

SHIFFMAN 6/2

Number 6



## Wondering why?

- Me, too!
- You're in it.
- A* — What's essential, you cannot see...
- A* — You're an official friend of Toad Hall (or will become one next week).
- You're at MagiCon.
- You're at ReinConation.
- You send great pocksarcs.
- I don't know, maybe it was the roses....
- A* — 'Cause some things just get better and better, and better than they've already been.
- You've obviously studied at the Willis Academy of Terrific LoCs.
- You show me yours.
- It seemed like the thing to do.
- You're Joe Siclari.
- A* — You tell me.
- A* — Tell me again.

## Idea #6

Stu Shiffman .....	Cover
Geri Sullivan: Editorial .....	3
Jeff Schalles: The Girl Homeowner Meets a Cosmic Engineer .....	5
♦ Ken Fletcher, artist	
Martin Schafer: The Pig Roast .....	8
♦ Larry Becker, artist	
Elise Matthesen: Ignorant Savages with a Certain Artistic Flair ...	12
Jack Targonski: Slugs 'N Fungus .....	16
♦ Reed Waller, artist	
♦ Glenn Tenhoff, The Eclectic Eater masthead art	
Luke McGuff: Live to Write; Write to Live .....	20
♦ Glenn Tenhoff, artist	
Rob Hansen: Hanging Out at the Hinckley Hilton .....	23
Chuch Harris writes to his mother .....	28
Readers: Letters .....	33
♦ Illustrated with more ATomillos	
MagiCon Fan Lounge & Minneapolis in '73 Schedule .....	Bacover

### Additional art credits:

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### Additional credit and thanks to...

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The Minn-Stf Board of Directors: MagiCon Minneapolis in '73 Suite *Idea* #5 collators (who signed the Toad Hall Register at the Minneapolis in '73 Toad Hall South party at Minicon): Don Fitch, Art Widner, Marty Helgesen, Ellen Franklin, Ariel Hudson, Karen Johnson, Linda Moss-Levin, Michael D. Levin, Colin R. Wright, Erin M. Wright, David Súdolph, Ira Mitchel Thornhill, and Karen Cooper, who told the Stone Soup story.

*Idea* Volume 2, Number 6

September 1992

Geri Sullivan, Editor

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A SMOTHRA publication. Member: fwa. Founding member: Minnesota Fanzine Recovery Act.

# That good again

Editorial by Geri Sullivan

*"A little creek you could spit across  
Jimmy and me each took one more toss  
Oh, our spinners bright in the evening air  
The people always said, 'There ain't no fish in there.'  
Well, grown-ups, they ain't always right,  
'Cause Jimmy and me walked home slow that night,  
Well, right down Main Street in our P.F. Flyers,  
With two five pound bass making grown men liars.*

*"And Jimmy, if I had known,  
I might have stopped fishin' right then.  
It's just as well we don't know when things  
Will never be that good again."*

It may well be one of those times. MagiCon, with its Fan Lounge and Minneapolis in '73 suite hosted by most every fan I could care to spend a Worldcon with, is only 11 days away. OK, there are some notable exceptions to the "most every fan" list — Fred, Susan, Jerry, Suzle, Stu, Andi, LeeH, Vince, and numerous others will be terribly missed. But even those not present will be there in spirit. Meanwhile, phone calls from Moshe, Peggy Rae, and other friends reinforce what I see when I look at the MagiCon schedule. A week of partying with Don Fitch, Walter & Madeleine Willis, Chuck & Sue Harris, James White, rich brown, Ted White... and most of the Corflu crowd, Dave Clement ... yes, thousands of my closest, most intimate friends, many of whom I haven't met yet. Call it a renewed sensawonder. As Robert Lichtman wrote last week, "I have the feeling this convention is going to go down in fannish history along with Room 770 and South Gate in '58. At least it has that potential."

Yes...and no. Certainly we can create mythology. We do it everyday, and twice on convention Sundays. (Hence the vermin at MagiCon.) I'm less certain we can ever again attain the critical mass needed for that mythology to enter the fannish mindset. In earlier days, when there were fewer fans, it was possible for events like Southgate in '58 to further unite fandom into a single whole. These days, shared experience, no matter how wonderful, is limited to a smaller audience within fandom. Hence, we create conventions within conventions while I dream of smaller cons where we're all "us."

(continued)



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I'm not overly worried, though. The joy we create today will, at the very least, enrich our individual lives. That's enough for me, especially when we're talking about so many individuals. Check out the schedule on the bacover and you'll see what I mean.

*"A ride on an autumn night,  
Well, I was 15 if I remember right  
We were far apart at the start of the ride  
But somehow we ended up side-by-side.  
Oh, it hit a bump and she grabbed my arm  
And the night was as cold as her lips were warm  
And I shivered as her hand held mine  
Yeah, and then I kissed her one more time.*

*"And Jane, if I had known  
I might have stopped kissin' right then  
It's just as well we don't know when things  
Will never be that good again."*

Then, as if MagiCon isn't enough, there's ReinConation the next weekend. It's one of the smaller cons I was talking about, where we're all "us" and the convention is built on shared experience. This year's guests are James White and Jeanne Gomoll. It promises to be a fine time.

Better still, Walter and Madeleine Willis have decided to join James as we all journey from Orlando to Minneapolis. Minneapolis fans who signed the petition back in 1987, asking Minn-stf to extend an invitation northward the last time Walter and Madeleine were in the States know how long I've wanted them to visit Minneapolis and Toad Hall. Dreams set free so very long ago, coming 'round to fruition at the most unexpected moments. Don't we just hate it when that happens? Yeah, right. If I had listened to just the first two verses of the Greg Brown song quoted here, I'd be thinking it was time to gafiate. How could anything *ever* be this good again? But up at the Winnipeg Folk Festival last month, Greg's voice was compelling, and I heard every word:

*"She was older than me I guess  
Summer was invented for her to wear that dress  
Oh, I knew about risk and she knew about proof  
And that night she took me up on the roof.  
And we could see the lights of the little town  
As we could watch August stars come down  
Oh, the shooting stars and the meteorites  
Yeah, we went on a ride through the sky that night.*

*"And oh, if I had known  
I'd do it all over again.  
Some things just get better and better  
And better than they've already been."*

Yes, exactly. From joining Minneapa in '82, to Corflu 3 in '86, receiving those first letters from Walter, the Chuch Fund, *Idea*, Tropicon, Corflu 6, my first Transatlantic trip in 1989, the second this year, and now, MagiCon and ReinConation. Not to mention everything in between — conventions, visits from fans near and far, visits returned, letters, friendship, love — you know, the usual. Yeah, right. *"Some things just get better and better, and better than they've already been."* That's fandom. Our fandom. Ever so glad you're here. See you on the funway.

"If I Had Known" written by Greg Brown  
Recorded on *Down in There*



# Adventures In The Wimpy Zone

## Part 3:

# The Girl Homeowner Meets A Cosmic Engineer

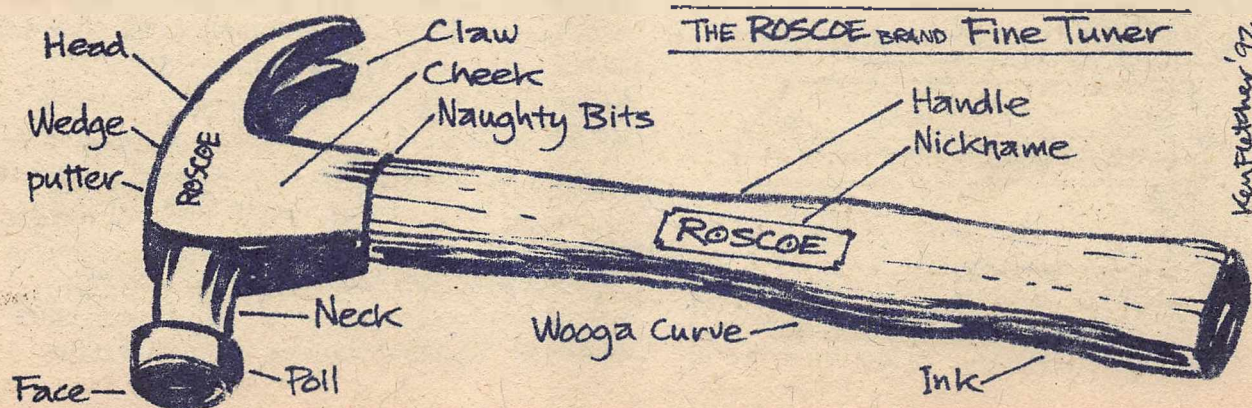
by Jeff Schalles

My favorite childhood toys were an enormous set of wooden blocks, several erector sets combined, different kinds of pre-Lego plastic bricks, Kenner's Girder & Panel and Bridge & Highway outfits, Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys, and, especially, the pile of big wooden boxes and pine planks they had in my church's kindergarten room. I liked having lots of stuff to build with. And I was real good at it. Outdoors, we built tree houses, snow forts, secret forest hideouts, numerous engineless wooden "go-carts" (which didn't go very well, didn't stop very well either, and that our parents kept tossing out) and elaborate canals and dams in the creek down the hill behind the grade school. As I got older I started rewiring the house, painting the trim and fixing the roof, replacing windows my brother kept sending golf balls through. My dad knew a lot about tools but never seemed inclined to own many, or to take on big projects. I just started doing stuff, and they let me go ahead with most of it. Right off the bat I was fearless about taking stuff apart and almost as good with putting it back together again. I guess the pile of half-disassembled things under the workbench here at Toad Hall has its beginnings in a basement in the South Hills of Pittsburgh.

When I was about 5 or 6 I decided I was going to be a contractor. I wanted a dump truck and a front-end loader and a bulldozer and an air compressor trailer and a jackhammer and a bunch of those wooden horses they block off streets with. And lumber, great big piles of fresh new lumber.

I forget when I quit wanting to be a contractor and decided instead I was going to be a rock & roll drummer and a science fiction writer and a photographer. Probably sometime around the 10th grade when I got into fandom and fanzines (where all knowledge resides) and realized that there was endless neat stuff in the world to do and no reason not to just go right ahead and do it. All of it.

I also decided back then that someday I was going to build a big solar-powered house full of books and plants and cats on forty or a hundred acres. With dogs and gardens and sheds full of tractors and tools, and a bunch of old cars and trucks hidden behind some pine trees. Somewhere... out of the hurly burly, yet near fandom, somewhere... (such fantasizing which usually leaves me humming: "There's A Place For Us" from *Westside Story*).



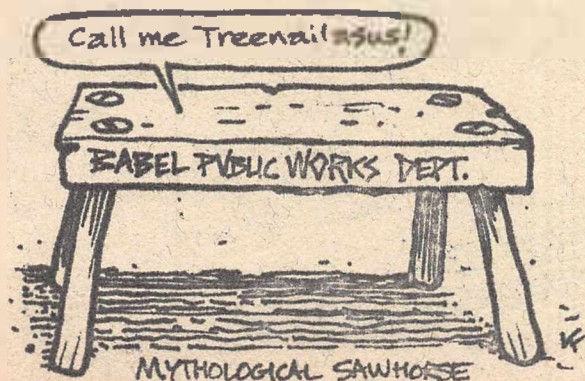
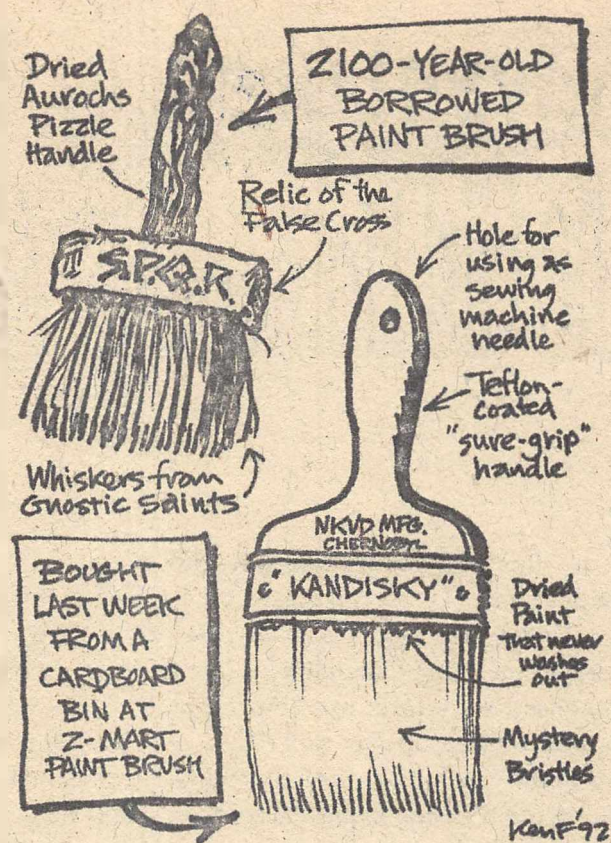


Anyway, in the early 1970s when I wasn't driving a cab or an ice cream truck, I was mostly a house painter. In 1976 I helped rehab a 150-year-old country store in central Pennsylvania and got a taste for old frame construction. Then I got into graphic arts work, microfilming documents in Washington D.C., eventually doing the staff photography for the agency. When I moved to New York in 1982 I found I could make a whole lot of money typing really fast into computers. This eventually lead to learning typesetting. But last winter I was laid-off from the type shop I'd been working at for the several years since moving here. Geri and I had just bought a second Mac. We had already figured out that I could help her in her business, which seems to be working. I worry less now about making a living and more about the holes in the gutters -- which I made last winter fighting the big ice dam on the roof. Water was pouring out of the dining room ceiling, filling up the space between the window and storm window, coming down the chandelier. It was like a scary scene from an early-settler stormy-adventure-on-the-prairie movie.

Geri's house, Toad Hall, is a 1911 classic. *Never boring. Never.* There's always something that needs poked at or taken apart or just simply admired. Right after I moved here, in fact, the South Minneapolis Official Housing Inspector took a really big interest in Toad Hall. He wrote up the nicest report detailing every loose railing, rusted gutter, peeled trim board, dangling cornice and yawning squirrel hole. Reminded me of the strict Pennsylvania automobile inspections. Those they don't have up here (except for emissions). Minnesotans don't need them. If you don't keep your car up you won't make it through the winter. They'll find you frozen behind the wheel in a snowdrift around about April.

So that set the agenda for my first couple years living here. I still manage to keep saying, "boy, it's lucky I *like* doing this stuff..." as I thrust my filthy, sweating arm up to the shoulder into a rotted squirrel-eaten eve looking for something solid to nail a 2x6 to. The wonder of it all is that there is always something *new*.

I moved here with a couple of electric drills, a circular saw, two sawhorses (which Jack Heneghan helped me build about 14 years ago for my first darkroom in Maryland... I built 3 in that state alone) numerous saws and hammers and files and chisels and levels and pliers and screwdrivers and wrenches and lots and lots of heavy-duty electrical extension cables. I like those. And a lot of paintbrushes (including



the one I borrowed from Craig Hughes in 1978 and which I mean to return one of these days). Now we've added a router and a jig saw and a sledge hammer and a couple of big aluminum extension ladders. And, wonder of all wonders, Geri has this amazing stud finder thing. I'd never used one before.

Wish the previous owner of Toad Hall had had one.

So, as I disassemble things and scrounge around for pieces to paste Toad Hall back together again with, I get to stand back and marvel at the



strange attempts at repairs and misinformed remuddling done over the last 80 years. I'm always real careful, of course, to ask "uh, Geri, you didn't...er...build that...uh, 'shelf'...out in the garage, did you?" making sure it wasn't something she did before I begin making smart ass remarks. I keep finding odd bits of wood jammed up under the eaves that don't really do anything, bizarre scraps, nailed up in areas that obviously need repairs, with an eclectic assortment of rusty bent nails. I mean, I scrounge used bits of things, drag lumber home from up the alley, have several boxes of odd scraps. But when I take an odd chunk of 2x4 to brace something, it's *braced*. It makes *sense*. It fits in with the structure around it. When I build a shelf, it's level, and it holds things. Heavy things. Isn't that the point? Apparently not to everyone. Remember the book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance"?

Geri's office is in the attic. The other week, as I put in the new attic stair treads, Geri wishfully mentioned wanting stair railings too. She asks for a lot. I inquired what the two wooden railings leaning by the chimney in the back attic were from. She said the former owner had mounted them up in the attic stairwell to please the FHA inspector. And then they'd fallen right off. Seems they missed the studs by 2 inches. (Do I hear Maxwell Smart here? "Missed it by *that* much!") Though even if they had found the studs, the 1" screws wouldn't have gone in much past the lathe.

I know where the studs are.

The other week I ran new circuits from the basement up to the attic to power Geri's laser printer and air conditioner. That was the most ambitious electrical work I've ever done and I learned a lot. I used to be far more scared of plumbing. When you make a mistake in an electrical circuit, you can leave the breaker off until you figure it out. If you make a mistake on the plumbing you keep the water for the whole house off while you figure it out. You might get real wet. Or, worse, end up paying a plumber a pile of money to come over and look at you with that eyeballs rolled up look. While building this darkroom (my 14th) I taught myself to sweat solder copper pipes, a major triumph, another mystery solved. But not on the first try. And that's what this is all about. Solving mysteries.

Having innumerable projects going at once all with seemingly insurmountable technical problems keeps you busy. The occasional sweet success spurs you on. Flashes of insight, notes scribbled and stuck up on the bathroom mirror at 4:00 AM, trading cunning discoveries with other hopelessly functional people, endlessly wandering the aisles of building supply stores. It's not just a job...it's a saga. You need to know, though, that the word "hobby" is a dirty word to me. I don't believe I have any hobbies, nor have I ever wanted any. I don't have time for that stuff and I get really offended when someone refers to what I'm doing as such a thing. At my last job I was explaining some new Macintosh discoveries to a co-worker and she said to me, "wow, you actually take this stuff seriously." Huh? What else do you do? You grab ahold of as much reality as you can tear off with both hands, glad that you have opposable thumbs, and you make what you will of it. Be a Cosmic Engineer.

Cosmic Engineer is actually Wilhelm Reich's term for people who work functionally and scientifically with orgone. I won't say I actually do *that*. That would be dangerous. No, I merely advocate striding purposefully about the world assuming that anything we want to understand, or build, we will, in time.

