

# GENRE RAT







# GENRE PLAT

WINTER/SPRING 1980 No. 4

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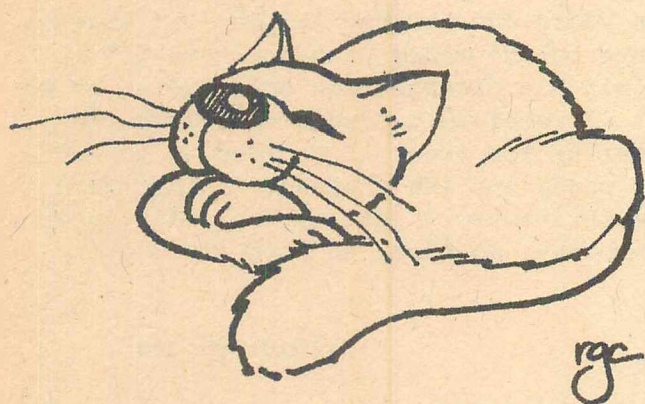


**"GENRE PLAT IS SERCON WITHOUT TASTING LIKE MEDICINE"**

**-- Ken Fletcher**



## Dangerously Amateur



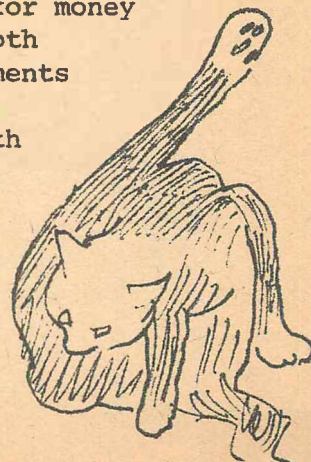
Honest, I never intended to stop publishing *GENRE PLAT*. I couldn't if I wanted to (and I don't, really) -- I've got subscriptions all the way up to #7.

*Excuse #1:* I had intended to produce this issue in November of 1978. Heh. My first mistake was in thinking I'd save on postage costs by handing out #3 at Iguacon. I learned the hard way that unless a fan gets a fanzine in the mail, s/he will not loc. It's taken me a year and a half to accumulate a letter column.

*Excuse #2:* Somewhere along the way, I've gone through two and one-half co-editors (Joe Pearson offered to draw up an ad for me: "Yes, YOU can become co-editor for an issue....") -- actually, Grant dropped out before #3 was quite off the presses, though he has remained generous with his art files. Then Fred Haskell dropped into San Francisco for a few months and late one night he and Joe Pearson decided that Fred would be great as a one-shot co-ed for GP. Fred inspired the general bent of the current issue, offered tons of advice and garnered me an article from Jon Singer, then moved on.

Sometime during the summer of 1979, Rich Coad decided to decamp for New York and asked if he could hang out in one of my spare rooms till his job transfer came through. I agreed on condition that he co-edit with me, as well. (Another ex-co-ed, and turncoat, Bill Gibson, suggested that I should scrap GP and join forces with Coad's *SPACE JUNK* -- available for money in any amounts, or sex, from this address -- but Coad and I both agreed that was a silly idea.) Rich made assorted snotty comments regarding my suggestion, all essentially boiling down to, "No fucking way," moved his fanzines and ashtray into the room with the closet and full-length mirror, and departed for SeaCon. Before he left, though, he phoned Taral and Victoria in Toronto and told them I was working on GP4. I first found out about this when I saw the issue in which they printed Rich's news. Since Taral and Victoria never print anything without first checking all the facts, I knew it must be true.

Already, since moving in, Coad has published two *SPACE JUNKS* to my none, is making noises to start a punk



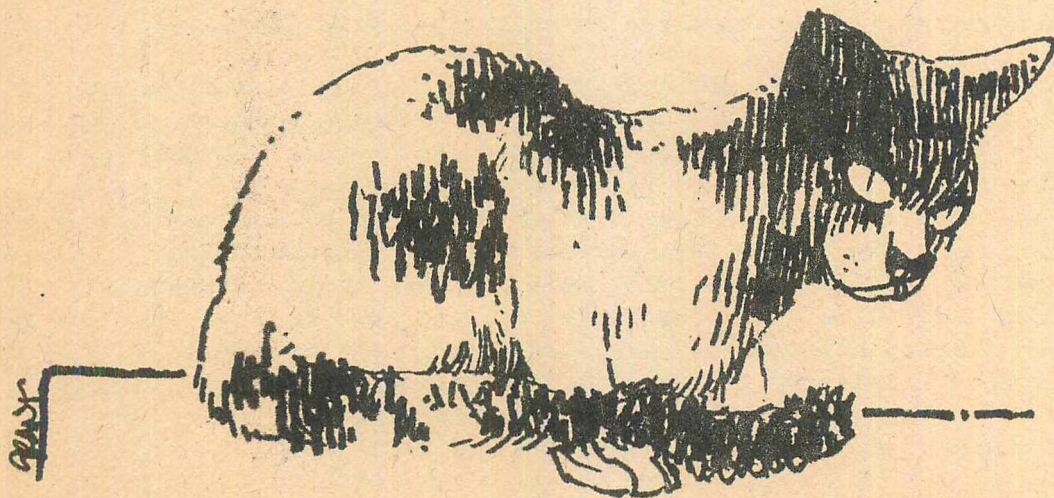


zine and taking guitar lessons preparatory to forming his own punk rock group. Just a hive of fannish activity happening in that room down the hall. Almost inspirational. What finally got to me, though, was the ker-thuk, ker-thuk, ker-thuk of the mimeo ker-thuking away in my office just off the living room. Coad producing SJ#3. I couldn't stop myself. Before I quite knew what came over me, I was right in there with him, helping to slip sheet. I got mimeo ink on my jeans, and Gary's typewriter on my desk and within a week, had all the stencils for #4 actually typed, except for this very page.

*Excuse #3:* Before getting to the typing, though, I had a few more problems. People kept promising me articles, but only Rebecca Kurland was delivering. Then a whole spate of stuff I'd asked for three years ago arrived in the last quarter of the year and suddenly I had a whole issue but no money with which to get it into print. Then Gary offered to let me join his distribution conclave so as to acquire access to his bulk mailing permit. I received a couple of offers from totally unexpected sources to print my cover up for free. I decided to forego my weekly coke shipment and buy a bunch of paper and ink instead. Things were going too well so in December, just before Christmas, I quit my job. I've now got plenty of time for fan-pubbing, but no money, so here, at long last, is silly old sercon GENRE PLAT.

--Allyn Cadogan

P.S. I've given up on co-editors, so you can probably expect a new one by next issue.





# HOW SCIENCE FICTION CHANGED MY LIFE

by SHERRY GOTTLIEB

*Excerpted from her special guest of honor speech at Westercon 32:*

Brothers and sisters, once I was a lot like you. Working at a nowhere job, hitting the singles' bars, reading Perry Rhodan novels in my free time. I tipped the scales at a hefty one-fifty, but my bank balance couldn't have tipped the busboy at the Francisco Torres.

Finally I hit botton: picked up by the Barstow police for offering a glance at my tattoo to an undercover cop in a leisure suit. My last friend in this lonely world, Harlan Ellison, set me straight while he was driving me back to L.A. "Sherry, get hold of yourself! Start reading sci-fi!"

"Gosh, Harlan, I'm not sure I care for all that Buck Rogers stuff." Aside from *Lost in Space* and two Star Trek conventions, I knew absolutely nothing about science fiction. But I needed something new, something exciting. I resolved to give science fiction a shot. At first it was quite painful. Reading all those stories was confusing: I had been used to reading inter-office memos, and anything longer than two pages made my head spin. But I started feeling the beneficial effects of science fiction in just one short week.

In no time, I was using napkins with every meal; I switched from Perry Rhodan to Alfred Bester, and I learned how to read a paperback without breaking the spine. Soon I was spending every night with a good book -- and sometimes with the author.

I realized that some of the most famous people in the world read science fiction: Plato, De Bergerac, Attila the Hun, Richard Nixon and many others who are alive today.

Then I met Hugo, the first man I'd met who knew there was more to science fiction than *Battlestar Galactica*, and I fell in love.





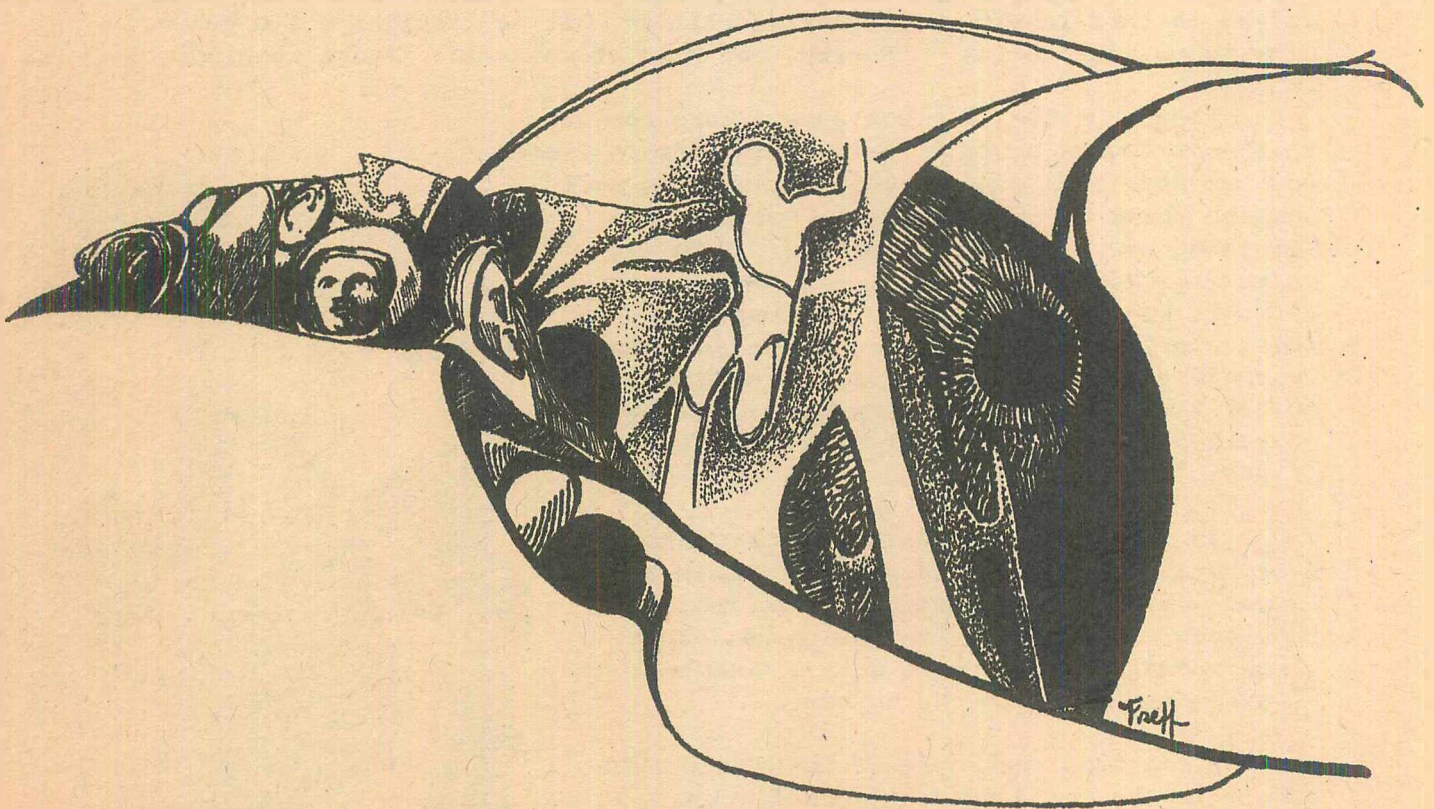
Today I'm on top of the world with a wonderful lover, close friends in high places and a promising career trading in science fiction futures.

#### CAN SCIENCE FICTION DO FOR YOU WHAT IT DID FOR ME?

A few years back, scientific studies showed that when dairy cows are read science fiction, the quantity and quality of their milk dramatically improves. Now, if it can do that for plain old moo-cows, imagine what it can do for you! You might use it to control disgusting personal habits and make fun new friends. The possibilities are endless.

#### CAN YOU AFFORD SCIENCE FICTION?

Even though marketing surveys show that science fiction's audience is the most affluent assemblage of weird people in the country, yes, you can afford science fiction. Thanks to your favorite sf bookstore's special offers, you can buy as much science fiction as you like, as long as your check has your current phone number written on it, and you have suitable I.D.





## IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: 4 VIEWS OF THE BAY AREA

# THE GREAT BAT HUNT

by RICH COAD

But let me tell you now about the time I caught a bat.

Well, to tell the absolute truth, it wasn't me that caught it but Dan. Dan worked at the Quincy sewage treatment plant and was ever ready to tell anyone with a working ear stories of how he had pedaled home, through a mountain blizzard, covered in freezing shit because he had fallen in the tank or a pipe had burst. From the amount of tales he could tell, one got the idea this happened about once a week. Small wonder he had no fear of bats.

About ten of us had traveled up from the Bay Area to spend a rustic spring weekend in Dan's shack. Rustic it certainly was: heat was provided by a stoked-up potbelly stove, warm enough if you could get out of the drafts caused by the two-inch gaps separating the roof from the house. There was indoor plumbing and electricity (a step up from my grandparents' house in Cornwall) and also an ersatz New England porch that started out about a yard higher than it finished.

The house next door was even better. It had not only a goat (which was milked regularly) but about fourteen chickens who wandered around the neighborhood with impunity when they weren't being chased by the local dogs. All we needed was a pond for Thoreau to feed the ducks at to complete the pastoral idyll.

