

KENNING

#25

* KENNING #25 -- the special, gala, Real Time-done-on-stencil issue done for the 4th *
* Birthday (Diamond Anniversary) Mailing of the Fannish Little Amateur Press, which, *
* as usual, is coming to you from Jackie Causgrove, 6828 Alpine Avenue, Apt. 4, Cin- *
* cinnati, Ohio 45236. A dozen (or so) copies will also be distributed to friends *
* who are not on the roster. First stencil begun on October 6, 1983, 10 in the ayem. *

Never again will I try to do something so time-consuming as boxing the colophon--not until I get a typewriter which has line spacing that matches its spacing between characters. Half-line spacing was a feature I found useful on my old Olympia portable, the typer -- received as a grammar school graduation gift from my Grandmother -- on which I committed to stencil my very first fanzine. You know, even after all these years (not as many as has passed in the case of some members of the apa, but still a respectable number), it is still agonizing to face the Dreaded Blank Stencil. Doesn't it ever get any easier?

DaveLo, in his role as Goad of my Life, kindly suggested that I should commit Kenning 25 directly onto stencil for this mailing, as it would seem to be unlikely that I'll be in any physical or mental shape to do any transcribing from notes later on in the cycle. Since I had similar thoughts on the subject, I am following his advice and beginning this mere days after the 24th Mlg. went into the tender care of the Post Office. The idea of doing an entire issue directly on-stencil makes me nervous, for some reason, so please excuse in advance any awkwardness in construction or expression of my comments, as I'm really out of practice. Though it's true I generally "wing it" for the latter portions of my mailing comments, it's always done after a goodly number of stencils have been cut and I'm swept up by the flow, or ambience, or whatever. Anyway, I feel quite amateurish and clumsy at this at the moment, so be warned.

In the previous issue I asked Arthur Hlavaty how he deals with conversing with Mike Wood -- now it seems his answer, if any, will be moot. Last night Joyce Scrivner called and told us that Mike's body had been found in his apartment on the 3rd of this month and it was thought that he had died from complications of diabetes the preceding Thursday. It's a damn shame. I never felt particularly close to Mike, but we shared many aspects of the same microcosm, and he will be missed. My sympathies go out to his many friends in SLANAPA, MINNEAPA, and elsewhere.

Let's see, is there anything else newsworthy to pass on? Oh, yes; DaveLo went back to being a Wage Earner for the first time in nearly a year yesterday. He'd enrolled with Kelly Services a couple of months ago, but hadn't received any assignments for several weeks after turning down two which were unreachable by bus. The last three days of this week he's typing mailing labels for the City of Silverton. It's a terrible, arduous journey he must make every morning -- the City Hall is all of a block from here. The weekend after this -- while I will away at Octocon -- he'll have a longer commute, and far more strenuous hours, at an assignment at the Cincinnati Gardens, a public arena

at which a variety of events are held, ranging from rodeos through wrestling matches to special merchandising affairs. His assignment seemingly will fall into the latter category. All he was told was that he would be dealing with "marketing", which isn't very informative. He'll have to walk a bit over a mile from the bus stop to reach the place. There is a bus which goes directly by it, but to take it would add another 45 minutes or so to his trip, so hoofing it -- weather permitting -- is preferable.

Daughter Sandy and son-in-law Greg moved to their own apartment this week. The day after, their car died. That caused all sorts of complications -- for one thing, Manpower, which Greg works for, requires employees to have their own transportation so their car's death will have to be kept a Secret from them -- and Sandy was audibly upset as she described the flurry of phone calls which passed among herself, her Temporary Agency (Le Gals, ain't that cute?), and various coworkers in attempts to arrange rides to and from work for her. Apparently Greg can reach his long-term, open-ended assignment at Kenners on foot, but her job at Procter and Gamble is miles away, not only from their residence, but any bus line. Things seemed to be well on their way to being worked out when I spoke to her yesterday, though. As Dave pointed out to me, there's little that Sandy could tell me that would surprise me, but she does manage to come up with these Minor/Major Calamities on a rather regular basis. (And please don't suggest that there's a genetic cause behind this tendency of hers...that would be quite rude of you.)

This procrastination has gone on long enough. No avoiding it; it's time to attack the last Mailing. On to MC's...

DAVE LOCKE -- SCOTCHED THOUGHTS & SMOKED INSPIRATIONS XIV -- This title isn't familiar to me. How did you manage to put out fourteen issues of it without me knowing? You're a sneaky person, Locke.

Now I'm getting confused. You typed "XIV" as the number of your zine on the contents page of the Mailing, but you typed "#1" on the zine itself. As I know you haven't had any scotch in quite some time, I presume the inconsistency is one of those Smoked Inspirations to which your title refers. Well, I've seen better...

Neat way you worked out the design around your title. I liked it. Looks classy as all hell.

Time has proven that your caution in being optimistic about your lead in your on-going tennis tourney with Steve Leigh was for good and sufficient reason -- I don't think you've won more than a match or two since you wrote that comment. To what do you attribute this change in fortune? Has Youth and Skill overcome Old Age and Treachery at last? Was Buck Coulson mistaken in stating so baldly that the reverse is true? Will I ever escape from this query mode?

Phew What a relief!

You ask Eric Lindsay how he would describe orgasm to a paraplegic. That's an impossible task. It's like trying to describe the color red to someone blind since birth, or the song of a meadowlark to ~~Dave Langford~~ a deaf person, or how to yodel to a giraffe. Some concepts simply must be experienced; mere description cannot suffice.

