Suzanne
Hughes 119
Atlanta, GA
Birmingham, Alabama
June 12-14, 1998

36

Steve
Hughes 118
Atlanta, GA
Birmingham, Alabama
June 12-14, 1998

36

DEEP SOUTHCON 36
CONVENTION REPORT
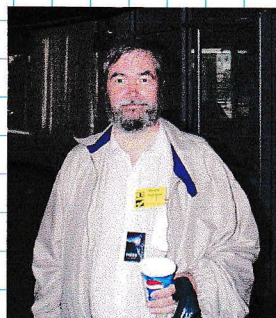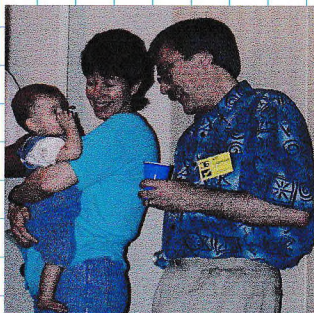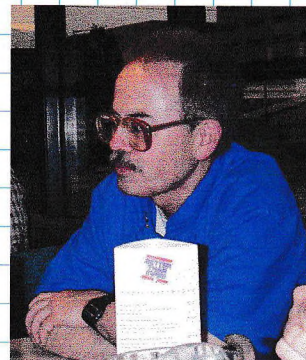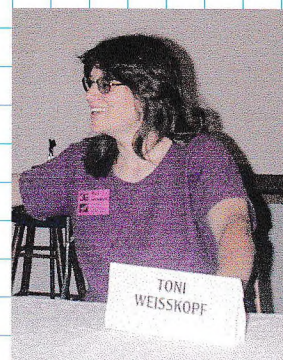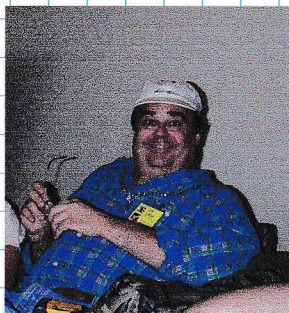
TONI
WEISSKOPF

Spider Pie

In This Issue:

There Are No "Good" SF Movies.

At least that's the impression you'd get if you just listened to fans discussing them. A few days ago Suzanne and I were over at Irv's bookstore and overheard 4 or 5 fans talking about *Deep Impact*. They hated it. The actors were lame, the script was bad, the special effects sucked, you'd have thought they were talking about *Plan Nine from Outer Space*.

By any normal standards, *Deep Impact* was a pretty good movie. Top-notch actors, decent script, great production values, everything needed to make a decent, even an excellent movie. Oh, the critics liked *Deep Impact* and gave it pretty good ratings. It was, in fact, a good movie with an SF plot. It was a "good" SF movie.

I observed sometime ago that unpopular SF movies can be "good" but anything that even approximates a box office hit is by definition a "bad" flick. This leads to the simplistic conclusion that anything the general populace likes somehow threatens fans uniqueness and so it must actually be "bad." The problem is that I hate simplistic answers to problems involving human behavior. They are almost always wrong.

I think the answer lies in the way our imagination works. When we read an SF story our minds supply all the details missing from the author's words and neatly fill in the logic holes so that the story makes sense. When we see those same stories on the screen the visual image we see doesn't get the same treatment.

We see all the flaws and logic problems magnified by our expectation that the movie will be as "good" as a book. In reality the books aren't that "good." If you doubt it, just look at the illos different artists draw for the same book. They usually show radically different views of the characters, the landscape and the hardware. Sometimes so different that the illos, no matter how technically well done, just aren't any "good."

Why would this be different from "normal" movies? Well we know what reality looks like and how people behave in real world situations or at least we share a common delusion that we do. This has to greatly reduce the need for imagination to help us interpret the story and we don't have to pay as much attention. Paying less attention makes us less critical.

Of course the simple answer may be the correct one: popular SF movies threaten our sense of being a unique group and our ego refuses to accept that possibility.

The Usual Natter

BOYS LIKE TO TAKE THINGS APART

Some stereotypes are true and this one certainly is in my case. I got interested in those disposable cameras wondering how the one hour processors develop them. I mean they don't seem to have any special equipment to handle disposables so that means the cameras should contain a normal role of film. I set down and carefully took one apart and yes there it was a perfectly normal roll of 35mm film. It even looks like you could reload the thing if you really wanted to. So if you ever break one of those cameras just pull it apart and take the film role out and you can still get it processed.

STEREO CAMERAS

For years I've wanted one of the original Stereo Realist cameras of the type manufactured by the White Company back in the early Fifties. They are generally considered the best stereo cameras ever made and used by all the serious stereo freaks. Two things have always stopped me from buying one, they're really hard to find and they're very hard to use. A few weeks ago, one of the well-known antique stereo camera repair people advertised several rebuilt cameras for sell on the Internet. A couple were pretty reasonably priced and I decided I would have time to figure out how to use it so I ordered one of them.

It's really beautiful and the instructions for loading the camera are two pages long. Now I've got to learn to use a light meter, no automation on 1950's cameras, and start shooting slide film.

THE JOYS OF HOME OWNERSHIP

Last week Suzanne turned on the downstairs air conditioner and I noticed that it was actually getting hotter not cooler. It was almost funny watching the face on the repairman when he said, "Your compressor has a vacuum in it. There's no coolant at all!" Apparently this is pretty rare. Seems there's a law against refilling old compressor units so it's also non-repairable. Now Suzanne is shopping for someone to install a whole new system.

The other cheerful thought is that the upstairs unit is just as old as the downstairs one so it will probably fail just as abruptly at some point. With my usual luck, before the end of the summer would be about right.

WEDDING PHOTOS

We finally completed the selection of photos for the wedding album and got a list together of all the prints the family wanted. Then we set down with the photographer and got the wedding album on order. It takes them four months to produce the finished album! I didn't think there were any businesses left that couldn't provide 24-hour turn around on an order. That means it will have been eight months from the wedding when we finally get the photos. Unreal.

SEE YOU GUYS NEXT MAILING!

This zine is going to take forever to print because of all the photos but I couldn't resist using as many as I could. Oh well time to start printing. Take care!

KEY TO COVER PHOTOS

Guy	George Wells	Toni
Janice	Liz	Gary Robe and Son
George Inzer	JoAnn	Ned
Irv and Kay	Janet Jeff / Meade	Binker

When I did the cover for the 200th zine several people commented they didn't know who was who. This key should help with this issue's cover. All photos were shot by Suzanne with her digital camera except for three which were supplied by Irv Koch: cover photo of Irv and Kay Pinckney, the masquerade shot and the Rebel award shot.

At Long Last ...
Windows 98

The long awaited, by some people, release of *Windows 98* has finally happened. I've been running various betas of *Windows 98* for the last couple of years. It's actually a lot of fun watching something like Windows 98 go from a rough prototype to a finished product. I loaded the official release version yesterday and it is certainly a finished product.

Anyone who is expecting major changes with this version of Windows is going to be disappointed. In fact the casual user might have a problem telling the difference between *Windows 95* and *Windows 98*. There are some significant differences:

1. The installation process works better then any previous version by a long way. It's totally automatic and starts off by backing up your existing operating system. If you don't like the new OS you can just uninstall it. Almost all of the settings on my machine were preserved, including the monitor settings. The new installation is the best part of *Windows 98*.

2. The new FAT32 file system is a major improvement over the old FAT 16. Without getting into the gory details, the old FAT16 system wasted a lot of space on your hard drive. The bigger your drive and the more small files you had the more space it wasted. The new system is much more efficient. Windows 98 includes a utility to automatically update your hard drive to FAT32. If you get Windows 98 you should upgrade to FAT32. Oh, always back up critical files before you install a new OS!

3. Windows Explorer, the file management utility included in Windows, has a lot of minor tweaks. The one most people will notice is the default setup makes folders look like Web pages. I don't like it. It takes up too much screen space and doesn't seem to provide any enhanced functionality.

4. The *Plus!* pack for *Windows 98* has a pretty good virus scan program, some games, a lot of new desktop themes and an add in called "compressed folders". Compressed folders are a really nice addition. They let you define folders as compressed and then any file moved to the folder is automatically compressed. If you use the file or move it out of the compressed folder, the file is decompressed. The whole process is transparent to the user. Better still the compression format is "pkzip" compatible so you no longer need a separate zip utility.

Some things remain the same. Microsoft claims faster startup and shutdown times but I can't see any difference on my system. They also claim improved stability; as far as I'm concerned the jury is still out. It does appear to me, I haven't done any statistics with the released version, that *Windows 98* needs more memory and more disk space.

If you have the latest version of Windows 95 and all it's patches and your system is running well, I'd think a long time before loading *Windows 98*. There just isn't enough difference to justify the expense and time. As time goes by, software developers will start to incorporate some of the internal differences between Windows 95 and 98 into their programs. Then you'll pretty well be forced to update. Until then it's your choice.

Version?

You can find out which version you're running by opening the "control panel" under "settings" and clicking on "System". You will get a screen that shows something like "4.00.950 B." The "B" is the latest version of *Windows 95*.
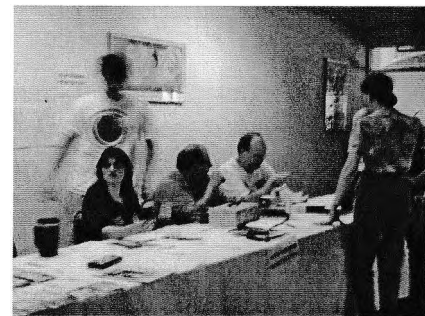
The Hotel

Let's get the only bad part of the convention out of the way right up front and talk about the hotel. The location was great, easy to get to from the expressway, with lots of places to eat within walking distance. The meeting rooms were a decent size and well arranged. Then we come to the air conditioning or, to be more precise, the lack there of. The rooms were cool, the public part of the hotel was extremely hot! Which is more then I could say for the food at the coffee shop / bar. It was either too greasy to eat or cold.