Well, we sat around drinking beer and listening to Dan tell of frozen shit and synopsisizing bad horror films when, all of a sudden, with three-chord suddenness, in fact, I heard a flapping sound. You've probably all seen various vampire films where the bat is hanging out at someone's window going "floop floop floop" and thought to yourself how stupid it all was. Well, it isn't so stupid after all; the only difference between your vampire-movie-type-bat and your regular-everyday-ordinary-bat is that where your v.m.t.b. floops three times, your r.e.o.b. floops about a dozen.

"What the fuck," I said, "is that?" Then it swooped. I don't know what it is about bats, but when they swoop, you duck. We ducked. I bashed my head against someone else's, which is proof of just how dangerous bats can be.

"It's a mutherfuckin', everlovin' blue-eyed bat!" said Doug, getting excited since he's an ornithologist and likes anything with wings. "Let's catch it!"



By this time, three of the women were hiding in the bathroom; the rest of us were kept busy ducking as the bat continued swooping, with the exception of Dory, who was calmly removing her blouse. "Here," she said, handing it to Dan, "use this."

So we got ready for the big hunt. Whenever the bat passed near anyone, he or she was tossed the blouse, ducked, picked up the blouse and tossed it to whoever was nearest the bat. It was Dan, saviour of Quincy's hygiene, who tired of the farce first. "Gimme dat!" he said, grabbing the blouse. Then, seeing the bat in the stairwell, he ran after it. The bat flew upstairs. So did Dan.

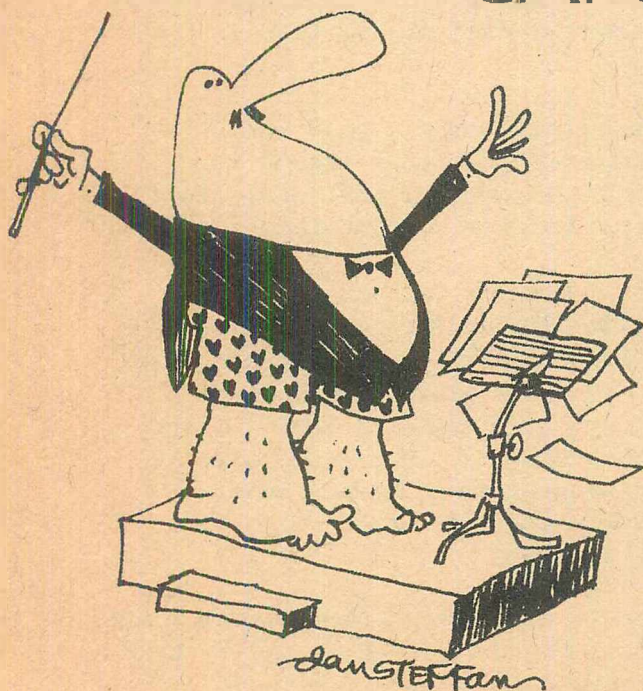
For the next five minutes all we heard were the typical sounds of a tremendous struggle, interspersed with yells of "goddammit!", "shit!" and "son of a bitch!" Finally Dan returned triumphant: grin on face, bat in blouse.

We took pictures. If there's one thing bats hate, it's being photographed. This one snarled and hissed, spat and struggled, even tried to bite, but we took the pictures anyway. After half a dozen or so, we took the bat outside and let it go. We waved goodbye. The bat flooped, swooped and shat. We ducked.

That's it.

\* \* \*

## CAFÉ MED\* by ANDREW BROWN



A couple of weeks after I got here, I heard that Susan Wood, well-known ex-ANZAPA member, was in town. After long battles with the telephone (it didn't really help that I transposed a couple of digits when I copied down the number), I arranged a meeting. Despite Susan's car breaking down the morning we were to meet, we managed to get together, along with her traveling companion, Minneapolis fan David Emerson, and we had a merry stroll up and down Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, looking at book shops and head shops, eating lunch and drinking coffee - the place where we drank the coffee, the Cafe Mediterraneum, was very interesting. It was quite large, and dimly lit, and...well, it sort of exuded beatnik. You sort of felt that in one corner there should be a little stage,

\*reprinted, with the author's permission, from LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDOURED THING, BUT PRETTY INIMICAL TO FANAC #1.



boom boom boom...)  
boom boom  
boom, boom,

[illegible]

he'd barf all over the stage! A third of the audience would immediately attain satori, and Allan Ginsberg would be intrigued by this novel method of criticism, but the pianist would just keep on playing away (doodah! deedle deedle doody doody dum dum! DAH! doo de dum de doo...) and the bassist would sort of step back a bit, but he'd keep on thrumming away (boom boom

boom boom  
boom boom  
boom boom  
boom, boom...)

TWO POEMS, WRITTEN AT THE CAFE MEDITERRANEUM, JULY 26, 1978.

--Susan Wood





In winter, as Emerson  
Stalks with his friend Thoreau  
The Brown Wood scatters leaves  
That fall among the snow

--Andrew Brown

\* \* \*

# CURFUFFLE

by M.C. SWIFT

Greenish, she thought to herself as the small, gaunt man climbed clumsily through the window of her capriciously furnished apartment.

"And just what," she queried knowingly, "do you people want now?"

With a glint of seeming innocence, he let the seaweed fall from around his neck; his gaze pierced through the thin veneer of her frail attempt at complacency.

"Well, then, let's have a go at the reality of it this time around, shall we?" She paused for a moment, trying to look perplexed, but threw off her cape with a sigh that told him she hadn't spent all that many evenings in taxis... not without some reservations, anyway.

She put on the disc he was thinking of and began spinning in the usual way, watching to see if he would go color wheel the first time around...he hadn't read all those new light magazines and pranced his precious mantra at all those luminous lantron rallies for nothing. He threw his head back and let loose with the shrillest yellow laser his concentration could produce, and watched as she melted like a virgin with her first electric color probe.

Wildly, he was upon her in a dervish of corruscating spasms, driving her past visual yellow and into the second spectra. He spent himself awaiting her return, then reached back for a cigarette. As if to sense the circle, she returned, opened her eyes with a snap, and went clear.

As was the custom among her crowd, she removed her clothing and sat upright on the video-box. He walked slowly toward her, stopped, and emptied his nose onto the floor. This wanton and childish demand for friendship made her pity him and she wished she could place her finger down her throat in submission, but how could she respect him now?

She climbed down off the box and placed her mouth against his cheek, but only a mute belch gurgled as she thought of Enrico, and how he simply wet his tunic and slid back into second spectrum, leaving her splattered with the un-evaporated saliva. Taking his foot and placing it against her chest, she looked up and waved clumsily, "I'm sorry, I just cant love a man who wears his heart on his sleeve."

\* \* \*



# "DO YOUR PARENTS KNOW YOU'RE RAMONES?"\*

by ALLYN CADOGAN

Rich Coad fed me lunch one sunny Saturday afternoon and regaled me with stories about the Deaf Club. Then he went to work and I went home and tried to phone Gary Mattingly to ask for a ride to the punk show that night. Instead of Gary, I got Fred Haskell, whom I wasn't expecting. He wasn't expecting me, either, so that was all right. We talked for half an hour or so. Later that night I met Fred for the first time in the flesh when I went over to the apartment he shared with Gary. Dixie and Jay Kinney were there, too, as well as Phil Payne, Tim Kyger, Simon Agree and Gary. Quite a fannish gathering.

Being as it was a punk club we were going to, I dressed up in my bright green levis, green leotard and multi-coloured top. I put on pale make-up with a spatula, wore very very green eye-shadow, very very black kohl and four coats of mascara. I wore dark rouge and bloodred lipstick and shocking pink nail-polish. I also wore my stompin' boots, the ones with the thick mean soles and the laces all the way up the front. I figured we were in for meeting some pretty rough trade. Fred showed me his rings and I showed Fred my nailpolish and then Gary, Tim, Simon, Phil and I piled into Gary's car and went off to the Deaf Club.

The Deaf Club is run by deaf people. They are very friendly and come up and sign at you a mile a minute and you end up feeling quite dumb when you can't sign back. Most of them also read lips, so they understand what you are saying to them, but you can't understand what they are saying to you. I'd guess about 30% of the clientele are deaf and, given the general noise level in the place, knowing sign language would be a definite advantage. The bartenders are also all deaf and read lips, too. They taught Gary how to ask for Budweiser in sign.

The Club is down around 16th and Valencia, in the Mission District of San Francisco, near the Roxie Theater, not the very best part of town. It's also next door to what appears to be a hookers' hotel. Herds of punks in greasy d-a haircuts and black leather jackets, pointed-toed patent leather shoes and white socks jammed the sidewalk in front of the Club and lined the long narrow stairway that led up into the smoke and the gloom and the noise.

A girl in brush-cut purple hair and black mini-skirt took my \$3 and a guy with shoulder-length curly blonde hair stamped the back of my hand with indelible black ink and then I had to squeeze past 50 people to get inside. I'd lost Gary and Phil and Tim and Simon on the trip up the stairs.

Not being your basic trupunk, I viewed the entire excursion as a sort of cultural anthropological field trip. First I crowded up to the stage and stood mesmerized for half an hour. The group were all young and male and skinny with short spiked blonde hair gone limp with sweat. They wore the standard issue

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\*line stolen from "Rock 'n' Roll High School," a movie, copyrighted by somebody or other, and used without permission, so there.





pegged black pants with either torn white or black t-shirts or no shirt at all. They changed their name three times in the course of 15 minutes. They only knew one song and they played it for exactly 27 seconds each time, except for when they did the special EP version, which was 38 seconds long. They were very loud. I wandered over to Gary, who had finally made it up the stairs. "You know, Gary," I said, "they're really awful." Gary collapsed to the floor, wildly amused.

I cased the joint. The stage was up at the front of the room, a rough wooden platform about six inches above the floor, which looked as if it hadn't been cleaned, or even swept, since the building was raised in 1919. The rest of the large room was bare except for a crude bar way at the back, and a juke box off to one side piled high with coats. There were a few folding metal chairs lining the walls. I found Tim and Phil and Simon on three of the chairs.

Tim was sleeping; Phil was reading *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*; Simon was sketching in an oversized book of newsprint. I took a chair and watched the floor show. Gary wandered over. Gary produced amyl and acquired beer. Tim woke up and we all got very silly for several hours. Rich Coad joined us and surprised everyone with his new punk haircut.

The room got exceedingly warm. Phil and I took poor sweet Tim (whom I've decided was created by Garry Trudeau) back toward the bar and bored him nearly to death by doing Canadian hockey trivia at each other. "I was born in the same place as Frank Mahavolich," Phil shouted at me. "Timmons, Ontario!" I shouted back. We discussed the Montreal Canadiens. A woman wearing a skin-tight black satin jumpsuit, black lipstick, black nailpolish, chain-link silver belt and black spike-heeled boots wandered past. Heades swiveled. Phil lost interest in the NHL. Tim had never had any. A scruffy character came by and spat on our shoes. We adjourned back to the walls.

Rich and I stood on chairs. "They're all really art students," Rich shouted as he bit my ear lobe. I wandered around looking into faces and discovered that, if you smiled, the scowls would disappear to be replaced by an answering smile. We were all there play-acting our aggressive sides; I was doing it, too, wandering around looking as tough as I could. It was rather cathartic. I went back to Rich who was now jumping up and down on his chair.

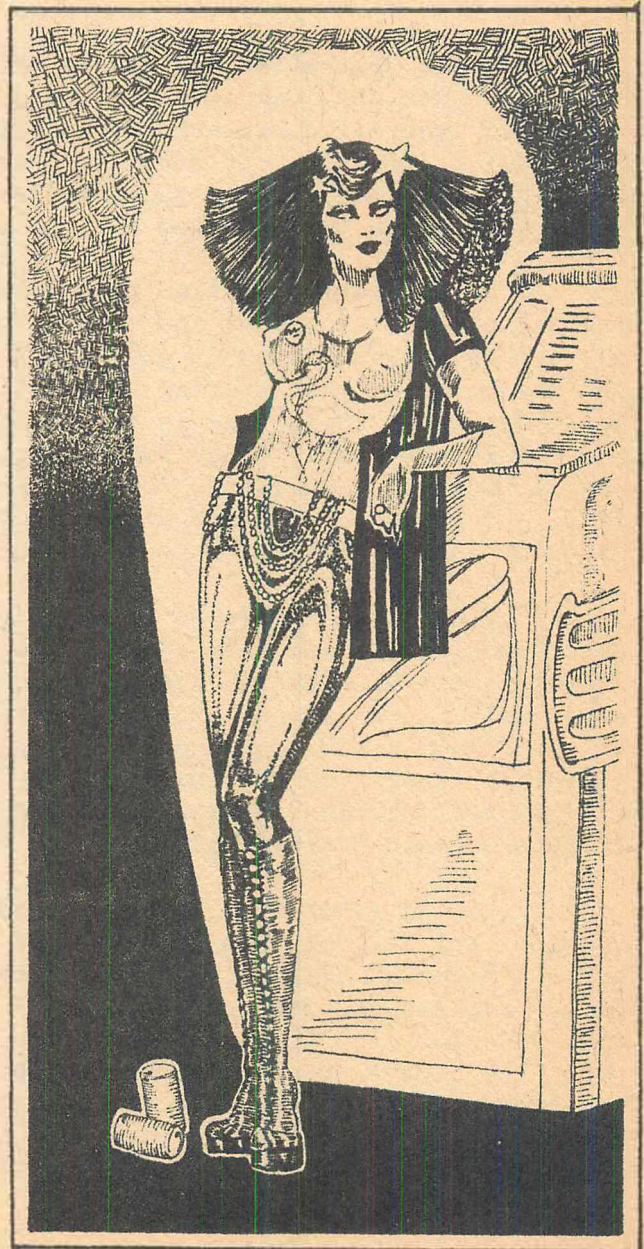
The last group to play was the Avengers. The bands had got progressively better as the night wore on. The Avengers had made a name for themselves, at least locally, and were quite good. We got down off our chairs and pushed through the milling throng to the front of the stage. We danced. No we didn't. We stood in front of the band and jumped up and down in the slime and pushed each other around. It was fun. I nearly got my front teeth chipped, and Rich hit the floor and lost his glasses. He was immediately helped up by four or five



people, and the glasses recovered intact. Within 15 minutes we were completely drenched in sweat, at least half of it originally belonging to other people.

