth (by mail) back in 1945.]

Ben P. Indick  
428 Sagamore Ave.  
Teaneck, NJ 07666

. . . I enjoyed your discursive Xmas card tale... I do admit however that this time you really ran all the bases, fielded them, swept the infield, watered the outfield, sold beer and hot dogs, all on your way to the pitching mound. I enjoyed the voyage, but I can picture our friend Sheryl's response! [Sheryl Smith, that is, and I suspect that Ben's picture of her response is not wholly on target, but he'll have a chance to judge for himself because her letter, or parts of it, will be the one right after Ben's].

Dale Donaldson's letter is indeed a model of beauty, and I fully agree with him. I know that when I have a vacation I find it difficult to read, let alone write! It seems I find these "chores" easier when they come as relaxation after work. Nevertheless, I would like to have more time . . . my dream is to have adequate wealth (I ask no more than I need) to work, say, two days a week and relax the rest. Maybe, if I got used to relaxing, the reading and writing (if not arithmetic) would follow.

I admire your wish to visit Australia and hope I can read all about such a trip in a later Don-o-Saur.

Here's Sheryl's letter-- most of it. I did cut her off rather abruptly last time, so I'll try to make up for it.

Sheryl Smith  
7512 N. Eastlake Terrace  
Chicago IL 60626

My dear Mr. Thompson,

Upon the sacred name of Richard Wagner, I do swear, forsooth, that when I said you sound like a good teacher I did not do so just to mitigate my criticism of your fiction. It is true I have never had the opportunity of taking your class (alas!); but I have had enough schooling so that I may say something, albeit based on the circumstantial evidence of what you say. For instance: if you can read aloud to your classes and move them as per your description of how they react you appear to do, I have some basis for believing that you use your voice well -- which has been true of nearly all the good teachers I have ever had, and of none of the bad ones. And from your concern that you may not be able to teach creative writing unless you can yourself write creatively, it is clear that getting through to your students, causing them to undergo a genuine learning process, truly matters to you. . .

I bet your students even come away with an inkling that writing is supposed to be a means of communication, just like talking -- something I had to learn perforce and too thoroughly to let subsequent schooling convince me otherwise. (Self-motivated creature that I am, I made do with my B+ average while the best regurgitators made A's).

Please do understand that [the criticism of "A Proud and Lonely Thing"] was but my honest opinion -- and I took you at your word when you asked for such -- given not from malice but from necessity: I care too much about the literary arts to give out false impressions of work in them. I should have warned you that I do tend to be fussier than most folk about what I like, however. (Yet... had your story even provided some space-opera-level entertainment or at the very least had passages that showed some expressive beauty, or creative thought, or any genuine emotional expression whatsoever, I'd've been less categorically discouraging . . . and my explanation has probably gone and made things worse -- which I regret, but I am trying to show you where my judgments come from if only to demonstrate that there is some basis for my impressions).

Yes, Gene Wolfe's constructive suggestions were very good ones (as



one would expect: now there is a fine writer!) But even if you follow all his suggestions the piece still won't be "really good enough." I think your names in themselves were rather dull, though others did enjoy them. Actually they were all the same joke multiplied (it seemed) endlessly. But then the only writer who can fascinate me with sheer nomenclature is R. A. Lafferty: he compounds them from various languages, using meaningful root words and colorful epithets so that very often they serve a characterizational function either directly or by association. Even Cabell's anagrams pale by comparison! ... And do note that there seems to be a sort of consensus on your weak (if not absent) characterization.

But I must say -- and if my brickbats are honest you can at least know my kusos will be the same -- your prose ramblings are very human and delightful. There is more art and more feeling in the "Christmas Memories" of #39 than in the fiction of #38 (and I bet the former was by far the least laborious to write!) . . .

Thanx for plugging WSA: you must be very sweet since you were willing to do that despite my critique. I should hope to meet you at some con or other -- though I won't be in Australia. So, unless you hold very long grudges, I may someday become

Most amiably yours,

Sheryl Smith

Sheryl, I ask only one favor of you, and it isn't much: please call me Don instead of "Mr. Thompson"? I may not be sweet exactly, but I'm very poor at holding grudges (and honestly, I never held one against you, anyway), and in general I tend to be rather amiable. I am looking forward to meeting you -- surely at KC, if not sooner? We might discover that we have more than a few things in common. Hey, you and Mike Glicksohn have at least a few things in common, too; did you know that? Here's the evidence:

*Mike Glicksohn*  
141 High Park Ave.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M6P 2S3