And I'm not talking just about home repairs here. Everything, material or intellectual, is open to you, as long as you respect the rights of others and the laws of physics. Courage keeps the fear of mistakes and failure and ridicule at bay, you keep forging ahead, so busy in the death-race against time that you have no real-time to beat yourself up over things that haven't worked. Not everything does. So be careful. Lock out that emergency switch. Watch where you put those hands. And wear those safety glasses!



# The Pig Roast

*as told by Martin Schafer*

No shit! There we were.\*

Back in 1983, Steve and Reen Brust and I (and Reen's father, Bill, and Alier and Carolyn and Corwin, plus John's stuff but not John) moved into the Courts of Chaos. After we had been there for nearly a year, we decided to have a big summer party. We thought about what we could do to make it a really special party, and, after a while, we came up with the idea of having a pig roast.

There was a guy at work who had talked about doing pig roasts, so I asked him how one went about getting a pig and roasting it. He gave me the name of a farmer to call, and told me where to rent a roaster. He said, "You just stick the spit through the pig, wrap it in chicken wire and cook it for about 14 hours. If you're going to keep it in a freezer for a while before cooking it, make sure to keep the body cavity open, or the insides won't get cold enough to prevent spoilage."

So I called up the rental place. Their biggest roaster, which could handle a hundred-pound pig, was \$35 plus \$25 if we didn't clean it afterwards. We could pick it up Friday and bring it back Monday. I reserved it for the third weekend from then. Next, I called the farmer and told him I wanted a roasting pig that weighed between 75 and 100 pounds. He said, "Fine. It'll be a dollar a pound. Do you want it dressed and debristled?" I knew enough to say "Yes."

Then he asked, "Do you want the head on or off?" I hadn't the faintest idea. Eventually I decided, "What the heck, leave the head on."

The upcoming party sparked another idea. For some time we'd had a problem. We went through a lot of Coke and Diet Coke. Something like eight to ten 12-packs a week. It was onerous hauling around that much pop. Two or three years before this, Minicon had begun to get Coke to bring in pop machines for the convention, which made parties much easier. Steven managed to convince the Coke distributor that it might be worth their while to install a Coke machine in our house. They would deliver it the evening before the party and, if our usage was high enough, we could keep it.

So our preparations proceeded apace. For some reason, not having enough other things to do, I wound up getting a waterbed during the week prior to the party. I broke only a couple of light fixtures getting the thing set up.

Friday before the party finally arrived. The plan was that we would pick up the roaster and the pig, put the pig in the freezer, and work on the house until about 1:30 in the morning. Then we would get the pig started by 2:00, so it would be ready around 4:00 or 5:00 the next afternoon.

I arrived at the rental place and picked up the roaster. It looked rather like an oil drum turned on its side with four legs added. There was a motor on one end that turned a square peg. The spit was about four feet long and had a square hole in its base that fit onto the peg. The top half of the roaster lifted off and inside there were baskets hung on the side that one filled with charcoal to provide the heat. There were also four square brackets with holes in them that fit on the spit and four long pins. When I asked what they were, the rental guy said, "They help hold the pig on the spit." I mentioned the pig's head and the rental guy said, "Oh, you've got to have the head off for this kind of roaster." Sigh.

I dropped the roaster at home and Steve and I went to get the pig. It turned out to be rather further than we thought, but we eventually found the farm. The pig was hanging from a tree in the farmer's front yard. It looked kind of large. I asked the farmer about that and he said, "Yep, it's a hundred and fifty pounds. Smallest one I had." Feeling slightly stunned, but unwilling to give up on the idea of the pig roast, we let the farmer put the pig in the back of the wagon and paid him with our last check.

\* I have it on reliable authority that this is how one starts a war story.



When I started the car, I noticed the gauge read empty. Steve and I spent the whole trip home biting our nails and waiting for the car to die, but we did make it. I helped take the pig out of the car, got checks, and went out for other supplies.

When I got back, Coke had come and gone. Steve and Reen told me they had been unable to carry the pig down to the basement, where the freezer was, but that one of the Coke guys had. I gave them the news that the head needed to come off and we sat and looked at each other for a while.

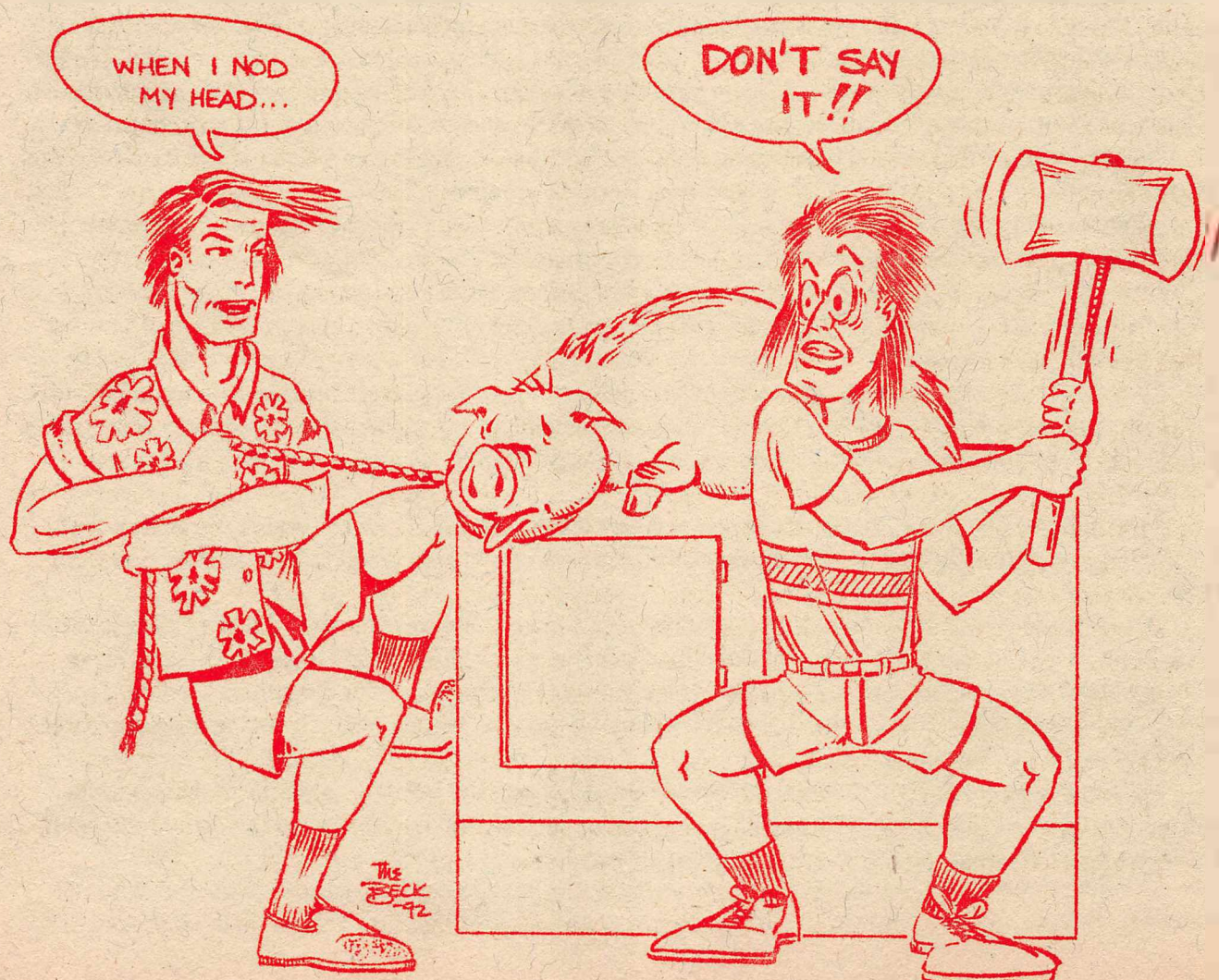
Steve grabbed the French chef's knife and he and I went down to the basement. We wrestled the pig out of the freezer and up onto the washer and dryer. Steve cut and cut but couldn't get through the spine. Finally we started to twist the head. I took a complete turn and a half before something popped and it came off.

We cleaned up the blood and put the pig back in the freezer. I couldn't get the body cavity to stay open, so I eventually filled it with frozen food. Then we turned to clean the house. During the course of this I noticed that my waterbed pedestal was falling apart. This made me very nervous, but there was no time to drain it now.

Well, 1:30 am rolled around, and we were nowhere near done with the house, but it was time to put the pig on. Steve and I went down and we tried to carry the pig up, but it was too heavy and our hands were too tired and we couldn't manage to carry it. Eventually, I got mad enough, and in a burst of adrenaline, draped it over my back and ran up the stairs.

We got the pig outside, and got the spit. And we looked at the pig. And we looked at the spit. And we looked at the pig. And the pig was longer than the spit. I went to the barn and came back with an axe.

We hacked off the hindquarters and forelegs (it was very satisfying to chop through the the pig's spine) and the torso that was left looked small enough to fit on the spit and into the roaster. So we





attempted to put the spit through the pig. We pushed and we strained, but it just wasn't working, until I thought of pounding it through with the back of the axe.

We actually had to pound it in twice, because the first time we forgot to attach the square metal brackets with the holes. And the next trick was trying to shove the pins through the pig in such a way that they went through the holes that were invisible because they were somewhere inside the pig. After about twenty minutes of trying, we realized that the pins had an oval cross section and would only go through the holes when they were in the right orientation. Afterward, you turned them ninety degrees to lock them in position.

Having at last dealt with the pins, we faced the task of wrapping the pig in chicken wire, to prevent the meat from sagging, or falling off, as it cooked. This involved rolling the pig in a piece of chicken wire, cutting all the little wires at the proper size and then twisting all the sharp little wires onto the mesh to hold the cylinder closed.

3:15 found us nursing our fingers, triumphantly staring at the wrapped pig on the ground at our feet. All we had left to do was put the spit on the peg, start the fire, and plug in the roaster. We picked up the hundred pounds of pig on the spit, and carried it over to the roaster, the ends of chicken wire stabbing into our wrists. And we tried to fit the hold in the base of the spit onto the peg. And we tried and we tried and we tried. And it just would not go, no matter what angle we tried it at, even though it had been happily sitting, fitting onto the peg, not two hours earlier.

At last, the reason for this mysterious behavior occurred to me. We had pounded the stake through the pig with the back of the axe (twice!). This had caused the metal wall of the socket in the base of the spit to bulge, and the hole was now smaller than the peg. I went and got a metal file and set to work on the hole.

About 4:30 we finally had the spit on the peg. We ran an extension cord out from the house to the roaster and the pig started to rotate. It was slightly off center and you could hear the difference in the motor, whether the heavy part was going up or down. We put our charcoal in the baskets and lit it. We had to squash the baskets down a bit for the pig to clear but it looked like the roasting could at last commence. We put the cover on. Steve agreed to take first watch, so Reen and I went to bed and got up about 10:00.

Steven told us it had rained for about an hour, but that it hadn't bothered the coals, and he went off to bed. Reen and I continued work on the house. People were expected at 2:00.

I was on the porch watching the pig when I suddenly heard a loud whooshing sound from inside the house. I raced inside, thinking my waterbed had burst, expecting to see a tidal wave rushing from my bedroom. But there was nothing to be seen. I finally realized the sound was coming from the Coke machine. One of the o-rings had broken and the CO<sub>2</sub> was rushing out.

I shut the tank off and went out to the hardware store to buy a new o-ring. When I got back and got out of the car, I noticed that heavy black smoke was pouring out of the roaster. I rushed over and took off the cover. Flames leapt six feet into the air. The pig was hanging down farther and the chicken wire had caught one of the baskets of coals, lifted it up, and dumped it out into the pool of hot fat in the bottom of the roaster.

I ran into the house, got the fire extinguisher, and put the pig out. Then I shoveled the coals out of the roaster, squashed the basket down further, refilled and lit the basket, restarted the roaster, and went inside.

A little while later a section of lights and appliances went off. We went down and flipped the circuit breaker on. It flipped right off again. The Coke machine was on that circuit, so I unplugged it and Steve went down to flip the circuit breaker on again. It flipped right off again. I heard something outside. I was looking out the window when Steven flipped the circuit on again. A huge blue flash shot up by the roaster as the circuit flipped off again.

I went outside and looked at the place where I had shoveled the hot coals onto the extension cord and sat down and keened (or perhaps gnashed my teeth). As it turned out, we did have another extension cord, and so before long the pig was once more roasting away.

The degree of off-centeredness slowly got worse and worse. The sound became "whiiiiine, whump! whiiiiine, whump!" Karen Johnson, an early arrival, was given a poker and sat defending the charcoal



baskets from the Damoclean porker. Once enough people had arrived, I, in a fit of madness, demonstrated that with a sufficiency of car jacks it was possible to reassemble a waterbed pedestal without draining the mattress.

Around 6:00 we gave up. It was becoming more and more difficult to lever the pendulous mass of pig over the baskets, and everyone was hungry. Between the raw inside and the extinguisher chemical outer crust, there was actually a fair amount of properly done, quite tasty (I was going to find it tasty no matter how it tasted) pork. Rare chunks were finished up in the microwave, and ultimately everyone had plenty to eat. There was general agreement that there had never been anything quite like this before.

A couple of final notes. Some months later we defrosted one of the legs and cooked it in the oven. It caused a grease fire. We tried to give the head to Bill Colsher, thinking he might do something interesting with it. The head got packaged up, but never made it out of the basement, and was discovered, sitting around, several weeks later. Fortunately, we recognized the package and threw it away without opening it.

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Client message left on the PROMote Communications business line:

*"Hi, Geri. I'm wondering if you're at all available before 1995.  
Could you give me a call and let me know?"*

December '91

---

**THE GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER MEDICAL FUND**  
*announces the*

**"WORLDCON-FOR-  
A-BUCK" RAFFLE**

**WHAT YOU GET:**

- 1). a chance to help defray George Effinger's medical costs.
- 2). a chance to see ConFrancisco. Grand Prize includes airline travel, membership, 4 nights hotel accomodations and meal allowance!
- 3). a good feeling.

**WHAT YOU DO:**

- 1). write your name, address and telephone number on as many index cards or 3"x5" sheets of paper as you like.
- 2). drop them in an envelope, enclosing one dollar for each chance, and mail them to:

The George Alec Effinger Medical Fund  
c/o NFSFA  
Post Office Box 500, Bridge Station  
Niagara Falls, NY 14305

- 3). Start packing.

**HELP US TO HELP GEORGE, AND GET A  
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# *Ignorant Savages with a Certain Artistic Flair*

*As revealed by Elise Matthesen*

(Chronicler's note: What follows are the footnotes to the original **Minicon 27 Microprogramming Implementation Handbook**, subtitled "Blame It On The Masons," which was tragically lost in a mysterious dirigible accident. Parties searching the wreckage for traces of the ill-fated Captain Clark found the footnotes stuffed into an empty tin that had once contained smoked eel.)

1. Elise "Big Snark" Matthesen, John "Juan Smiling Elk" Ladwig, Greg "Mad Shriner" Cotton, Tim "Doctor Mysterio" Szeliga, and Nevenah "Art Goddess" Smith. Nevenah lost contact with the team during the winter. Just prior to the convention the team recruited Rebecca "Rose Petal" Holmberg.
2. Budget? You mean there was a budget?
3. By maintaining a high standard of plausible deniability, which generally amounted to saying "We don't want to bother DD-B with trifles like this, do we?"
4. No elevators said "Nih!" That was a DavE thing. Our elevators did Other Stuff.
5. About 3 a.m., and the only one there was Steve Brust, who reportedly displayed considerable aplomb as the mist rolled out of the reddish glow framed by the elevator doorway and enveloped his band equipment. Mr. Cotton politely inquired, "Going down?"
6. It makes a better story that way, though, doesn't it?
7. A lot of dry ice, but we had concerns about breathable air if the CO<sub>2</sub> content got too high. Short trips are best, or an elevator equipped with breathing apparatus.
8. After which the whole Amalgamated Spleen thing was retroactively declared a microprogramming event following tradition and was roundly applauded.
- 8.5 We never found out either.
9. Blue mylar laced with silver. There was just enough to wrap the jacuzzi enclosure à la Christo. It was still up on late Monday, leading to speculation that it would stay up indefinitely because no hotel employee was authorized to take it down.
10. As evidenced by the wrapping later in the convention of Nevenah Smith in Red Tape, as reported in *Cube*.
11. And not just any ordinary hall costumes. "Babe-osity" is generally credited to either Rebecca Holmberg or Elise Matthesen, but may have arisen from a chance remark by Victor. See the "Conventions" issue of *Rune* for illustration. Bob and Fred seemed to like it. Todd Menton was completely crogged by it earlier.
12. A tragic vibrator accident.
13. None of your business, unless you have references.
14. 100 lbs. is *dry* weight; when water is added, considerably more oobleck results.



15. See accompanying lyrics. First performed on Monday at the Decomposing Dodo Party with a chorus of all assembled revelers and Nate Bucklin on guitar.
16. It certainly was.
17. Followup includes mention in a report on covert dumping of toxic wastes in the metro area of "a putrid whitish substance discovered in a hotel parking lot." If they only knew.
18. The sticky hands worked on a "frog tongue principle," and were well adapted for grabbing small bits of paper at a distance of ten or twelve feet. The Chairman had to be dissuaded from using one to snatch up the brunch tab of diners situated directly below the Veranda walkway where the Chairman was loitering.
19. More bubbles might not have helped, since we were asked to desist by non-Con guests who were being chased by huge bubbly flocks through the lobby and pool areas. Still, they certainly seemed to amuse escalator passengers.
20. The Lawrence Welk theme song, one out of five. The remaining four out of five? "Tiny Bubbles."
21. Little zeppelins made out of blue and magenta plastic running up and down the Consuite bar.
22. "Ignorant Savages With A Certain Artistic Flair," from the Egypliaphiles in the ill-fitting tunics with the tomb-painting stares. Lecture performed at the Triune Masonic Temple. Declared the "First Microprogramming Event" by the team, who attended en mass the week before the convention, seeking illumination.
23. Elise and Greg would have, if only to see how they worked the pitch and turned the tip, but the rest of the team had a surfeit of pseudoscience, so we left early and went somewhere else to laugh real hard.
24. Not without a lot more equipment. And possibly major muscle relaxants.
25. "Pyramid" was, for example, translated as "fire in the middle."
26. Yeah, right. And we have some swamp land in scenic Lauderdale to talk to you about, too.
27. They were, in fact, bona fide medical devices. Sort of. Patent medicine sorts of things, to tell the truth. Ultraviolet wands, electro-stimulating "strengthening devices," that sort of thing.
28. We don't know. We went to bed early, and only the occasional giggle or thump was heard through the wall we shared with the Green Room. We earnestly hoped it was educational and then we put pillows over our ears.
29. But it didn't work very well, although the balloon and tank in the pool sure attracted troubleshooters quickly. You'd have to ask Greg.
30. Which given the total cubic amount of water in the jacuzzi, brings the whole project into reasonable scope. Transporting the dry ice poses no additional difficulties.
31. "Rover," the enforcement agent guarding the perimeter of the Village in "The Prisoner." Our balloon was red, but it was a conceptual piece. Getting it to rise from the pool bottom was beyond the available means, but plans have been drawn for future testing.
32. Why not?
33. Greg Cotton will be heading the team next time. Look for the genuine eye-and-pyramid logo! Accept all substitutes and declare them Microprogramming events! Do not put in eye! Dilute! Dilute! Okay!