Afterward, Gary suggested dropping acid and going to see *Eraserhead*. When that was vetoed, he suggested going to a Doggie Diner for something to eat. We threatened to throw up in his car, and he had to content himself with driving us home. I don't know what he did after that.

\* \* \*







# GETTING DOWN WITH HARLAN ELLISON

BY ANGELA MOON FELDPERSON

Personal journalism has always meant more to me than just saying things. I mean, I think the journalist should get below the artifice of his or her subject to the real substratum of humanity that links all living things. So when I do an interview, it's not just about some hype personality, you know, it's like, it's the *skin* of the universe with all its egotistical flashy jewelry and its defensive perfumes and all its self-deceiving tattoos scrubbed off.

So I was really thrilled to get this assignment to interview Harlan Ellison, because he's so forthright and honest and sort of vulnerable at the same time -- he's a real get *down* kind of guy, and I just knew that interviewing him wouldn't mean having to do that kissing up stuff, you know, letting them think you really dig where their head is at, pretend the readers give a shit about what they think about politics or redwood trees or all that crap. And then I also knew it would be a challenge, because Harlan Ellison is so shy and quiet, and it takes a lot of digging to get his own opinion on anything out of him, because he's so insecure and withdrawn.

I mean, I know he doesn't like publicity, but tough assignments don't bother me. After all, I got the first posthumous interview with Alan Watts, when he told me that being dead wasn't Zen at all, it was a real drag and he really missed the here and now. And even though Jann got really pissed when I called Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria on the *Rolling Stone* tie-line, I was the one who told him that Amerika was really cool now, and a place where persons of any and all colors could start really socially conscious farout fashion lines.



Anyway, I figured if anybody could bring Harlan Ellison out of his shell, I could. And I think this interview is really the most together thing I've ever done. I'd really like to thank Allyn for all her support and encouragement and all the cookies she fed me that night I thought *Twin Peaks* was sucking my soul out. I'd also like to thank Rebecca Kurland for typing this up for me -- written words have always been too much into symbolism for me, so I just put all my real heavy journalist's notes on tape and get them transcribed: I feel that's more honest than like typing words and then reading them and typing them over and anyway machines give me bad *vibes* if I have to touch them a lot.

\* \* \* \* \*



I've always admired Harlan Ellison, because his writing is real honest and gutsy, and you can really tell that he doesn't care what is in, he's just gonna go ahead and be himself and keep writing himself all the time. Actually, I never could get behind reading, I mean like sitting and keeping your eyes focused on all that print all the time, I always start tripping out and thinking about my skin and my nerves and my bones -- well, you know, when it's real quiet like when you're reading, you can sort of hear your bones shifting around inside your body, and that always makes me nervous.



Besides, words don't really say anything at all; I learned that in my "Structures of Film" class with Steven Spielberg, and I think Harlan Ellison really demonstrates that. I mean, he obviously says a lot in his writing that people have emotions and feelings and pains too, they're not just a lot of words. So I think he agrees with me that it is really more valid to look at his work in the greater scope of society and overall being than just to like read his books and ask a lot of hype questions about them. Not that I haven't read a lot of his stuff -- I thought "The Demolished Man" was just incredible. And I saw every episode of "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea" and some episodes of "Star Trek" when I spent all those months locked in my apartment coming down. And those shows really were meaningful to my life at that moment, they really helped me keep in touch, so I figured that Harlan Ellison really understands my head and we have always had an unconscious rapport that would make for great chemistry when we got together.



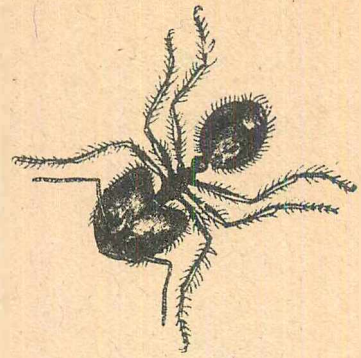
Anyway, I didn't want to just go down to L.A. and knock on his door, him being so shy you know, so I went over to a friend's house and asked if I could use the phone and dialed him long distance. It was real trippy listening to all the connections clicking on the phone line, it's like hearing the space between the stars, and I was just thinking what if aliens started talking to me while I was calling long distance like that, and whether I should tell them the truth about Earth or do a real PR job and hope they were tourist types, when Harlan Ellison answered his phone.

Except that it turned out to be one of those machines that answers your phone and records messages, and I can never figure out what to say because it seems so stupid to ask a lot of get down questions without getting any answers, but I left my name and number and just had time to ask what he had in mind when he wrote "Stranger in a Strange Land" when I think the machine hung up on me but I wasn't sure cause you can never tell since the machine doesn't say anything anyway. But it sounded like the space between the stars again, and I guess the aliens aren't interested in hearing me ask somebody questions when they're trying to decide whether to invade and destroy us with thermo-blasters or pretend to be friendly and give us everything we want until they eat us.

Well, he didn't call me back for a couple of months, but I didn't get hung up because I had got this connection onto some Kashmir hash that was a total mind blowout, and I went up to Seattle with this guy who was supposed to



be getting another shipment in and we were going to like wholesale it around the world but he freaked out at customs and let some guys in a black limousine take all the goatskin vests it was sewn into away to retail in Dayton. Then he split for Dayton and I had to hitch back down the coast but I got a ride with all these people who were going to see somebody named Iggy who was throwing a sci-fi bash in New Mexico or someplace. One of them said that Harlan Ellison was going to be there making a social statement about equality for Indians, and then I like remembered that I was supposed to do a heavy interview with him and that he'd been too shy to answer my phone call.



So we stopped off in Frisco, and I went to see my friend again and he started yelling as soon as I opened the door about his phone bill and I told him he was a bourgeois pig and that got him really turned on you know, cause he's a real macho powertrip guy and can only get it on when somebody threatens his dominance. Anyway, so when he fell asleep I called Harlan Ellison again and I didn't hear any aliens this time but I still got his answering machine and then I realized that he's like, wow! too shy to even answer his own telephone, and I thought that was a real trip, because his stories are, you know, loud and he's so famous, so I just knew that he really represses all his feelings so they'll come out in his writing and that got me real excited to meet him.

So I left a message telling him I'd meet him at Iggy's and I also asked where he ever got the idea for R2-D2 and then I got hold of the people going to New Mexico and we all headed down there and the trip wasn't bad except that they all kept making dumb jokes and playing chess or something in their heads and they said my hash smelled like burning tires and anyway they were all allergic so I couldn't smoke in the car.

When we got to New Mexico I found out that the bash was really big, like a Shriners' convention or something except that instead of little fezzes everybody was wearing aluminum foil or leotards painted funny or Star Wars costumes, stuff like that. And these real ugly guys kept coming up and asking me if I was anybody famous and trying to like cop a feel, and I neverggt to meet Iggy and nobody would tell me where Harlan Ellison was.

But finally I met this guy who had some really super mescaline and we spent a couple of days in his room tripping and then when I went out the people didn't look so weird anymore because I could see they were all just flowing like a river and that in time they would become rich alluvial soil to feed the psychic energies of the Total Being, which put the whole thing into perspective. And then this guy said one night that he knew Harlan Ellison and if I really wanted to get down we could go to a party where Harlan Ellison was and he'd introduce me. So we got back into our material bodies and dressed and stuff and went to a party in a real crowded hotel room where a bunch of people were all watching this guy do a pretty fair Lenny Bruce imitation and over in a corner all by himself I finally found Harlan Ellison.



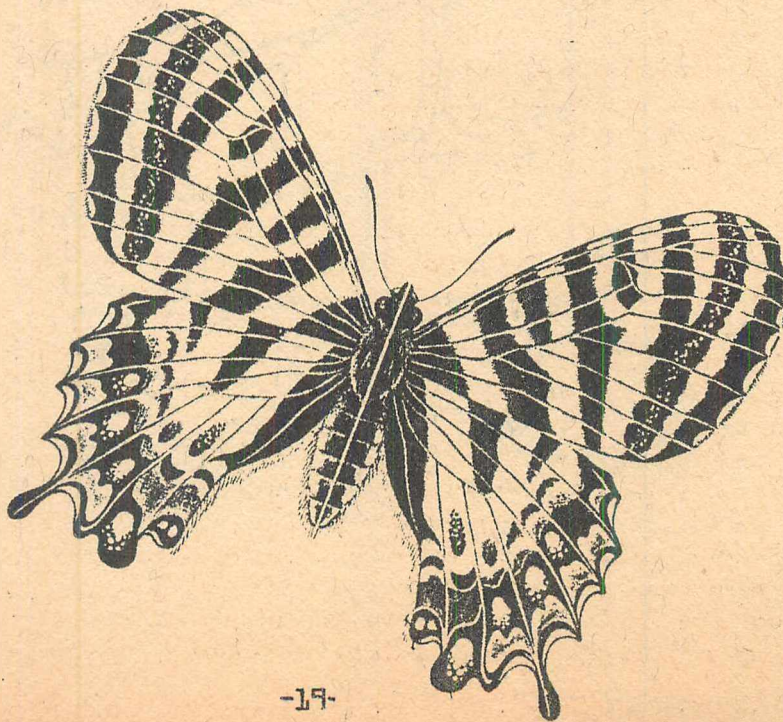


I was really surprised to meet him, because he didn't look anything like I imagined: he's real tall and thin and distinguished looking, with a kind of gray beard and all his clothes were sort of too big for him and baggy and out of style. But he was real quiet and softspoken like I figured, and I asked him why he didn't answer my phone calls and he looked surprised, so I guess he's too shy even to listen to his phone messages, but he said why didn't I come up to his room where it was quiet and he had some good hash?

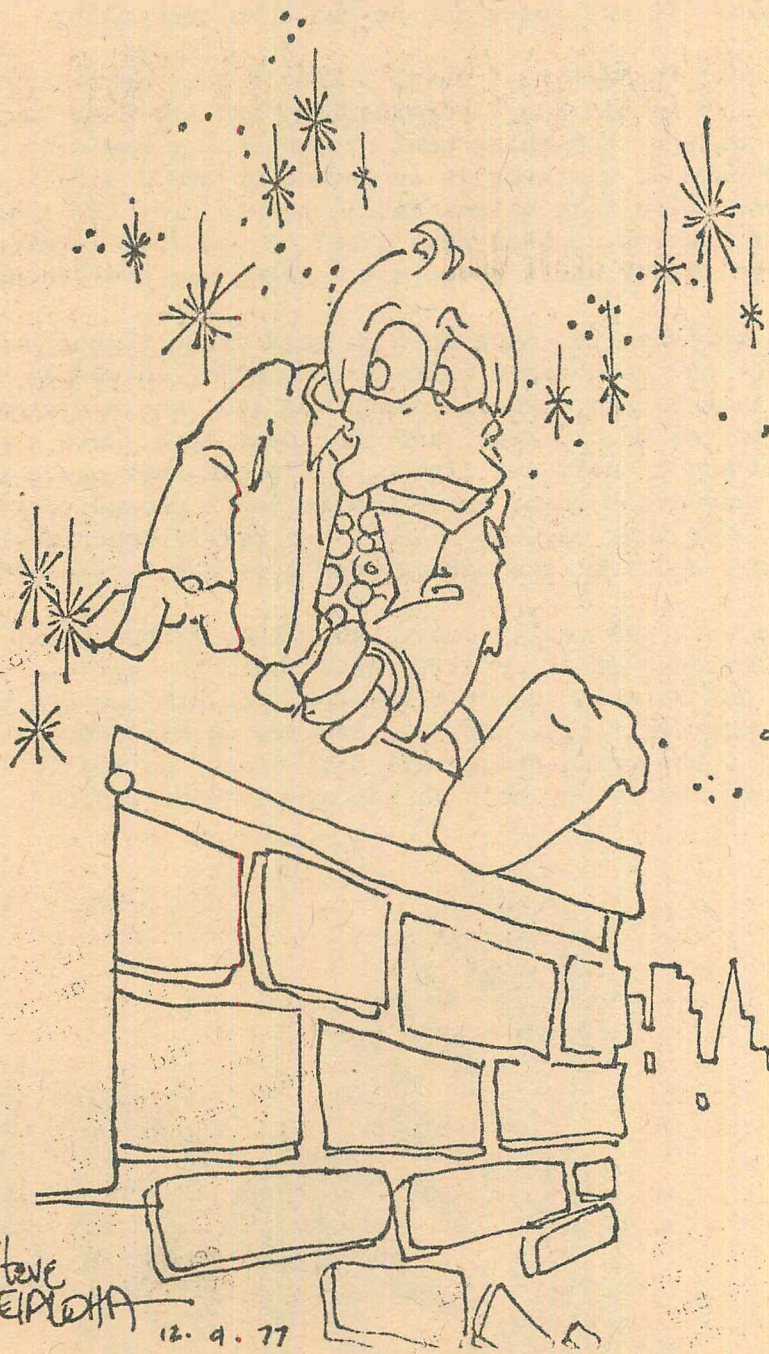
It was real fantastic, I mean, I didn't know guys his age could even get it on at all, but he did okay, considering, and the hash was really mellow. The only problem was that something went wrong with my movie camera, I got the pictures but the tape or whatever it is fucked up and I didn't get any sound at all except some noise like aliens eating people from the inside out. Harlan Ellison didn't make any sounds like that; he was real interesting and he told me a lot of real heavy stuff about his writing and everything.