Your discourse this time was another finely crafted and superbly written piece of work. It adds considerable weight to Sheryl Smith's arguments, by the way, by contrasting strikingly with your story from last issue. The

story was slight and lacked a real focus. This piece is about something, and you have definite things to communicate and you do so very well. I found this one of the most interesting and enjoyable items you've written for DoS and hence one of the best items to have appeared in fanzines in quite some time. It tells a great deal about you, about the other people you talk about, and about the times and the life you were living at that time. In just about every way it's a fine piece of writing, and much more impressive than the story from last issue. If Gene Wolfe liked the story, it can certainly be saved because Gene Wolfe is a perceptive judge of quality. Why, after my speech at Confusion 13 last weekend, Gene personally told me it had been good. He obviously knows whereof he speaks. But my overall impression is still closer to Sheryl's reaction than to Gene's

Her remark about wanting to be a writer rather than wanting to write encapsulates a lot of people I know in fandom, myself included, although my own desires in either direction are slight indeed and well under control. But the fact that I do not write either fiction or non-fiction every day tells me that I've no real driving desire to be a writer. I

wish you'd reacted more to that particular remark, because I think it's an insightful comment on Sheryl's part. I also think that having read your dis-  
courses, seen a few of the ideas you have about what material should be given  
to students and how it might be presented, she's capable of forming a rough  
idea of whether or not you'd be potentially a good teacher. And that's all  
she said, after all. And I agree with her: from what I've read by you, I  
think you sound like you'd be a good teacher. Whether you can actually do  
any of the things you've mentioned is another matter entirely so no one's  
saying you are a good teacher. But the possibility does exist.

Tha. . . Ah-h-h... Well, shucks, I think I'd be just as happy if  
somebody would go ahead and say I'm a good teacher, since it's be-  
come an issue. I don't care, actually, whether there's any basis  
for saying it; I'll accept any kind of compliment I can get.

As for that other matter, about writing and wanting to be a writer,  
yes, it surely is an astute observation, and quite obviously it ap-  
plies to be in no small measure. If I had truly wanted to write --  
fiction, that is, and commercially--surely I would have been doing so  
for the past 20 years; but it's more fun, and a good deal less work,  
to make occasional attempts at fiction

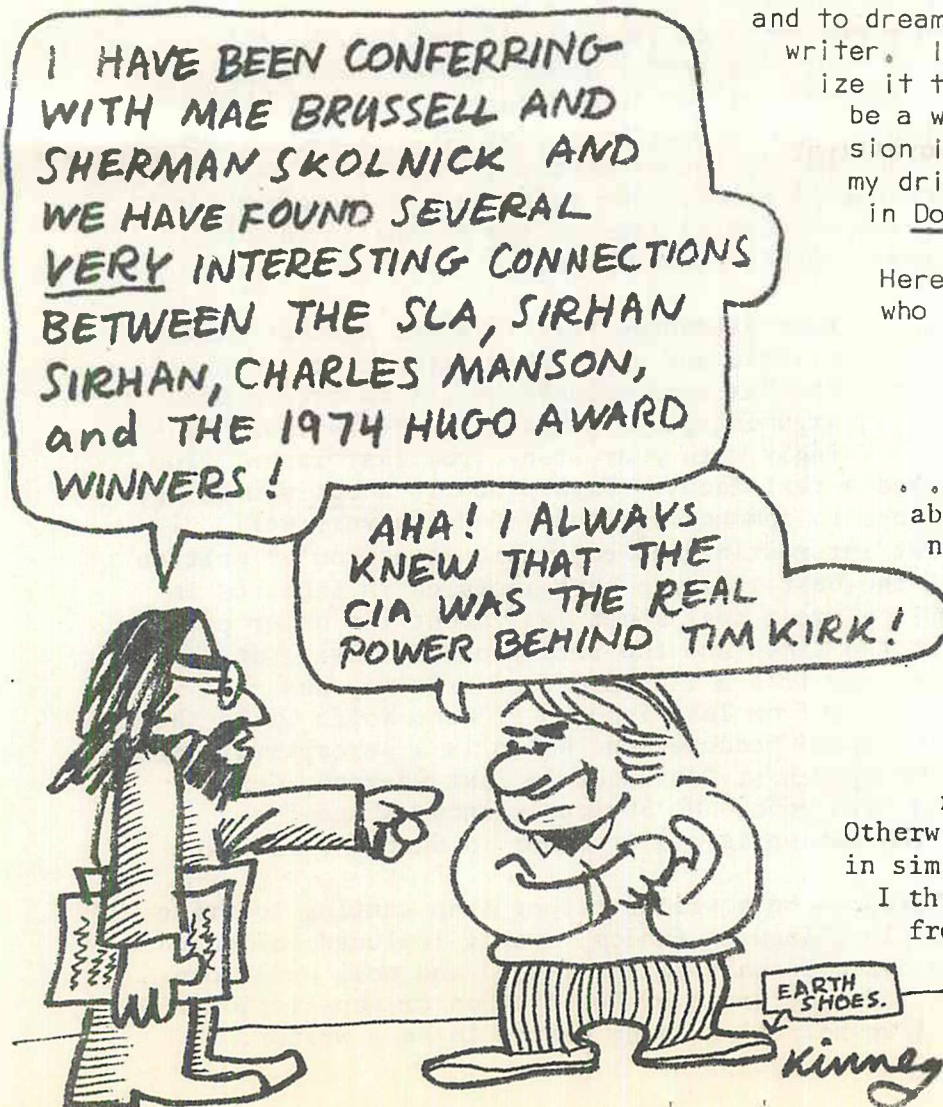
and to dream of someday being a  
writer. I think I can summar-  
ize it this way: my drive to  
be a writer finds expres-  
sion in infrequent fiction;  
my drive to write results  
in Don-o-Saur.