Here endeth the text.

"Oh, snow and rain are not enough! Oh, we must make some brand-new stuff! So feed the fire

oobleck tumble down. On every street, in every town! Go make the wondrous oobleck fall! Oh, bring down oobleck on us all!"

## Oobleck in the Bathtub

It was on a Sunday evening when the trouble all began  
A guy from microprogramming was loaded with a plan,  
And a hundred pounds of cornstarch, and a really evil grin;  
He went up to the bathtub and he dumped the powder in

They say that in a bathtub you can have a lovely time  
If you fill it up with Jell-O, and especially if it's lime  
Now, Jell-O may be pleasant, but it's obvious to see  
That I'm kinda stuck on oobleck 'cause it's kinda stuck on me

### CHORUS:

*There's oobleck in the bathtub; the con ain't over yet  
It's pleasantly disgusting and it's thick and white and wet  
We know Hotel Security would say it's got to go  
So there's oobleck in the bathtub, but no one's s'posed to know*

We figured that the Radisson just wouldn't understand  
It would only make 'em nervous of they knew what we had planned  
They're overly protective and they're easily upset  
And they wouldn't grok a hundred pounds of thick and white and wet

They're pretty good at dealing with the stuff they've never seen  
Like the catapulting lizards and Amalgamated Spleen  
And the haunted elevator that was full of eerie mist,  
But the oobleck in the bathtub would really get 'em pissed

### CHORUS

When you move it fast it crumbles, but it oozes if you're slow  
You can pile it in a mountain, and wait for it to flow  
It's a little bit like quicksand, and it almost swallowed Greg  
By the time you get your ankle out, it's got your other leg

We know it's kind of friendly, we know it likes to play  
We know that if you grab it, it will slowly ooze away  
We know it isn't toxic, it's safe beyond a doubt  
The only thing we didn't know was how to get it out

### CHORUS

day gets light, Go, magic smoke! Go high! Go high! Go rise into the kingdom's sky! Go make the



with wet mouse hair, Burn an onion. Burn a chair. Burn a whisker from your chin. And burn a long  
sour lizard skin. Burn yellow twigs and burn red rust. And burn a stocking full of dust. Make magic smoke, green, thick and hot!

We thought of adding water that would liquify the sludge  
But when we tried diluting it, it sank and wouldn't budge  
We considered high explosives but didn't wanna be  
Responsible for oobleck at escape velocity

We finally got it out of there with fingernails and prayers  
And assembled a disposal squad to smuggle it downstairs  
We sent them to the parking lot to dump it in a heap  
So it won't come oozing back again and get us in our sleep

CHORUS

So early Monday morning we went out and looked around  
We figured we should find the place we dumped it on the ground  
And we found a guy in coveralls whose lips were kind of tight  
Standing at the border of a spreading pool of white

He seemed a little croggled so politely we inquired  
And he answered with intensity, "It's time that I retired.  
There's a lot of funny messes after which I've had to clean,  
But that's the biggest friggin' pigeon that the world has ever seen."

CHORUS:

*There's oobleck in the bathtub; the con ain't over yet  
It's pleasantly disgusting and it's thick and white and wet  
We know Hotel Security would say it's got to go  
So there's oobleck in the bathtub, but no one's s'posed to know*

---

"I think the oobleck is going to live on in fable and song,  
not to mention the parking lot."

Karen Cooper  
4/20/92

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Filk lyrics by Elise Matthesen, written to "Crying in the Bathtub" by Nate Bucklin  
"Wizard's Chant" from *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* © Dr. Seuss

(It sure smells dreadful, does it not?) That means the smoke is now just right. So, quick! Before the



## Slugs 'N Fungus

by Jack Targonski

*"You've got to remember to take the utensil out of your mouth before you start chewing."*

Elise Matthesen  
4/19/92

It seems that the Devil decided to go for a walk one day. As he approached a railroad crossing, he thought that he could beat the oncoming train. He almost made it, but the train cut off his tail. The Devil jumped and bellowed and swore.

He assailed the first man he met and demanded, "What can I do? How can I reattach my tail?"

"Why, You'll have to take it to the liquor store," replied the man.

"The liquor store? Why the liquor store?" demanded the Devil.

"Well, because that's the only spirit re-tailer we've got."

This bit of whimsy was passed on to our table of eight at Chez Colette by a slightly tipsy elderly gentleman in a maroon sport coat and perhaps the worst flowered tie produced by western civilization. There was a second joke that I have mercifully forgotten.

He and his companion had stopped to gawk at the three members of our party who were wearing the ends of French bread loaves over their noses. (It helps to wear glasses if you wanna try this at home, kids.)

These two gentlemen were a marked contrast to the rather elegantly-dressed and coiffed lady who probably needed a chiropractic visit from the dirty looks she kept throwing over her shoulder on her way to the ladies' room. Her ten-year-old daughter seemed to think we were pretty neat, however.

Chez Colette is a brasserie. It is the middle-priced French restaurant of three in the Hotel Sofitel, Minicon's erstwhile overflow hotel. Word has it that the Sofitel is not completely pleased with this arrangement, catering to a quieter clientele. However, the Radisson looms the better part of twenty stories above the Sofitel, and when it sells out for Minicon, I suppose some leverage can be applied.

Colette was a French romance writer of some renown in the '20s, according to the first page of the menu. The decor of the restaurant named for her was conceived as a place in which she would be comfortable whiling away an evening. Yes, there is



brass, and comfortable chairs and benches, attractive and understated fabrics, and HATS! Hats on the coat tree, women's hats adorn the walls (fortunately high enough so the people I eat with can't reach them). All in all, a quiet, not quite elegant (the waiters don't wear tuxedos), conservative restaurant.

I don't remember whose idea it was back there in '85, but someone suggested dinner at this wonderful French restaurant on Sunday night of Minicon. Since gluttony has never had a difficult time elbowing its corpulent way to the top of my personal list of Cardinal Sins, I became part of the dinner party. There were about twelve of us.

Chez Colette is not overly busy on Sunday evenings. That Easter evening it was close to empty. Having paid some dues in the restaurant biz, I recognized the \$ signs lighting up in staff's eyes as we were seated. I don't think that they were quite prepared for these convention burnouts, however. The mood quickly deteriorated from slight awe at our surroundings to, "This place was put here for us to goof on."

Seated at a long bench with small tables pushed together to form one long one, it wasn't long before a few of our party turned in their seats to kneel on the bench and peer at the few diners on the other side. This created quite a surprise for the dark-suited gentlemen and their ladies in the smokeless section beyond the etched glass and brass rail.

Conversation was lively, punctuated by short bursts of hilarity. I remember being moved to recount the long version of my trip to California in 1971. (Another story... suffice it to say I later shoulder shrugged my way through *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.) At one point, Fred (pre Levy) Haskell, seated across the table on the bench to my right, was laughing hard enough to pitch over on his side. We retrieved him before he rolled under the table, but declared him no fun for falling right over.

Our waiter (trainee) made it through the appetizer course before calling for help. You see, we knew that we wouldn't get out of control, but they didn't. He was faced with things like Ed Sunden, generally referred to as "the large furry creature" by his wife, ordering two dinners. Ed claimed no knowledge of French food and wanted two meals in case he didn't like the first one.

As the salad arrived, our new waitress (supervisor) also arrived with a 30 inch peppermill and startled Ed, who leapt to his feet brandishing a loaf of French bread with a cry of "En Garde" and assumed a fencing stance. We knew we were gonna be OK when the waitress parried the bread with the peppermill. I came close to physical pain in an attempt to keep from imitating Fred.





And so was a tradition born unto our time. With the exception of 1986, each year's Easter dinner has been celebrated at Chez Colette in the august company of such luminaries as Bob Berlien, Kathy Routliffe, Geri Sullivan, Reed Waller, Kate Worley, Peter Toluzzi, Marie Mayer, Kay Drache, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Nate Bucklin, Elise Matthesen, John Ladwig, Gordon Garb, Jeff Schalles, and, this year, the redoubtable Don Fitch.

I remember ordering the salmon that first year. It's been my choice several times since. Chez Colette is also the only place I've ever tasted wild boar (Po'k Chops is Po'k Chops). The Filet Mignon in cracked pepper sauce is outstanding, even if your idea of the ideal steak, like Berlien's, is to be let loose in a cow pasture with a chainsaw and a BIC lighter.

The best deal is to order a complete dinner, which includes appetizer, salad, main course, dessert, and costs from \$20 to \$25. Add funds for a cocktail, wine (or a lovely 22 oz. bottle of Fischer Alsatian amber beer) coffee, and tip. It's not difficult to top \$40 for dinner. This year's swordfish steak stuffed with scallops and Swiss cheese was worth every penny.

The intervening years have had their ups and downs. Our closest brush with a bad experience came in '87 or '88. We had an older waiter, very French, who thought our role was to conform with his idea of proper dinner decorum. Poor little man, we never saw him again. I believe that was also the time I had a veal dish with artichokes and too much lemon in the sauce for my taste. (I know, I know, I shouldn't eat things that are force fed in tiny pens where they can't move until they are slaughtered. I don't do it very often, and somehow pizza Oscar just doesn't quite make it.)

*"I'll start with the slugs."*

Bob Berlien, on several occasions

Six escargot are served on a dimpled metal plate, each basking in its own small pond of garlic butter. Now eating these little buggers is something like chewing the eraser off the back end of a No.2 pencil. But the herbed garlic butter is made to be sopped up with pieces of the French loaf laid out on the table between the diners. I always observe a moment of silence after this course, just to see if I can hear my arteries clogging. Then I think about skipping the main course and ordering more.

In November of 1990, Falcon was held at a hotel nearby and a non-Easter dinner was observed at Colette. The chef prepared the snails in a puff pastry filled with a burned brown sauce. We filled out about ten customer comment cards complaining about this travesty, and haven't seen it on the menu since. I should note that Slugs 'N Fungus is Berlien's idea for the name of a French restaurant he'd like to open.

*"We are conservatives in our own way... We need our own traditions, our own rituals, our own liturgy. AND WE NEED OUR OWN WAITER!"*

Kathy Routliffe

4/19/92

We met Richard at that November dinner. Picture a taller, thinner, and younger Robin Williams, with a sense of humor to match. Chance made him our waiter that evening and he joined right into the spirit of things. At one point, confronted with Kathy's best Bucky Beaver teeth (you gotta see it), he simply dropped a napkin over her face and walked away without a word.

Such interactive service is frowned upon by Sofitel managerial types. One such strode by our table wearing a very severe look directed toward our waiter, who was by that time wearing a napkin crafted into a hat. We lavishly praised the service for our dinner on comment cards at the end of the evening. Richard tells us that particular manager is no longer with the hotel.

We made the mistake of not requesting Richard last Easter. We did call him over to chat and he loudly lamented our lack of foresight, returning several times to toss barbs in our direction.

Bob Berlien: *"Richard, go back to your station!"*

Richard: *"No, I'm going to sit here and make you get indigestion."*



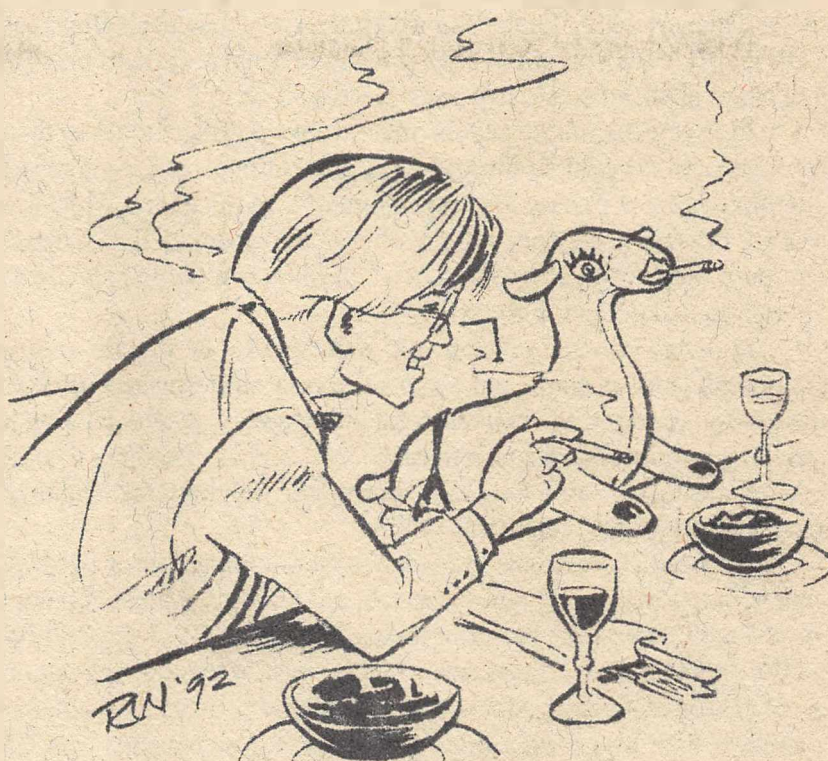
I believe it was 1989 when I found myself present at the founding of the Brain Crips Society. The dinner conversation was studded with tales of epilepsy, narcolepsy, manic depression and yes, Virginia, your migraines count, too. The motto, "I think, therefore I'm fucked up," was coined, along with an alternate, "A mind is a terrible thing." I'm sure their fanzine, tentatively titled *Fits and Stars*, will be out Real Soon Now.

1990 was the year of the hanging spoons. By this time other folks from Minicon had discovered Colette and we found ourselves in an L-shaped arrangement with another table of 10 or 12 friends and acquaintances. It might have been Gordon Garb who first hung a spoon from his nose at the other table. Soon Tappan King was wearing an entire place setting on his face, and others joined in. (Don't bother to deny it. Ve haf pikchurs.)

*"That's right, Richard was  
two years ago. We had  
a woman with the sheep."*

Geri Sullivan  
4/19/92

After hosting the second Snotty Elitist Minicon Music Party in 1991, we found ourselves with a table of 11. Berlien was chided for leaving his date, an inflatable black sheep which hung from the chandelier at our party, back at the Radisson. Between ordering and the arrival of the now-mandatory snails, Bob popped back to the room to correct his oversight. Our party was evened out by the sheep, still in garter belt and stockings. An extra salad was ordered and the smoking cigarette taped to her snout was a particularly nice touch.



*"I'm terribly sorry, Marie. I was aiming for Jack."*

Elise Matthesen  
4/19/92

Dessert choices arrive on a cart. I always wonder at that point whether to indulge after the more-than-satisfying meal, the weekend's worth of parties, drinks, sleep deprivation, and general exhaustive merry-making. The answer is a resounding, "OF COURSE!" I usually opt for the fresh fruit custard. They also do obscene things with chocolate. This year's Easter cake had wonderfully tossable jelly beans, several of which rattled and bounced from one end of our table to the other.

The stroll back to the Radisson is usually taken at a more leisurely pace, except for the year it snowed. (On Easter, for Chrissake! Ah, Minnesota!) Back to the dwindling joviality of a Sunday night at a major convention, the music, the bheer (usually), the oobleck. Sure wish I could have found a verb for that pseudosentence. Anyway, our Sunday evening dinner saves the night from being a pale shell of the three previous evenings. So, should you need to find me on Easter evening, check one of Richard's tables.



# WRITE TO LIVE, LIVE TO WRITE

"Street fair food booth prep cook" is one of those writerly interesting jobs — the kind that when you see it listed on the back cover flap of a book, you think "how interesting," whereas the writer probably thought "this sucks, I gotta get out of it."

To make a Philly Cheese "The Feast From the East" Steak Sandwich, you start by measuring out two and a half pounds of sliced steak. If the meat has thawed, it's slimy with blood. If it's still frozen, you have to hack it apart with a knife. You weigh the meat on a scale that says **NOT LEGAL FOR TRADE PORTION CONTROL**. Then you cut a ten-pound log of "coarse ground beef" into quarters. Each quarter will go with one batch of sliced steak, five pounds altogether.

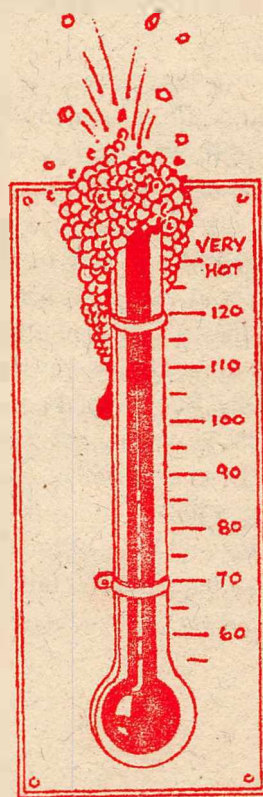
After pouring a little canola oil onto a prep grill, you dump the meat in. Then you chop it with cleavers until it's cooked through, but still a little pink. This takes fairly constant attention, but you can let the meat simmer in its juice for a while if you need to restock the cup supply or refill the cheese bin or empty the garbage box or weigh out more meat or measure out a chicken sandwich (which people order just enough to make it get in the way).