I can't remember too much that he said exactly, but he said a lot of meaningful stuff about how he doesn't write for money or so people would be impressed with him but that he has a really heavy message, and his stories like "Repeat, Harlequin, Said the Ticktockman" and "The Dead Bird" were supposed to make people stop and think about their own lives. I thought that was a real mind blower, and then he said this great thing about how it isn't enough to talk about it, you've got to walk that way too. And I was really touched when he said that he'd put my idea about aliens eating people over the telephone into a story.

So anyway, it was really heavy, just like I thought it would be. I wish I could remember some of the really funny stuff he said, too. But anyway, he's really funny, and he said nobody else ever drew him out the way I did. And he said I could come visit him, and when he gave me his address I realized that I'd been calling the wrong number all that time: he really lives in South Dakota. I guess that's why he's so concerned about Indians.









# **YAKKITY YAK**

-OR-

## **GROWING UP IN OHIO**

by P.M. COCOON

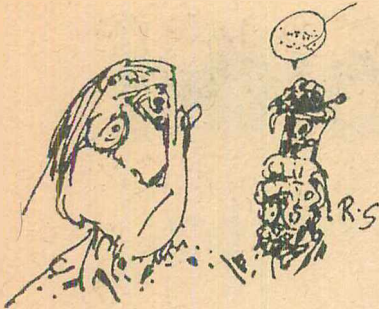
It was the old Yak yoghurt days in them days. Sometimes we'd flounder about in the vat for hours before they'd get around to fishing us out. Minnows, they used, in the main. It was no picnic, let me tell you. We burped dorje dzong tak for weeks at a time; getting yanked out by the ear is not my idea of ballroom dancing either. Of course, every once in a while we'd pull one of them in with us. Then, while Maryanne stuffed debris up the nose, Sofia or I would flail about with the fishing tackle. We could only imagine the looks on their faces as those hundred-gram lead sinkers and massive trebles came singing up over the edge of the vat...we eventually developed a hit rating system, based largely on the volume of noise which resulted. Largely hypothetical, but workable, after a fashion. They were, you see, sufficiently canny to keep the lights out, except when the media were visiting, and then all the lights were shining directly in on us anyway, so we couldn't see out. As long as we remained unable to memorize the locations of the features of the room, they weren't forced to rearrange, and that suited them fine.

The darkness was, for us, absolute, except for the faint luminescence of the yoghurt itself, a pale bluish-white glow which barely enabled us to see each other, and decidedly hampered our efforts to grow infrared-sensitive eyes. (We had some notion that they were using old military snooperscopes to watch us. Certainly they were using something. They never seemed to have any trouble locating us.) We never came to a conclusion on the troubling question of whether the luminescence of the yoghurt was a deliberate ploy on their part, or a mere accident. In one of our lighter moments, Maryanne suggested that it was a deliberate ploy on the part of the yoghurt. We awarded her thirty points for the notion, and withdrew twenty points for giving the yoghurt ideas.

The media were quite cordial. The yoghurt particularly enjoyed their attentions, gurgling happily and quivering in excitement whenever they appeared. It generally wanted to follow the cameras about, and we had to step on it firmly more than once to prevent it. It would have slimed all over them, which was, of course, out of the question.

On particularly snowy days, they would give us bulbs of garlic to take into the vat with us. We would then swim about in the yoghurt, holding the garlic out ahead like little lanterns. The object was to push it into someone's nose, an immediate fifteen points. After some hours of this, we would tire, and break the bulbs up, scattering cloves through the surface layer. Then we would swim about

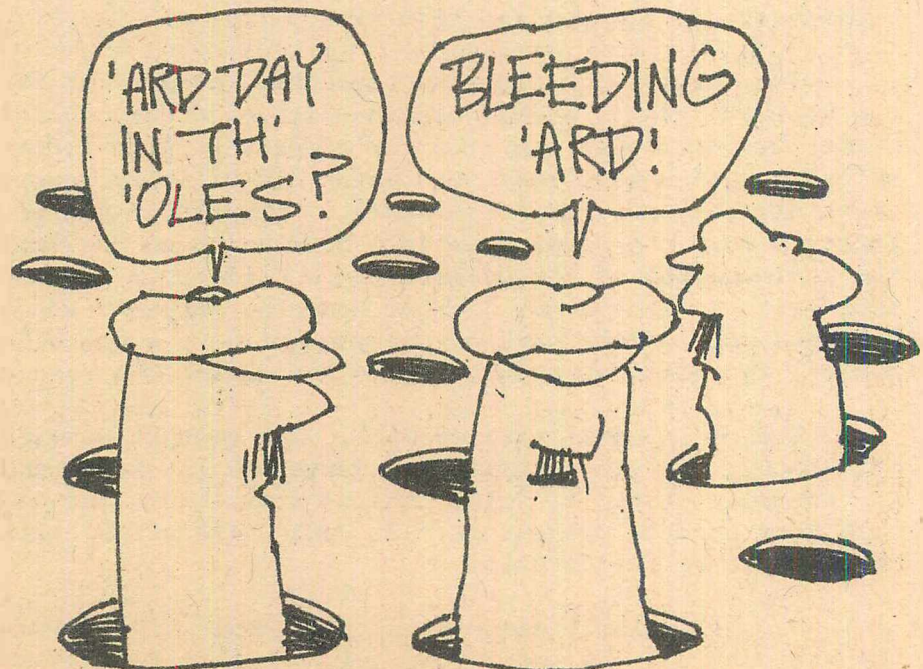




some more, practicing echolocation on them. Alas, except for Sofia, we never became very proficient at it. She usually ended up magnanimously handing collected garlic out to the rest of us. We always saved some of it for occasions on which we snared one of them...we also kept a supply of Juniper twigs. I have no idea where we got them, but we always had some, and as a result, when one of them got dragged into the vat, they never knew what manner of marvel they would have to have extracted from their plumbing.

They were always terribly embarrassed at being caught, especially when they got pulled back out with a nose full of garlic or whatever, but they never had us punished for it. I guess it was just another fact of life for them. For our part, we felt that being hauled out by some extremity was punishment enough. The scented polychrome bandages they gave us hardly made up for the pain and inconvenience. I suppose we were no better when we got our hands on the fishing tackle. There was one huge tank somewhere in the room which gave a resounding clang upon being struck with a hundred grams of lead, and of course we tried our best to catch it every time.

Yes, it was a good life. There were rumours that the people in miso had it better (except for the poor hatcho people. All those rocks, ugh!), and of course we all had tremendous sympathy for those confined to Kim-Chi cooperage, but the good grunt times, the real crunchy life, all of us were convinced were to be had only in yoghurt.





# ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

by BILL GIBSON

One of the many good reasons for not admitting to anything even vaguely resembling a working relationship with science fiction is that you don't get to hear nearly as many personal accounts of UFO's, Amazing Precognitive Dreams or those weird little sorta German-looking people somebody's cousin Liz kept running into on her last acid trip. This is almost as good a reason as not getting asked to Explain Black Holes. ("Lady, if I could explain black holes, do you think I'd be wearing this Salvation Army trenchcoat?")

As one former member of the London brigade of The Society For Psychical Research put it to me recently over a can of beer and a tall glass of iced sangria (my drink and hers, respectively), just about anyone you're likely to run into can provide some kind of Anecdotal Evidence of Phenomena. Too true, I agreed. And how.

Everybody but me, that is. But -- and thereon hangs a tale, or at least a fanzine article -- I did once see something really peculiar. It wasn't anything that Charles Fort would have written home about, but it was weird and mysterious and, to me at least, vaguely worrisome.

I saw a mirror break, all by itself.

Now, hold on, wait a second -- it happened in *Istanbul*. Exotic background, right? Something to hold your interest.

October, 1971, and my Future Wife (good reactionary anthology title there) and I are holed up in a grim commercial-travellers' hotel called the Yeni Istanbul, just the other side of the Galata Bridge, waiting for a cheapo charter back to Athens. You don't get a phone in your room, but there's an ordinary-looking doorbell button you can push to summon a three-hundred-pound blackshirt in plastic carpet slippers who arrives thrity minutes later with two shotglasses of lukewarm tea.

By local standards, this isn't bad. Our previous hotel, the Liz (Taylor? We'll never know.), had been populated exclusively by catatonic British students reduced to twitching zombies by their Land Rover trek from Paris, and by a manic breed of smalltime New York dope dealers who were all pretending they were in



town to buy gross quantities of Turkish puzzle-rings. The Englishmen spent their days in the flyblown Bar Liz, sucking down medicinal quantities of Turk Tuborg and trying to get their legs to work, while the New Yorkers crouched in their plywood-partitioned rooms, power-toking joints of Maui Wowee they'd brought from home and lying to one another about why they were in town. If this scene hadn't been enough to move us uptown to the Yeni, there was the gaping Lovecraftian chasm in the basement, at whose edge we were expected to crouch in near total darkness whenever the need arose. You could sometimes hear things moving down there. Floundering, sort of. I once directed the palsied beam of my trusty Pile Wonder French-stairwell flashlight down, fearing that one of the Brits had tumbled in, but fortunately I'd read enough bad horror stories in my day to not look too closely, else I be found gibbering in some uncouth and eldritch tongue.

But I digress.

The Yeni was expensive enough that we needed to find a cheap restaurant not too far from the hotel. I went out to do just this, and after some time located what I suppose was your basic Turkish working class diner. It was in a back street and down a very old flight of stone stairs worn smooth by centuries of carpet slippers. In terms of age, Istanbul makes London look like Los Angeles. Turkish men are no longer allowed to wear the fez or slippers in public, but compensate with flat cloth caps and pointy black shoes. They tie the laces once, when they buy the shoes, and then mash the backs down with their heels so they can slip them on and off.

The first time I ate in this place, I was alone. It was a room of modest dimensions, with three or four tables and the ubiquitous steamtable to keep the rice warm. The menu boasted kebab, rice, bottled water, Turkish coffee and shot-glasses of lukewarm tea. No trouble ordering. The staff consisted of three brothers who all looked very much like the young Peter Lorre. The walls were rough-cut stone that had been whitewashed, once, and were hung with unframed sheets of mirror in assorted odd rectangles. Actually, these seemed to have been glued on a long time ago with some dark adhesive that had eaten away and discoloured large areas of the silver backing. If I were Borges, I might point out that each of these could be regarded as a detailed map of an imaginary country, to be filled out over the years in the minds of the more fanciful customers, but I'm not Borges and anyway I wouldn't waste that kind of imagery on a San Francisco fanzine that probably won't even be published.



I had kebab, rice, bottled water and a cup -- a china thimble -- of very good, really sticky-thick coffee. The tab, translated out of lira, came to something like sixty cents. After I'd paid, I went through the usual nationality charade; since it was an odd-numbered day, I was Canadian. Having pretended to be Canadian on alternate days for something like a six-month period, I had come to the conclusion that, contrary to Canadian mythology, Canadians aren't all that much more Welcome than Americans. There are, in fact, Europeans who seem slightly disappointed when they learn you're Canadian.



I had been the only customer, and the Lorre who worked the till offered me a Kent. Kents are a big deal in Turkey; they are in Russia, too, I'm told; they're black market and a kind of currency. In Russia, I don't think people actually *smoke* them. Too valuable. But they get smoked in Turkey. The Turkish government has a monopoly on the manufacture of cigarettes, and the official product is almost impossible to remove intact from its pack. Not that anyone would want to. So in Turkey it's cool to smoke Kents.

Next evening I returned, again without Deb, who wasn't hungry, and again I was alone in the place. Same meal, same tab, same postprandial Kent. What the government monopoly does make that's really very good, while I'm on the subject, is vodka. Excellent vodka from Izmir.

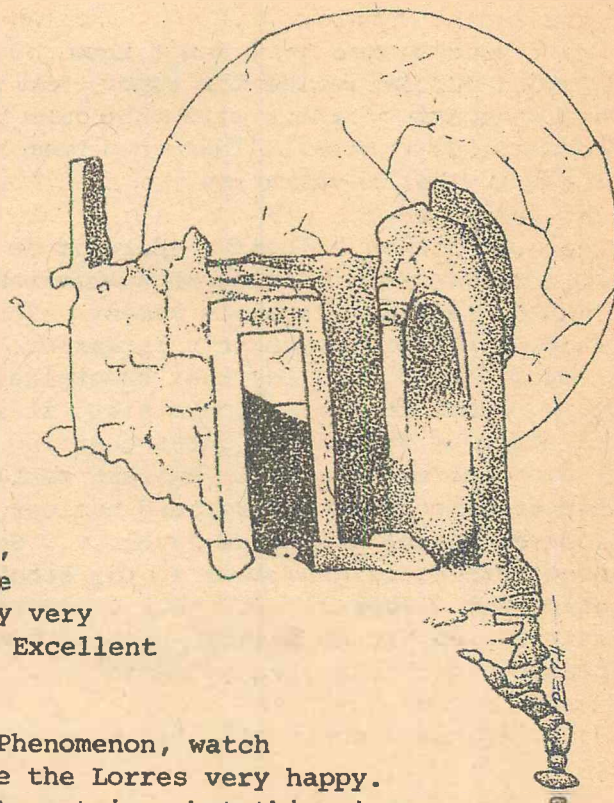
The evening after that -- comes the Phenomenon, watch closely -- Deb did come with me, which made the Lorres very happy. Not only did I like the kebab enough to return twice, but this time I had actually brought my woman. (Sorry, but it's that kind of culture.) And tonight we weren't alone. There was a man at the table opposite us who might've been a Turkish long-haul trucker. He wore a businesslike black leather jacket and jeans. He was eating kebab and rice. We ordered kebab and rice. Just as ours was arriving, the mirror on the wall above this man's table exploded.