The rooms themselves were fine as long as you didn't need towels. For some reason they were in very short supply. I will give the hotel points for having quiet rooms, we were right across the hall from the Boston WorldCon bid party and could barely hear them. I would guess the hotel was probably very nice at one point but badly in need of total renovation today. Then there were the reservations, I reserved a room about three months before the con. When Suzanne called to check a week before the convention, the hotel had never heard of my reservation so she made another one. Surprise, when we got there they had no record of a reservation in our name. Fortunately there were plenty of rooms available.

The Trip Down and Registration

Suzanne and I had a very nice drive down to Birmingham. We had to take her car since my foot hurt too much to drive my straight stick. I used to make the drive about once a week back when I was working on a project for South Central Bell. The express way has gotten much busier but it seems a lot shorter going 75 then it did at 55 miles an hour.

We found the hotel on the first pass and got checked in. Then it was down to registration where it took all of two minutes to get our badges. I will have to give the convention staff points for an efficient organization. I was impressed with the way meetings ran on time and the schedule actually matched the program.
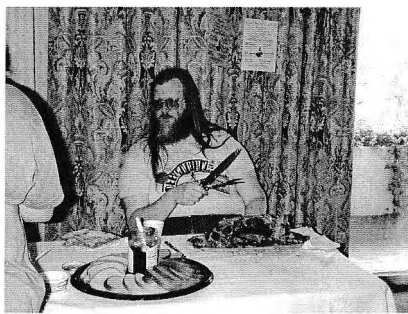
The Con Suite

There's no doubt this was the best-stocked con suite I've ever seen at a DSC. We're talking real food served at the right times to make meals. True it was non-alcoholic but I think that makes a lot of sense these days. They had a separate room, not stocked with food, for smokers. I ended up spending a lot of time there because it was one of the few places where I could find a place to sit.
The terrace outside the con suite would have been a great place to hang out but most of the time it was just too hot. We were treated to a reading of the "world's worst SF" by **Hank Reinhardt** and **George Wells** on the terrace. Isn't it amazing how the real classics like *Galaxy 666* just never lose their appeal?

The Oneshot

At the last DSC **Toni** ran a panel on fannish one shots. The idea behind the session was not to talk about one shots but to actually produce one during the panel. It was a lot of fun so she decided to do another panel at DSC 36. Last time the technology used to produce the one shot was a mixture of **Guy's** portable typewriter and my notebook. This time we had three notebooks and no primitive mechanical imprinting devices. **Toni** got **Wade Gilbreath** and **Randy Cleary** to do art for the zine.
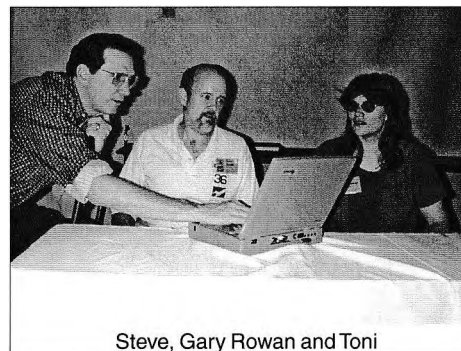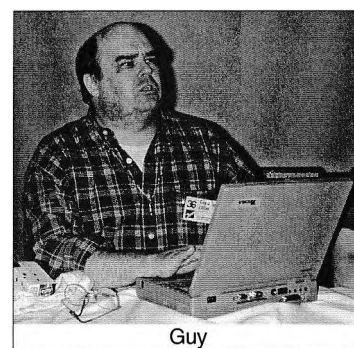

Steve, Gary Rowan and Toni

Toni and Randy Cleary

Toni set down with **Randy** and made sure that he caught the spirit she wanted in the cover illo. I will assume that **Toni** or **Janice** has already told the story the cover is based on so I won't repeat it here, besides gentleman don't discuss certain subjects.

We lost a lot of participants to the hearts tournament. **Ned**, **Janice** and **George** were all playing hearts during the one shot panel. Actually we probably couldn't have gotten much more material without having more notebooks. If **Toni** does this next year, we'll have to round up more notebooks and try to make sure the panel is timed a little better.

Guy
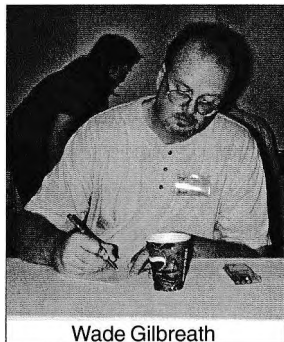
Wade Gilbreath

When the hour was up, **Suzanne** and I collected the files from all three notebooks and the art and took it all up to our room to combine into a zine. It was a little harder to do then it should have been because we had a *Word* file, a *Word Perfect* file and a Mac file. **Toni** complained loudly last time because the notebook part of the one shot was laid out in *PageMaker* like a real zine. So this time I just combined the three files without making any changes or doing any layout. **Suzanne** shot the two pieces of art for the one shot with her digital camera. Then it was off to Kinko's to get it printed.

That was fun since I had to get my *PageMaker* file onto their PC to print the originals for them to copy. I had all the usual problems: they didn't have the fonts I'd used loaded on their PC and it hung up when I exited out of *PageMaker*. Once we had the zine prited, they ran off the copies in a few minutes. The tab, almost $70, reminded me why I print all my zines at home!

Julie Wall, Guy and Toni

Cheryl Smith

Still the look on **Janice's** face when she saw the cover was well worth the price. I only wish **Suzanne** had gotten a picture.

Hopefully, having done this at two DSCs in a row, we now have a tradition and will do this again next year. I've even thought we might be able to set up an InterNet link so that SFPA members who aren't at the convention can participate in the one shot panel.
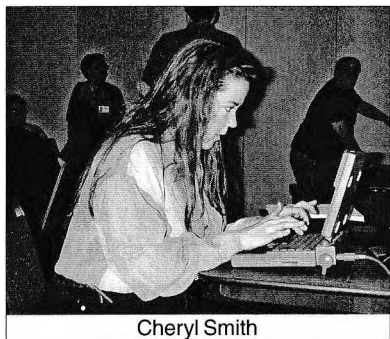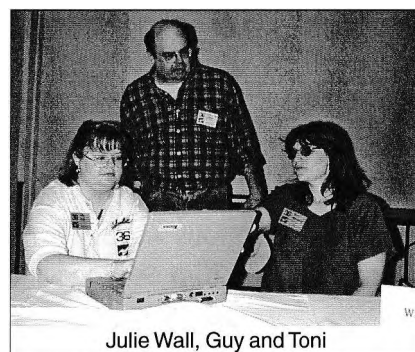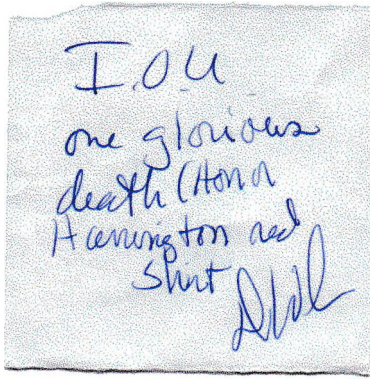
The Art Auction

Did you ever bid on having someone kill you? I missed most of the art auction, we were at dinner, but got there in time for the last few pieces and the charity auction that followed. They auctioned off several items to raise money for the American Cancer Society. Two of them were contributions from David Weber.

The first was an original manuscript, the second an IOU for "one glorious death" as a character in a future book. I bid on and won the fictional death because it seemed like a cool idea. Now I've got to pick up a couple of Weber's books and see what kind of universe I'm going to get killed in. Oh, I did pick up a couple of things from the art show: an old Ron Beasly pen and ink and a nice Richard Ryan acrylic piece. The last reminds me strongly of a lot of Kelly Freas's work. I'm going to try and get permission to print it as a cover.

Guest of Honor

Michael Bishop was the guest of honor. I wanted to talk to him but the opportunity never came up. I still remember the con in Rome Georgia where we all went to a restaurant for dinner and Michael ended up playing waiter. Of course that was a long time ago.
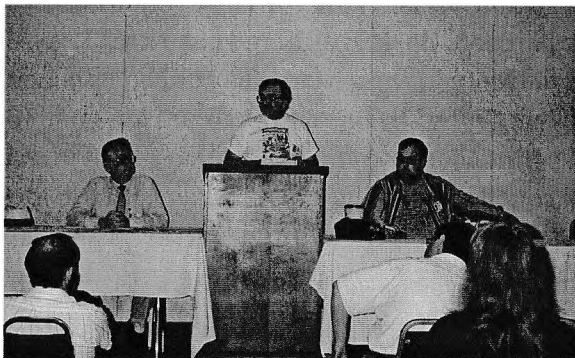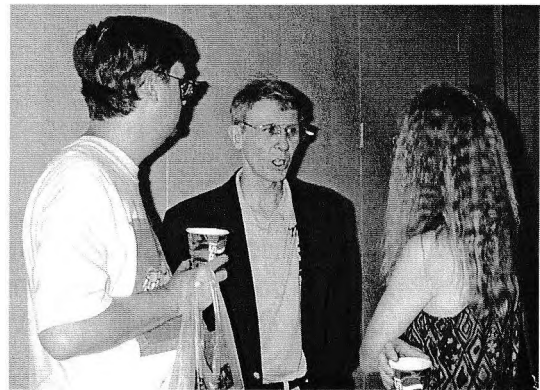
I am automatically inclined to approve of any writer who sets his books in Atlanta, but Michael really is very good at his craft.

The SFC Meeting

The SFC meeting was kind of fun. Suzanne and I were quietly comparing it to meetings at work. No, there wasn't a lot of difference. The way people interact in meetings fascinates me. They will be picky and argumentative to an astonishing degree when outside the meeting they'd never dream of behaving that way. On the other hand some people get quiet and easily give up points they could win.