Here's a letter from one  
who needs no introduction:

Harry Warner  
423 Summit Avenue  
Hagerstown, MD 21740

. . . We differ in one way  
about writing habits. I  
never sit at a typewriter  
trying to get the first  
words on paper. This  
is an agony that  
I endure on the  
mental level, while  
walking or shaving  
or doing some other  
mechanical-type task.

Otherwise, we seem to function  
in similar manner because after  
I think of something to start  
from, the equivalent of  
your first sentence,  
then I can go to the  
typewriter and begin  
elaborating and pro-  
ducing wordage at a  
fairly brisk pace.





Meanwhile, I was quite interested in the reactions to "A Proud and Lonely Thing." They don't alter my original impression: that it is a story which was written quite a few years too late, from the standpoint of marketability. There is so little hope of selling short fiction nowadays for sums large enough to be worth carrying to the bank, particularly the frothy type you created in this story. A few decades back, there were dozens of national magazines that ran this kind of material, not to mention the syndicates that supplied fiction to newspapers. Unless policies have changed quite recently, the good-paying markets for short fiction today won't even read manuscripts unless they come from a reputable agent or a big name; it's almost unheard of for an unknown author to sell a collection of short stories for paperback publication, and what's left?

The only serious weakness I found in the story was its ending; not only the fact that the story sort of runs down, as Ben Indick suggested, but the punch line, which wouldn't make its intended effect on anyone except fans and possibly one non-fan reader of science fiction in a hundred thousand who happened to remember the obscure prozine story where the line originated.

[Well, that brings up an interesting question: where did that line originate? I presume Harry knows, since he provides a hint, but damned if I do. Does anyone else? "It is a proud and lonely thing to be a . . . what?" Back to Harry's letter]:

Have you ever thought of tackling a novel? Your Christmas narrative in the newest DoS and the short story show that you're good at filling in details, putting events into an elaborately described environment. That ability should be useful in long fiction. And the reward for a novel is so much greater than for short stories, in reader response and remuneration and chance for continuing royalties.

The Great Christmas Card Flap naturally interested me for its journalism theme, over and beyond the other merits. It reads exactly like a chapter from a book of autobiographical writing, and with allowances for differences in time and place, it wouldn't have much trouble making itself at home in a book like Mencken's *Newspaper Days*. I think it might be beneficial to a few of your readers, if it demonstrates to them a typical reality of the newspaper career some of them might be considering.

I never have involved myself in such a community hassle, probably because I never had my stuff published without editorial inspection during my early years as a reporter. The closest I came was in my music reviewing. I won the right to publish genuine musical criticism instead of the 100% pure compliments that had always been published locally in the past. This freedom lasted about two years before the community put so much pressure on the newspaper owners and editors that I got orders to say only nice or neutral things. As I remember it, the deciding factor was my review of a performance of Faure's *Requiem* by a local choral group. Halfway through the composition, the chorus interrupted it to sing "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've seen" while a collection was taken up from the audience. I described this interruption as "perfect in intonation but doubtful in taste" or some such words, and the heat was on.