Shattered. But violently. Finger-sized shards of faded mirror in the kebab and rice. In the man's black hair. On the scrubbed stone floor.

And the six of us frozen for a moment in a most peculiar tableau. The Turkish trucker with knife and fork still in his hands. Deb with her mouth open. The Lorres offering two gestures to ward off the Evil Eye while the third brother clutched some sort of amulet or talisman under his white nylon shirt. And me with my hand down my pants, where I always kept my passport and traveller's checks in a soft leather envelope manufactured by the Canadian firm of Cooper who, aside from producing professional hockey gear, also turn out a line of very comfortable moneybelts that look alarmingly like trusses.

The trucker began to curse, softly, slowly, and very nastily, and got to his feet. He stalked out without paying. The Lorres began to tidy up furiously, sweeping and clucking to one another and rolling their eyes in our direction.

After our meal, I did my best to get it across to them that we were going to Athens in the morning, and that that was the reason we wouldn't be back. Not because the mirror had exploded. Not because we thought they were infested with *djinn*, or the local equivalent.





Well, that's it.

What happened? I don't know. I do know that nothing was thrown or fired in any way from inside the room. And there were no windows. The only door was at the bottom of the stairs that lead down from the street, and it was at right angles to the target. There had been no sound but the sharp shattering of glass, no other audible vibration.

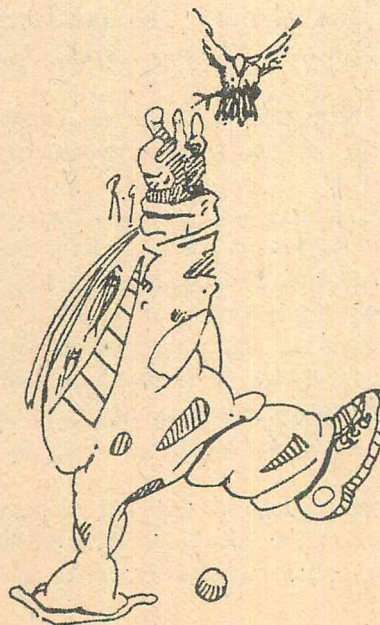
But I have a Theory. Here it is: It's, say, 1942, and someone is sticking an unframed mirror up on a whitewashed stone wall in a basement in Istanbul. Using black sticky asphalt cement. The wall is rough, uneven. The mirror goes up, but in the process it's stressed. When you cut glass to replace windows or frame pictures, you see that sheetglass is slightly flexible. So the mirror goes up and, though it looks flat, it's actually bent, very slightly. And then the years of reflecting Turks scarfing down plates of kebab and rice, until one evening in October, 1971, a truck rumbles across the Galata Bridge, or the Chinese explode an underground nuclear device, or something just suddenly decides to give, on the molecular level.... Some minute or seemingly unrelated event... and shards of bright glass in the kebab and rice. Or else it was some bored godlet out of Zelazny.... But I prefer the submicroscopic event, or the larger one, very far away, or some combination of the two. The invisible made manifest. What more do you want?

Now, if I could only learn to explain black holes....

❖ ❖ ❖

**INTERNATIONAL NOTE:** C. Patrick Costin of S.F., flying aboard a Russian-built jetliner in Poland, took a photo of the instructions, in Polish and English, over the emergency exit. They read as follows — "1. Pull handle. 2. Remove hatch by polling. 3. Take escape rope from hatrack. 4. Fasten rope to exit frame. 5. Throw free end of rope through exit" — and so much for advanced Soviet technology.

... A boffo belly is seldom heard in Federal Court, but one transpired last wk. when Federal Judge Stanley Weigel snapped at a pair of nitpicking lawyers: "Come come, let's not make a Federal case out of this!"





# Lost secrets revealed

-or-

## Memoirs of a Burma-Shave Salesman

by POUL ANDERSON

It is not always a sign of encroaching senility to growl that this or that is inferior to what it was in one's salad years. A fair-minded man admits that some progress, some improvement does get made. For instance, the miniskirt was a long step in the right direction. But then why should a fair-minded boy not admit that certain other things are not as good as they once were?

They just don't put the kind of stuff into hypotheses that they used to. Let me give you an example.

My personal memory lane is lined with Burma Shave signs. The fact that I must explain this to at least half of the readership is a reminder of how many years have crept over me like wee red ants. An age seems to have passed since these things were. Their extinction was sudden and startling, probably as sinister an omen, as the passing of the passenger pigeon.

Mind you, I have never actually approved of billboards. But a few did once possess a certain baroque charm. There were those which were put in an empty sagebrush desert by an auto repairman who styled himself Fearless Ferris, the Stinker, and used a skunk as his emblem. (No, my dear College of Heralds, I don't remember whether it was couchant or rampant or piquant or what.) They had humor: e.g., outside of a hamlet named Battle Mountain, in the middle of optically flat hundreds of miles, one read APPROACHING BATTLE MOUNTAIN, USE SECOND GEAR.

And then there were the Burma Shave signs.

The product itself was a brushless shaving cream which came in squat jars. I never happened to use it -- the advertising stopped before scraping my face had become a daily nuisance -- and I was surprised to learn it was manufactured in Minneapolis where I lived. I imagine the stuff is no longer made, though perhaps it is; these days I generally employ a mowing machine. But the material is irrelevant, in the way that the flesh and blood of an artist are. He needs a body, of course, but his creations are the important thing. Likewise, as far as most people are concerned, the sole purpose of Burma Shave was to provide signs.

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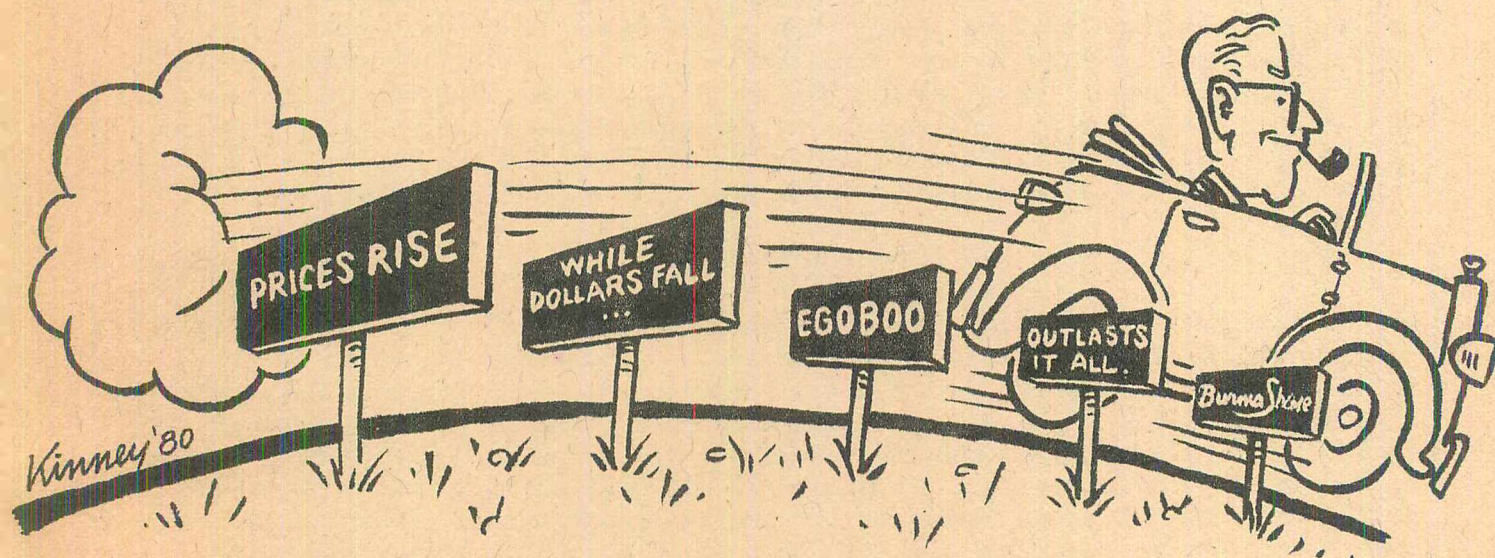
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They always came in fives -- small, discreet though crimson, rectangles on low posts. They were exactly big enough and set at exactly the right intervals, one after the other, to be read with ease at what was then the average driving speed. The last always bore, simply, the legend BURMA SHAVE. The preceding four made a jingle. The meter varied little, and the rhyme scheme was an unchangeable abcb. However, the range of subjects was infinite.

Often a set merely advertised. Thus: "Shaving brush/In Army pack/Was straw that broke/This rookie's back./BURMA SHAVE." But frequently it promoted traffic safety, as in the macabre: "Approached a crossing/Without looking./Who will eat/His widow's cooking?/BURMA SHAVE." And sheer lightheartedness kept breaking through, thus: "Free, free,/A trip to Mars/For 10,000/Empty jars./BURMA SHAVE." (The story goes that somebody did collect that many, and the company was sportsmanlike enough to send him, not to Mars, Pennsylvania, but to Mars, Germany.) You, being a reader of mine and therefore alert and intelligent, will have noted that the fifth sign was a coda, never a part of the main composition. Surprisingly many persons at the time failed to grasp this, and produced such private bastardizations as "Never let your whiskers wave. Shave 'em off with BURMA SHAVE." The real form was as rigidly structured as a villamelle or a limerick.

Except for the war years, no set remained long at any location; it would presently be replaced by a different quintet. And if you drove around the country a lot, you soon observed that the groups were not merely swapped -- that is, no doubt they were to some degree, but old ones were gradually phased out and new ones appeared. In other words, the company surpassed Fred Hoyle; it had continual, if not continuous, creation and extinction, resulting in an equilibrium concentration of Burma Shave signs within a finite space.





Throughout our early boyhood, to my brother and me this was a fact of life, like the cycle of day and night. It's a sentimental myth that children wonder. They don't. They ask questions, but basically they absorb the world as it comes, without thinking. (Which reminds me of when Margaret Fuller stated grandly: "I accept the universe." Thomas Carlyle, who happened to be on hand, was heard to snort, "Gad! She'd better!") The scientific temperament developes, if it does, only after puberty.

Sometime during our teens, John and I began actively inquiring into reality. We noticed the intrinsic strangeness of much we had hitherto taken for granted, like girls. Mysteries encompassed us. Who made the sun shine and the flowers grow, now that President Roosevelt was no more? Why is a planet when it spins? What is the meaning of Perth Amboy? Whither the pileated woodpecker? Whence the Burma Shave signs?

The alarming and significant fact grew in our awareness. We had never seen a quintet being changed. We did not know anyone who had. We could find no printed reference to anyone who claimed to have.

One morning you drove by the row, and it was different from what it had been, and that was all. No explanation. No predictable schedule. No traces of upheaval. Just: this.

Furthermore, a change was never reported in newspapers or on the steam radio. Officialdom never so much as discussed it, let alone attempt to exert any control -- which is absolutely uncharacteristic of officialdom, especially with regard to so basic a part of the American scene: Right-wingers did not extol Burma Shave signs as a paradigm of success through free enterprise, nor did left-wingers denounce them as capitalistic exploitation of working men's eyeballs. Stephen Vincent Benet wrote no ballads about them. Ordinary folks like us would mention them in casual conversation, but the silence on higher levels was downright eerie. It became clear that a vast, all-pervasive, smooth-running Power was in control.

Being no more paranoid than is standard for adolescents, John and I did not assume the Power was evil. There must be excellent reasons for all the secrecy. Indeed, a quartain would lose most of its force if its advent were heralded. Competitors might steal a march, did they know what was due in a certain area. Under the prevailing policy, they were always caught flat-footed and none of their own ads were really visible against the blinding psychological glare of BURMA SHAVE.

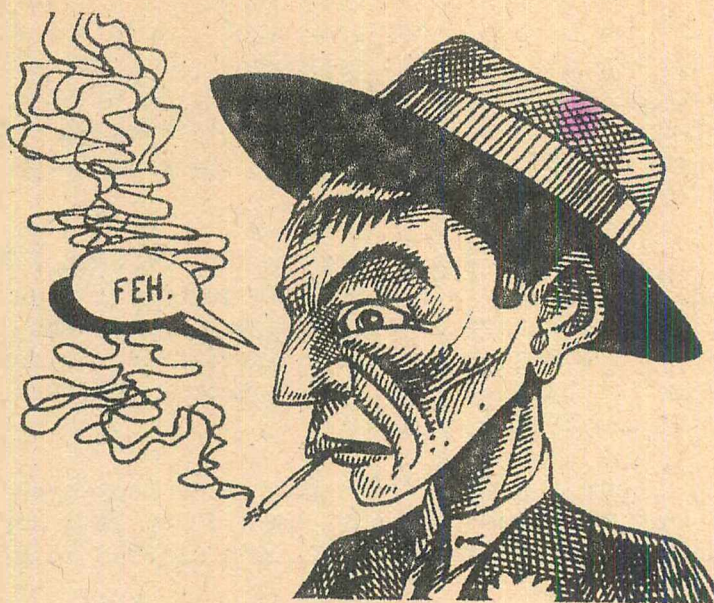
Thus, constructing our explanatory hypothesis, we chose what looked like the simplest assumptions. (Did William of Ockham use Burma?) To account for the facts, we needed to postulate little more than a huge and secretive organization.