Julie Wall was elected President to replace **Tom Feller** who was not interested in running for another term. The elections were very peaceful with our own **Irv** almost being roped into the secretary job. Fortunately for him, someone else decided to run and **Irv** quickly refused his nomination.

The only real discussion came over a motion by **Judy Bemis** for the SFC to endorse the Boston World Con bid. Her logic was that it would be held in Orlando so it is really a southern con bid. Needless to say there was quite a bit of opposition to the idea and the motion was defeated. Personally I think that was a mistake. Convention fans may know it's a Boston bid but no one else will. To the outside world an SF convention held in Orlando is a southern convention. I think **Judy** gave up way to easily.

Tom wanted to allocate some money to hold room parties at conventions with a view to promoting membership in the SFC. Seemed like a good idea to me and after a long, long discussion a motion to allocate $200 for room parties was passed. The only other item I remember was a motion to reduce the price of the *SFC Handbook*. That motion passed with no discussion.

The Phoenix

David Weber was awarded the Phoenix. It was a beautiful stained glassed wall hanging. **David** seemed both surprised and pleased to receive the award. I didn't get to talk to David much but he seemed like a real nice guy. I was particularly impressed with his attitude toward the cover art for his books. A lot of authors do nothing but whine about how bad the covers are and all the things wrong with them. David was very up front about the primary importance of covers as marketing tools.

Wilson "Bob" Tucker won the Rebel. In this case the Rebel was a beautiful full size sword. I imagine he had fun getting on to the plane for the trip back!

David Weber
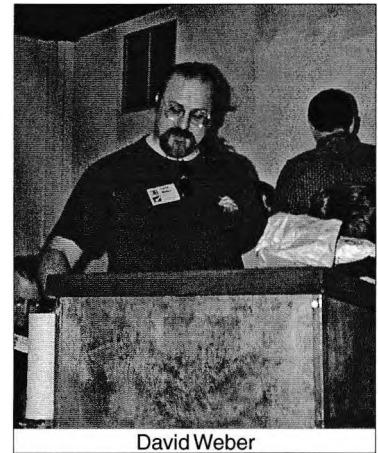
The Rubble

L to R Rubble Winner: Gary Robe
Past Winners: Naomi Fisher, Toni, Hank and Irv

Gary Robe "won" the Rubble. What I really admire is the way the gang set him up for it. They agreed on a name and gave **Gary** a sealed envelope to open when he announced the winner on stage. It was really funny watching his face when he opened the envelope and read "the winner is…**Gary Robe!**"

I think I counted six previous Rubble winners at the con. The Rubble is awarded at each DSC. All the previous victims get together and pick the next member of their select company. The award, visible in the picture, is a Krystal's meal.

The SFPA Party

Liz and **Jeff** hosted the SFPA party in their room. It was fun with several past members showing up. **Steven Carlberg**, **Wade Gilbreath**, **Dennis Dolbar, Jerry Page** and **JoAnn Montalbano** were all present.

The high point of the party was the "hoist FiFi" ceremony performed by some of the ladies of SFPA. If you want details of this bizarre ritual, you'll have to get them from one of the initiates into the ritual. Who knows what fate would befall a mere mortal who revealed it's dark secrets? All I will say is it involves disgusting animal icons.

Liz, Irv and Toni

Overall

Overall it was a real good time. There were a lot of things that don't fit into a neat heading: **Winston Justin** with a Minox B spy camera on a key chain. A two hour discussion with **Jeff Copeland, Frank Love** and others on the effects of the Justice Department's Microsoft law suit and how their law suit against Intel is probably more significant. A similar discussion with **Hank Reinhardt** about whether the US is becoming more diverse or more cohesive. I'm on the "more cohesive" side of the question. Dinner with a whole gang at Shoney's one night and a fish place that looked like a dive but had great food the next. A guy in the costume party made up as a "traffic cone" and I'm not kidding. **Toni's** Baen Book's presentation showing covers for future books. And last but not least, buying **Suzanne** and my memberships in the next DSC so we can do this all over again next year!

DEEP SOUTH CON 36 PHOTO ALBUM

Hank Davis
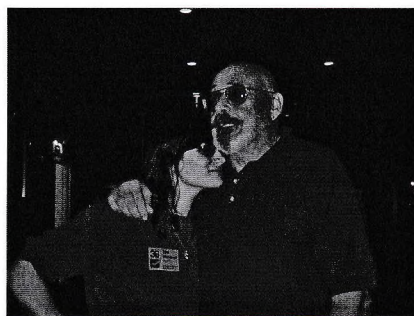
Toni and Hank

Larry Montgomery
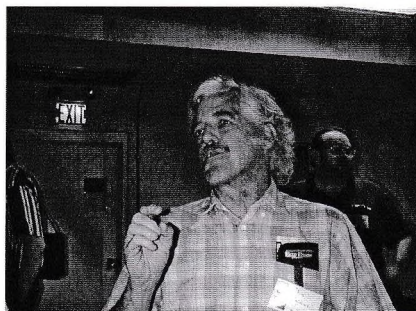
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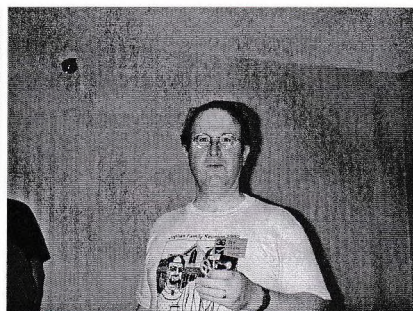
Pat Gibbs

Hall Gathering
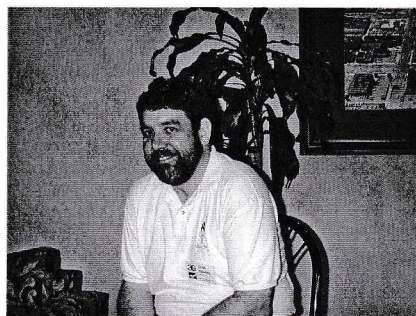
Leon Hendel

Jerry Page and Friends

Ward Beatty

Justin Winston

Liz and Dennis Dolbear

Naomi Fisher
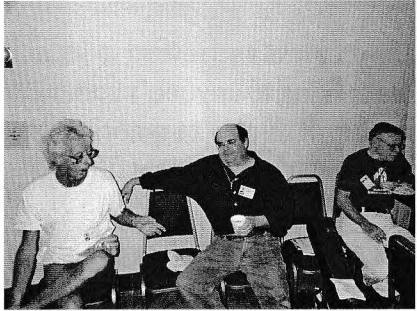
Ken and Guy

Randy Cleary

Charlotte Proctor

Corliss Robe
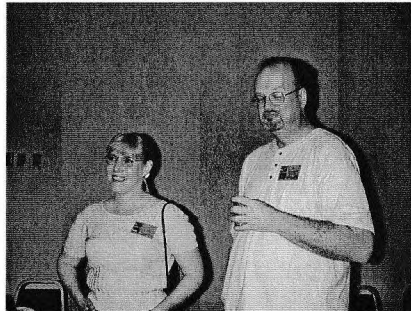
Andie and Wade Gilbreath
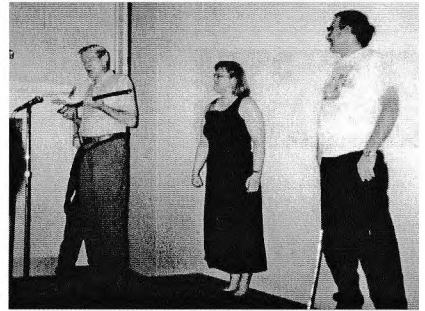
Rebel Award
Tucker, Julie and Tom
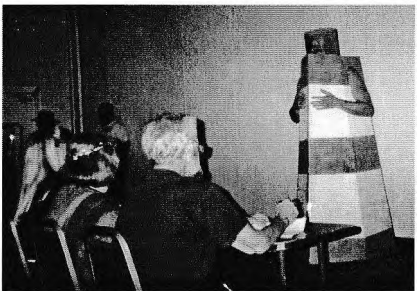
Masquerade Show
Adrian Washburn as Pylon Man

Isaac Robe

SFPA Party
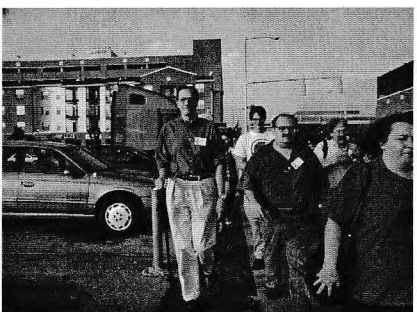
The Trek to Dinner

SFPA Party

Frank Love

Mailing Comments

General Comment

I'm really tired of talking about the whole Clinton mess and intend to let it drop for awhile. Therefore I'm not going to be replying to anyone's comments on the subject. I'm saying this up front so no one will think I'm ignoring them and take it personally. In a few months this rare bout of reticence will probably wear off and I'll be ranting away as usual.

Oh, if anyone wonders why some of the scans of zine covers are in black and white while others are in color, the answer is simple: I tried to print them in which ever way they looked best.

The Southerner

Nothing like a few direct threats to get the memberships attention! There have been OEs who never allowed even a day's grace on meeting the deadline so I don't see how I can complain if you occasionally want to move it up a bit.

Nice shot of MIR!

I think we should put up a SFPA web site. Not to replace the paper mailing, but to advertise the APA and the idea of belonging to one. There are any number of free sites where we could host the site and I'd be perfectly willing to do the work.

I think it would be a good idea to put in material explaining what an APA is and some examples of the kind of work people put through a mailing.

What do people think of the idea?