I suspect that Ken Millett is close to correct in his estimate of when the real depression will arrive. My own guess would be about ten years, for two reasons. By the middle of the 1980s, the petroleum shortage will have become real enough to force total revolution in freight and human transportation, different ways of living, and serious sickness of the motor vehicle industry. It won't be a matter of what the Arabs think of us or whether Standard Oil gets a tax break; the world's supplies of petroleum will be close enough to depletion to force those changes. Sim-

ultaneously, there will be a shortage of young married couples and babies, because ten years from now the nation will have been using the pill long enough for the birth rate decline it caused to affect the creation of new families. There will be too many housing units for the reduced demand, no more growth in the demand for baby foods and school teachers and Saturday morning cartoons. When these two conditions coincide, there will be a genuine, 1933-type depression, and it'll probably arrive just about the time I'm retiring from my job, if I live that long and don't get fired first.

[The threat of population shortage is a factor that's seldom mentioned in the economic forecasts I've seen, and I confess I haven't really considered it myself. I'll be interested in getting your reactions to Harry's analysis.

[The drawings on this page and next are by Sam Long. And here is a letter from that many-talented individual]:

Samuel S. Long  
Box 4046  
Patrick AFB, Fla.  
32925

Thanks for DoS 39. Quite a good cover. I've heard of flower children before, but flower dinosaurs -- never.

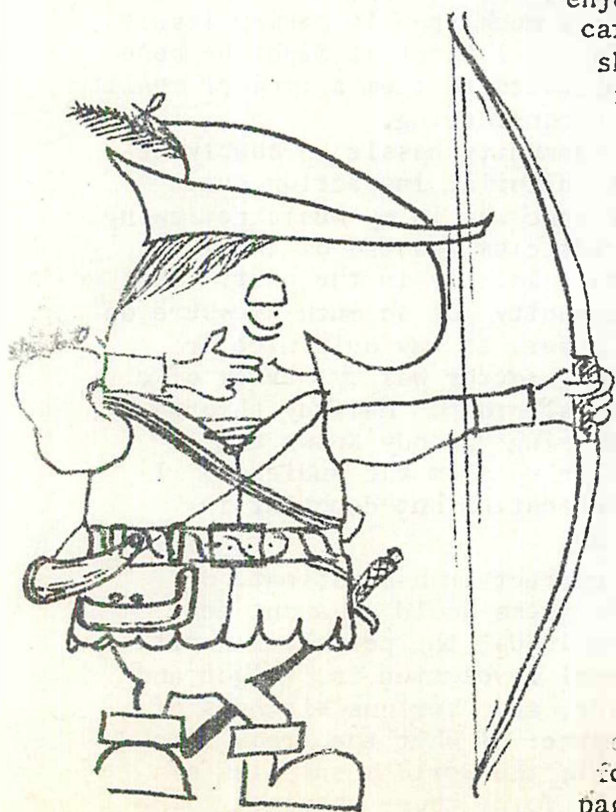
I observe that DoS is becoming less fa(a)nnish and more personal the last few issues. And this issue was, for the most part, very serious, with nary a chuckle in your autobiographical essay.

I share some of your feelings about Xmas. When I was in college, I didn't enjoy Xmas a great deal, even if it was spent with my family. I was a non-believer at that time too. But 'long about my second year in England, I experienced a sort of conversion. I'm no more a Christian now than I was then or before; but now I *understand* what it's all about, and can appreciate Christmas from a philosophical point of view. Plus I made some good

friends in England and spent several *very* enjoyable Xmas'es with them: singing carols and starting Xmas dinner with sherry about 1100, and remaining a few inches off the floor until 2300 or later that night, when, after a night-cap, I floated off to bed. That was the year a soprano, an alto, and I tried to sing our way thru the

*Massiah* oratoria: I had to sing both tenor and bass, which ain't easy. But it was fun.

I enjoy sending Xmas cards (and giving good gifts), and go to great expense to do so. Anything having to do with the post office is a vast expense these days, don't you know. But that is about my only concession to the season. I put up no tree, nor any lights, nor even a wreath on my door. I celebrate quietly, without fuss. And I pick my cards carefully for neutrality and seemliness: as a good pagan, I dislike and avoid the more religious-





type cards; and Santa Claus and trees and candles and stars are overdone. I have trouble finding cards. But I manage.

It may just be my big-city incredulity, but I find it hard to believe that the readers took you so seriously. But I know it's possible, so it must be so. I'm glad it all worked out for you, but I'm sad that you were forced to apologize. I know just how you felt, tho.

Wagner, ych, or at best, eh! Bach, hooray!!!

Take it easy, and do your thing — fannishly, of course.

Bruce D. Arthurs  
2401 W. Southern B-136  
Tempe, AZ 85282

. . . Basically, I found DoS much more entertaining than the last few issues, I suspect because it contained one of your personal anecdotes and wasn't as letter oriented as the last few issues seem to have been. Keep DoS a personal zine, Don. Here's my new address, effective 23rd January.