Never mind where the cream factory was; as said, the actual stuff existed only for the sake of the verses. The sign production was something else. Doubtless this took place in an enormous, closely guarded cube of a building. The lower parts would be devoted to manufacture of the physical objects. With memories of the Manhattan Project and of H.G. Wells' Morlocks, we could visualize what a tight and harsh operation that was, and what untold stories of spies from



Palmolive and thwarted raids by Mennenite gangs its steel-jacketed archives must hold. But this was secondary. As you could not have had an atomic bomb without physicists, so you could not have Burma Shave jingles without poets.

Surely these occupied the upper levels, and surely they were in a hierarchy of Mandarin complexity and Byzantine intrigues. In a great, barnlike, coldly lighted chamber the has-beens and the never-would-bes sat desk by desk, pounding their typewriters to the nonotonous beat of an overseer's gong. But that was mere mechanical testing of permutations, with some slight hoper in addition of randomness producing an occasional useful phrase. Nowadays we would turn it over to a computer.



The true poets, the creators, had regular offices. Their supervisors rode close herd on them; conferences were frequent, with all the grey flannel sycophancy which it was then fashionable to believe pervaded the American business world. You didn't get to be the very least of these executive-rhymsters without a security check of you, your family, and your relatives unto the thirteenth degree, thorough enough to turn J. Edger Hoover first white, then green (never red) with envy.

And yet, as said, Burma Shave was by no means an evil organization. These measures were essential to its continued existance, and the bureaucracy and yes-sing were no worse than is inevitable under such circumstances. Of course you must be able to cut it; you must never let yourself get all lathered up; soft soap was no substitute for razor sharpness; given such traits, you could go far in Burma Shave.

Imagine how inspiration strikes a young poet. He sits alone, transfigured, for minutes or hours, before he plunges into feverish scribbling. He takes no paper home with him -- what does not go into a safe overnight must be thrown down a chute to an electric furnace -- but when he drives home the words are seared into his brain. Having been cleared, he and his wife actually enjoy more privacy than most people; agents make regular checks to be sure that no one has bugged their house. How impatiently he dithers through cocktails, and dinner, and a ratted newspaper, and how she senses it and grows likewise aquiver, until at last the children are in bed and they dare talk about the matter!

Probably she gives him some good ideas. Bright, up-and-coming men generally marry women who are also bright as well as beautiful. This couple knows that, should his basic concept be accepted, should it become a part of America,



he is made. From then on he will have supervisor status, shares of stock will be given to him and before he retires he may hope to sit upon the Board.

They steel themselves. They know what the odds are against any single quatrain. And yet...and yet...Burma Shave allows, yea, it encourages all of its acolytes to dream. That night, husband and wife do not do so literally. They are far too excited to sleep.

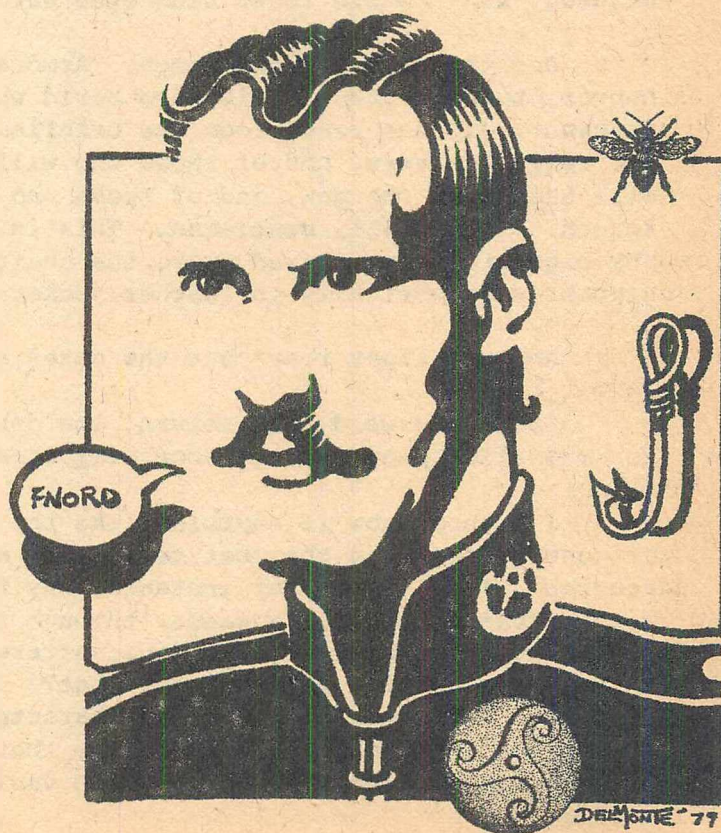
For days thereafter, he is wrapped in his work -- searching through thesauruses and rhyming dictionaries, trying hundreds of variations, striving to anticipate every conceivable objection and marshal every argument in favor. He grows abstracted, is no longer a jolly companion at lunch, begs off social engagements. His colleagues notice. They guess what the reason is, are envious, seek excuses to drop in on him and sound him out. But he preserves silence, he whisks his papers into a drawer the instant the office door is opened, he holds back everything until at the end-of-the-week conference there comes his moment of truth.

I need not describe in detail the bombshell impact of his carefully diffident "notion I've been sort of kicking around, thought you fellows might maybe like to run up the flagpole," nor the sly attempts of Uriah Heep to discredit not only it but him, nor the bluff gallantry with which good old Mr. Bush rallies to his defense, and all the while the supervisor watches, listens, alert, enigmatic...but, seeing that youth and hopefulness, do those cold eyes briefly soften as he remembers....?

In the end, the proposal goes Up Through Channels. Again I need not detail the haggling, the higgling, the useless changes made by every self-important nobody along the line who has somehow to justify his bloated salary. Nor need I write any Dostoyevskian account of the suspense, the anguish of the waiting, husband fretting himself into a shadow while wife gains back the thirty pounds she had thought she had lost and the children learn to speak oh, very softly.

However slowly, however mutilated, the quatrain does at last reach The Top.

John and I supposed there had to be some ultimate authority. His office would of course be in a penthouse on the building. Despite the legion of





secretaries and other underlings in the outer rooms of this suite, it would have a quietness intensified, in the inner sanctum, by plush carpet, darkly gleaming Rembrandts upon oak wainscoting, and that acre of polished rosewood and glass -- broken only by an onyx pen-and-pencil set, an ivory telephone, a notepad at the precise middle, and a picture in a massive silver frame that no visitor actually saw -- which was the desk of him whom the organization never called anything but (in hushed tones) The Big Burma.

He did not have many visitors, nor did that telephone ring very often; and when it did, the caller was more apt to be the president of Standard Oil or of the United States than any subordinate. The Big Burma expected those beneath him to handle any routine on their own. Woe betide them if they did not! His time was too precious to waste on details. (No one knew what he did spend it on.) Yes, a figure of mystery, and a despot, but a benevolent one, who quietly enjoyed scribbling his curt "OK" on certain of the poems which finally reached him.

And the rapture in the home of that hitherto humble scrivener! And the tortuous passage downwards Through Channels! But at last -- the Finalized Form and tooling up in the factory division, and production by those grim, skilled guardsmen.

And meanwhile, the logistics trams buzz with plans. Heads grown grey in the service bend over reports and charts. Lean fingers trace routes out on great tabletop maps. A low, steady voice says, "It appears to me our optimum strategy is--" while faded blue eyes watch out of hawklike faces.

And the chosen night comes. Armored trucks grumble in their underground hanger, turning its air blue and acrid while mechanics give them their ultimate checkout. In the ready room the briefing of the drivers takes place, and of the relief drivers, and of those who will remove the old signs, and of those who will hammer in the new, and of those who, bleak-visaged, will ride shotgun. At length: "Very well, gentlemen. This is it. God bless you. Good shunting!" The cigarettes are tossed away, the chairs scrape back, feet boom on the floor, zippers rise scrittily on leather jackets....

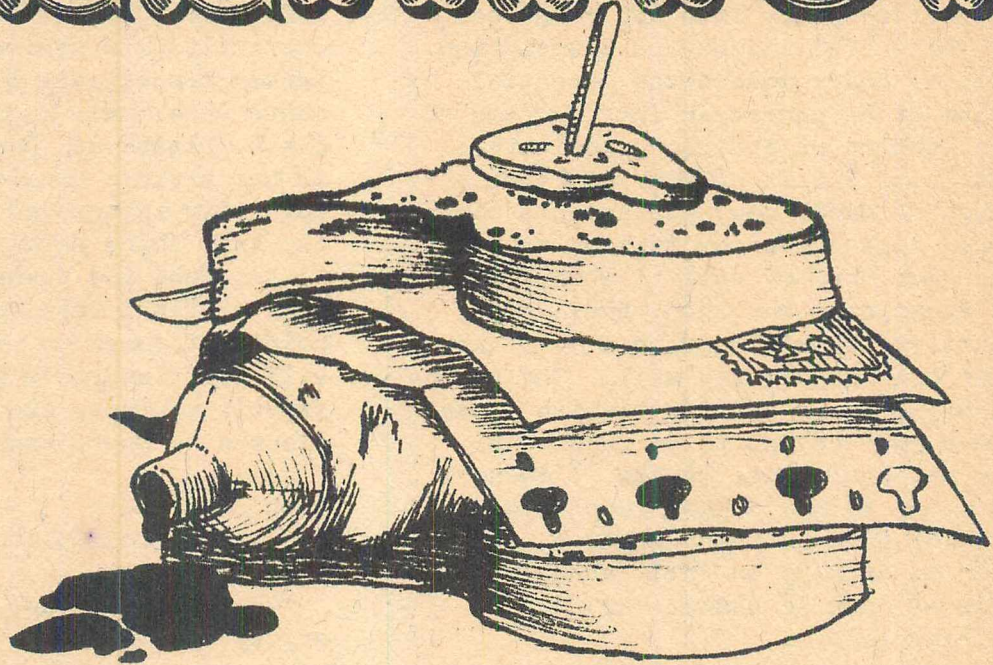
And the fleet roars out the gates and disperses....

Days afterward, the return, the debriefings, the evaluations, finally the records filed away because soon will come a new mission....

I do not know if anything like the universe of the Big Burma ever existed. It just seemed like the most reasonable explanation of the facts. Not that it covered all of them. For instance, why *Burma Shave*? Once in youth, did he who sat in that lonely eyrie wander through the mysterious East and meet a wild, lovely Eurasian girl whom he never afterward could forget, even though she went on to Terry and the Pirates? Or what? The basic idea could be elaborated indefinitely. This potential is one characteristic of a good hypothesis, and I submit to you that nobody has made them that good since -- for unknown but doubtless terrible reasons -- BURMA SHAVE vanished, apparently forever, out of this world.



# COLLATION



Simon Agree  
Detroit, Michigan

The marijuana is harvested; apples are dropping from their trees like besotted guests departing a party; there are pomegranates in the market again. Yesterday I wet my finger and held it in the wind; its north side grew chill. I guess that means that the time to sit down and write you a letter, concerning Genre Plat 3rd, has arrived.

Not that I intend that this should be a Substantial Letter of Comment. No way. In the past year, I've learned a lesson: In the time it takes to draft, re-write, edit, and type a SLoC to a serconzine, I could be following these same steps (or their equivalent) in preparing the article or artwork I constantly owe someone yesterday. Until some future John Campbell begins promoting a perpetual fanac device,

you hard-working types will have to be satisfied with my measly dollars and simple, one-page LoCs.

The best part of this attitude, from my PoV, is that I can by-pass Loppers Block by ignoring the bits of your zine that mildly interested me, but couldn't move me to comment with Archimedes' Crowbar, such as the Define SF/Define Definition in 25 Easy Words contest that you seem to have inherited from whichever zine last got tired of it. Even telling you I'm avoiding it is getting me tangled up.

Instead of flashing my semantical macho by trying to think of something intelligent (if not original) to say about that, and other sercon protuberances, I can put the dollar in the envelope, relax and natter away through the rest of this letter. There are parts of your zine that I like, and taking the time to tell you so will, hopefully, ease the pangs



of Subscriber Malaise that you may be experiencing. Comfy?

Now: your editorial. You've done a good job of briefly presenting your feelings about your work on Genre Plat and your re-entry into San Francisco. The bits of dialogue and description of local color squash the potential tedium of an uncertain introduction to a collection of articles and letters containing little of your own special thoughts. Mind, now, you haven't convinced me to relax my grip on my valuables (or even my wallet) when I'm in San Francisco; but then, that "ruddy fanartist" hasn't convinced me of anything but his drawing skill. The things you write in GP have me wishing I was friend enuf to you to be receiving your personal zine. *(Funny, I thought you were; if you'd just keep me advised of your flippin' address, instead of relying on Phil Payne to relay it when he chances to drop by San Francisco....)*

I reckon it's time to move on here, and let my taste for overblown flattery fly free on the wings of a chicken. For making it possible for me to chuckle in a scarey airplane above the California foothills over a shaggy-cock-tale, Marta Randall deserves a congratulatory goose. How that's cooked, I

wouldn't know but, at the risk of appearing giblets, hope that it's quicker than Johnsville Chicken.

Jessica Salmonson advocating all-women music makes pretty strange reading, since, if I follow Jessica's history correctly, its separateness is what caused traditional women's music to dissolve under male repression in the first place. Please ask Jessica why she avoids in her article consideration of the need for truly integrated male-female music; the real thing hardly exists at all.