Refinement for Efficiency's Sake
Jeffrey Copeland

Way back when Binker and I did the Egoboo Poll, I wrote a program on the DEC PDP8 to tally up the results. It was in FOCAL and took up most of the machines 4 k words of memory. I was very proud of the way I used paper tape to punch out an intermediate file that was then read by the print out and sort routines. The biggest mistake I made was writing an analysis report that showed who voted for who. It destroyed my respect for several members, now long gone, of the APA. Needless to say, the report never saw the light of day.

The paper tape sort routine was my first user group submission. I got more feed back from it then anything I've ever done. Of course, it was impressive watching the tape feed backwards and forwards a dozen or more times for each person. These days, computing is such an invisible business. You don't even have blinking lights much less tape drives humming to show that anything is happening. I've actually starting designing a front panel for a PC

Page 10
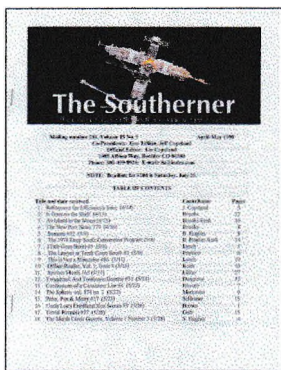
that would show you what the machine is doing. I know it would be pretty useless for any practical purpose but it would be kind of nice to see that *something* is going on while that hourglass turns on the screen.

I recently set up a Linux server in my workroom and I'm starting to learn the operating system. I just bought one of those 5-inch thick books on Linux and plan to spend a solid week working on it. I think I'll bring up a Web server for the house network.

An Island in the Moon
Ned Brooks

Very nice!! I always look forward to your Purple Mouth Press publications. Mostly because I never know what your going to do next but it's always something nice.

I'm something of a fan of Blake's but I have never run across this piece before. My first impulse was to label the manuscript as very dubious Blake. Partly because it just doesn't read right and partly because of your tendency toward playing little literary jokes on people. The explanation at the end clears it up for me. The attempt to make it more readable, a worth while effort with a lot of Blake's work, also changed the tone enough to make it "non Blake like."

Thanks for putting it though the APA.
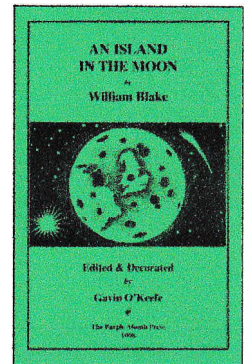
It Goes On the Shelf
Ned Brooks

One of your best covers!

Hum, ads for escort services in an APA zine? Wonder how many calls they'd get. At least I assume it's an escort service. The name is very similar to a company we turned off a while back. Nova wouldn't touch escort services.

What kind of printer did you buy? You can get fonts very cheaply for Windows applications. Typically a few hundred fonts are only about $25! I have quite a few loaded on my system, mostly from the Corel *Draw!* software installation.

I've always thought Shaw had human nature pretty well pegged. I started reading his plays quite some time ago and love his comments on relationships. Then there was a really good series of British movies made in the fifties. My favorite is *Pygmalion.*

Oh, so I'm not the only SFPAian to retire this year. Congratulations! I don't know how you feel about it, but I love retirement. Not having to get up in the morning and drive to work alone makes it a wonderful thing. I never realized just how much I hated the daily commute!

And I see you've moved to Atlanta. Maybe you, Glen, Joe and I could get together sometime? It would be just like the old times when we used to get together in West End in that office Glen had over the bookstore. A lot of time has passed since then both in years, it has been close to thirty, and events.
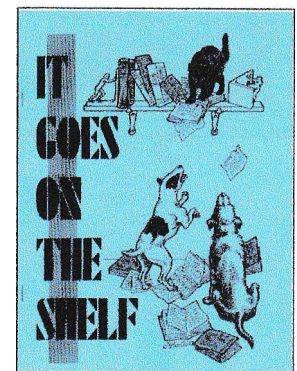
If you need a good ISP in Atlanta, I would recommend MindSpring. They offer a good range of services and have been very reliable. They also have a pretty good web hosting service if your serious about putting up a web site. I'm working on mine right now. I hope to have it up next week.

By the way, my favorite tool for building web sites is Microsoft's *FrontPage98* it allows laying out web pages much the same way you'd lay out a print publication. You can download a trial version from Microsoft's web site. I've been using *FrontPage* for a couple of years and used it to do a project site at work. It was quite elaborate but *FrontPage* made it easy to maintain.

Second choice would be *PageMill* from Adobe. It's a pretty nice program and has some nice features for handling illos. There are several highly regarded layout programs around but I would stick to one of the widely used ones. The ISPs support their management features and that can save you a lot of work and hassle.
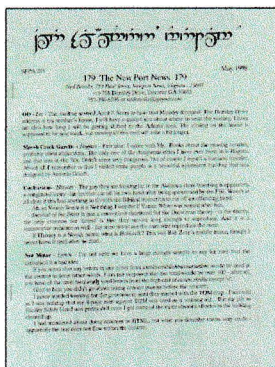
The New Port News 179
Ned Brooks

It's nice to find someone else with my opinion of TQM. Nova officially adopted a TQM program a couple of years after we started and I was strictly forbidden to express my opinion of it in public or in private. I am a strong believer in *quality control* but not in a lot of the things done in its name. Still you need something to rally people around when you're trying to raise standards plus most of the large banks we dealt with had their own TQM programs and they were very proud of them.

Nova's business, because of all the elements involved in handling credit cards, requires constant attention to detail. A single little slip, that might go unnoticed in most businesses, can create havoc in the financial world. People get so irritable when they get charged three or four times for something. We were always working on better controls and monitoring systems. Just to take a sanity check on things, we made a deal with the people at Auburn University's Government Studies group to devise and implement a customer survey for Nova. It was a totally "hands off" project without any guidance from Nova to make sure the answer came out right. The results were pretty interesting.

We found that if we got someone set up on the system correctly the first time, they loved us. If we didn't, we frequently lost them. With the price we paid to acquire merchants, quality control became a religion after we saw the survey results. Oh, Nova's overall scores from the survey were very high, way above the industry norms. We didn't believe the first survey, it was so good, but after doing them yearly for three or four years we started using them to pinpoint specific problems.

The Bonestell cover on the last *Spider Pie* is from the exploration of mars book and shows the Mars landers in orbit. I found a clip art disk of early SF illustrations and it has three or four good Bonestell illos. They were the images of space exploration I fell in love with when I was a kid. This was the second illo in the

same series I've used as a cover. *Spider Pie 9*'s cover was a Bonestell illo of the base camp on Mars. I found an ad for another clip art collection with Bonestell illos but it was sold out before I got a copy. I find it very neat to use such high quality art for a fan zine cover.

Speaking of playing hearts, maybe we should get up a game over the net? There's a nice version you can play with people on an IP network.

Seasons #32
Binker Hughes

Glad to hear your father is doing better. It's hard for people to accept their physical limitations with age. One of the main reasons I decided to retire now was the knowledge that physical problems can hit at any time and suddenly put new limits on your life. Waiting a few years to quit would have meant a lot more money but I just couldn't bring myself to trade the time for the money. As it is, I'm being forced to acknowledge that age itself imposes limits. I hurt my left foot a couple of months ago. Normally I'd just ignore something like that until it got better. Now I've been to the doctor twice because instead of getting better it just kept getting worse. It's only three days to DSC and I may very well be limping along at the convention. Oh, well.

We had the Braunsteins over for dinner the other night, they're both doctors, and Rowena pointed out that "you just don't heal as well when you reach your age." Thanks Rowena! But it is true, things I would have surged off twenty years ago are serious problems now. If I over stress my hand, as I did hitting my punching bag during karate practice, it takes weeks to stop hurting. Still there are a lot of things I want to do and I'm going to do as many of them as I can in the next few years.

Hope you made it to the Derby. I have fond memories of some of those trips up to see it. Sitting in the infield along with a zillion other people and watching my little TV to see how the race came out. All too many times I was too stressed out to enjoy the trip but some of them were fun. I almost went up this year myself but the timing just didn't work out.

I sympathize with your problems trying to help your parents but it is also true that you sometimes just have to let people work things out themselves. You can't change the way people think with reason or argument; you can only hope they see sanity before it's too late to do any good.

I liked the poem on the back cover. It mirrors a lot of my own thoughts and feelings.

The 1976 Deep South Convention Program
Binker Hughes

Talk about memories! I'm starting to do a series of articles on my favorite conventions and this was one of them. I can still remember setting up all night before the convention making buttons while you typed the Program. Talk about last minute deadline pressure. Still it all worked out well.
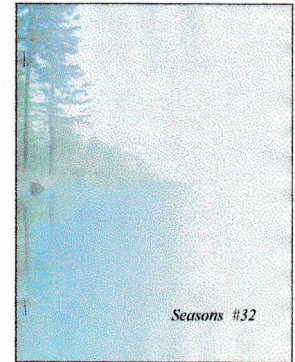
In a future issue of *Spider Pie*, I'll be doing an article on DSC 14. I've been collecting together photos and other material from old cons to use in articles. It brings back a lot of good memories.
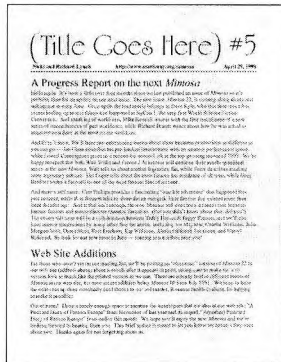
(Title Goes Here) #5
Nicki and Richard Lynch

By the time this goes out I'll have my first pass at a web site up. Nothing as nice as yours but at least a beginning. It looks like it's going to be a lot more 3D oriented then fanish.