If the day is cool, the job is hot. If the day is hot, the job is very hot. If the food booth is busy, soon your arms are waxen with grease and your feet slide on the ground. You put the cooked meat into a prep pan, and set it on a counter until one of the front cooks takes it to make sandwiches. The idea is to have two pans of cooked meat, one batch cooking and another weighed out. The other prep cook could handle it, but I fell a little behind.

The front cooks make sandwiches by dumping four or five big handfuls of vegetables — white and purple onions, red and green bell peppers, mushrooms — on the grill. Then they pour the "special sauce" (oil, vinegar and Italian seasoning) on the vegetables and dice them with cleavers. When the vegetables are stirred, great clouds of vinegary steam drift up into the faces of the cook and the people waiting in line. It's a surprisingly pleasant smell, sharp and clean. The other smell is the grease of the cooked meat, so the vegetable smell is preferable. After the vegetables are cooked, the meat is chopped in.

The meat and vegetables are then shoved over to the "cool" (120 degrees) part of the grill. Then they're lined up in rows, three sandwiches long, and as many as five rows across the grill. Once the sandwiches are lined up, shredded cheese is spread out across the top, then buns put on top of the cheese. If the cashiers can, they help the front cook put down the cheese and buns. When a customer comes up, you put a foil wrapper on top of the bun, shove a spatula under it, and turn the mess over so the bun is in your hand. There's usually some meat and cheese left on the grill, which is then shoved to the side to start another sandwich later.

If the booth is busy, everyone works nonstop. The adrenaline level gradually increases until one becomes something of a robot, calling out to the customers "Order on the left and right, pick up in the



## BY LUKE MCGUFF



middle" or "you got a receipt, I got a sandwich." The cashiers and drink pullers are girls. The prep cook and the grill cooks are men.

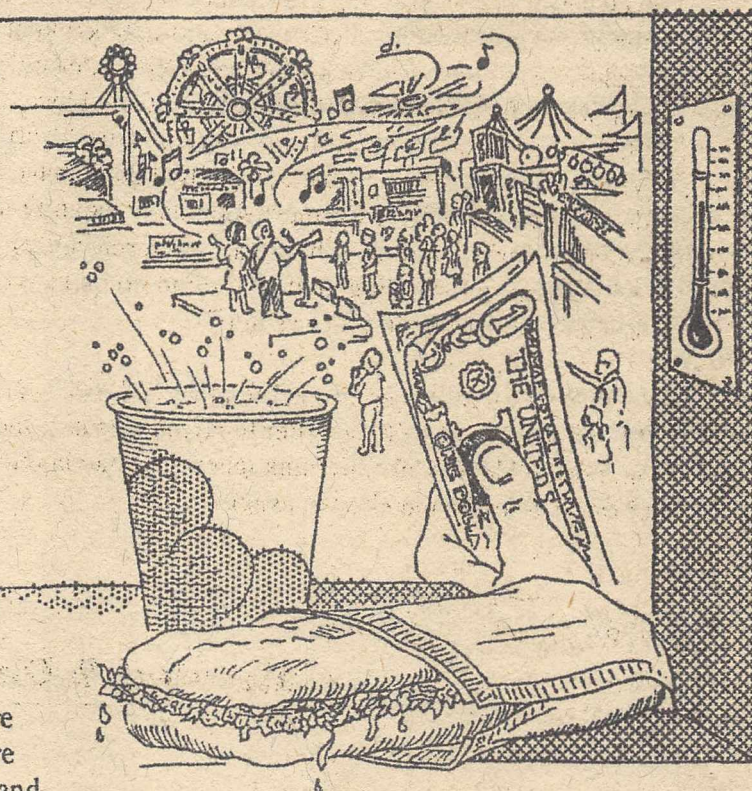
I thought the major component of "writerly interesting" to the job would be working at Seattle's summer fairs — U District, Fremont, Folklife, Bumbershoot, many others — and perhaps getting a little info on the kind of people that work there. So far, I've only worked two, the U District Street Fair and Folklife. Folklife is a big fair, held on the grounds of Seattle Center (where the Space Needle is) over Memorial Day Weekend, Friday through Monday. There are at least ten music stages, and more than a hundred craft booths. Several thousand people go each day, for a total of 28,000 or more for the weekend.

One interesting sociological factoid is that food booths trade with each other. On Friday, I went up to the coffee booth and said I worked at Philly's, could I have a tall double latte? The cashier said sure, then called out, "Hey, we got a trade at Philly's." Turning back to me, she said they had trades at the pizza booth, the frankfurter booth, a couple of the Vietnamese and Thai booths, and the piroshky booth. The coffee was awful, though, and pretty soon we went to the QFC, a grocery store just outside the fairgrounds.

What I like about fairs is the sonic collage — the jam of sounds from people talking, musicians playing, performers rapping, whatever. Folklife was great for that. There were big circles of drummers, jugglers, magicians, pick-up bands, hacky sackers, strollers, dates, friends, families.

Walking through the fair, the sonic collage swirls around you until a moment of pure music comes through and clarifies everything. This happened Friday, when I walked past a small stage where a mandolin and guitar duo were playing. The two dozen or so listeners were completely enrapt, and I thought that the musicians were not so much "playing" the music as they were its conduit — that all their hours of practice and rehearsal and finger training had allowed them to open a doorway into the music universe and transmit parts of it to the physical universe. It didn't matter if the music was purely improvised or if every note had been written down, they were free in the music. There was a rollingness to the music, a pitch and yaw. The only words I heard them sing were "stormy seas," but the music had the ocean in it.

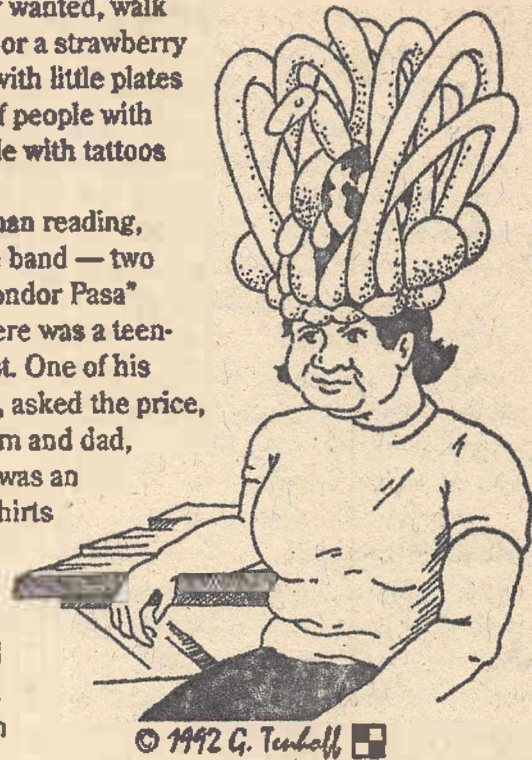
With this much happening, there is a simultaneity that leads to a level of coincidence that I find beautiful. On Friday, as the festival opened, I stood with a small group of friends near a booth that sold bells and gongs. I told a bad joke, and before the rest of us had recuperated, someone in the booth rang a gong. That was funnier than the joke. On Sunday, when Folklife was at its peak, I sat on a bench near the fountain. Across the way was the drum circle, a steel-drum band and small groups of jugglers performing for each other. Something happened that got the drum circle going full tilt, and the steel drum band picked up their pace to finish a song. I looked up to see a juggler doing a waterfall with what looked like fifteen bright green tennis balls. The drum circle, the juggler and the steel drum band all finished at the same time, the last few balls falling bam bam bam bam out of the sky in time with the last few beats of the music, followed by cheering for a different event. Or maybe the air was cheering for life. I felt lifted up and exhilarated, and whipped out my notebook to scribble a wish that life could be *this much* all the time. Well, maybe not all the time.





I liked it that people could be themselves. Dress how they wanted, walk around, sell little trinkets, play and sing a bit, get a funnel cake or a strawberry shortcake — Monday I saw some people walking *into* Folklife with little plates of food and I thought, oh yeah, warm up exercises. Hah! Lots of people with tattoos, one of the guys at Philly's said "There's too many people with tattoos these days. I'm going to have all mine erased."

People sat on benches or on the grass, I saw a young woman reading, another woman sketching the guitarist of a Peruvian band. The band — two guitars, bass, bass drum, two wood flutes — was playing "El Condor Pasa" (which we know as "I'd rather be a spider than a snail") and there was a teenager leaning against a tree selling ten dollar tapes hand over fist. One of his customers was a chubby boy in a Ross Perot t-shirt who ran up, asked the price, and ran back a couple seconds later. He walked back to his mom and dad, pouty sister and baby sib in the stroller, waving the tape like it was an international trade agreement. They all wore different Perot t-shirts and buttons, which fact elucidated the comment "God, I love America" from a large, emphatic woman — she gestured with her fist as she spoke — wearing a balloon hat that could have been made by Salvador Dali for Carmen Miranda. Pink and red arches swooped nearly a yard over her head, centerpieced by a purple "balloonosaurus" standing next to a round green balloon with a world map printed on it. She was into it.



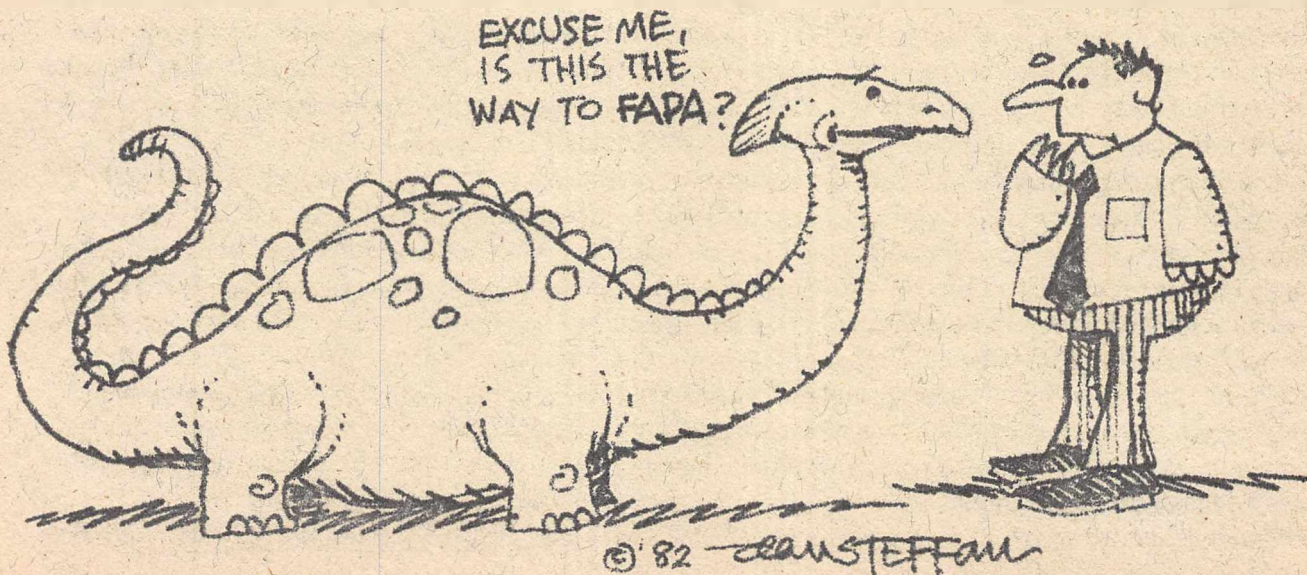
The first version of this essay (written for English 201 at school) was a serious socioeconomic analysis of the purpose of being a writer today, but it made me gag with pretension (believe it or else). Years from now, I'll look back and think, geeze, if I had been able to describe the *real* balloon hat, I wouldn't have had to cheapen it with exaggeration.

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I-94 Billboard, western Wisconsin:

## Unleaded & Delicious

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# Hanging out at the Hinckley Hilton

by Rob Hansen

How often have you read convention reports full of side-splittingly hilarious anecdotes about the antics of bunches of wacky, fun-loving fans and thought to yourself: "Who the hell are these people, anyway?" Recognising the problem, this report includes, at no cost or use to the reader, a selective *Dramatis Personae*:

- |                  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
| Sarah Prince     | - | Toothy Bostonian. Likes chewy young Englishmen.   |
| Jack Heneghan    | - | Irish ancestry. Velcro hair.  |
| Vicki Rosenzweig | - | Bubbly, bouncy, rarely without a smile. Makes you sick, doesn't it?   |
| D. Potter        | - | Tall.   |
| Denial           | - | A river in Egypt.   |
| Mark Richards    | - | Appears darkly brooding, even when he isn't. Reputed to be a dead ringer for Elvis under all that hair. Maybe he is Elvis. Should be photographed behind a supermarket checkout, and made to sing 'Heartbreak Hotel' at his next con, so we can decide for ourselves before calling the Enquirer. |
| Vijay Bowen      | - | Dark and slender. In certain situations is so energetic that she could, via the miracle of jump-leads, be used to power a number of major electrical appliances.  |
| Martin Smith     | - | English. Chewy.   |
| Avedon Carol     | - | Talented, dynamic, legendary, capable of doing dreadful things to the writer while he sleeps if she doesn't like what he's written.   |

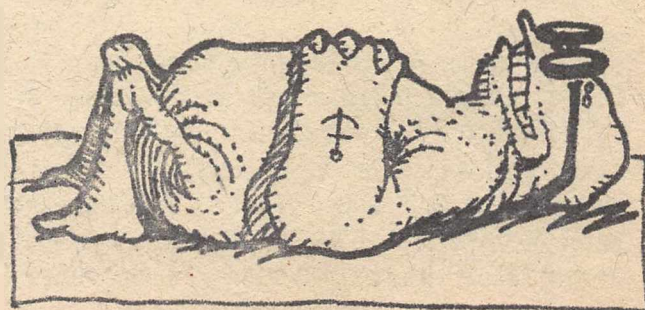
I take my responsibilities as Martin Smith's fannish mentor very seriously indeed but, being the ungrateful wretch he is, Martin is often woefully unappreciative of my efforts on his behalf, as anyone who has read my earlier accounts of his ongoing fannish education will know only too well. Still, we were at an American convention and, since I know American fandom better than he does, I decided to give Martin the benefit of my knowledge.

"The best way for you to break the ice at a room party and get yourself noticed," I told him, "is for you to drop your trousers, bend over, and offer your services as a novelty bottle-opener."

Martin wasn't terribly enthusiastic about this idea, even after I assured him that the bottle-caps could be easily removed later by any competent proctologist, which just goes to show what a stick-in-the-mud he can be. I don't understand his attitude. At various points during the con I told other people about my suggestion for Martin and they all thought it was a good idea, too, so what was his problem?

It was May 1992, Memorial Day Weekend, and we were at DISCLAVE. The hotel was called the Washington DC Hilton and Towers, but known to all and sundry as the Hinckley Hilton, this being where John Hinckley III had failed to assassinate Ronald Reagan, noted amnesiac and President, a decade earlier, thus dooming the US economy. (One of my time-travel fantasies is to switch the guns used by Hinckley and Mark Chapman.)

If the con had a definite starting point for me, then it was out on the poolside patio where, despite the canopy, it was blisteringly hot. Here Avedon and I chewed the fat with Jack Heneghan, and Vol & Jay Haldeman, later being joined by Martin, Linda



Bushyager, Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenberg, and Bill Wagner. Strange to see those New Yorkers and not see Stu Shiffman, but he and Andi Shechter have long since relocated to Seattle and couldn't be with us. We missed you, people.

Fish are fine if you're a seal or own an aquarium, but I've never considered them fit for human consumption. So it was when Avedon organised a dinner party to a sea'food' restaurant, Martin and I slipped out to sample the greasy delights of the nearby Hardee's burger emporium, where we bumped into local fan Walter Miles. Now Walter is, I'm sure, a splendid fellow, but be wary of accepting medical advice from this man. His ideas on the taking of medication are not merely odd but downright peculiar. I became aware of his unorthodox views a few days earlier when we played cards at Avedon's folks' house. In the middle of the game, I was suddenly stricken with a bout of wind that felt like a fatal heart attack. Avedon fetched a bottle



of antacid and I quickly uncapped it, unaware that I was about to trip over a Cultural Difference. I upended the opaque plastic bottle in order to shake out a couple of antacid tablets ... and watched stupidly as the contents of the bottle, the *liquid* contents, sloshed out into my hand and all over the table. Avedon did what you expect in such a situation from the person who has promised to honour and cherish you, and who respects and looks up to you: she collapsed into helpless giggles. Not wanting to dignify such unseemly behaviour with a response I turned to Walter, who'd sat calmly through the whole incident, and demanded to know why he hadn't stopped me.

"I thought," he said, adopting the sort of tone one uses when explaining something obvious to a small child, "that you were pouring it into your hand so that you could lap it up."

Avedon thinks Walter would have women all over him if he grew his hair out and lost his moustache, a strategy that would almost certainly have also worked for Martin Smith. If Martin didn't already have long hair, that is. And no moustache. Tough luck, Martin.

With Walter in Hardee's was Joe Mayhew, organiser of the Disclub, a socialising area that was essentially a large con-suite with free soda on tap and, from eight 'til midnight every evening, free beer. As well as the obligatory lager, the Disclub also carried a different dark beer every night. On Friday night this was Old Dominion, which wasn't at all bad, and I quaffed my first glass of it with Alexis Gilliland shortly after the bar area opened. People were still arriving at DISCLAVE at this point, and two who turned up while I was in the Disclub were Vijay Bowen, who gave me a big hug, and Mark Richards. It was getting late now and the parties were starting, so we decided to check them out.

The most enjoyable of the parties was the one Moshe and Lise traditionally throw on the first night of the convention, so we hung out with them for a couple of hours. Martin had yet to loosen up, and seemed a little out of things.

"There's only one way you're going to get into the swing of things," I said.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Why, by offering your services as a novelty bottle-opener, of course."

"No way," said Martin. He was determined to be difficult about this.