Re: Wood and Burbee; I grinned so much at first reading that I missed the point. It comes to me now: Fanac is evil vile stuff and it's got to stop. No more frivolity; there are books to shelve and planets to bust. Right now.

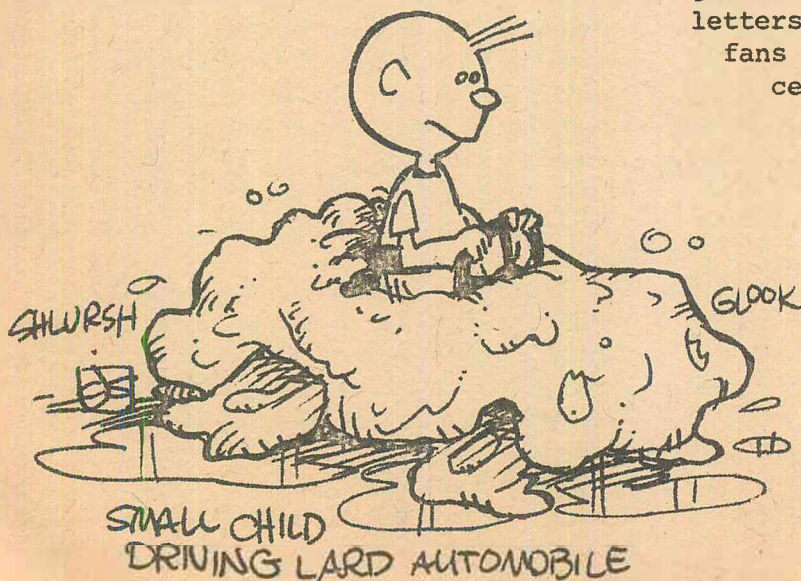
Rich Coad  
San Francisco, California

Genre Plat 3 came today and made a sticky mess all over the carpet. Then, of course, as with all good fanzines, the back cover fell off. This was followed by about four more pages falling off. What a wunnerful fanzine, thinks I, once it comes it can't get itself together again.

Ya know, there was once a fanzine that didn't begin with issue number 1. Roy Kettle and Greg Pickersgill's FOWLER began with number two and included bogus letters from many of the better-known fans of the day. Immediately they received many angry and/or imploring letters demanding and/or begging for copies of number one.

Golly gee, jumpin' jiminy, holy moly! I just can't wait for that real live Canfield editorial -- bet it'll be swift! *(Sorry, that's an in-joke between me, Coad & Swift.)*

I read the rest of the fanzine. I liked some of it. I also didn't like some of it. But I really liked where you said I wasn't a cretin. Of course we both know different but some people can be fooled.





Brian Earl Brown  
Detroit, Michigan

For one thing you need either longer staples or shorter zines. I recommend : longer staples as 1/4" staples will bind reliably only about a 36 page zine. GENRE PLAT #3 would take at the least a 3/8" staple. Alas one has to purchase a special heavy-duty stapler which runs about \$25. \*Sigh\* what's a faned to do...

This issue of GP does seem more fan-nish than previous ones, which is not to say that one should be faaaaaaanish just because some people contend that it's better than sercon. I'm a little of both. I enjoyed laughing with Marta Randall and that poor, now-deceased chicken. And I relished reading doug barbour's review of Ballard. The best zines, I suppose, do maintain a mix of faan and sercon, or perhaps they avoid the style of literary criticism that is characterized by "dry." I'm reminded of John Bangsund's SF COMMENTARY whose last two issues struck me as being exceptionally insightful and not as interesting as the best of American reviews. And I really think it's because Bangsund's stable takes criticism bloody seriously. American/Canadian critics -- like doug, Jeff Smith, J. Frane, Sheryl Smith, etc. -- seem to be much more light-hearted without a loss of critical insight... This is a conviction that I haven't carefully researched, but I tend to feel that it is a valid observation. (As you can see, Brian, I did take your comments -- not included here -- about blue-pencilling the lettercolumn to heart. Alas, it appears that we are once again faced with a long zine and short staples. The intention was to keep this to about 36 pages, then I discovered I still had a lettercolumn to do....\*sigh\*.)

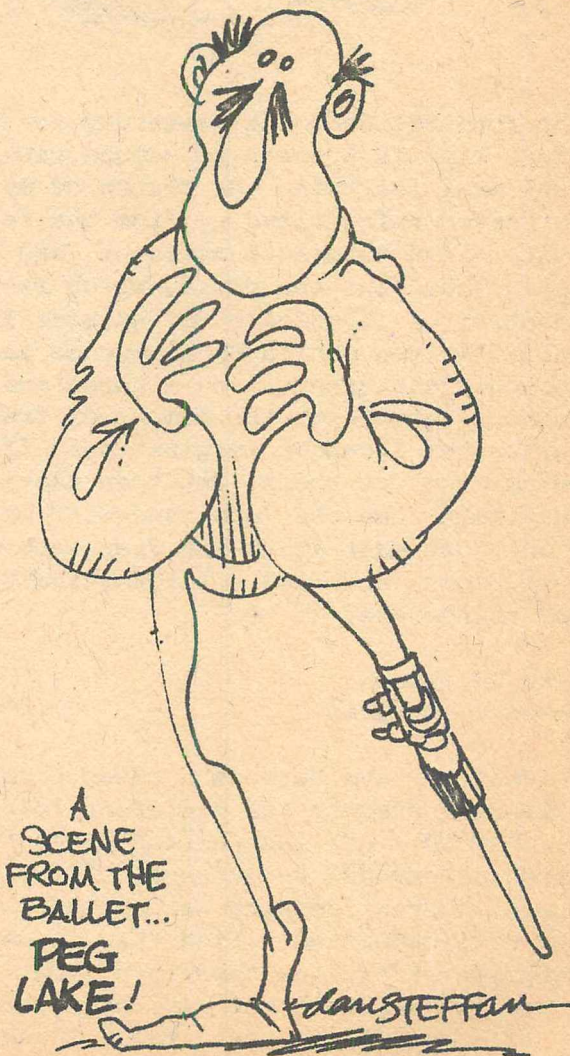
Ron Solomon  
Framingham, Maine

Since I've only been west (of New Jersey) once so far, until I read thish I thought "kitty-corner" was only a Phoenix expression. But in reading the ed. it looks like

it is one of those Western N.A. expressions which I wasn't aware existed. Every time I asked a Phoenix native for directions in their city (never trust air you cannot see goes without saying), I ended up looking for feline landmarks. I wonder if there are words only eastern fanzines use?

The highlight of this issue was the Kate Wilhelm interview, which is one of the warmest I've read in some time. I mean Kate Wilhelm comes across that way.

I also enjoyed Marta Randall's humorous column. I don't know why it came as such a surprise, but I should have figured that as much different as the California lifestyle is, so would







the food be. Went out yesterday for the first time in a month to a good restaurant meal following the return of my car after being fixed up from the results of an auto-auto accident, and the fella that runs the place, which is the Inkeeper of (Longfellow's) Wayside Inn said, "If you wanted to have come earlier we would have rented you a horse and surrey." What with the famous CA freeway system I cannot imagine that offer being made out there. But then that's what makes the east east and west west. Might just make it to San Francisco this next summer and find out firsthand the way things are.

Mike Glicksohn  
Toronto, Ontario

What we have here is a clear case of different strokes for different folks (...why do I get the feeling Genre Plat is being invaded by cliches...?), I guess. Whereas Jessica was bored by #2 and will undoubtedly find this issue the dynamite effort she expects of you, I liked #2 very much but was largely bored by this one. So it goes. Well, I guess bored isn't really an accurate description because I did read quite a bit of

it, but I just didn't find much that I wanted to comment on. The Randall piece was well done but there isn't much one can say about it. It certainly must be the most convoluted and intricate way of complaining about an overpriced meal that anyone has ever come up with, however! Susan's reprint was fun to read, both for the material itself and for the memories of those early days that it brought to mind, and a few that it didn't. I hadn't remembered it being in AMOR, for example; I had this vague recollection that it was in the very same OSFIC QUARTERLY mentioned in the article. (Well, it was; it's just that I found it in AMOR. A reprinted reprint) One of these decades I'm actually going to get around to building some appropriately-sized bookshelves and filing my better quality fanzines in proper library style magazine cases so I can have access to them. But considering that it took me five years to rebuild my regular bookcases and unpack my books after moving here from my old apartment, I somehow doubt I'm going to have access to my fanzine collection in anything like pre-Orwellian times.

In the lettercolumn the discussion about personalzines is good but, after the panel at IGGY and after my own letter, I don't think I could say much without being repetitious. However, I do want to reiterate the point I made to you in the Adams bar at Iguanacon in re your editorial comment in the middle of my second paragraph (He's referring to his letter in GP3). Despite your disclaimer I had the impression that your interpretation of my statement resulted in a negative judgement of me on your part. (Honest to god, it didn't. I was just being a smart-mouth out of turn and at your expense. Again, I apologize.) Now I'm quite able to live with other people's negative opinions of me (I don't have much choice, after all) but since I definitely feel you've misunderstood me on this point, I'd like to set part of the record straight. I do enough stupid things without being thought poorly of for things I haven't done.



My claim was that I don't write about my personal life in my fanzines and that remains a valid statement. My article in MOTA that you refer to concerned my divorce but if you remember the article at all, you'll notice that what I wrote about was the highly *impersonal* (and remarkably funny in a fucked up sort of way) process of obtaining a divorce in Ontario. I didn't write about my emotional reaction to obtaining a divorce, I didn't write about how and why I'd reached the point of needing a divorce, I didn't write about what it had been like to be married and what it was like when it didn't work out. Those are personal things, and those are things I won't write about in fanzines. (I also avoid writing about the happy times of a really personal nature because I'm cynical enough to believe that such times tend to be transitory and it can be embarrassing a few years later to read one's overly-eloquent words about someone you may not even be talking to any longer.) So I think I can safely say that the divorce article was not a piece of personal writing and if you read anything about my character out of that statement, I hope you'll reconsider any "speculations as to (my) character" you may have made. Fair enough? *(Right on.)*

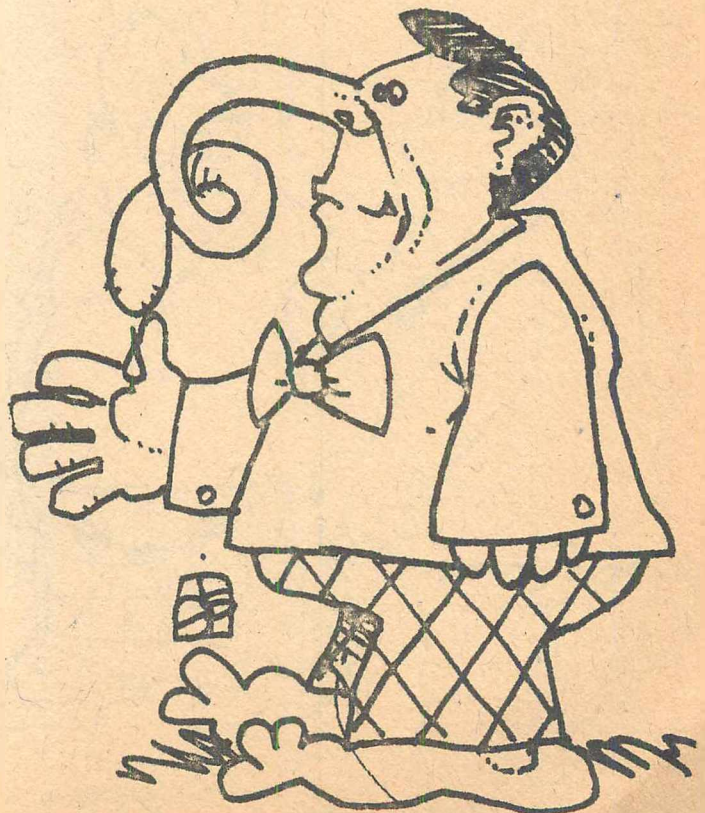
Jessica Amanda Salmonson  
Seattle, Washington

Reading how the street beggars, amputees, et cetera, give you a sense of "security" by being "landmarks" showing "familiar faces" was at once familiar, and frightening. Frightening because people can come to feel "secure" seeing others who, for being routed by a society they couldn't accept or cope with, end up wandering and homeless. Sleeping under viaducts or at the mission. Or people who escape one-room shelters to make daily trips to regular haunts -- these ghosts of our society's forgotten cast-offs. And it was familiar because, yeah, I see these people in Seattle (maybe here is where the old Market Street regulars came), and I feel

that security, too. I don't know why. I don't think it's right. But certainly it would not do to loathe them, as many of the Pioneer Square merchants seem to do. "Too many bums. Why doesn't the city do something." And the police arrive periodically, like the street sweepers of an earlier age, throwing horse apples in a barrel.

Some of the street people are very likeable. Not the burned out winos, the pitiful, retched, diseased once-humans who can no longer think, dying slowly of some emotional cancer put there by society...but some of them. A weekly Seattle paper recently did an article on Rosa, who thinks she's living in another country, and calls this "whore city," and who makes a strange kind of cynical sense when she speaks. I saw her some spell back, her feet sticking up, head down in a huge garbage bin, looking for things to put in her shopping bags.

Lily Tomlin has made this breed of woman famous, but shopping bag ladies have been with us for a long while. I





can't really say my tedious daily grind as a secretary is less self-destructive or so much better. My routine provides me the economic ability to drown my dissatisfaction in bourgeois tastes. Shopping bag ladies are hardly bougeois, yet perhaps their own dissatisfaction is patched as wholly by their garbage bin discoveries as mine are by my antique store discoveries.