I'm playing around with doing a 'real' zine myself. Back in my first pass at SFPA, Binker and I were doing a pretty good job with *Pan* and I enjoyed it. Now I have both the time and the equipment to do a good job but I may not have the real interest. Putting out something like *Mimosa* is a labor of love not just a hobby. Then again standards have risen quite a bit since *Pan* days. There was a time when I really wanted to do a semipro zine and I suppose I could still take a crack at it. I would suspect there are still a lot of would be SF writers who would be happy to contribute fiction. Something to think about.
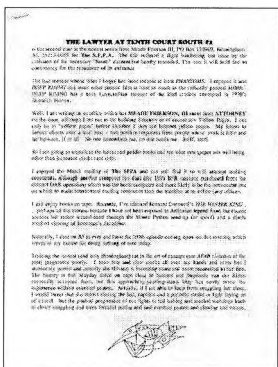
The Lawyer at Tenth Court South #2
Meade Frierson III

I haven't seen any of the three movies you mentioned. I keep planning to watch *Mimic*, it's on pay-per-view, but Suzanne is not a big fan of horror movies, to say the least, and every time it's been on and I'm been in a mood to watch it, she's been home. My nephew and I occasionally go to horror flicks together. His girlfriend dislikes them even more then Suzanne.

Phantoms is based on one of my favorite Dean Koontz novels and I really wanted to see it but never got the opportunity. It's one of the books he wrote before he figured out that the most horrifying monsters are all human. I was a big fan of what I think of as his fantasy monster novels. These days the villain in his books is almost always an insane person and that's a little too real for me. I don't mind strange creatures, what ever their source, but insane people really scare me.

I share your taste for books on tape. I picked up a couple one day at a local outlet mall and have bought several since. I like listening to them while I'm working on the computer. Just the other day I got 4 volumes of Sherlock Holmes radio shows and they are great. I saw a set of CDs of *The Shadow* and mean to pick them up the first chance I get.

I may have some teeth to send you in the near future! A few years ago I had implants done to replace some of the teeth I lost in childhood before I had access to dental care. They were very expensive and a lot of trouble taking almost 18 months to complete. Now they're trying to come out. I've had one bone graft to try and save them but the jury is still out on the attempt. The real bad news is that replacing them will be very difficult if it's possible at all. Funny the problem always used to be that I could not afford to have problems fixed, now I can afford it and most of the things going wrong with the old body are not repairable.

This is Not a Minaczine #86

Richard Lynch

Hum, my father was deeply into country music when I was a kid and I've always thought that's why I never tried to play an instrument even though I love music. He did a lot of shows and even cut a few records. He had a country music radio show for several years and even helped start a small radio station. Maybe that's something else I could try now that I have the time, pick an instrument and learn to play it.

Sometime next year I'm going to stop envying all the trips you take quite so much. Suzanne and I will be setting out on our round-the-world trip. The only stop we have planned in Eastern Europe is Moscow and were starting to think about skipping it. Everyone we talk to tells us how dangerous it's become to visit as a tourist. Maybe we will save it for a future trip.

I like your work site. Using the world map as an image map for jump points is a good touch. What did we do before the Web?

Something I'm interested in you might know, how tough is it to get internet connections on travels? I've been researching some of the places we're going to next year and it looks possible from most of them. I want to use the Net as a means of keeping in touch with things in Atlanta during the 8 weeks or so we'll be gone. Phoning home just doesn't seem to be practical and for people to try to call us while we're gone seems unlikely to work. Normally I wouldn't bother but two months is a long time to be out of touch.

Offline Reader Vol 1 Number 4

Irv Koch

I just visited your "not a web site" and it's pretty good. Lots of information and very little fluff. I can remember when the entire web, all 100 or so sites, were just like yours. Sometimes I wish they still were.

As far as your experience with Nova, I'd like to say I'm surprised but I can't. The company had as many as 30 or 40 conversions going on at one time. That needs a bit of explanation.

When a credit processor, like Nova, buys new accounts they also buy some real problems. The merchants are usually with a bank and that bank may use as many as three or four processors. Needless to say the bank normally has no records to speak of and the processor your converting the merchant away from is not exactly cooperative. Just to make things more interesting, there's probably an absolute deadline to get the job done. The task of moving a merchant from another processor includes reprogramming their terminal, which may be transparent to the merchant, moving their funds settlement to Nova's settlement company and setting up the funds transfer stuff to get their money into the merchants account.

The problems with transactions getting duplicated usually occur when the old processor and Nova both submit the same transactions for settlement. There

can also be problems when the settlement agent has problems loading the new, to them, merchant onto their system. Then sometimes the bank's existing network and processing contracts may require Nova leave the merchant on the old system for some time. Those cases can be real disasters since Nova has no control over the service provided but all the responsibility for keeping things working. In those cases the people in Knoxville at the operations center have a real tough time fixing problems because they're trying to work with a third party who probably doesn't like Nova to start with.

I'm guessing you guys got caught up in a sudden death conversion, a lot of the Regions Bank deals are, and simply never got onto the Nova system correctly or maybe not at all. Your deal through the ABA is very similar to one you could have gotten from Nova through some of our associations. Pricing in the industry is so competitive there's very little difference from one company to the next. Small banks charge the highest rates; large banks and ISOs charge the lowest.

Just for giggles I'm going to forward your comments to Nova's CEO. A little touch of reality is often good for upper management. I will comment that Nova is generally considered to be one of the best processors in the business. I know your experience probably makes that hard to believe but Nova has won several bank portfolios because of its high service levels. It all goes back to a comment I made to Ned earlier, if someone gets set up correctly on Nova's system the first time they love it. If they don't, they may not be so happy. I think that a lot of those setup problems have been cleared up in the last year or so.

I was over at the store the other day and picked up some good stuff. The store was pretty full so Suzanne and I just got the books we were looking for and left. Now that I'm not working, I'll be able to drop by during the day and get by more often.

I'll spend some time with your spreadsheet as soon as I get a chance. It's always fun looking at how other people do their finances.

Spiritus Mundi 165

Guy H. Lillian III

Up until this year, Spring has been my least favorite time of the year. I have always suffered badly from "seasonal allergies" meaning I sneeze and drip from the start of Spring to the end of Summer. This year I got a prescription for Claritin and it's made a world of difference. Now I can face the outside air with a cheerful face.

Last fall I came down with a cold that lasted for weeks. In fact it sounds just like yours. I finally tried going to a doctor and he told me, "it's viral you'll just have to wait until it runs its course." Seems every time I go to the doctor my problem is either viral or stress related. Nothing ever seems to be something they can actually help. Right now I'm limping around with some kind of foot problem. It started about two months ago, on our honeymoon I think, and gradually got worse. I went to the doctor and he gave me some anti-inflammatory drugs for a couple of weeks. No luck, then on my second visit he decided I needed an injection. Right into

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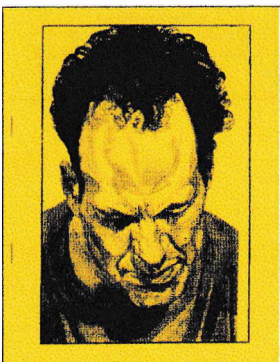
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the sorest part of my foot. It was one of the most painful things I've ever let anyone do to me. It also crippled my foot.

Apparently the medicine he used sometimes causes the problem to seem much worse before it gets better. I'm giving it until next Monday then I'm going to a specialist. I like my family doctor but enough is enough. This business of having to carefully plan each trip to the kitchen is a real pain.

Taxes are just too painful a topic for me right now. I'm coming up on my second quarterly payment and I'll have to have a few drinks before I sign it.

I see you didn't care for *Deep Impact*. I was rather pleasantly surprised by the movie. I expected a 'space cowboys blow up big rock' movie and instead got a well-done movie with good acting and a decent script. I know that many fans do not share my opinion but that's normal. The funniest criticism I've heard of the movie came from some fans discussing it at the bookstore. The point raised was "why did they have to land, why didn't they just set off the bombs in front of the comet?" They had a lot of other criticisms but that was one of the main ones.

Well why didn't they? Nuclear bombs work by generating enormous quantities of heat and radiation not blast effect. The blast comes from other stuff, like air, reacting to the heat. If you set the bomb off even a few hundred feet from the comet it would heat up its surface but that's about all. To deflect it you need to set the charges deep in the comet and let the rock blown away by the bomb be the reaction mass to deflect the comet. Fans should know that space is a vacuum.

Now I do agree with you about *Lost in Space*. It lost all of the whimsy from the TV series and didn't replace it with anything. I did like some of the graphics and I think the space spiders were great monsters but the "boy and father find each other" plot was trash.

Getting on the Net is a necessity of modern life. You don't need a powerhouse PC to work well on the Net. If you have to trade off price, go for a bigger monitor over a few more megahertz. A lot of web sites are set up for an 800 by 600 display and that looks best on a 17-inch monitor. I'd install both Netscape *Navigator* and Microsoft *Explorer* on your system. There are sites that only work well with one or the other. Since they're both free, there's no reason not to use both.

General Comment

I'm fighting with the most annoying bug I've ever encountered in Microsoft *Word*: it keeps throwing in hard page breaks at weird places. I can only find them by using the 'print preview' command to find the unwanted page break then reformatting the paragraphs around the break. What a pain!

Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette #51
Richard Dengrove

I've been faced with the death of a relative myself. Just a few days ago my cousin Rex lost his fight with cancer. He and I grew up together and he was closer to me then my own brother. Was closer because I fell out of touch with
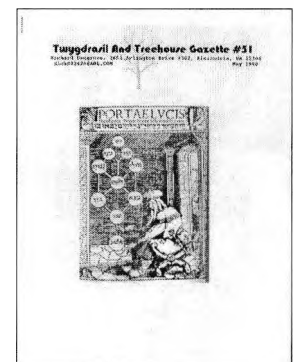
him the summer after high school. I missed his funeral but went back up to McCaysville to visit the grave the next day. Hard to say how I feel about it. He was only a year or so older then me and was always the strong healthy one. As I type this I realize I haven't really let myself think about his death.