I breakfasted with Martin in Hardee's the following morning, after which I wandered into the Disclub. Here, to my great surprise, I encountered Hope Kiefer. She and husband Karl now live in nearby Philadelphia, having moved there from mythical Madison. There were here with another couple (whose names I failed to record in my diary), and raising funds (for something I also forgot to record) by selling plates of food. Following a brief chat with Hope and Co., I spend a couple of hours discussing many things, but mainly World War II, with Mark Richards, and a couple more chatting to Ted & Lynda White, rich brown, Dan & Lynn Steffan, Steve & Elaine Stiles, Lenny Bailes, and Walter Miles. Also, somewhere in there, I talked fanhistory with Dick Lynch, who was doing a lot of work on the long overdue book edition



of Harry Warner's *A WEALTH OF FABLE*. From this list you might assume that I was really getting into *DISCLAVE*, but in fact I felt oddly and inexplicably out of things most of Saturday, detached and dissatisfied. It wasn't until the evening's disco that I finally felt part of the convention again.

Dancing has always been one of life's great joys for me, and before discovering fandom I used to hit the discos of Cardiff, my home town, two or three nights a week with a friend who felt the same about dancing. If we met women, that was a bonus, but the dancing was always the main thing. Ten years ago I could dance all night, only missing those numbers I actively disliked, but no longer. Someone who still can, and who did at the *DISCLAVE* disco, is Vijay Bowen. We danced, but I could manage no more than five consecutive tracks at a time before needing a break. I was stiff as a board when I woke the next morning, but it was worth it. Thanks, Vijay.

By the time the disco was over, and it was time to party, I was drenched. Multiple rivulets of perspiration were running down my face, and I knew what that meant. I have 'unfortunate' hair. It looks alright when I've just washed it, but within hours it starts getting wilder and wilder, gradually twisting into shapes that are, so I'm assured, highly amusing. Soaked with sweat after the disco my hair looked merely risible but within a few hours, as it dried, it would cause great laughter among Martin Smith. Or maybe not. At the tartan-laden Glasgow in '95 party (they even had on display, I swear, a tartan Rubik's Cube) he didn't seem to notice my hair, possibly because he was so intent on troughing down the snacks on offer. The party, though enjoyable, was pretty quiet, a situation I was sure Martin could change.

"What this party needs to liven it up ..." I began.

"Forget it, Rob," said Martin, with uncharacteristic forcefulness, "I'm not being a novelty bottle-opener for anyone!"

"Not even," I coaxed, "if I get the ball rolling by producing a bottle of beer and saying: 'Get your farting gear around *that*'?"

"No, Rob, not even then."

I woke the next morning as Martin was rising (Avedon was already up and about) and couldn't quite believe what I was seeing. I tried rubbing the sleep from my eyes, but it made no difference. I would never have expected such a thing, such aberrant behaviour, of an adult human being, but there was no denying the evidence of my own eyes: Martin was wearing pyjamas.

"Martin," I told him, "you're wearing pyjamas."

He was unshocked by this revelation, which destroyed my final faint hope that he'd been abducted by alien tailors while he slept.

"I always wear pyjamas," he replied, not even slightly embarrassed.

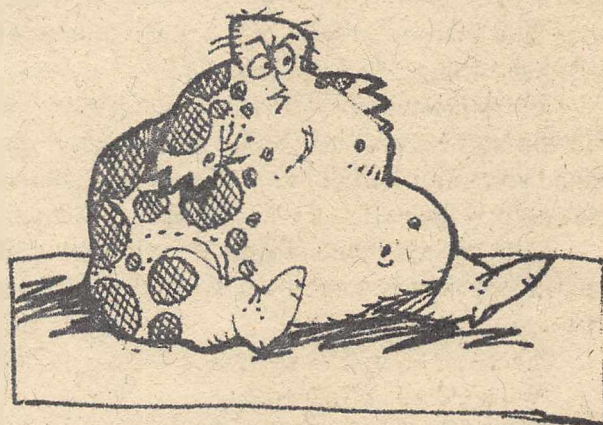
Of course, if alien tailors *had* abducted him they could also have worked on his brain. (I always thought it needed a little darning, and maybe a new hem.) But no; I was clutching at straws.

"God, Martin," I said, disgustedly, "sometimes you can be so *English*!"

I was shaken. For all I knew Martin had other secret vices. Maybe \*shudder\* he plays golf.

Golf, I'm convinced, is just an excuse for usually sensible people to wear hideous trousers. In much the same way, SF conventions provide an excuse for people even more sensible than golfers (you never see a fan using a long stick and vast amounts of energy to send small clumps of earth a few feet, after all) to dress as warrior women, space troopers, barbarians, and otherwise prance around in leather. Though not usually one for costumes, at least not outside the bedroom, I decided to wear one on this Sunday: namely, a Green Lantern ring.

Green Lantern, I should explain for the culturally-deprived, is a comic book character responsible for policing the sector of space containing our solar system. Armed with a power ring, a wondrous device he



recharges daily while reciting an oath composed by Alfred Bester (no kidding), he's the nemesis of evildoers everywhere. The ring I was wearing was a promotional item from those canny people at DC Comics, who sure know their audience (the rings come in one size only and are sized for an adult male finger). The real joy in wearing the ring came from the way Moshe, another Green Lantern fan from way back, faunched after it. I saw him casting covetous glances at it all day until, able to stand it no longer, he announced that, by God, he was going to march into the offices of DC Comics when he got back to New York and *demand* they give him one. (These New Yorkers can be sooooo macho when they're roused.) I allowed myself a smile, but it was a small victory. After a couple of years of practicing manipulation on Martin Smith this was no more than finger exercise.

Sunday passed by in a blur of the usual convention activities, including some that are None Of Your Damn Business, so I'll fast forward through the day until around 10:30 pm, when I was emerging from my hotel room and making my way to the Disclub. Which seems an appropriate point in this narrative to say a few words about one of the most pressing problems facing the modern world ...

There is a dread scourge sweeping the globe today, one we've all been made aware of on TV and one every one of us should take all the steps we can to avoid, and yet it's something that any of us might have to face one day. I'm talking, of course, about alcohol-free beer. Fortunately, the Disclub would have no truck with this foul abomination and was serving another perfectly acceptable dark beer. Unfortunately, I consumed two of these before remembering that booze plays havoc with my medication. I was taking one antihistamine pill a night, which I washed down with water (take *that*, Walter Miles!), and they were definitely less effective in the presence of alcohol so, regretfully, I switched to Coke.

Monday was the final morning of DISCLAVE, and I woke too late for breakfast at Hardee's. Avedon was also awake, so we made our way down to the hotel's lounge area and left Martin to his snoring. We sat around talking with Mark, Vijay, Sarah Prince, D. Potter, Vicki Rosenzweig and Andy Hickmott, having conversations that were extended farewells to people we wouldn't be seeing again for a year or more, and discussing the foibles of absent friends. My casual revelation that Martin slept in pyjamas was greeted with incredulous laughter. Reactions ranged from "What?", "How?", and "Why?" to "Where?", "When?" and "Is he some sort of pervert?" Events then unfolded with regrettable inevitability.

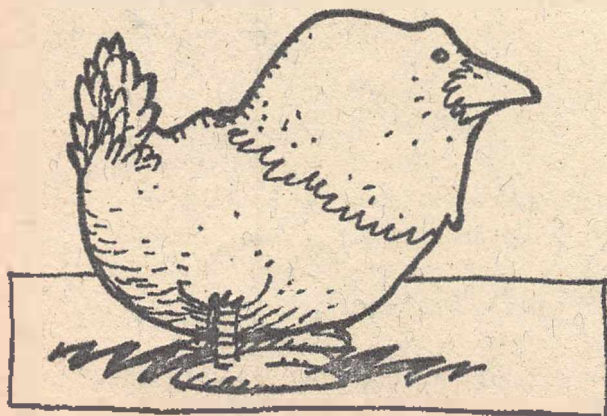
"They didn't believe me when I told them about the pyjamas," I explained to the groggy figure sitting on the end of the bed, as cameras flashed all around us, "so I - ah - organised a private viewing."

"You bastard!" Martin Smith would normally have said at this point but, still sleepy and bemused, all he could manage was a sickly smile.

We all thought this was pretty funny except for Martin, who really has little reason for complaint. I only brought seven people to the room, after all, and I doubt that the photos they took will be seen by more than a couple of hundred people. And among those, there probably won't be more than a handful of women he would otherwise have stood a chance with.

Later that morning, Martin was being sought by someone who wanted him to spend the night with her. Typically, he was nowhere to be found. Avedon was also off somewhere, but we remaining members

of the pyjama party got treated to a floor show back in the lounge area. It started when our conversation was interrupted by the thwack of leather on flesh. As one we turned, and watched while a young guy, who was stripped to the waist and stretched out over the back of a chair, was whipped by a young woman until his bare back glowed red. Conversation slowly died at the other tables in the lounge as everyone turned to watch the spectacle. Midway through this a second young woman joined in and both carried on whipping him until he groaned: "You'd better stop or I'll need a cold shower." At this point they put a collar and leash on him and led him around the room with one of them riding him and applying gentle strokes to his enflamed back. While watching





these three, we were distracted by another loud thwack, and turned to see a second bare-backed guy stretched out over a chair, with yet another woman whipping him. I could hardly believe it.

"You never see that at British cons," I commented.

"You don't usually see it at American cons either," said Vicki.

"Yeah ... *three* female tops in one small group!"

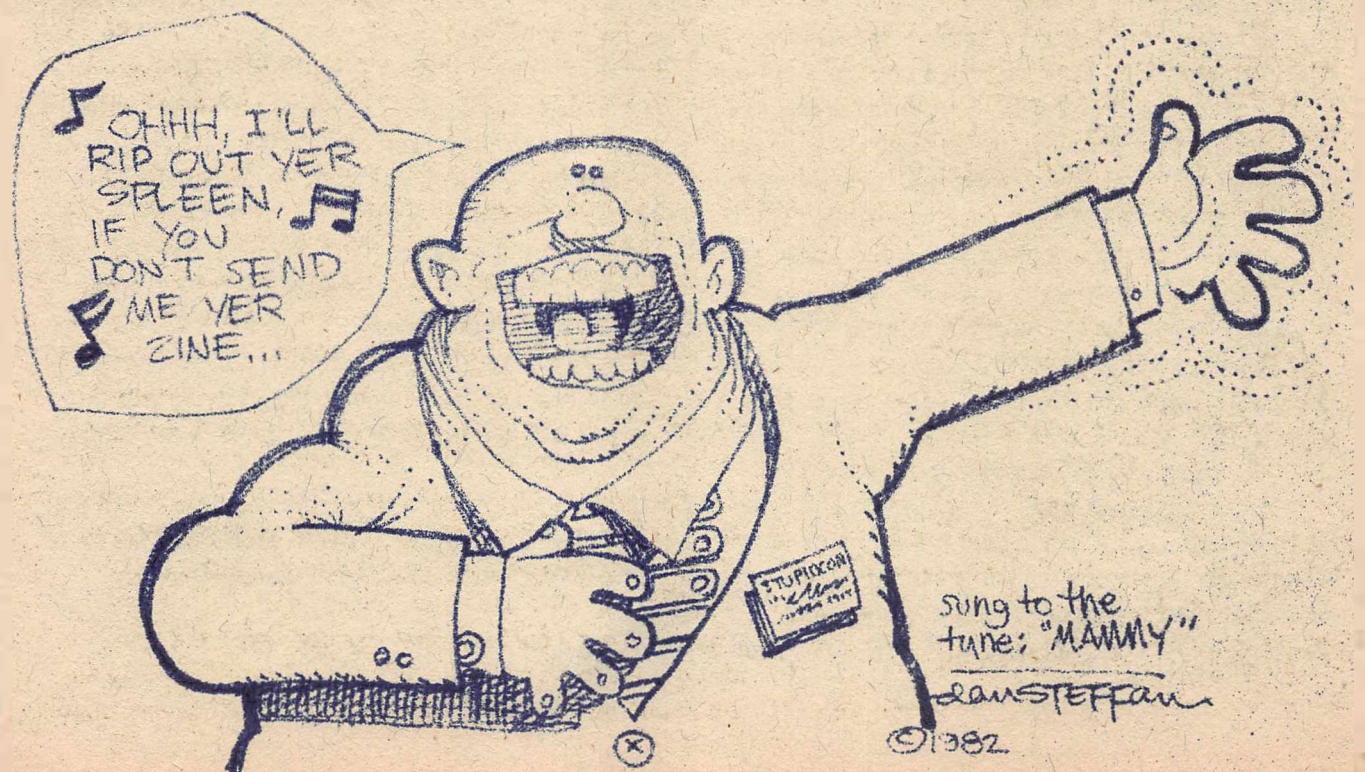
The final, dying moments of a convention are an odd time to meet someone new, but this was when Avedon produced a Mysterious Person who just happened to have dropped in on the con, a desperado from her misspent pre-fannish youth whose name even she didn't recall. Of an earlier dwelling of his, Avedon said:

"I lost my virginity in a house full of bikers and Twinkies."

People sometimes speak in tongues, but this was the first time I'd heard anyone speak in interlinos. The bikers, it seemed, had ripped-off box after box of the Twinkies months earlier and these had subsequently been available to anyone who could keep them down. Twinkies, Avedon once explained to me, are these weird chemical-based things that bear a superficial resemblance to food and that keep forever. I ate one once, years ago. It felt really peculiar going down, and sat in my stomach like ballast. It's probably still there. The longevity of Twinkies is such that had they existed in ancient Egypt, a country on the banks of Denial, those left in the pyramids would be no more inedible today than when they were made. Isn't that amazing? Also, and I am not making this up, the eating of Twinkies has been successfully used in America as a defense in a murder trial. Twinkies are Ronald Reagan's favourite food. This may explain a lot.

There was no denying that DISCLAVE was, finally, over. Filled with post-con melancholia, Sarah, Martin, the Mysterious Person, Jack Heneghan, Walter Miles, Avedon, and I made our way to the main entrance of the Hinckley Hilton and stood out on the sidewalk, waiting for Avedon's parents to turn out and whisk Avedon and I off to a restaurant and to probably the best meal I had the whole trip (chicken teryaki, if you must know). It was a time for wistful goodbyes, for kisses from the women and manly hugs from the guys. Martin wasn't coming back to Avedon's folks' place with us but was setting off by himself, armed with little more than his toothbrush and a fresh pair of pyjamas, with a view of spending some time in New York.

"If you're lucky they might throw a party for you there," I told him, "and if they do, I know the perfect way for you to break the ice...."





# 'Write your mother!'

Back in 1954, Walt Willis wrote to Robert Bloch: "...You'd like Chuck too: I guess you do already. He's one of the finest people I've ever come across in my life. A brilliant writer, too, but his form of escape from writing for publication is writing letters. I think Chuck's letters are the best body of writing in fandom, and I only wish it were possible to publish the whole lot of them...."

Walter quoted the letter in his "I Remember Me" column in *Mimosa* 12 to explain why there was no letter from Chuck in his earlier installment. "It was simply because I was going through the general correspondence file, and Chuck of course has a file all to himself ..."

I read that and grinned. Yes, of course. Chuck has a file all to himself in my correspondence drawers, too. I think he charmed his way into my heart with that first letter four years ago, when he wrote ... Ghod, how can I excerpt a chunk? The entire two pages are a delight ... "I find fandom a sort of family thing, and even the people I don't like much still interest me ... even though in some cases it's the sort of horrid fascination you'd find in a Bombay beggar exhibiting his deformities for baksheesh."

Two pages, that's a short letter for Chuck. He rivals me for wordiness, but is so much more entertaining along the way. When I received no fewer than four letters responding to the last two *Ideas*, I decided that Chuck deserves his own LoC file, too. Even so, I'm compelled to edit the letters down to the *Idea* parts. Chuck sends his letters 'round to a small group of correspondents, so you get to read over every one else's shoulders, while they read over yours. If my dear son would revive Q, you could perhaps write and see for yourself. But until that happy day, here are some bits for your enjoyment.

Chuck Harris  
32 Lake Crescent  
Daventry  
Northants NN11 5EB  
GREAT BRITAIN

22 April. Lots of mail today, — Sheryl, Geri, Arnie, Visa and the Electricity Company... *Folly* is on the way so that's something to look forward to within the next few days... Geri's *Idea* #5 is damn near finished and I haven't even commented on #4 yet, let alone work on an offering for the next issue.

But what can I say? Do I turn to page 8, scream and gibber and ask if she's hired Brian Earl Brown to proofread my stuff, or thumb thru Roget trying to find the female equivalent of 'dickhead.' Should I write to Karl Marx — the only address I have is Highgate Cemetery and the last time I wrote the letter came back marked "Gone Away. New Address Unknown" — or grovel to The Robert Bloch for (a) stealing his one-liner and (b) allowing a mere woman to cock up his immortal prose?