[PERSONAL NOTE TO BRUCE ARTHURS: I enjoyed your story, "The Return of Captain Nucleus," in the February Fantastic, and I intended to write you a note saying so, but you know how I am... Starting soon in Vertex will be "Rocket Crispies: a Space Serial" by Lawrence Talbott. Ed Bryant, who is LT's alter ego, presented the first segment at a recent Writers Workshop. At the same session there was a story by Karl Hansen (his first published work will be appearing in Analog soon; it's "The Killers") which in final analysis, beneath its brilliant blend of space opera parody and new wave obscurantism, is a marvelously sophisticated shaggy dog story. Bryant claimed that he and Karl were in the forefront of a new trend in sf, and I was able to proclaim: "NO! Bruce D. Arthurs was ahead of you!"

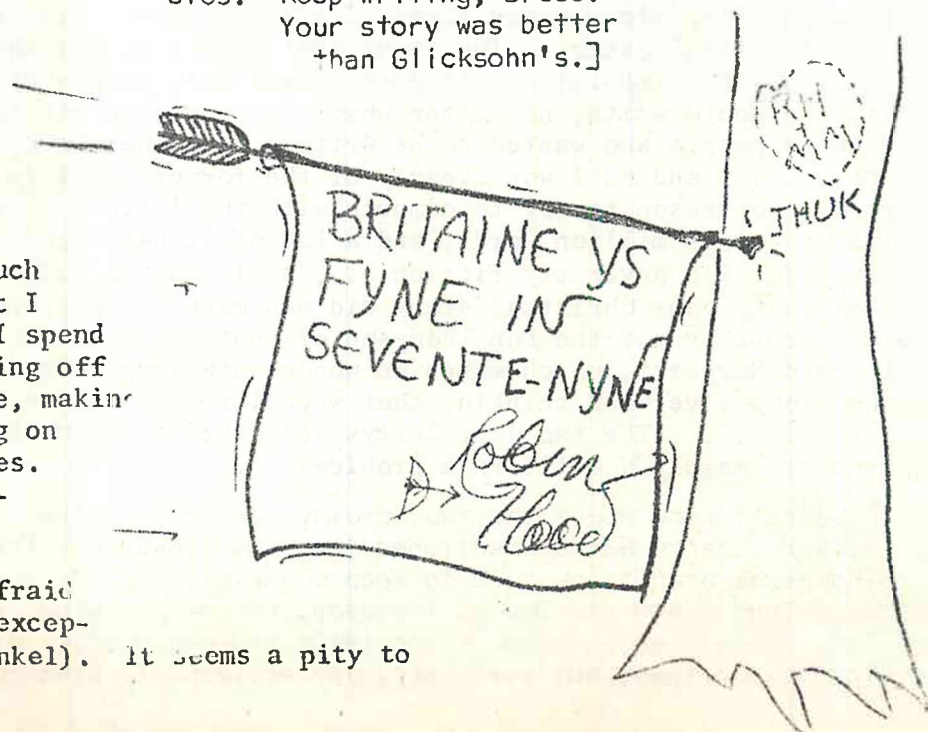
[February was a fannishier issue than usual for Fantastic, was it not? There was you, Mike Glicksohn, Juanita Coulson, Alpajpuri . . . and of course Ted White. And it wasn't too long ago that Stephen Fabian was known only in fan circles. Keep writing, Bruce.

Your story was better than Glicksohn's.]

Peter Roberts  
6 Westbourne  
Park Villas  
London W2

I envy you your journalistic enthusiasm; I've never managed to keep so much as a diary -- in fact I write very little. I spend most of my time dashing off quick notes to people, making lists, and scribbling on the backs of envelopes. It's a permanent writer's block.

Don't care for your 'artwork' I'm afraid (with the honorable exceptions of Kinney & Kunkel). It seems a pity to



waste good writing space with scribbles which are neither competent nor amusing.

This Warren Johnson business is all very strange. How come a fan can make a name for himself by gafiating? Still, I must admit I like the idea -- it has a nice touch of absurdity in it. The ultimate, of course, would be to have a faned who just produces one issue -- and that's entirely taken up with an announcement of his gafiation and the reasons for folding the fanzine.

Anyway, Mike Glicksohn tells me that I'm behind the times in EGG. "People aren't talking about hoaxes anymore," says Mike. "The new fannish talking point is Warren Johnson's gafiation." Faced with this definitive statement from The Man Who Knows, what can I say? There's only one solution: Warren Johnson has to be a hoax. That's the only way I can get back into the fannish mainstream. Sorry, Warren - somebody has to lose out.