Your problem getting permission to teach people how to use Netscape is an all too familiar one. In my days at NDC I often ran into the same sort of thing. People get so concerned with protecting their turff they lose site of the goal: getting something done. Of course I sort of understand, if you do something you might do something wrong. If you let someone else do something, they might do something right. The point of a bureaucracy is to let activity settle down to the lowest possible level while employing the maximum number of people. I'm not making a statement about government bureaucracies but about all bureaucracies. The only time they ever get anything done is when individuals force things to happen despite the system. The fact that our government works as well as it does is a tribute to the people who work in all those bureaucracies.

When I left Nova, I was just starting to see the beginnings of a bureaucracy forming. I have faith that Nova's CEO will nip it in the bud. He has zero tolerance for anything that gets in the way of doing the job. If Nova develops those kinds of problems, it will be after he leaves.

Oh, I never suspect conspiracies when things go wrong on an internal network. The technology is so much more likely to be the problem that deliberate activity on anyone's part to cause problems is redundant.

Linux is a neat system and it does seem to be more stable then NT. I'm running it on one of my old PCs. Installing it was a real challenge! If you ever decide to do it, make sure the PC your installing it on has both an EIDE hard drive and CD drive. It took me several days to get it installed and working because I had to swap out the CD drive in the PC and I was using a SCSI hard drive. I'm planning on installing Red Hat Linux on another PC that's a lot newer. It is a lot harder to run then something like Windows and you should expect to spend a few days learning the operation system utilities before you get any thing done.

Linux used to be regarded as a "toy" operating system, now it's starting to creep into the corporate world. It's hard to justify installing "free" software in most corporate systems. There's a rather strong assumption that if it's free it's also junk. If I ever set up another corporate system, I'll probably use Linux. Not because it's free but because I can get the source code and that means I can fix problems myself.

Confessions of a Consistent Liar 66

Arthur D. Hlavaty

So you're another of those people who pervert the world of instant information by printing your e-mails. Well you're far from alone, a good percentage of the business world prints e-mail. That actually makes sense to me because I don't like reading long documents on screen myself. What I don't understand is the habit

Confessions
of a Consistent Liar
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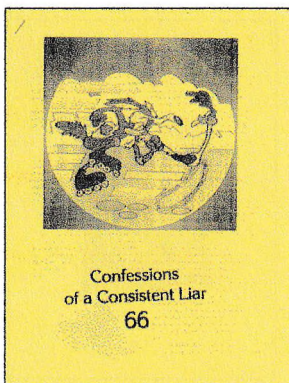
some people have of using their e-mail system as a file cabinet. E-mail systems are not very secure and they frequently lose some or all of their files.

Microsoft has almost reached practical limits on the number of features you can put into a single program. *Word* has so much stuff in it that probably no one ever uses half of its features. I know I use the same features today that I did ten years ago. Part of that is because I use *PageMaker* to do all my layout and *Corel* to do things like print labels. I could probably do most of the things I use *PageMaker* and *Corel* for in *Word* if I went to the trouble to learn more about its features. Actually I look back fondly on the old DOS word processor I used to use. It was simple, did exactly what I wanted and almost never died in the middle of editing a document.

I sort of wonder if there might not be a market for a line of "simple" office tools. A word processor whose features you could learn in 20 minutes, a simple spreadsheet and, maybe, a web-publishing program. If you did a study comparing all the time wasted learning today's hideously complex programs against the productivity benefits, if any, resulting from all their features, I suspect you would find the features are not at all worth having. Problem is how do you convince management that cheaper and simpler is better?

Kaypro.. now there's a name I haven't heard in a long time. They actually made some very good computers and I've even found a few still in use. When Nova took over the Knoxville operations center, I threw away 5 or 6 Kaypros that were being used for word processing. I had this crazy idea of giving everyone the same hardware and software to try and avoid wasting so much time converting documents. It worked out pretty well until Windows 95 came out and then we had incompatible formats everywhere. Microsoft has made sure no business will ever have real control of their PCs. But that's another rant.

The Sphere 174

Don Markstein

By an odd coincidence I'm watching *The Pirates of Penzance* as I do mailing comments. It's the Linda Ronstadt version. Not my favorite version but better then a lot. I really prefer Gilbert and Sullivan as performed by local amateur theatrical groups. Somehow a lot of the fun is missed when the performance is too polished.

My attempts at CD ROMs have been based around the Web site metaphor. It's not really that difficult if you use a good page production program, like *FrontPage*. I'm hoping to get started on my first serious attempt at a CD ROM in a few months.

Don't worry about learning HTML, it's not worth the effort. None of the authoring programs on the market require that you know any HTML at all. In fact if you do learn HTML and start directly editing page files, you'll probably cause yourself a lot of trouble. You can write some neat code in HTML that only works under very limited conditions and that is big trouble if
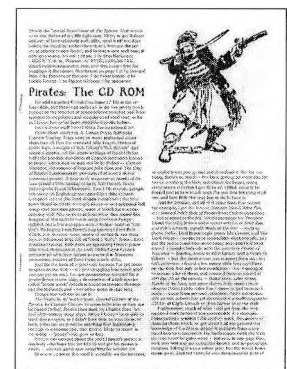
you're doing something for general distribution. Web page layout is just a limited form of printed page layout. It should be easy for someone with your publishing background.

The big advantage of using HTML is you can then easily move all or part of the CD to a Web site with almost no work. You do need to think about it a little and set up your directories on the CD the same way you would for a Web site. You can always do it the other way around and build a Web site until you get things just the way you want them then download to a CD master.
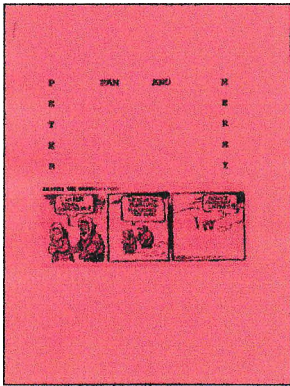
Peter Pan and Merry 17

David Schlosser

I was just out looking at the USPS web site and they do have the stamp images but you can't purchase stamps over the web. Seems a pity since ordering over the web would save a lot of time and hassle. I will admit the people at the local postal store really do try to help the customers. My biggest bitch these days is the requirement to hand all packages over 1 lb to a postal employee. I thought it was pretty stupid when I first heard about it and now I think it's the most annoying thing the Post Office has ever come up with. Instead of dropping things like SFPA mailings in the mail slot, you have to stand in line for 20 or 30 minutes to hand the package to someone who just tosses it into a bag without even looking at it.

My vision of how they came with that requirement involves some bureaucrats sitting around a table saying, "Well we have to come up with some security thing. Doesn't anybody have any ideas?" Then someone says "We could really annoy a lot of people with out spending any money if we made them bring packages in to the post office." Then someone else says, "OK, but don't make business do it because they might cause some trouble."

I mean there can't be any real logic to it. You can make a nifty bomb that weighs a lot less then a pound and almost anyone can get access to some company mail room to ship a package anyway. I mailed a few things by getting the postage from the postage meter at work.

My current house related problem is the presence of a dozen or so ants in our kitchen. Doesn't sound so bad but they were carpenter ants and they eat houses. Now I'm looking for someone to inspect the house. Our normal termite guys did their annual inspection just days before we found the first ants so I don't have much faith in them. We're more then normally sensitive to bug eating house problems because we had to replace both decks about a year after we moved in. That cost a fortune. Suzanne and I aren't even sure we want to stay in Atlanta, so we've been trying to keep expenditures on the house down until we decide if we're staying.

I'm starting to think more about buying a back up generator for the house. We had a long power outage this week and they just get more frequent. We lost power for a day during a winter storm and had to heat the house with the fireplace. The fireplaces in this house were designed to sit in front of on a winters night not heat anything. I was even reduced to cooking over an open flame! Another decision

being put off until we decide if we're staying.

One of my most memorable trips to Reno involved my having to win stuffed animals for two potential customers. You know those kids games are pretty tough when you're under a lot of pressure to win one. I made a trip out there, back when I worked with NDC, to meet with a couple of senior executives from Sprint. They turned out to be female and pretty free spirited ones at that. We had a fun night doing the casino circuits and put together a deal that made NDC almost $100 million dollars. Sometime you do get to mix pleasure with business.

Trivial Pursuits #77

Janice Gelb

I thought your selection of cartoons for this issue was particularly good. I like the one of the guy looking at the mirror and seeing his younger self. I also identify with it.

An empty condo in a high value area could have sinister implications. Maybe it's being used as some sort of convenience address for bad guys. A girl I knew at NDC had an empty apartment next door to her for three or four years. Then one day the police who were trying to catch a drug gang raided it. It turned out the bad guys used it during the day, when she was never at home, to hold meetings and exchange stuff. Just something for you to think about.

I don't know how much luck the Justice Department will have with their suit against Microsoft but I've got my fingers crossed. Microsoft has gotten too big and their total control of the market is really starting to impact progress in our business. It's way to early in the development cycle for any company to have total control of the technology. You need a lot of small, very hungry, companies driving innovation and a decent number of medium sized companies providing price competition. What we have is a 900 pound gorilla that no one will even try to compete with.

I was talking to some New York banker types the other day about potential new start up businesses and they made the comment " We'll look at almost anything just as long as they don't try to compete with Microsoft." That's why the Justice Department needs to get involved. Microsoft has gotten so big no one will even try to compete with them. In fact there's a wide spread feeling in the financial world that no matter how successful a company may be with a new product, if Microsoft wants to put them out of business they can and it doesn't matter how bad the Microsoft product is. Microsoft will simply give the product away, they can afford to drop millions doing so, until the competitor goes away or sells out to Microsoft. That's too much power.