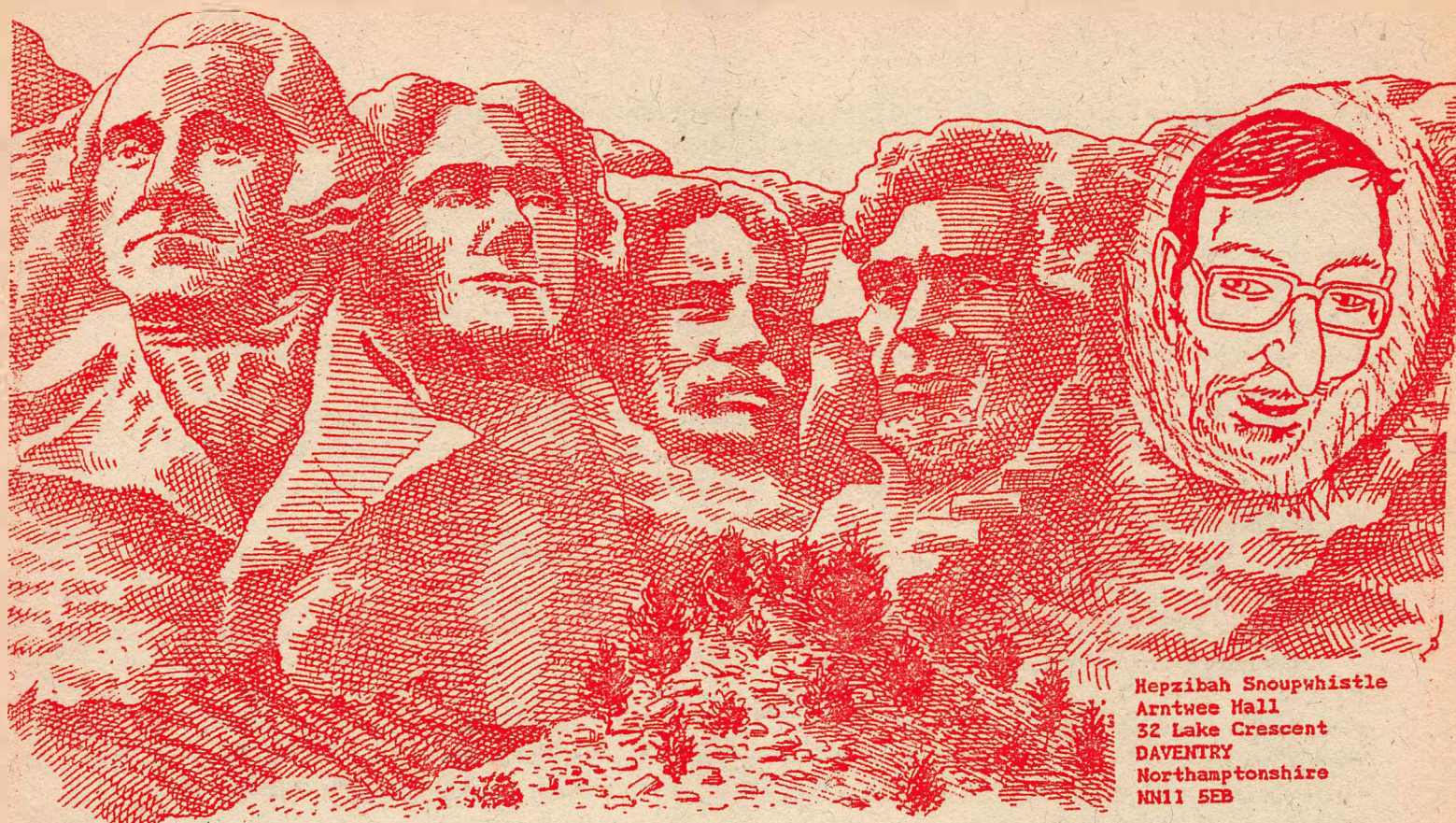
AND I make no mention of the eight hundred and sixteen words — some of them quite long too, real polysyllables that you don't often see in fanzines — the eight hundred and sixteen words that I'd crafted into a tiny jewelcase of prose and proudly crowned with this Bloch/Marx diadem.

Surely, even in the primitive dame-schools of Battle Creek, Mich., the kiddies still learn Karl's Communist Manifesto by heart. "The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to gain. WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE." Not, NOT, as you will see instantly after two or three weeks close study, NOT Workers the world unite.

And from this mundane manifesto, The Robert, with his masterful touch of genius, gave us "Trufen of the world, Ignite." Never would he offer a nonsense like TRUFEN THE WORLD IGNITE which is no more than the garblings of a dyslectic Philistine, the sort of puerile ungrammatical rubbish usually found in Sector General books or similar pornography

OF OF OF OF OF OF dearest Mommy, OF OF OF OF OF OF  
Grith.





9 May

Geri cherie, Mother Superior,

There's a lot of letter starting overleaf, but I didn't seem to say much about the *Big Idea* before I ran out of steam. This was such a special issue that I thought I'd do a sort of postscript — or prescript or something.

I liked your Con report of course, (and I'll get to that in a minute) and I was really impressed with the Linda Bushyager GoH speech. She sez it all and encapsulates the whole meaning of fandom in one memorable line: "Fandom is more than fanzines. What's important are the people who are in it, the friends like you." I'd give a belated Hallelujah for that. I've got a million acquaintances Outside; I can't walk through the precinct without saying Hi to half a dozen ex-workmates, golfers, pub-folk, neighbours, et al. But they ain't friends. My friends are trufans, — the only people outside my family who have a claim on my right arm at any time, and I honestly don't know what I'd do without them. Hallelujah. Amen.

And what happened to the decorated tableware that Bill Rotsler created? Surely no apostate would desecrate it in a dishwasher, ... but wouldn't the restaurant holler at half the crockery walking out of the front door along with the diners or are the waiters more tolerant Stateside?

Well, your pieces are always special because they always seem so personal, — as if they were written with just me in mind. (And of course, they ARE, hmm?) and there are always Old Friends popping up as I read thru it... "Joyce & Arnie, Robert, Jerry & Suzle, Andy Hooper (I MUST write him soon), Fitch, Widner, Spike... it's almost as good as being there in person. ###Out of space. More later I PROMISE!!!!!! Love.

P.S. Jeff was OK but like his travel stuff best. More about this later, too.

*And from the 8-page letter that followed:*

And suddenly it's NEXT Sunday and here is *Idea* again, and I'm regulated to one solitary colour on my cover feather. Ah well...

It was lovely to see the WIDOWER verses again. Needham wrote some pretty good offbeat humorous pieces for *Now and Then* but the verses, — and the idea behind them — was his outstanding achievement.



And you know there really WAS (and IS) a Widower's department store in Manchester? Being mercenary old me, I suggested he tried to sell them the verses or, failing that, first buy space in the "Classified Advert" page of the Manchester Evening News to run a verse for four or five continuous nights in the hope that the store would see them and like them and then buy a series. I still think they might have done so too, but, even tho I offered to help pay for the space, he was never really interested even though he had very little money indeed. (He had no regular job. He used to clean windows and re-charge, for a small fee, those old sulphuric acid "accumulators" that people used for old-fashioned radios. I imagine he made barely enough to live on, but, he was never overly concerned about money and always seemed happy and content with his lifestyle.)

When the Widower's verses began they were more in the format of traditional advertising jingles, — but a lot more witty. The classical and biblical allusions came later. Bloch (who was originally an advertising copywriter before he wrote fulltime fantasy/SF), gives perhaps the best illustration of this...although I'm by no means word perfect with it

*Whilst doing the mangling, appendages dangling,  
Well-endowed ladies have fears,  
Forget apprehension, allow us to mention,  
WIDOWER'S FINE BRASSIERES.*

[And whilst I mention Bloch, does anyone else think SILENCE OF THE LAMBS, which won a flock of Oscars this year, was a much poorer film and in no way superior to the Bloch/Hitchcock masterpiece PSYCHO, which won damn all? And any of you who don't have impeccable taste like wot I have had better keep very quiet indeed or else....

Back to Widower's. Perhaps Vincent will check N&T for the other early verse that sticks in my memory, for contraceptives. The punchline was (of course) WIDOWERS REGRET THEY ARE UNABLE TO HELP YOU.]

But for me, none of the early verses were half as good as the second cycle. History, Homer and the Bible were racked for hooks to sell Widower merchandise. I tried...

*Salome with her bumps and grinds,  
Gave Herod hallucinations.  
John would still have his head  
If she'd danced instead,  
In WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL COMBINATIONS.*

*And, by return, Needham capped me.  
And as she shed her seven veils,  
With Herod as the audience,  
They beheaded John to the sound of one  
Of WIDOWER'S PIANO ACCORDIONS.*

And, as if that wasn't enough, he pointed out that "combinations" was possibly an unknown word in the U.S., where they seemed to call them "Union suits."

*We tried again, but we thought it wasn't as good.  
She terpsichored like one possessed,  
To the sound of drum and flute,  
She pirouetted, but sadly wetted,  
Her WIDOWER'S UNION SUIT.*

I don't think he ever used it. There were hundreds of verses available, and I already had two in the next N&T...



*Icarus flew too near the sun,  
And never gave a hoot.  
"Drop dead," they said, but he used instead  
His WIDOWER'S PARACHUTE.*

*When Zeus played follow-the-Leda,  
It wasn't lust, but greed.  
The hell with passion, he needs his ration,  
Of WIDOWER'S BIRDSEED.*

Apart from jingles Eric was a dab hand with Proper Poetry too. Next time I'm in the Library at Welling I'll copy his piece about the lights going on in Manchester and you'll see what I mean.

*In a 6 page letter written 17 - 23 June, Chuck wrote:*

I wrote to Harry Turner last week to check out Widower verses and added a little bit more to the saga.

Harry told me that, after all my conversations at cooperative projects with Eric aimed at selling a series of Widower verses to the Widower department store in Manchester, the damn store never existed outside Eric's imagination. He was kidding me along. I was always fascinated by the quality and originality of the verses, and had offered to help set up a professional approach to the store in the hope of turning the jingles into something creditworthy to try to earn Eric a few quid. I was completely baffled when he showed no enthusiasm for the idea. I even offered to fund a few adverts in the classified section of the Manchester Evening News (just a verse and a phone number), in the hope of enticing Widowers' to enquire further about them, but he didn't care for that idea either. It didn't help when, in possibly the best "serious" poem he ever wrote, about dusk falling in Manchester and the lights going on throughout the town, he mentioned Widowers along with a string of other places whose names I recognised. This was only a passing reference but I took it quite seriously. It's only now that I see it was just an "in" joke for Mancunians and others who knew the place didn't exist at all.

I shall take all this up with Eric when I see him again at the Great Convention in the Sky. The tricky sod. I hope he's full of remorse now and whizzing around making knots in his winding sheet.

*(undated, but from around the same time)*

### **A PROMISE is A PROMISE** *or Second Thoughts on Wilhelm Reich*

Before I start this tarradiddle I had better make it quite clear that I am not the sensitive cultural intellectual that some neofans might imagine. The Old Guard know better of course.

I'm okay on sexual deviations, Ford cars from 1943 onwards, and the more popular wines of California, but apart from that I'm a Visigoth. Years ago Arf and I stopped going to the White Horse because some resident clown always came up and asked conundrums like "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

We weren't up to that sort of thing. I would look at Arf, and Arf would look at me. "Er, what hand? Is that the right hand or the left hand? Chuchy is deaf and he can't do sign language and I'm ambidextrous, and why don't you piss off and ask Dave Langford over there who is so sharp he'll wipe that superior smarmy look off your face so quick you'll never know what happened?"

[I digress, — but we got him once by postulating that you can judge a chap's libido by the thickness of his wristwatch, (have you seen James' wristwatch? If it had a pendulum it would be a grandfather clock, so don't just laugh off the theory out of hand.) Would you let any loved one accept a piece of hard candy from such a monster?]

So you see, philosophy really isn't me altho I can fake it if I have to. Eventually I became a follower of Nietzsche. There were only six people in the world who, even though they couldn't understand his theory, could at least pronounce his name correctly, and it was comforting to belong to such an exclusive club.

[I digress again, but that was until I found out that he was a low fascist bastard, worse than Wagner, beloved by Hitler, and definitely no role model for a nice boy like me. I decided to teach the pronunciation to everyone and train them to do the obligatory spit in the gutter every time they said it.

Quick! Find yourself a gutter...

*"If you're aristocratic," said Nietzsche,  
It's thumbs up, you're O.K. Pleased to meitzsche.  
If you're working-class bores,  
It's thumbs down and Up Yours!  
If you don't know your place, then I'll tietzsche.]*

I tried other philosophers, — Marx, Rousseau, Wittgeastein but none of them knew The Answer, and to my drink fuddled mind the Rubaiyat has the most of it that I can accept.

*Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring,  
The winter garment of Repentance fling,  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To fly — and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.*

Patience dear heart, we are nearly up to Reich now. Just a little bit more reprise of the intro.

Now, in the wild, animals are not so obsessively sexually orientated as they are in captivity. In the zoo, bored out of his skull, the monkey fondles himself continually with no regard to his eyesight. Back in the jungle Chaka swings on the liana behind Tarzan, and helps Jane with washing the dishes, with nary a thought below his navel. In the wild his AGGRESSIVE HUNTING AND PACK INSTINCTS ARE DOMINANT. In captivity these instincts are rechanneled into COMPULSIVE SEX PLAY. Reich (and this is the only bit I know about him), contends that the Nazi is a suppressed lover. I think the reverse is true and that the lover is a suppressed Nazi, — i.e. a bully "tamed" and his basic wild instincts displaced by screwing away happily.

This seems so basic that I can't accept anything else Reich postulates. In fact, I wouldn't be in the least surprised if it was him that started that one hand clapping business. Ghod only knows what the other hand is doing.

I liked James and Stu's pieces but I daren't comment. Bill Danner's letter was astonishing, — good but astonishing. I always imagined him as being about my age yet here he is taking chocolate to school in his "freshman" year ... 1926!!!! And I wasn't even born then!

Arf's Kama Sutra illos came out beautifully. I'll have do search around and see what else I can find.  
More later...Love



Yes, more later. Always, please.

Most of the Rotsler dishes left the room in fannish bookbags and purses. The staff certainly noticed, but didn't confront anyone. Perhaps the organizers will let us know if the hotel charged them for the inventory shortage following the banquet.

Steve Sneyd sent me a collection of 74 Widower's Verses, yet you quoted three and referred to another not in my set. The closest I can come to the contraceptive one is:

*Perhaps your child has his mother's eyes  
But appearances can be deceptive  
Undoubted maternity, but as for paternity  
WIDOWER's ... are unable to offer any assistance.*

Nice start on the Arf stories. Keep up the good work and your LoC column will become a regular feature. Wanna start with a MagiCon report? Let me know. Meanwhile, wash your hands. Mind your wife. Take Millie for a walk. And don't forget to write your mother. — gfs



# Park and LoC It

Marc Ortlieb

P.O. Box 215, Forest Hill, Vic 3131

AUSTRALIA

23/7/92

- X Why you are getting this LoC
- X It seemed like the fannish thing to do
- X I needed something to pass the time while the modem was uploading a file to the Bulletin Board
- X I have shingles and am bored silly sitting at home (Make sure you disinfect this before reading this far.)
- X The weight of guilt was causing serious stress on the Melbourne Faultline
- X It's still winter!
- X Your zine was top of the pile

I'd be lucky to have five good ideas a decade, but you seem quite capable of more.

The Corflu report was wonderful to read, all those names of people I met over there in '81 or here subsequently. If ever DUFF is restructured to make Corflu its destination, rather than Worldcon, I might be persuaded to stand. Delightfully coy - the wet spot left by two other friends... If anyone did that to me, their names would be splashed across the front page. Glad to hear that Eric Lindsay spent lots on books. That might leave him poor enough to hit a Melbourne convention this year, rather than gallivanting off overseas.

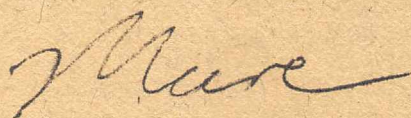
Linda's Corflu Speech was a dangerous piece and, while I'd hate to accuse her of being seduced by the anti-Ghu, there are messages in her piece that smack of the darkest of heresies. What if everyone were to decide that fanzines weren't the essence of fandom, but that being surrounded by true friends was. Where would we be eh? In-apas; that's where. Ghu, the true Ghu, demands the constant mortification on the flesh and the wallet. Fans weren't meant to be happy. They were meant to be miserable wretches, like Bruce Gillespie, constantly producing monumental fanzines without having the wherewithal to post them. And then Linda starts talking about fandom as being friends!!!! Still, what can you expect of this New Age, do your own thing, fandom???

But you know the worst things about *Idea* #5? It gave me an idea; one that, I hasten to add, I'm beating back into its cellar before it does something really stupid. The idea had to do with running a Corflu style convention in Australia. Fortunately common sense tends to get the better of me, still, we have the people and your zine provides an ideal blueprint for a Corflu... Maybe after the baby (Cath is expecting in December)....

I'm afraid I'm one of the nasty critics who refuses to accept anything that can't be measured. I prefer Martin Gardiner's opinions of Reich to anything else I've encountered. Pity too, as I'm very fond of Patti Smith's "Birdland" and I rather like Kate Bush's "Cloudbusting" the video for which features Donald Sutherland as, I assume, Reich.

The Corflu Oneshot was appreciated. It's good to know that there are people around who can get the line about having a leg stuck in the shift lock.

Yours scientifricionally,



Neil Rest

1336 Bryn Mawr, Chicago IL 60660

17 July, 1992

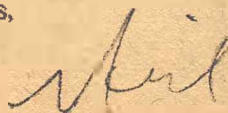
...how right to have Garth repro fatigue-poisoned rubberstamp originals!

It was intriguing to see that Jeff didn't talk about one of Reich's distinctions that is one of my favorite openers for introducing the good doctor into a conversation: his books were burned by the Nazis, by the Communists, and by the U.S. government! I've never heard of anyone else with that incredible hat trick.

Certainly can't underestimate the viscosity of Reich's Germanic prose, but of particular interest to me has been *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Reich had been a member of the German Communist Party in the '20s (not at all an irrational or irresponsible attitude), and had even written the Party's "facts of life" pamphlet for adolescents. He was excommunicated because he told them that the youth were more interested in getting laid than in the structure of the socioeconomic constraints which kept them from economic independence. It was heresy to assert that the OfficialHopeOfTheFuture Proletarian Youth could have sex hang-ups just like the bourgeois. Anyway, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* asks a simple penetrating question: In the '20s, the preconditions for Marx' revolution existed in Germany, but when the revolution came, it was a Right revolution, not Left. Why? Certainly seems to me like a pointed question.

That last paragraph Jeff quotes accounts for LaRouchies, Sendero Luminoso, the myriad massacres of the six o'clock news, Jesus Freaks, and Dan Quayle. Of course the F.D.A. had to spend half its budget for a decade in the campaign to get Reich locked up as a paranoid!

Yours,



### James White

2 West Drive, Portstewart,  
Co. Londonderry BT 55 7ND, Northern Ireland  
UNITED KINGDOM  
3 June 1992

You have done something strange and a bit dangerous with your Corflu coverage in IDEA 5 and the one-shot. Don't you realise that the con was covered so thoroughly and well, and from so many different aspects by Linda Bushyager, Stu Shiffman, Don Fitch and yourself, that there was really no need to be there? If this goes on, fans will stay at home in increasing numbers and wait for IDEA, like we watch the shuttle going up on TV. I liked "The Eclectic Reader," too. I'd never even heard of Reich, but not the curtain of my ignorance has another hole in it. But if IDEA is going frequent as well as irregular, that is another dangerous combination which can lead you into semi-prozine country.

Last week I watched a TV programme in the "Made in the USA" series which was about Minneapolis. Wow! You didn't tell me that Minnesota had a thousand lakes, Amerindian entrepreneurs running gambling casinos, or witches covens who dance around campfires and recite arcane litanies *fully-clothed!* The big, new shopping mall looked terrific, but if you take me around it you must promise not to do a Robert Lichtman on me — I have to reserve space in my return baggage for George.