*Rick Sneary*  
2962 Santa Ana St.  
South Gate CA  
90280

. . . I didn't read much of #38... I have always avoided fan fiction, and nowadays when my only interest in Fandom is Fandom and fans, and not good writing or the current SF crop (which is no longer written in a style I grew accustomed to -- except by Niven and Anderson) I don't read much that doesn't relate to fandom. There isn't time, there isn't time. [Where have I heard that before?] (I've been buying books and acquiring them, particularly in the last ten years, at a rate of at least twice to five times what I can actually read). So, par-me . . . I read a little of the beginning and a lot of the last, and wasn't very impressed . . .

I always hold it as a mark of distinction that with almost 30 years in the SF game, I have never imagined or dreamed of being a pro writer. Not because of my miss use of letters and English -- a couple of selling authors assured me that was no problem as someone else could always edit it for me. But mainly that I never day-dreamed in complete stories. I could imagine long stretches of action, but no openers, and never an ending. I just never wrote fiction, (except some of the faanish type Art Rapp used to publish). What is more, by the time I got to the point where I might have started thinking along those lines, I already knew a few selling writers, and about several others. The thing that struck me was that most of them wrote almost by compulsion. To most it was hard work, but they were hooked on it, and would write, no matter what . . . even to not selling. I decided there were people who wanted to be writers, and there were those who had to write . . . and as I was clearly of the former class (as far as fiction), there was no reason to try to compete with the latter. I suppose I've written a couple million words, and a lot of it has been full of self-revelation. But I'd never try fiction. . . so I'm not a judge of others.

One thing your Christmas story did was make me fully realize was that you are probably not the Don Thompson of Mentor, Ohio, who is married to a girl named Margaret, which makes me wonder how long this has been going on, and how long I've been thinking that when I read the name Don Thompson, it was one fan . . . The two John Berrys were the worst, while the two Dorothy Joneses are mainly a California problem. . .

[I didn't know about the two Dorothy Joneses; or the John Berrys, either. Harry Warner mentioned four Bob Stewarts. The three Don Thompsons aren't too hard to keep track of:

First there was Don B. Thompson, who mostly used just his initials, D.B. He was an actifan in the 1940s and had a story or two published in the prozines, but even Harry Warner seems to have lost touch with him.



And then there was Don A. Thompson, who is married to Maggie and has come closest to achieving fame of any of us, what with co-authoring a book about comics, with Dick Lupoff (*All in Color for a Dime*) and any number of articles about comics. Don A. is in FAPA, and is suburban editor of the *Cleveland Press*.

And finally, bringing up the rear, though apparently of an age somewhere in between the other two, is Don C. Thompson, who is a sort of college professor but who also works for a Denver newspaper, and who published a fanzine that has been getting a few favorable mentions recently and thereby confusing a lot of people. Notice that I am using the middle initial now].

Eric Lindsay  
6 Hillcrest Ave.  
Faulconbridge N.S.W.  
2776 Australia

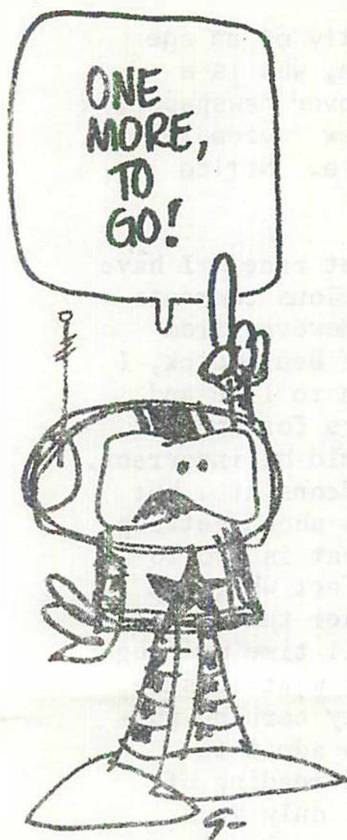
On escaping the financial rat race, I have been most interested in the various comments that have been made on this. However from your comments and from those of Ben Indick, I tend to suspect that you happen to like and enjoy your paid work and you don't work just because it pays for an education for the children. Else your remarks about time would be incorrect. That is, the time you spend would not go to attending worldcons etc. but would be used for work. Probably if you are really serious about getting out, you would find it possible to make a partial move. That is, go to a single job to gain more time for writing (if that is in fact what you really want to do) and then perhaps to a part time job rather than a full-time one. And there is, even in this case, a problem. Full time writing is the equal of a normal job -- are you sure you don't just want leisure, without the need to fill it with some more pleasurable money earning pursuit substituting for a regular job? On college, I have to admit to a very low opinion of it, but since this is based only upon a reading of some of the texts used, and summaries of courses and these only in a relatively few areas, I may well be entirely wrong about its value to an individual (note that I don't argue about the value as a means of obtaining a better paid job -- I just no longer count that as of all that much value to the individual personality).