Then there's the incredible arrogance of the company. Can you believe Bill Gates saying that delaying the release of *Windows 98* would put the entire national economy at risk? Personally I think stopping all new Microsoft software releases would be a wonderful thing for the economy. I mean, think of all the money businesses all over the country would save by not having to upgrade all their PCs and all the productivity gains from not having to deal with all those new
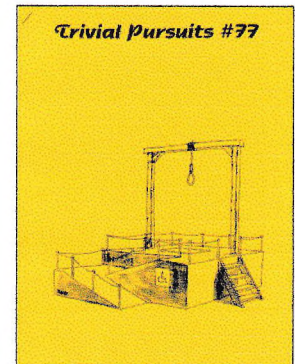
bugs in the new software. It could give the economy a significant boost.

We have the same problem getting our decks resealed. They need it pretty badly and I don't have time to do it myself. Suzanne wants to put a swing on the deck and we can't do it until after the deck has been sealed. She's been looking at swings for quite awhile and she finally found one she likes. Now she can't buy it. I think the swing is operating under the "its always something" rule.
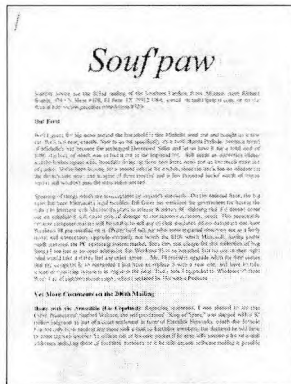
Souf'paw 7

Richard Brandt

The nice part about the Microsoft suit is that it's not the only one. Intel is also coming in for its share of litigation. You know for years we've been talking about the WinTel monopoly and I suppose it makes sense that the government would notice sooner or later. It's hard to think of another case of an industry so dominated by two players and so well controlled.

There may be only one *Windows* but there are actually several very good processor chips. Intel has done a good job of using its money to dissuade PC manufactures from using other chips. I am not, please notice, saying Intel has done anything illegal, others may say so, but only that they use their dominate position in some very creative ways.

What would have been optimal would probably have been for Apple not to have been so stupid and maintained a good market share. Then at least there would be some competition in the industry. The problem there was they were even greedier then WinTel and wanted to totally control the business. If they had encouraged, even allowed, the development of clones, they might have won the market share battle. In many ways they had a better product *early* then the WinTel folks.

I normally hang on to hardware until the new systems are at least twice the speed of my current system. Anything less isn't worth the pain of upgrading. Right now a lot of my friends are going to the new 400Mhz processors. I'm waiting until they've been out at least a year.

I found your list of people with free web sites very interesting. I just signed up with MindSpring for one of their web hosting services. It's not that expensive and they already host my domain name. Moving it would have been a hassle. Now I'm thinking I might put up a second site on one of the free services with my 3D photos on it. MindSpring, and most other ISPs, charge based on the amount of bandwidth used downloading data from your site. The 3D community is real big on downloading other peoples photos so I've been concerned that I might get into trouble cost wise if I put too many photos on line. A free service might be a good way around that problem. I might even get creative and try storing the photo files on a free service and linking to it from my MindSpring site. That way I could spread out the bandwidth usage among more then one ISP.

If you're going to make it to Comdex in Vegas this year maybe we could get together. Suzanne and I have already made all the arrangements for the trip. Even though we're not working, we intend to stay up to date on the industry. After all you never know when things will change and we might have to go back to work.

Stomp Your Hat Like Uncle Ned #1

George H. Wells

I've started taping *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* off of TNT. They run it at something like 4:00AM on Tuesday mornings. At first I was asking myself "What did I ever see in this show?" Now I'm starting to get back into the series. It's hard to believe their toys used to look so neat, now they look so bad. Watching the series raised on old question in my mind; what is it about old TV shows that make them look so old? I mean it's not the clothes, you see a lot of period pieces and they don't look old. I would say the colors were fading but videotape isn't all that susceptible to fade. Any thoughts?

I downloaded the trailer for *The Avengers* and like it. Diana Riggs will always be the only real Mrs. Peel but Uma Thurman looks pretty good in the role. I'm trying to keep my expectations for the movie safely low, I'm a real Avengers fan, so that I can enjoy it when it comes out.

Speaking of *Babylon 5*, do you know which episode had the mages coming through Babylon 5 on their way to escape the coming war? I remember it because of the "imp" one of them set off to trash Londo's data files. I've been looking for it, I have all the episodes on tape, but just can't seem to find it.

I liked *Deep Impact* and thought they did a great job with the tidal wave trashing New York. Just for comparison, I fished up *When Worlds Collide* to watch a 1950's tidal wave trash New York. Considering the time difference and the relative technology available to both movies, they did an extremely impressive job in *When Worlds Collide.* Computer graphics are nice but some of the old model builders did really great stuff.

Tennessee Trash #33

Gary Robe

Nice Cover! My HP does not do photographs well enough to bother with. I'm not sure why, it has all the normal HP printing technology and should do as well as any other HP printer.

South Beach is one of my favorite places. I've eaten at Joe's Crab House a few times, it's really nice if you can get in. The last time I tried to go, I was in Miami giving a paper at a communications conference, we were told the wait for a table would be 3 to 4 hours! Needless to say, I wasn't that hungry. The good thing about South Beach is the large number of good places to eat. If one is too busy, there's always a good alternative.

I love watching little kids try to play ball. It reminds you that a lot of behavior we take for granted is actually hard learned. I saw some research on attention spans versus age and it made some of the things I've seen make a lot more sense. Kids in the 5-year-old range have *very* short attention spans and their ability to reaction time to commands is pretty long. That means they need a lot of time to think through a command before they try to act on it. When they don't get the time, they either do "something" or freeze.
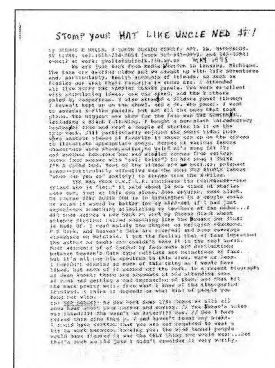
There's also a problem with information overload. As we get older we learn to filter out most of the sensory input we're exposed to. The key word there is "learn." Kids aren't very good at this and that means they do things like forget "throw the ball not the glove" because they're busy trying to cope with all that data.

Corlis has all my sympathy. I'm limping around at the moment with 'something' wrong with my left foot. It's really a nuisance and I'm afraid it may mess up DSC for me. I just had to blow off a computer show here in Atlanta I had been looking forward to attending. I was hoping to put off the "stuff hurting for no good reason" stage for at lest a few more years.

Ah yes, the Visa prizes give away scam, now there's an old favorite. What makes it work so well, and it does, is that Visa has run several contests just like the one described. No, they did not notify people by phone if they won. I can just hear the person on the phone now, "Let me verify your card number. OK now I need your social security number for tax purposes and, oh, could you give me your PIN number to use as verification that I talked to you?" and a lot of people would give them all the data without a second thought. One of my friends in the security business used to say, "there are no smart crooks just lots of stupid people." Despite the cynicism, there's a lot of truth in his opinion.

As to the sexiness of stripers, if you've never seen one who was sexy, then you've just never seen a good one. It's not an easy thing to do and takes real talent to do right but there are women who are really good at it. Probably men too but that's outside of my experience.
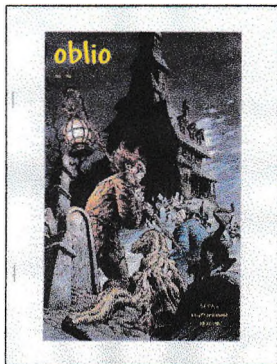
Oblio #16

Gary Brown

Really nice cover! No doubt they were going to a SF club meeting.

I actually own a couple of 'Beanie Babies' despite my general tendency to avoid collectable stuff. It's not snobbish, it's a firm understanding of my weaknesses. I will collect almost anything and once I get started it's very hard for me to stop. Nova had TY's credit card business and it amounted to several million dollars a week! When we got their first weeks business, we thought something was wrong it was so high.

I've been watching all kind of stores suddenly turn into 'Beanie Babies' outlets. A couple of card shops, a book store and craft store that I occasionally shop at now have more of TY's products then their normal stock. Then there are all the people selling them out the back of their cars. Surely there's a saturation point for these things somewhere!

We fight the battle of the wasps every summer. They like to build nests under the mailbox and out on our deck. We currently have a nest under one of the tables on the large deck. As soon as my foot gets back to normal, I've got to kill them. Fortunately modern sprays make this a simple business. I haven't been seriously stung since one of my cousins kicked this old rusty 5-gallon can and it turned out to be a wasp condo. I got a couple of dozen stings and he, being a slower

runner, got even more.

I can see how tough it would be to do several versions of the same page. I have enough trouble just doing simple layout for zines. I've seen a couple of examples in the local Atlanta paper where they got the caption and the image swapped in two local editions. It always looks so stupid to people who don't know how complex it is to put together a publication. When I started doing a newsletter for a project at work, I told the other people on the team it would take a couple of days to lay it out after I got the material.

They felt I was allocating way too much time and that it could be done in an hour. So I said "OK you start on it yourself while I start working on my version." They did and three days later presented me with an absolute mess. After that no one questioned the amount of work involved.

Don't feel too good about your old editor getting his just deserts until you find out what kind of exit package he got. If he had any sense at all, he put a very good package in his contract during the original negotiations. Say two years of continued salary, with all benefits, plus the equivalent of another two or three years in the form of an exit bonus. It's ridiculously easy to work that kind of thing into a contract when you're working a deal. Let us hope he wasn't that smart.

There's a good conspiracy theory, salt Mars with something valuable that fires the imagination with greed daydreams. Gold might not do it, though it has been very effective over the years, you might need something like high quality uranium. Even though everyone would know it wouldn't make economic sense to try to bring it back to earth, a lot of people would suspend logic and vote for a project to try.