All the Best

*James*  
.....

At last count, we were something over 11,000 lakes, to be a bit more precise. Given our weather, anything less than fully clothed would lead quickly to chilbains, which interfere with the effectiveness of the spells, and, yes, the Mall of America is terrific. Surprisingly so. But why am I telling you all this? You'll be seeing for yourself within a week of this fanzine's publication. Whee! — gfs



### Spike Parsons

P.O. Box 20132, Castro Valley, CA 94546  
6 Jun

Jealousy! Bitterness! If you were going to get Jeff, at least he could have been a mediocre mimeographer (this goes also for *SF 5 Yearly*)!! And Corflu analysis by Stu Shiffman! He wrote an article for you!!! I quickly read your article and Don's, also. You missed Corflu in El Paso, and so could not properly evaluate Michelle Lyon's consuite. Fabulous food — cold, hot — beautiful presentation. We Do Not Have to Go to Restaurants for Meals (although we did, because we are fans...) Michelle set the standard for slaving in the Corflu consuite — Don merely followed suit. The difference in *value* is, I think, in the needs met. Michelle shouldn't have worked so hard — getting good food wasn't too tough, and we didn't need the c-suite quite so much, since we met for a program/auction that was timed well and gave us a center. In L.A., the consuite, with its plentiful (if not the gourmet ML offered) food and great fannish atmosphere, turned out to be the soul of the con, as much as the stomach.

*Spike*

### Ted White

1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046  
May 30, 1992

It helps that this was a "Corflu issue" of sorta. I wonder why no one has done this before? Not that there haven't been Corflu-oriented fanzines before (LET'S FANAC springs to mind), but this issue of IDEA brings a lot of different viewpoints to bear on Corflu, and that's a fresh approach.

I find myself nodding in agreement to nearly every paragraph of Stu's article. We've needed this kind of comparison and examination of the various elements of Corflu, as reflected in the various Corflus over the years, and I think Stu is spot-on in most instances, particularly when he discusses the programming. Programming at Corflu occupies a *unique* position in convention-programming: programming for people who gave up on the programs at most cons years ago. Corflu programming is, or should be, the core of the convention, the organized aspect of the con which pulls the members together, in community. It should reflect Corflu's unique appeal to fanzine fans. It should *not* be a lackadaisically offered series of auctions with a trivia contest thrown in, pace LA. When it came to programming their Corflu, Pelz, Glycer & Co. hadn't a clue. (This may help explain why Glycer's fanthology also had little clue to the best fanwriting of 1988, most of which occurred in Britain, and little of which appears in his volume.) The lesson is plain: don't let people who have lost touch with fanzine fandom run Corflus.



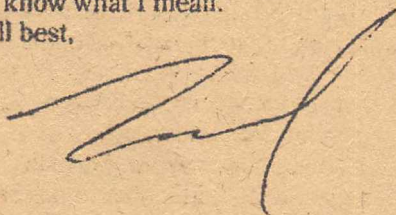
Stu is wrong on one point, however. It is not true that Corflu 3's Live Fanzine program was based "on the model of the 1976 Live SPANISH INQUISITION at Balticon." I can say this because Corflu 3's Live Fanzine was my idea and either I never saw or I forgot the 1976 Balticon SPANISH INQUISITION. The ten years between the two events means that no one else along the way picked up on or used the idea, and it had been more or less lost. My inspiration was overhearing discussion of how a live fanzine had almost become part of the programming of Corflu 2 in Napa Valley. "What a keen idea!" I said, not only to myself, but to Terry Carr and several other people. "How appropriate for Corflu!" With this thought in mind, and nary a memory of the 1976 event, I began putting together the idea for a fanzine in my own mind. Functioning as "editor," I assembled it as I would have a real fanzine, complete with "covers," the contents page, an editorial, and the "letters." The real innovation, I suppose, was running "letters" in the same "issue" they were commenting upon, and running those comments directly following each item. In practical effect, the result was that after each individual item was presented, the audience got to participate in a slightly more structured way than would otherwise occur. You remember....

After Corflu 3, several people reminded me of the 1976 event, commented disparagingly about how I'd "stolen" the idea without credit, and otherwise belittled my accomplishment. (But then, more than one of those critics had spent all of Saturday afternoon sightseeing in DC, missing the program completely.) To them I say, "Pooh!" or maybe "Poot!"

Howsomever, Corflu 4 took my Live Fanzine and ran with it, Bowers adding the element of videotaping and making his Corflu program an issue of OUTWORLDS. After that, the idea died. I think it's time for future Corflu committees to look back over past Corflu programming, winnow out the workable stuff, and get us back on track. The Live Fanzine is an infinitely reusable idea, simply because each of us puts out a unique fanzine. (No one has tried a Live Apazine yet, either....)

You know, I *really* don't recall either Arnie or my saying, when we met again at Corflu, "Well, I guess you're not going to punch me out." And I am certain that the thought never occurred to me in the first place. Some people make too much of some things, if you know what I mean.

All best,



Yes, I do remember. And running the "LoCs" right after each "article" was inspired. It kept everything interactive and gave the contributors truer (and more immediate) feedback than is usually available by more traditional means of fanzine production. — gfs

Walter Willis

32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 0PD  
UNITED KINGDOM

18th May, 1992

Idea #5 has arrived, to universal admiration. Your Corflu Report is one of great charm. I'm thinking in particular of your remarks on the Las Vegas fans and your account of shopping with Robert Lichtman. The first because of your account of your own difficulty in assimilating the convention, which strikes one as unusually honest, and the second because of the genuine affection you convey for your companion.

Linda's speech *was* good, and thank you for reprinting it. Heretofore I have rather resented the custom of requiring a speech from a randomly selected Guest of Honour, feeling that Corflu is the one convention where a card-carrying introvert should feel safe from being dragooned into taking part in the programme. I still feel this way, and would tend to stay away from Corflus on that account, but I have to admit that Linda's little speech is a powerful argument against my point of view.

Stu's article was a stimulating mixture of sound practical advice and philosophical reflection.

Don Fitch was good with the sound practical advice, but also manages to convey something of the good nature you bring out in your reports.

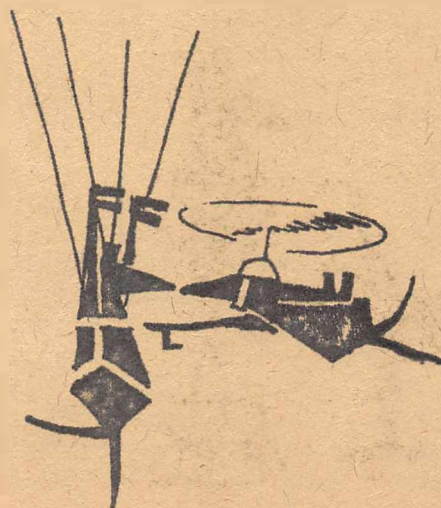
Jeff was tantalising on Reich. I would have liked some background on the evidence for the statements about the Government persecution of Reich, which seems so curiously ineffective.

James's piece was charming.

Best,



I like the Corflu tradition, so long as my name is never picked from the hat! Bet you didn't know I could be such a hypocrite, did you? — gfs



**Harry Warner, Jr.**

423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740.

July 24, 1992.

This is no time for writing locs. I've been very unwell for several days and got little sleep last night. But I'm sure I owe you several locs and should get started on the task of creating them, one by one, although it would be nice to be divine enough to do it two by two as in the Bible.

...the loc involves the fifth *Idea*, which I enjoyed immensely despite the fact that much of it involved conventions and therefore imparted to me the same slight sense of danger avoided as Victorians used to acquire from books about the exploration of Africa. I can't quite break myself of the habit of moralizing to myself that there, but for the grace of God, I might have gone, when I read conreports. In all justice, the pages about Corflu contained fewer shudders than most conreports do, in the form of experiences that left me thankful they didn't happen to me.

You in particular made it seem rather enjoyable, although I was startled here and there at a passing remark, such as the fact that Robert parked his car on Hollywood Boulevard. This is fantastic, to me, something like reading that a few fans took a picnic table to Times Square and enjoyed a leisurely late lunch on it while the old year was turning into the new year. But I'm willing to conceive of a Hollywood that is changing so rapidly that parking spaces are now available on one of its most fabled thoroughfares.

I loved the reprints of the Widower's verses. No doubt I saw all or most of these when they were originally published, but they'd vanished from memory completely and seems as surprising, inevitable and funny as ever. It certainly was a shock when I learned years after they flourished that there was no such establishment as Widower's in England. I'd always assumed it was England's equivalent of Macy's.

The reprint of Linda's speech was disappointing in one sense. I sensed as I approached the climax of the talk that she was preparing to announce the impending return of Bushyager fanzines. Instead she uttered something so close to heresy that it's hard to detect the difference, from my standpoint: "Fandom is more than fanzines." At my age, it's going to take me at least several years to study thoroughly the ramifications of such a daring thought.

For obvious reasons, I can't offer wise advice or scholarly rebuttals to the conrunning matters that Stu Shiffman and Don Fitch emphasized in their articles. All I can do is guess that a smallish con like Corflu is almost as difficult to plan and produce as a giant con, because so many areas of conrunning are common to both sizes.

I got badly mixed up when I started to read Jeff Schalles' article about Reich. Then I realized why he hadn't listed *The Haunting Melody* as one of Reich's important books. I had mixed up that writer

with Reik, another psychiatrist. Reik never got into trouble with the feds, but his book is quite interesting, a demonstration of how the subconscious mind can manipulate familiar melodies, even use them to create puns, without this activity coming to the conscious attention of the individual unless he looks for it. I have no idea if Reich had any merit to his theories, but I do find myself wondering if the difference between armored muscles and those up and down streamings of orgone energy has become muddled by the popularity of television, which causes people to spend much of their time in a sprawl before the tube that reverses the polarity of up-and-down and sideways muscles.

"George and the Aliens of IF" is superb, one giant leap for fankind, as the fellow almost said. I'm sure this will be anthologies time after time in the years to come, if fanzine fandom survives long enough.

My father was bookkeeper for Hagerstown's largest wholesale candy firm when I was growing up and sometimes brought home samples, but curiously, I don't recall the giant cakes of chocolate that Bill Danner writes about. My memory of them comes from the local dime store, which at that time still had a salesgirl at each counter, and no checkout counters. The candy counter contained glass-walled containers for each main kind of candy and the chocolate container had its chocolate in huge blocks, from which the salesgirl would chisel off as much as the purchaser wanted to buy, exactly like the way we broke small pieces of ice from the big block in the icebox at home when we wanted to cool a drink of lemonade or tea.

Yrs., &c,

*Harry Warner, Jr.*

Sorry to hear of your illness. I know, all too well, the insane impulse to fanac when one ought to be doing other things, such as resting and recuperating (on your part) or finishing up three handbooks for Northern States Power, designing a product sales guide for Pillsbury, and a host of other projects that want doing before MagiCon (on mine).

Thanks for mentioning the chocolate. Late in April, or early in May, I bought a couple small baggies of Wilbur's buds to send to Bill. Remembering the last time I mailed chocolate (a fish sucker to LeeH; it arrived a puddle of chocolate with a stick in it), I watched the thermometer and weather reports, saving the chocolates in the fridge for a safe mailing time. Life was life. Busy. It's been a remarkably cool summer, but I have yet to mail the Wilbur's off to Bill. Meanwhile, several small impulse raids have taken their toll. There's barely enough left for a sample, let alone a proper tasting. After ReinCONation, I'll make another trip with my baggies to the co-op. Hang in there, Bill. The Wilbur's Are Coming. — gfs



**Peter Hentges**

1045 - 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414

May 19, 1992

Ack! A copy of *Idea* #5 (hand delivered at Minicon) before I've had a chance to LoC #4?! You being ahead of schedule has put me behind mine and now I'll have to quickly sketch out a letter and reprieve myself.

I wanted to let Jeff know about the "Lost Acres" in Northern Minnesota. A surveyor's error left a stand of virgin pine in a triangular area untouched by loggers. When I lived up north, I never visited but always heard about them. (Similarly, I lived within a short car hop of the headwaters of the Mississippi and never walked across, go figure.) I would think that the Dept. of Natural Resources would know about them if Jeff wanted to pursue it further.

Chuch Harris's "Greening of Fandom" reminded me of the premise behind *Fallen Angels*. Made me wonder if he had read the book before or has since.

It was very nice to see Don Fitch's (BHS) article on the running of con suites. I agree with him that criticism is helpful for those who are running convention hospitality. Having been on the receiving end, however, I can attest to the fact that most criticism is in the form of "Why don't you have X?" If criticism is delivered in the "It might help if you did Y. How can I help?" form or significantly after the con to distance the emotional attachment it would be helpful.

As a former Minicon Parties Co-Head, I can help with some of Don's questions. How much and what kind of drinks do a given number of fans consume? Without figures in front of me (the records have since passed to other Parties Heads), I am guessing that two servings of soda pop to every one of beer is a good starting point. Of course this varies widely depending on the nature of the convention. A 16-gallon keg of beer would yield 170 12-oz. servings, ideally. Figure 150 for easy reference. If the average con-goer would drink about 3 beers over the course of the con you would need 1 keg for every 50 people. (This assumes that there is a significant population of non-drinkers and that the con suite isn't the only source of drinkables.) The last time I ordered beer for Minicon I ordered 35 kegs, or enough for 1,750 people. I also purchased 6 cases of bottled beer to provide variety and so had a total of 1,894 servings of beer. Attendance was less than 2,000 and we had beer left over. This formula will leave you with beer left over and it is a good idea to have a plan for it. Either parties over the week following the con or a supplier that will take back un-tapped kegs.

What always runs out first? Something different every year. One year I was running Parties at Minicon, it was the club soda, another it was Cherry Coke, in another it was vodka for the blog.

What do people complain about the most? Something you don't have. What do people wish had been provided? Something that wouldn't have fit in

the budget. What do people appreciate the most? *Real* food, chocolate and little things. Some of the most heartfelt thanks I received while running Parties for Minicon were for things like real milk for coffee, fresh vegetables, Chinese yo-yos, rubber ducks in the bathtub and instant oatmeal.

It is also important to remember to provide the things in your con suite that you and your staff like about the conventions you visit. Your people will be much happier and visitors from other cities will feel more at home.

I see you gave Don a good rating for his running of Corflu's con suite. Having seen his work at Minicon, and trusting your judgement, I would agree. Delegation, as you pointed out to Don, is very important. Not even Martin Schafer can keep a con suite staffed 24 hours a day by himself. Always get more help than you need, if possible. If nothing else, you can make points with other departments by "lending" your volunteers to them.

Don's tips on running con suites are good. Not all of them are particularly applicable to a larger convention, like Minicon, but good principles none the less. I've also thought of some others that might be of use to others.

- Popcorn. People will eat it, it is easily prepared, it can be made into numerous varieties easily and it is cheap.
- Don't serve anything that needs preparation at the convention, if possible. You will not have enough time or enough people, or something will be left behind. (Blog is an obvious exception to this rule.)
- If you have the money, pay for it. The amount of time and aggravation saved by paying for things like delivery, set-up, preparation, rental, etc. is well worth it. For example, renting a refrigerator for a weekend is fairly inexpensive and can save you numerous hassles with the hotel. Spend money to make your life easier.

I didn't really intend this to become a treatise on con suite running. On to other portions of *Idea* #5.

It is good to hear of the further adventures of George. I hope he enjoyed his brief hop. I saw him the other day when I dropped stuff off for Jeff but didn't take the time to chat. Maybe next time.

The Toad Hall Cannister Key is somewhat bizarre. For some items I'm not too sure how it is to be read. It it Huey that hids in the Unbleached All-Purpose Flour? And you keep eggplant in moonshine bottles? Does the coffee add to the flavor of the green pepper or vice-versa? The pinto bean/Chinese cabbage combination sounds particularly tasty.

Wishing you all the best and hoping that you can keep me behind schedule.

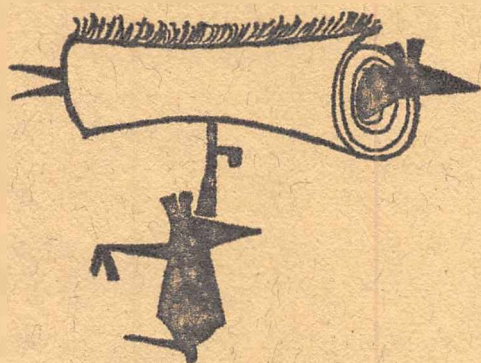
Best,



Popcorn. Yuck. I enjoy eating it anywhere but at conventions. Popcorn makes more of a mess than all other party foods combined. And the odor permeates right along with that of stale beer. Visions of 4:30 am Con Suite Hell invade my brain. On to another topic!

Glad you picked up on the bacover — I like ending with a bit of the bizarre. As you no doubt figured out, the Refined White Death can be found in the Eggplant cannister, the Bread Flour in the Tomato Sack. Still don't quite believe me? Check them out for yourself next time you're over.

I read *Fallen Angels* on the trip to London this last March, and left it on Chuck's bookshelf. It hadn't yet made it to Brit bookstores. — gfs



**Teddy Harvia**  
PO Box 905, Euless TX 76039

Your check beside "You're Fannish as Hell" brought to mind visions of horned devils in propeller beanies dancing around. Larry Becker would be a great fiend to illustrate it.

At the latest local SF party, Pat Virzi brought out her copy of *Idea* and pointed out the typo in your *Corflu* article "tenants of fandom," suggesting that I illustrate it with fans in an appropriate structure.

"What typo?" I asked.

"Quick, Murray — a Pepsi!!" "You've run out of High-Caffeine Diet Cola!" What is it with fans and carbonated beverages? Perhaps it's the caffeine. I remember being around Pat Mueller in the days she was wired with the stimulant from uncounted cups of coffee and soda. My heart races just thinking about it.

Andi Shechter's lament "No one will talk to me..." as quoted by Stu Shiffman in his article reminded me of the reason Tom Sadler gave for not interacting with other fans more at Chicon. He said that the fans he knew always seemed to be talking with fans he didn't and he didn't want to intrude. To me, in fandom you're somebody as soon as you introduce yourself.