How come I never even reach the WAHF? I always seem to be writing to you?

[\*BLUSH\* Ever since I have been sending DoS abroad, Eric Lindsay has been one of my most faithful correspondents. I have rationalized not printing his letters by the fact that he usually has very specific comments on specific matters, and because I send the zine to him by surface mail, his comments tend to be on zines that are three or four months behind us when I get his letters. If I haven't even been including him in the AHFs though, it's for a dumber reason: I must be getting the letters shortly after a DoS issue is mailed out and so by the time I have the next issue ready, Eric's letter is so far toward the bottom of the stack of mail that I assume he must have been listed in the AHFs last issue. Isn't there some way to organize incoming mail?

[I get letters from other Australians, too, which I haven't been printing for the same "reason" I gave for not printing Eric's -- time lag. With my bi-monthly schedule that factor should be reduced. Here's a portion of a letter from Down Under that is timely enough:]

Ken Ozanne  
 'The Cottonwoods'  
 42 Meek's Crescent  
 Faulconbridge NSW  
 Australia 2776



. . . As it happens, I have some of my Galaxys in some kind of order for the first time in years and so I looked up March 1954 and read enough to remember your story and then read 'A Proud and Lonely Thing.'

The newer story is better. Your control of words has improved out of sight. What I'm getting at is that your ability to write has increased.

But the old story is tauter. You wanted that to sell. If you want to sell more then you have to write what editors will buy and not merely what is good or what is fun to write.

I know you know all that. I know it too. But I still write what I want to instead of what I think will sell. Thank ghu I have a job.

If you are going to retire to write, start writing to sell now. Don-o-Saur is ideal for writing for fun.

Well, that nail seems thoroughly hit on the thumb.

[I have been wondering what this drawing by Canfield was going to refer to. I've known that the drawing was going to be here, on this page, right from the start (I actually dummy DoS before I begin typing it), but I had no idea what the accompanying text would be. I thought it would probably mean just one more loc. What it actually does mean is one more Australian. (I wonder what Grant had in mind with it?)]

Paul Anderson  
 21 Mulga Rd.  
 Hawthorndene SA 5051  
 Australia

It must have been quite a time since you sent my first copy of Don-o-Saur

off in the post before

you got my loc on the zine. So far I think 4 or 5 copies must have just gone into limbo before you had any response at all. I'm happy that I did not miss any in the meantime but the surface delay does cause problems at times. The first thing I do on receiving a zine these days is to turn to the letter col to see where my epic loc was placed by the discerning eye of the editor. That practice has been a little frustrating of late with your zine but soon I will be up to the issue that saw print after I replied.

. . . The DASFA weekend as detailed in DoS 37 seems to be rather chaotic and quite normal for fans. In SA we have plenty of social occasions where the fans meet but that's as far as it goes most of the time. Usually just for record listening, taping, etc., and attending movies. Especially the regular midnight screenings of horror films that are dug up before each Public Holiday. Rarely do they find a good show like the latest Hammer or else a sleeper like Tombs of the Blind Dead, though more often than not they are content to show a different kind of sleeper in Iguana With Tongue of Fire, Scream, Blacula Scream, et al. These tend to make it difficult to stay awake.

The latest version of a fannish social gathering is a variant of the writers workshop idea. This time we have an initial group of 6, mostly the inner circle of the local club, who are rostered in turn to try their hands at writing fiction. My turn should be in about 2



months or so. . . Sometimes the stories are entertaining. This activity has made me a little curious as to how the Ed Bryant workshop is doing back in Denver. . .

[Strangely enough (or maybe it isn't) the Bryant workshop is doing quite well. It still meets regularly, and four of its members, other than Ed, have sold recently. Paul attended a session in 1973, and the portion of a novel which was read then and which Paul asks about, is not yet part of a published work. The author is still working on it, but he's not a member of the workshop; he's pretty much of a loner.