We, with our comforts, can smile, pleased, entertained -- and secure -- by the existence of such women and men who add color to our cities. We can be liberal and imagine that we don't look down on these people. Yet, when Jerry Kaufman and I discovered, by chance, a

street-people enclave (we'd helped an Amerind amputee get there), I was struck by the depths to which these people had fallen. Men barely alive, it seemed, and sick, bloody sometimes from fighting or falling down staircases in drunken stupors; they leaned on walls, sat on wobbly furniture, lay on a cement floor; they thrust grimy hands into a pile of broken, stale sugary donuts, the nutritional value of which must be roughly equivalent to the wine they'd vomited the night before. And you know why *maybe* their presence gives us comfort, Allyn? Maybe because this is a classist society. And as long as they stay down there, we're safe up here.

Some of the street people have probably made decent lives for themselves, and are happy. Most of them, no. I think I'd feel even more secure if I could help change the world a little, so that no one was expected to fill these kinds of ecological niches in cities. (Oh, shit, Jessica, you've inspired an article, or story, or book, or something at any rate much too long for inclusion here, out of me all having to do with society's outlaws -- not against written legal codes, but outlaws against society. Now I remember why I don't write to you more often - you're entirely too inspirational - it's not as if I don't already have too many stories and characters waiting patiently in line to get put down on paper.... Damn you, Jessica! Oh, yeah, and thanks....)

I very much appreciated the good layout and presentation of my essay! I liked Jeanne's and Jim's illustrations. Elsewhere, I loved all of Ole's illustrations very much. It looks pretty certain that I'll have a mimeograph myself pretty soon, so I'm looking very closely at mimeograph fanzine layout. I think Genre Platt (*sic*; Platt - that's one "t", Jessica, and all you others who insist on spelling





it with two.) is the best I receive and do hope I'll be able to match it in some ways. (You've no idea how nice it was to hear about something besides the short staples. Thanks for the egoboo.)

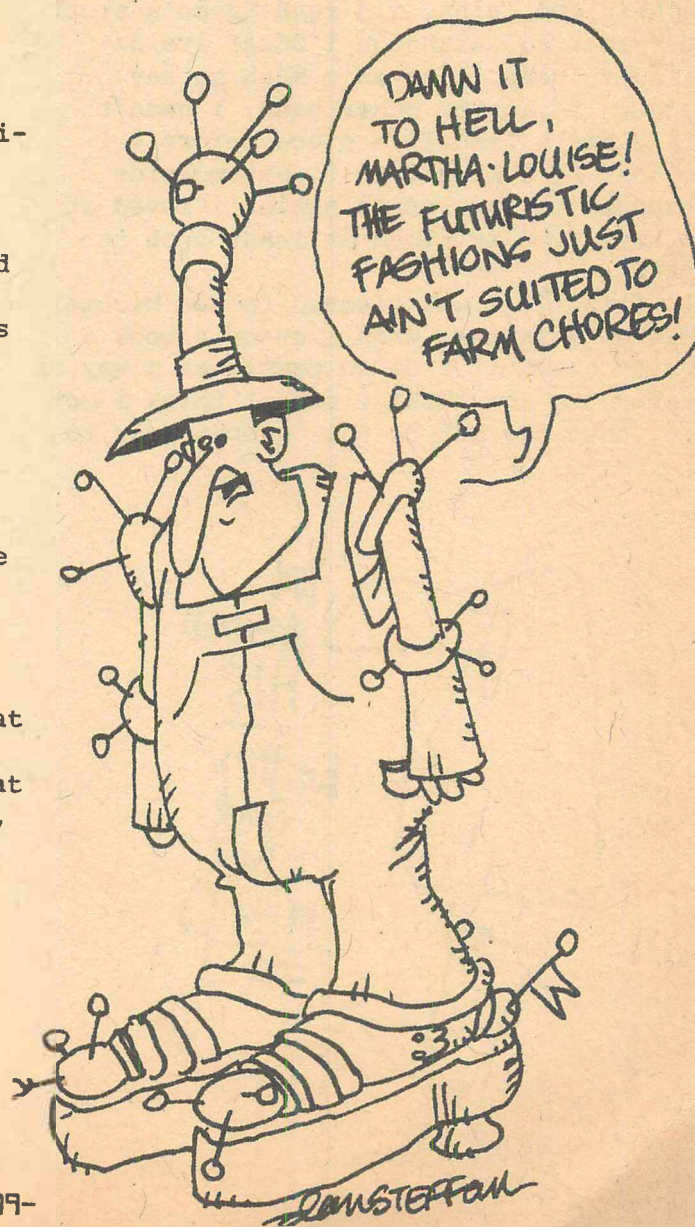
doug barbour  
Edmonton, Alberta

another hefty GP & an attempt here at a "substantial letter of comment." perhaps the most single interesting aspect of this was the response yr previous editorial generated in the lettercol. as a participant in the original discussion at noncon (seattle - now that it's a title for edmonton's con, it has lost a certain uniqueness (and gained some, too)), i found all the talk fascinating. was especially impressed by Liz Lynn's loc. also intriguing to find Jessica growing and changing her mind on this topic, tho it shouldnt be unexpected. we all go thru such changes. & yet, given fandom's long memory, the Jessica who did (apparently) tell all will be remembered as her image i suspect long after she has given it up. which is, of course, one of the problems with telling all (even when you're being honest!) - it sticks around & no zine, even a private letter substitute, is really that private.

speaking of Jessica, i enjoyed her piece on feminist music very much. i have this feeling that the 'truth' about the destruction of women's culture is somewhere between the books Jessica lists & the 'official' (i.e., manwritten) histories, but i realize that i may feel that way only because i'm a man. i must say i feel that Jung was right when he said that by refusing woman a place in the heavens, Christianity did all humankind a grave disservice (he let catholicism off the hook a bit cos it allowed Mary a lot of power as the mother of god (& Mary is essentially Isis's Christian form, as a very fine book on Isis points out)). (Which very fine book? As an English prof, you know better than that, Doug!) i haven't heard too many of the people she mentions, but she makes me want to.

i do know that some of my favorite pop singers are women, and not simply the ones who fit male stereotypical images like Linda Ronstadt. Sharon & i both love the McGarrigle Sisters whose magic & lyrics are goth original & humane & strong. we saw them in concert recently & it was an evening of great joy by all.

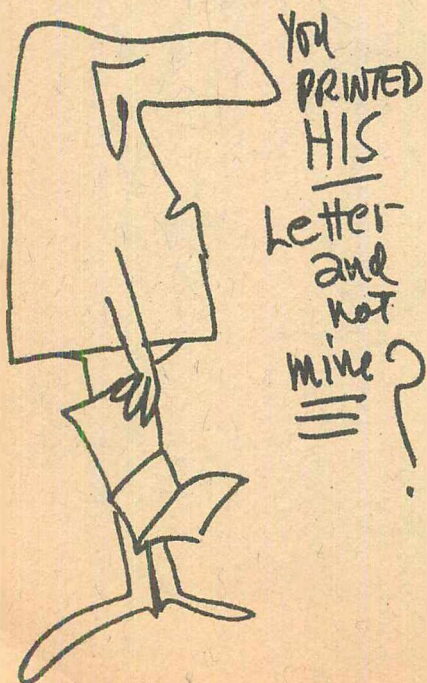
since i heard the Wilhelm interview, i felt i knew most of it as i read; nevertheless, it's full of interest & of her very fine presence. it is nice to have it down on paper. (i am still an eye oriented person - print oriented, that is.) i says as shouldn't cos he's





a friend, that Bill Beard's reviews are always intelligent & always manifest a sense of film as cinema that far too many film reviewers still don't understand. (Tho I'd love to keep running his reviews, I fear Bill Beard has given up on Genre Plat's publishing schedule - can't say as I blame him. For those who would like to know where he can be read regularly, tho, he now has a column in Edmonton's MONTHLY MONTHLY, co-edited by a group of Edmonton fans: 75¢ from 10957 - 88 Avenue; Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 0Y9. They have other good stuff, too.) alas, i'd read Susan's stuff before & so, although i admit its delightfulness, i haven't much to say about it. on the other hand, i hadn't read Marta Randall's piece before & i wonder if i ever dare to eat outside sanfran in california again. i loved it & have read it aloud at least once to others.

finally, i was pleased to see Michael Bishop's letter: when i enjoy a book & write about it i do so partly as a way of saying to the author, see, i think i got it. that may not be the 'proper' way to



write about books but it is mine & then it's nice to hear the author say that indeed you were present as you should have been. so. i enjoyed #3 & hope #4 isn't as far behind it as it was behind #2. (Ulp.)

Bob Soderberg  
Hollywood, California

Received #3 of GENRE PLAT about a month ago and it was a damn good magazine.

I couldn't believe ya had Susan Wood as a contributor. That says something about your mag. and unfortunately the only thing wrong with her article was that it was too short.

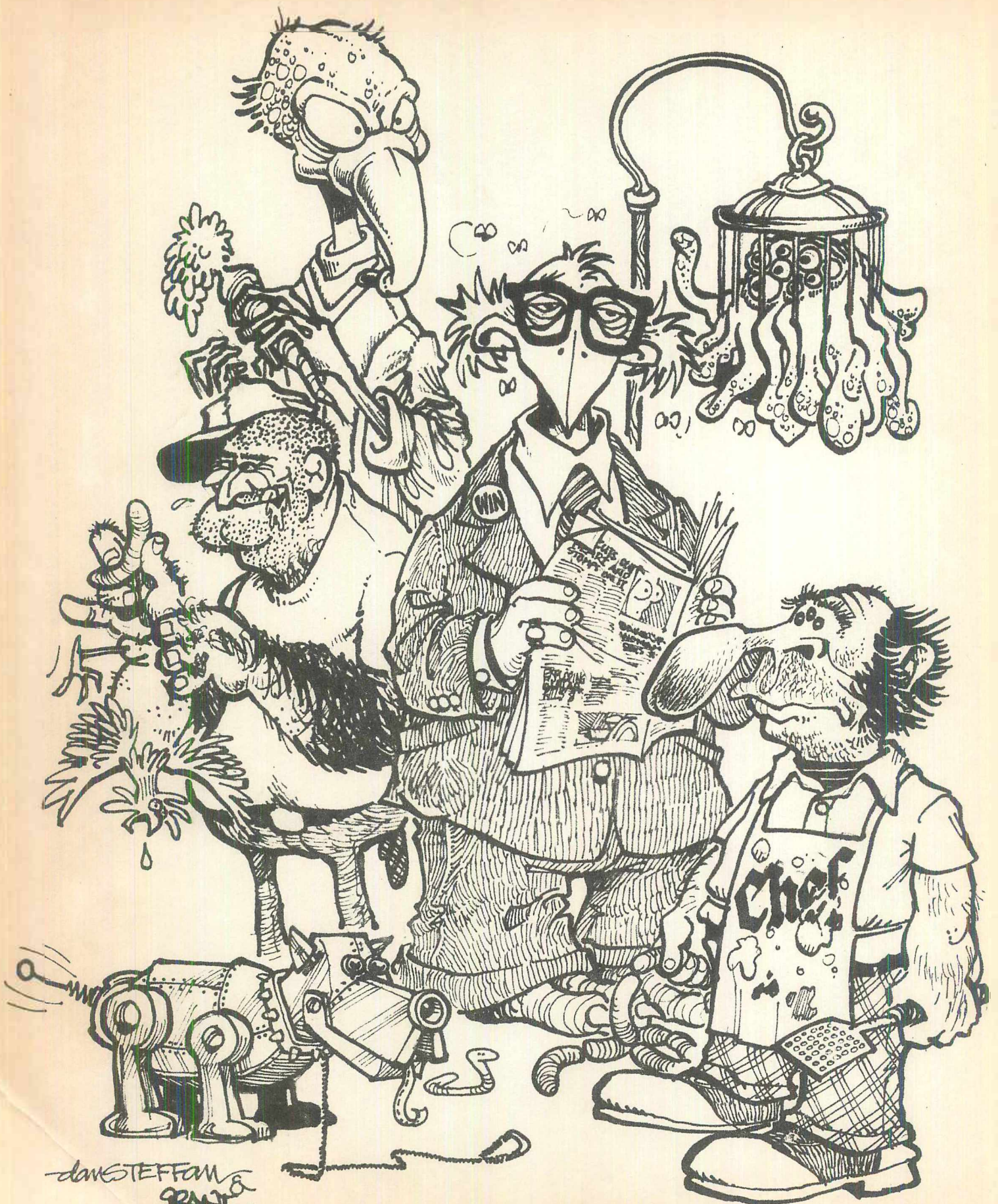
I really didn't like the film reviews for the simple reason I've never heard of those 2. Really, I tried to think (something new) about the past movies and I don't remember them.

The highlight of the issue was the interview with Kate Wilhelm. I have read a couple of works and she is one good writer. GENRE PLAT is a super magazine and I think you are gonna go far.

Well, this has been a fairly representative sampling of the letters received; there were some other very good ones, but, unfortunately, I'm out of room. Those that didn't make it to print came from: David Bratman, Ken Wong, Glenn Garrett, Roy Tackett (twice), Ben Fulves, Gary Deindorfer, Sharon Barbour, Andy Richards (several times), Seth Goldberg, Gerald Geary, Julian Reid, Gil Gaier, Andy Andruschak, Don D'Ammassa, Robert Whitaker, Charles Seeling, Eric Lindsay, Victoria Vayne, Graham England, and a slew of others whose letters have been temporarily misplaced. Sorry, and thanks for writing. As for those of you who only sent money, we love you, too.







the Nuclear Family



*Don Ayres*

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