Mark Manning's comment about not wanting to write a long letter of comment for fear that it'll never see print misses the point. Letters are feedback for the editor first, fodder for publication second. Writers who strive too hard to stay out of the WAHF column are blighting their main audience.

Beast wishes,

TEDDY

It's the caffeine that does it for me, along with the coolness, and the lack of calories. When I was a kid, I went through a bout of extensive allergy testing. For something like two months, I ate no wheat, corn, citrus, chocolate, or dairy products. The list of food and drink I was allowed to consume fit on one side of a letter-sized page. My beverage choices included water, Vernor's Ginger Ale (which I abhorred), A&W Rootbeer from the tap, and Coca-Cola. Coke's advertising theme of the day was, "Coke has the taste you never get tired of." Damned if they weren't right. I had grown cynical enough by junior high school to be surprised by this. I've since had occasion to change my mind — after several days of all-nighters, filling the recycling box with flattened cans, I find I want nothing more than a nice, cool glass of water. — gfs

**Andrew P. Hooper**  
The Starliter, 4228 Francis Ave. N. #103  
Seattle, WA 98103  
June 2nd, 1992

"Why this zine is early" indeed. When a person goes two years without doing an issue of their zine, one expects to have more than 90 days to LoC before another issue comes out. Damn your little hyper-enthusiastic soul, Geri Sullivan; I've been on a real letter-writing bender, mending my previously fakefannish ways and responding in a timely fashion to the fanac sent me...but now, no one will know that. It'll just look like I was shamed into writing by the precipitous pace of you publishing. Damn and blast.

Things in the fourth issue which elicit specific response are Jeff's article, and your own reading list-cum-travelogue. I identified with his urge to get out and find *convenient* wild places; the option always exists for you guys to pack up and travel two days into the Quetico, and leave *everything* behind. But I think it's also important to be able to find a little tree-belt or creek-bed or patch of meadow that can be reached without having to work too hard to get there. His efforts to locate real grassland-type prairie in the immediate area may be difficult; most of the region you live in has gone under the plow at one time or another, and a combination of wet weather and human manipulation of the water table has changed



the soil chemistry of both Minnesota and Wisconsin, in such a way that semi-arid grassland is unlikely to redevelop. Also, there is a dearth of real wildfires around there these days, and you know how critical that is to maintaining a real prairie.

When you guys come down to Madison for Corflu Ten, we might be able to take a trip out to the Curtis Prairie section of the University arboretum — everything ought to be in bloom about then, and I think it would well be worth visiting. It's half a mile wide and two miles long; more than big enough to get temporarily lost in.

While your trip to Britain sounds like great fun and well worth it many ways, but I feel sorry for you in that you have to go to another continent to find time to read. And you tease us so! What do you mean, "a telling game of one-upsmanship" with D. West? And doesn't that sound just like Stu Schiffman, leaving a guide to London bookshops in his wake. Good for you in discovering the work of Geoff Ryman; now try *The Child Garden* and get *really* weird.

Chuch's piece was also diverting, and I enjoyed Rob's report, even though I had read it in its original publication.

Standing out LoCs from #4 include those from Robert Lichtman (Why can't we just go back to calling him Bob, anyway? I mean, I respect him, and credit him with all the maturity that any fan ever achieves, but at the same time, it's quite clear he ought to be named "Bob.") and Harry Warner.

#5 is redolent with the odor of Corflu Nine, and seeing the rubber-stamped one-shot again brings back the quality of the weekend almost better than anything else could. I predict that Corflu will prove to have been the beginning of a new vogue for Rotsler's art. So many cartoonists in fandom have an exceedingly tight line. My personal taste often runs toward scrawlier stuff; I have always liked Alexis Gilliland and Rotsler for the way that they evoke so much with such a paltry number of seemingly disorganized lines. Anyway, the juxtaposition — I leave it to James White to explain the word to Chuch — of ATom, Rotsler and Schiffman, along with your usual faultless layout, makes *Idea* #5 so flaming faanish that I feel as though I can die now, and count myself a happy man.

Mr. Schiffman's theories and efforts to quantify the wispy thing that is Corflu are all well-taken, and I will be sure that everyone on the Corflu Ten committee gets a copy of his article to consider. I wonder what, if any, fallout there will be from Stu's decision to name the faults he saw present in the New York Corflu. Perhaps there will be none; Stu is one of the handful of people in the world who could criticize his friends on the New York committee without plunging us into some sort of fan war.

In talking about the New York Corflu, Stu makes the only gaffe that I could detect in his narrative, that being his brief diatribe against the presumably

non-faanish fans who attended the convention. One of the most significant challenges facing a Corflu committee is the need to somehow involve the special character — and special characters — of their local fan group, without allowing it to be intrusive to the special habitat of the Corfluvianite. If there are people attending Corflu that one doesn't particularly want to see there, regional fans or even fanzine fans with a chip on their shoulder, you can't hold the convention responsible for allowing them to attend. The last thing our branch of the hobby needs to be is exclusionary; we have a hard enough time attracting new blood as it is, and if some less-than-sterling fans do come to Corflu, all we can do is hope that some of our ideas of fun will rub off on them. I will never attend any Corflu that takes action to openly exclude anyone from attending, and I can assure you that Corflu Ten will not undertake any such action.

Don Fitch's comments serve to confirm most of my impressions at #9: That he was doing a superb job, that he was having only a little fun, most of the time, and that he was the only person from the convention infrastructure to be found anywhere near the hotel after five o'clock on Sunday. I think avoiding the second of those points, the failure to have fun, is actually a very serious failure to plan adequately on Don's part. It may have been in an area where failure hurt only himself, but con workers who do not have fun soon become former con workers, for after all, what is the point of it, anyway.

I have one actual criticism of Don's style of hospitality, and that, predictably, has to do with a dairy product. People everywhere, certainly not just Don, persist in cutting perfectly good cheese into little one-inch cubes before serving it. These usually sit for anywhere from a half hour to four before they are eaten, by which time they have attained room temperature, developed a waxy texture, and have lost most of the flavor they originally possessed. Cheese should be left out in the largest chunks possible, and guests should be permitted to cut off pieces themselves, ensuring a fresh cut for each piece eaten.

Jeff's discussion and bibliography of Wilhelm Reich was intriguing and maybe just a little frightening. I always find it startling to discover deep convictions that I had never suspected before in an acquaintance, whether they be religious feelings or political beliefs or whatever. Jeff's contention that he can see the orgone glowing around a big tree in a green field is just that kind of thing. I don't want to judge him positively or negatively as a result of finding this out, but everyone has prejudices that creep in at the corners, if they want them or not, and I think Jeff is brave to lay himself out so honestly.

I have flipped through a few of Reich's works at book stalls or even in libraries; perhaps if I had had a personal encounter like Jeff's with Tom Ross, they would have pulled me in more. On the other hand, Peter Reich's *Book of Dreams* is a remarkable,

heartfelt work; I had occasion to read it a few years back while staying at a beach house where the only other choices available were bodice-rippers and Reader's Digest Condensed Books. I don't think Peter Reich really understood his father's theories any better than any of the rest of us, but what does emerge is an image of a man who was desperately sincere about his work, and who is well-removed from the cynical or demented charlatan that many saw.

And then there is Kate Bush's interpretation, in the song "Cloudbusting," and the video that was made of it. Readers would do well to try and find a copy of it, to see a superb rendition of the cloudbusting apparatus, and to hear those haunting words, "I still dream of Orgonon." It's a schematic and simplified view of Reich and his downfall, but it captures the spirit of it all, including the battling with UFO's bit.

James White's "George and the Aliens of IF" was charming and a lot of fun; it almost verged into poetry in the part where he talks about Ireland. That's some kind of Bufo you've got there....

Out of the rest of the issue, the thing that stuck with me the most was Steve Sneyd's account of his early memories of German bombings of Britain. I seem to be seeing a lot of television about the Battle of Britain lately, and reading a lot of accounts. Sat through a whole hour on the Supermarine Spitfire and its less glamorous partner, the Hawker Hurricane; it made me think of my own cousins, and the way they described how their street in Plymouth was bombed in 1940. I read of how the German's campaign was doomed from the start by their reliance on short and medium range bombers, by the British radar net, and Hitler's decision to shift the bomber's emphasis to crushing British morale by burning their cities, in response to an ineffectual British raid on Berlin.

In the face of all this historical synthesis, I can't shake the feeling that the people who lay under the bombs at night were far from certain of the futility of the German assault. They must have felt, from time to time, that their labors were in vain; that their fantasies and scientific dreams might come to nothing but chaos and famine and burning cities, as Harry Warner suggested in #4.

Thinking of that, I see it as another way in which these older fans are different from you and I, and worth our veneration; they went through fire and came out with these outlandish dreams intact; and that is a test that only a few of subsequent generations of fans have faced.

Warm Regards,

Ah, the ratio of amusement value to length on the D. West story makes it unworthy of publication, but ask me in person sometime when we've got a few minutes. In short, I decided (and probably not to my credit) that Don was most likely going to form a "bad" Impression of me, so I might as well let it develop from something blatant rather than inadvertent on my part. I'll be damned for something real over something imagined any day. So I treated our meeting as a performance, and, lacking polished acting skills, I hammed it up. It was fun, if unsatisfying as far as friendship-building goes. I have reason to believe he enjoyed it, at least on some level.

As if it's open to discussion, I see Robert as a "Rob" over a "Bob" any day. While dangerous at best, we (i.e., fandom) could have a lot of fun renaming all the fans to fit our images of them. Nah...people change their own names often enough (and I should know) that we'd best leave things be....

Don's going to be working on the fun part come MagiCon; we'll convert him yet. I take the middle road when it comes to cheese. Your points are well made, but I've seen too many chunks of cheese sitting, uncut, surrounded by baskets of greasy napkins and mouse-sized potato chips. I tend to slice a few off the end of the cheese, so the people who are shy about getting into their food can help themselves, but also leave the knife so purists can cut their own. This works best with fans who understand and respect Wüsthof Trident knives. (So tell me, do Real Purists use only wire?)

Given how high irreverence is on my list, I guess I'll just have to leave the veneration to you. But you do make a good point about the life-experience differences between generations. What I like most about fandom is that we can share these differences and all learn a little (or a lot) in the process. Well, no, that's not quite right. What I like most about fandom is the fannish outlook, not to mention the family and love I've found here. But you know what I mean.... — gfs





## Hans Persson

Alsättersgatan 4B, S-582 48 Linköping, SWEDEN  
92-06-29

I had a very nice time reading *Idea*, not only because of the good contents, but also because of the nice production. Stenciled twiltone fanzines in two colors isn't something you see often here in Sweden unfortunately. Furthermore, most of the times that one of them sneaks in through my mailbox it is from America anyway. Most Swedish fanzines nowadays are xeroxed. "Most" in this case means at least one and probably both of the fanzines you get every month....

I enjoyed reading about Corflu a lot. It was a report from the kind of convention that I more or less was starting to wonder if it was available in the U.S. at all. From my point of view it seems as if all your cons are big affairs with at least a thousand visitors. I'm happy to hear that that is not the case. Personally, I've just emerged from running my second con (second both as a congoer and conrunner, actually). It was a con with a little more than sixty visitors, going on from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon. What should be noted is that these cons are major Swedish cons. The largest Swedish con ever attracted about 500 visitors and the second-largest had 300-something. As you can see there is quite a difference in scale here.

Another thing that is different is that over there you have specialized cons for different interests. Cons for faneds, trekkiecons, etc. There is nothing of that sort of thing here. Everybody goes to any con — we simply aren't many enough to split up.

In August there will even be an attempt made in the opposite direction. There is a con being arranged that has both a regular sf program and a role-playing program in parallel. This has not been tried here before, and is (mostly) an attempt to get more people. Fandom feels itself to be dwindling (doesn't it always) so all ways to get new blood into fandom are tried.

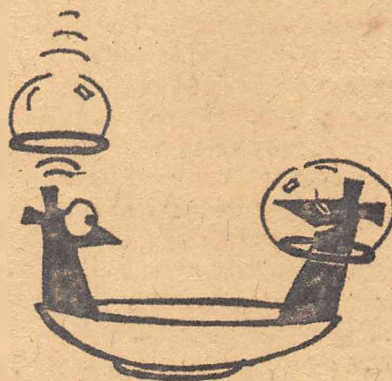
*Hans*

Most American fanzines are photocopied, too. The first three issues of *Idea* were, though I knew from the beginning that I wanted to do it desktop to e-stencil to twiltone. I'm glad other people like it, too. I just wish more ink colors were available.

I could go on at length about convention size, style, tone, the perceived dwindling (or greying) of fandom, and other everlasting discussions, but will instead opt to thank you for telling us a bit about Swedish conventions. — gfs

## WAHF

Steve Stiles; Dick Lynch ("I was amused at how your Corflu report is at the same time so similar yet so different that the one we'll have in *Mimosa* 12 next month. It's as if we were reporting on the design of a checkerboard, with you being assigned the red squares and we the black."); Mog Decarnin; Sheryl Birkhead; Sarah Prince; Martha Beck; Harry Andruschak; Jean Weber; Paul Williams, who appreciated the Robert Lichtman exposé; Craig Smith; George Flynn ("Chris Sherman's weatherball verse is interesting. In Boston there's a fairly standard verse that goes with the beacon on the (old) John Hancock tower; I think it goes: 'Steady blue, sun in view./Flashing blue, clouds there, too./Steady red, rain ahead./Flashing red, snow instead.' — except in the warmer months, when the flashing red means gale winds and the verse breaks down."); Steve Sneyd; Eric Lindsay ("Hang on, what is this about my book browsing habits? I'll have you know I bout less than 100 books (that I can count) during the course of my trip. A mere handful, and certainly not excessive for a six week trop, as I'm sure everyone will agree." and "Must admit to treating Corflu entirely as a relaxacon, and until I read Stu's comments, didn't realise anyone was even thinking of more structure. But it was my first Corflu, and I didn't know what to expect. I certainly didn't expect the quality of Don Fitch's provisioning. If I'm ever on a Mars expedition, I want Don to supply the food!")



Jeff, on Geri's cooking:

"It looks like something from  
a *Far Side* cartoon.

Ah ... that's supposed to be a compliment."



# MagiCon Fan Lounge & Minneapolis in '73 • Host Schedule

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
11am - 1 pm		Fan Lounge Geri Sullivan The Usual 7MPLS3 Don Fitch Coffee & more	Fan Lounge Dick & Nicki Lynch The Usual 7MPLS3 Joyce Scrivner Tea Party	Fan Lounge Linda Bushyager Aussiecon/Heicon Reunion 7MPLS3 Jeff Schalles '75 Non-Con Reunion	Fan Lounge Andy Hooper/The Usual 12 noon program: Eofan 7MPLS3 Geri Sullivan & Jeff Schalles Toad Hall South	Fan Lounge  7MPLS3 Chuck & Sue Harris Coffee & conversation
1 - 3 pm		Fan Lounge  Caroline Mullan The Usual	Fan Lounge  Art Widner DUFF 2pm program: Fandom Supports Itself	Fan Lounge Mike Glicksohn The Usual 1pm program: The Fortress Roscoe Method of Enjoying Modern Cons	Fan Lounge Art Widner Old Phartz Meet Young Phartz 1pm program: Fan-O-Rama	Fan Lounge -- TEAR DOWN  Don Fitch
3 - 5 pm	3 pm - evening Set-up Fan Lounge Crew - check in at the fan lounge (curtained area in Convention Center Exhibit Halls B&C)	Fan Lounge Steven Rice The Usual  4pm program: Fan-O-Rama	Fan Lounge Caroline Mullan The Usual  4pm program: Fanzine Fandom Wants You	Fan Lounge Teddy Harvia Cartoonists' Jam  4pm program: Fan-O-Rama	Fan Lounge Madeleine Willis Fannish Dinosaurs  4pm program: Readings from the Works of Walt Willis	Fan Lounge -- TEAR DOWN  Geri Sullivan
5 - 7 pm		Fan Lounge  Marty Helgesen The Usual	Fan Lounge  Jeff Schalles WPSFA Reunion	Fan Lounge  James White vs. Chuck Harris Practicum: The Fine Art of the Fannish Insult	Fan Lounge  Jeff Schalles & Geri Sullivan Science Fiction Five Yearly Party	
7 - 9 pm	7MPLS3 Crew - check in Rooms 2525-27-29 at the Peabody (or call Geri Sullivan or Don Fitch at the Peabody)	Fan Lounge Elaine & Steve Stiles The Usual 7MPLS3 Jeanne Gomoll & Steve Schwartz: Tiptree Tasting	Fan Lounge Arnie & Joyce Katz Folly 7MPLS3 Party set-up	Fan Lounge  7MPLS3 Terry Garey & Don Fitch Garden Party	Fan Lounge Jeanne Gomoll/SteveSchwartz Corflu Party 7MPLS3 M. Willis, White, & Sullivan 7MPLS3 visits Oblique House	7MPLS3 Terry Garey & friends ReinCONation Preview 7 pm - 1 am (if you can't make the party, come up to Minneapolis next Friday for the convention!)
9 - 11 pm		Fan Lounge Woody Bernardi Lucious, Ludicrous Las Vegas 7MPLS3	Fan Lounge Moshe Feder Program: TAFF/DUFF Auction 7MPLS3 Karen Johnson, Don Bailey, Margo Bratton & friends host	Fan Lounge  7MPLS3 Terry Garey & Don Fitch Garden Party	Fan Lounge Caroline Mullan The Usual 7MPLS3 rich brown	Laurie Mann joins in to host a Dead Moose Party 9 - 11 pm
11pm - 1 am		Dave Clement & Bill Roper Music & more 9 pm - 1 am	MINNEAPOLIS IN '73 Party! Nancy Atherton & John Douglas collect messages to Our Man in Moscow: Jim Young 11 pm - 1 am	7MPLS3 Woody Bernardi & Barnaby Rapoport Viva Las Vegas 11 am - 3 am	The Carl Joshua Brandon "Memorable" Bheerbust (Beer Can Tower to the Moon) 9 pm - 1 am	"...it's all right. It's just that Minneapolis likes to party..." Moshe Feder to Walt Willis
1 - 3 am			MINNEAPOLIS IN '73 Party runs 9 pm - 3 am		7MPLS3  Woody Bernardi Viva Las Vegas Revisited	