[A few quick comments on the economy to close out with, okay?]:

Mark L. Blackman  
2400 Nostrand Ave. Apt. 717  
Brooklyn, NY 11210

I read a book six years ago, Report from Iron Mountain. Its thesis was that our economy was

based on war, and if the Vietnam War ended we would have a depression. Of course the book was poo-pooed; we could easily switch to a peacetime economy, make cars instead of tanks, etc. I'll leave it for others to note how the economy went wild (Phases I and II) when the war was ending, the mass unemployment (they can't even find hospital jobs for the guys applying for clemency; and with a college degree I am unemployed but not receiving unemployment benefits -- meanwhile I am a graduate student), and how fast the "economy cars" are selling, even with rebates. I wonder if that's why Vietnam and Cambodia have been sneaking back into the news lately.

John Robinson  
1-101st Street  
Troy, NY 12180

Gene Wolfe is right. The 23rd largest bank in the country failed (and the 100th largest as well). For more information on the subject I suggest you and Don-o-Saur's readers, peruse the article, "Banks on the Brink" by John B. Tipton (wasn't he the guy who used to send Michael Anthony out with tax-free million dollar checks 20 years ago? [Beats me] in the February 1975 Playboy, p. 85

I was wrong and I admit it. I'm glad Gene came through with the correction.

C. Howard Webster  
Box 5519  
Richmond, VA 23220

I certainly hope that you are wrong about the DePrEsSiOn (symbolic, huh? [reminds me of the stock market]), but I have started stocking up on those little packets of sugar

that they lay on you at restaurants just in case. Seriously, I'm waiting to see how the sale of gold will affect the market over a period of months before I write my congressman about a revival of the WPA. Rumor has it that Things Will be Better Midyear, and I'm optimistic enough to hope it's so.

[At this stage I'm willing to just wait and see. The market is going up; some prices are coming down; but the unemployment rate is still rising. . . Who know what it all means?]

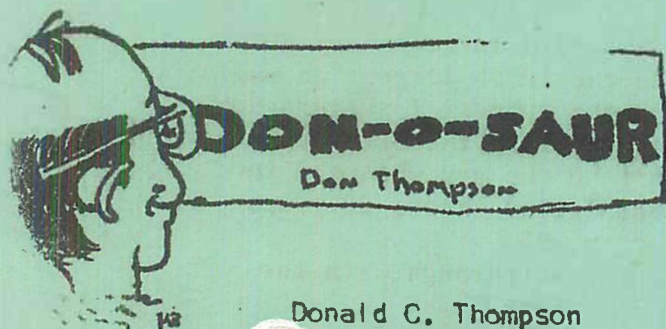


I A H F

(Not counting the people already mentioned in the PERSONALS): DON AYRES (a loc plus a nine-page loc-zine; comments on several back issues; could/should be published, but . . . ); GEORGE BEAHM, STEVE BEATTY, SHERYL BIRKHEAD (for valentine, for Bow-WOW Award-- lovely!--, for DASFAX artwork, for letters, for Christmas Don-o-Saur/ dino, and for being so nice -- thanks again!); CARRIE BRENNAN, JOANNE BURGER, ANN CHAMBERLAIN, BRETT COX (sorry Brett, hang in there; I really hoped to use part of your loc this time, but . . . ); DON D'AMASSA, HAL DAVIS, JOAN DICK, JERI DODSON, DALE DONALDSON, PHILIP FOGLIO (thanks for the artwork; I'll be using some of it soon; did I forget to mention that Mark Blackman sent pictures which I intended to thank him for? Thanks, Mark; they'll be used); JACKIE FRANKE, MARCI HELMS (and in Jackie's letter she extended special thanks to Marci for the cover on DoS 39 because of personal memories it evoked; I thank you for it too, Marci, just because it was nice); D. GARY GRADY, DAVID KLEIST, VIC KOSTRIKIN (thanks for this month's cover); WAYNE W. MARTIN, JODIE OFFUTT, RUSS PARKHURST, BRUCE PELZ, JERRY POURNELLE, LAURA RUSKIN, DARRELL SCHWEITZER, MAE STRELKOV, BRUCE TOWNLEY, LAURINE WHITE, BILL WRIGHT, LEAH ZELDES . . . and possibly others whose letters I have dumbly misplaced or put with last issue's. Gotta get organized. . .

+++++

**ART CREDITS:** VIC KOSTRIKIN: Front cover and page 15; MIKE BRACKEN, back cover; DAVID BARNETT, page 19; GAIL BARTON, pages 11 and 12; GRANT CANFIELD, pages 5 and 28; MARCI HELMS, page 9; JAY KINNEY, page 22; ERIC LINDSAY, page 6; SAM LONG, pages 24 and 25; RUSS PARKHURST, page 29; STUART SHIFFMAN, page 2.



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