### The Northern Californian 5

Robert Lichtman

We'd like to have a garden but there's just no place to put one. Our house is on a steep hill and there's not any flat sunny land to plant on. Suzanne is managing to plant a few flowers in the front yard, a space only six or seven feet wide and they are nice but she really wants a vegetable garden. Maybe in our next house we can make sure there's ground suitable for planting.

I lived with old cars for most of my life and used to be very good at repairing them. I would carry tools in the trunk and basic spare parts, like bailing wire and black electricians tape. It's amazing what you can fix with wire and tape. I suppose my most creative repair was a bad fuel pump.

The car, a 1951 Ford convertible, stopped when we were about 25 miles from the nearest human habitation on the top of a mountain. A little work determined that the fuel pump diaphragm had failed and that's not something you can normally repair. I cut a new pump diaphragm out of one of my cousin's shoes and managed to get it mounted in the fuel pump. We drove off the mountain. At least part of the way off the mountain. Then the fuel pump gave out again. This time the whole pump was shot.

My next idea was to take the hood off the car and let someone sit on the front
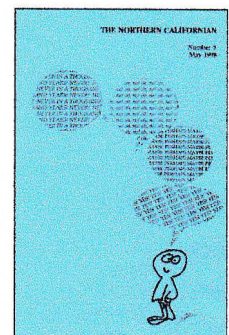
fender and pour gas directly into the carburetor from a bottle. It didn't work until I figured out we needed something to vaporize the gas. A few folds of a tee shirt did the trick. I still remember how hard it was to pour just enough gas to keep the car going but not so much that it flooded the engine. What made it more interesting, the only bottles we had were a couple of RC Cola bottles. This meant we stopped to refill ever mile or two. It took a while and I fell off the hood a couple of times when I gave the car too much gas, but we did get home.

I know the feeling of seeing someone else in "your" car. When I banged up my old Fiero, I gave it to my brother-in-law. Every time I see him driving it, my first reaction is "Hey that's my car!"
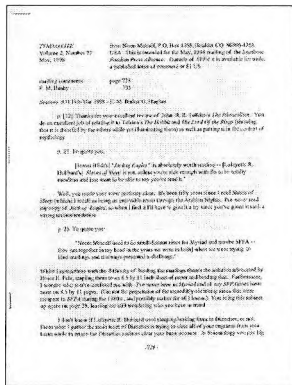
Tyndallite #77
Norm Metcalf

I think it's pretty clear that WWI would have happened regardless of weather the Archduke was killed or not. The Austria Hungarian Empire was on its last legs and about as corrupt as it could get. The only way the nobility could hold it together was to start a war. If you look at the times, all the parties involved wanted an excuse to show off their military prowess. The old "honor in battle" idea was very big and everyone had in mind calvery charges when they thought of battle. The reality of machine guns and light, fast firing artillery hadn't dawned on anyone.

I've read several books on the political climate in Europe just before the war and they universally agree that war was coming regardless of what anyone did. I mean all the major powers had spent a fortune on battle ships and really wanted to play with their toys. As usual, the war was supposed to be over in months.

The Fifties may or may not represent the best in SF but it is true that most of my favorite books were written in the Fifties. I've just recently started rereading them. They're just as much fun as they ever were.

Agent of Vega stories are high on my all time best list and they were written in the early fifties. Then there are all the early Heinlein books and things like the Lensmen series. Come to think of it, most of my favorite books were written in the fifties.

"YNGVI IS A LOUSE" and Other Graffitos #53
T.K.F. Weisskopf

You're beginning to sound like me, no time to do anything. It's really strange now that I do have time to do things and control of my own schedule. For example, I'm planning on attending DSC and there's nothing anyone at work can do to stop me. All this free time is probably going to result in a lot more stuff in SFPA. I'm not promising anything quality wise but at least the quantity should go up.

I was out looking at the Baen Web site and you guys have done a great job. Was that an internal job or did you farm it out to someone?
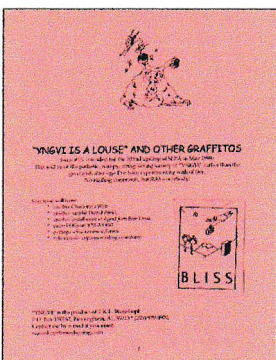
Guilty Pleasures
Eve Ackerman

I thought *Chasing Amy* was good. I got a kick out of seeing an old friends, Ward Beatty, name in the credits. He publishes the comic newspaper the characters talk about in one scene.

By the way, you're probably wrong about the fifty-inch TV. They're are a couple of very slender ones that will fit almost anywhere. Suzanne is looking at the new flat panel TVs to replace my big Mitsubishi. They are only about four inches thick and can be mounted on the wall. She really wants to put it over the fireplace.

Suzanne tried to sign up for an interior-decorating course. It's taught by a pretty good person with the class being held at each students home in turn. Then the class works on ideas for one room in the student's house. We're looking for some good ideas for our living room. We haven't done a thing to it since we moved in and it's our number one priority.

How's the life of a lady of leisure going? Suzanne and I are just now starting to really realize that we've quit. That this is not a long vacation but a new way of life.

… You're Not Pressing Hard Enough On the Pillow …
Mike Weber

The dynamics of small autogryo's are very different from large ones. I used to look at that kit, the one they used in the Bond film, and daydream about owning one. Now I wan to buy an ultra light. They are a lot easier to fly and a lot safer. There was a good special on autogryos a few months ago. They pointed out the problems they have like relatively low maximum speeds and poor handling at high speed. Also, as you mentioned, the bigger they are the worse they work. By the way, a 120-knot turn in 100 feet would generate some pretty nasty G forces.

How many dates in a year are unambiguous? Well at least half since any date with a day greater then 12 is pretty obvious. I started to write a quick program to count them then decided that was being a little compulsive.

That bit about setting Pi equal to 3.0 has been blamed on just about every Southern State. Any idea who first started it? I remember reading an article claiming it was Tennessee when I was a kid.

Do I remember your saying you had the complete Flanders and Swan, probably bad spelling on the names, on cassette? If so I would love to get a copy and cut a CD.

Home With the Armadillo
Liz Copeland

We still have a bunch of 5.25 floppies. Of course, I also have a PC that will read them. I used to keep it going to do media conversions now that's not such an issue. We also have a large number of cases for 5.25 floppies that we keep meaning to take to GoodWill. It just never makes it to the top of the priority list.
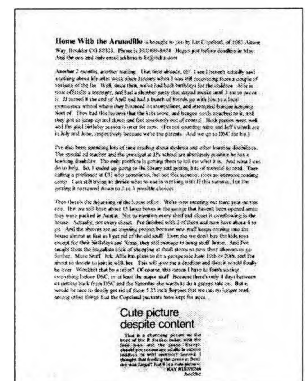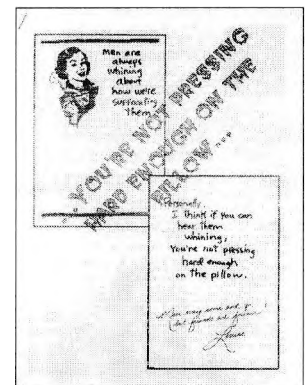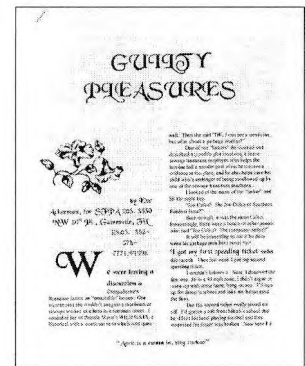
At one point Nova bought the Bank of Boulder's merchant business. I think the thing the employees were most upset about was no longer being part of the Bolder Boulder. They had a souvenir shop set up in the same building as the merchant business and we converted it to Nova's network as our fist conversion. I gather they spent more time on the race then the business. Oh well I got a nice jacket out of it.

"Twenty six square miles surrounded by reality" really sounds right. Except I think reality may be on the retreat in your part of the world.
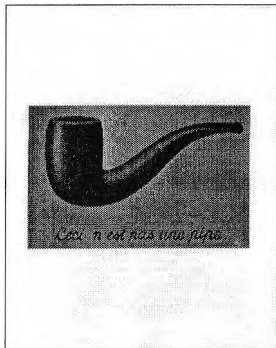
Ceci n'est pas une pipe

Jeffery Copeland

Your approach to the Friday the 13th problem is exactly the opposite of my approach to such things. I will always use exhaustive search if it's at all reasonable. I remember being criticized by a professor in front of the class for using a simple "try all the numbers" solution to a problem he had given us. Then I pointed out that my program only took about 20 minutes to write and I knew it was right whereas he obviously hadn't really tested his algorithm because he had the wrong answer. Yes I've always been a pain about some things.

Good thing you picked up that 33k modem, a lot of ISPs are starting to not allow connections below 14.4kbps. I found this out when I set a friend up on the net and her modem wouldn't work. Of course with 56k modems as low as $60 it's not that bad having to upgrade.

I use RSA to encrypt my personal files. It doesn't do compression but it's got very good data integrity. I've taken to backing my data files up to CD ROM about once a month. Its not too much work to do it monthly and I don't do that much in the course of a month. Mind you I regularly copy all working files to a different hard drive on my system.

Funny you should mention your old DEC PDP-11 manuals, we just got through throwing away my old PDP-8 books. I started to keep them as reminders of how I got into this business but decided that if I started keeping stuff like that I wouldn't throw anything away.

General Comment

Well I've managed to comment the entire mailing again. The question is: How long can this excess of virtue continue? I think these are the most comments I've done for any mailing since I first joined SFPA. Usually I end up writing comments in odd moments or while printing the rest of the zine. It's really been fun having time to just slowly work through the mailing reading all the zines.

Tomorrow we leave for DSC and, hopefully, I'll get to talk to a lot of you guys in person. See you guys next mailing.