No sooner than do we both comment on the Pitcher Show -- the theater where patrons can smoke, dine, and drink while viewing films that Eric attended while visiting the Haldecouple in Florida -- than the news is released in our local paper that a suburb of Cincinnati has opened up one of its own versions. Too bad we haven't got a car or that the bus lines don't go up to Hamilton (strange that the city of Hamilton is outside of Hamilton County), I would like to go to a show set up like that.

Though, as I've said before, I'm not into gardening to the same degree as is Joni (GIAWOL -- a neat way to describe her ~~obsession~~ hobby) it is an activity I enjoy. Yes, there are aches and pains entailed in its performance, but they seem somehow easier to tolerate than most other discomforts. Saving money by one's own efforts is a large part of it, but there's an almost metaphysical pleasure in watching things grow. The Miracle of Nature and Life, and all that... I even like the smell of freshly-turned soil, the warmth of the sun upon my back, the way my senses become attuned

to the little things that go on around us all the time but that we tend to let fade into the mental background -- the chirring of the insects in the trees, the waft of summer air upon my cheeks, the odors of the Earth, the sight of light and shadow which reveals the twisting shape of a blade of grass, the nubby texture of the handle of a gardening tool. It's as if my senses become more acute, more aware, magnified. Sorry to come off so maudlin about it, but that's the way it is with something you enjoy and are no longer able to do. *Sigh*

Which is more likely to be erotic, nails or hands? My vote would go to nails, I guess, though hands can be used erotically, too, of course. I suppose it's because one is unlikely to encounter another person's nails in an unerotic setting. If you're not a manicurist, that is. Having one's back scratched isn't in the same league, IMHO; the pressure and technique employed are altogether different.

Reading of how you enjoyed perusing all the old issues of your defunct zine AWRY reminds me of my deep, personal loss. I don't have a run of my own old zines to read through. *Sob* Back when I was living in Chicago, and Larry Nichols came by to visit, I lent him my run of DILEMMAS on his promise to return them as soon as he was finished reading them. I've never laid eyes on him since. Sure wish I had those copies back; taking strolls down Memory Lane can be amusing every so often.

I should correct a misapprehension you reveal in your comments to Suzi -- it wasn't she who brought the canoe to Wilcon. Since we have a conspiracy afoot that relates to said canoe, I cannot say more... (Joni? Have you heard from Minneapolis about our Secret?) (Boy, how's that for esoteric references. With Bowers gone, I suppose someone must take up the fallen standard...)

Speaking of Suzi, I just got off the phone with her. She had called to speak with you (should I get suspicious?), thinking I was in the hospital and expecting surgery tomorrow. There was a slight mix-up in dates, there. I passed on the news about Mike Wood, and we yacked about this-n-that on her employer's dime. Wish I had a job at a place where I could make long distance calls and get away with it. Some people have all the luck!

And yet again speaking of Suzi (I hope she's lapping up this egoboo); was that line in the section you addressed to Lon -- "...when I hold a tool the best that can be said is that I'm dangerous." -- meant as a Free Throw to Suzi? The acronym you came up with, SUS (SU,S would look better), seems strikingly apropos.

Please, don't be Impressed by the page-count of my last Kenning. Statements like that tend to intimidate me; like when Don D'Amassa told me in a letter that the LoC I'd sent on his now-defunct zine MYTHOLOGIES ran over 3,000 words and he was Impressed. I never LoCced him again. It was if some sort of mental standard had been set, over which I would have to hurdle if I ever attempted a similar feat. I mean, I hadn't intended to go on for so long...the words just kinda poured out.

If you passed a knot of people standing or sitting close together, obviously deep in conversation, I doubt if you'd give them a second glance. Unless a viewer's attention were attracted by something glaringly abnormal about such a group, I doubt if anyone would look closely enough to notice that everyone involved in the Fondlecon was in actual physical contact with at least two others. A football huddle would appear more intimate than that group did at passing glance. Perhaps if someone had been in a Wookiee costume (though I think the incident pre-dates Star Wars) a mundane guest might have looked twice, but otherwise, I really doubt if anyone would've.

Do I consider Avedon Carol to be "one of fandom's all-time overrated fanwriters?" No. Okay, that's sidestepping the intent of your question, but I gather my evaluation of her writing rates her higher than yours does. In any case, while I see your point in linking the tone of her writing to that of Joseph Nicholas, I would have to state in her defense that such a tone was far more evident in her earlier fan writing, when she was in the thick of the feminist discussions then going-on. Her stuff is more like personal-nattering, now, and I enjoy what I've seen of it. Without Naming Names, there's a goodly number -- over a half dozen occurred to me while I paused to ponder -- who seem to me to be far more overrated than she ever was.

Langford could use copies of VARGO

STATEN to ward off the insects attacking his dwelling? Excuse me, my ignorance is showing, but I thought that was the name of a writer, not a book. I'm unable to reach even the first layer of your esoteric joke...

It's rather silly to argue about something that took place last June, but as my dim memory recalls it, I was down from Martha's room much sooner than any "hour and a half". All I did was take a quick shower and get dressed, drinking a cup of coffee while I tossed on my clothes. You know that doesn't take me more than 20-25 minutes. What I thought strange was why you didn't come up to the room, once you'd made contact and knew we were all up and about. *Oh well* The entire episode was weird.

When I was publishing Dilemma, one of my goals --vague and not stated as such openly -- was to acquaint some of the confen with fanzine fen. Most of my friends in fandom overlap both camps, but there are too many convention fans who do feel that their form of fanac is the Only form of fanac. Not to say that they don't recognize fanzine fandom, but they consider it a lesser form, not as important as in-person types of activity. Since "importance" rests on the bias of the beholder, I can't argue with anyone who feels that whatever it is that they do is what really counts in this world, but I do try to let them know that their way is not the only one.

DAVE LANGFORD -- ANSIBLE 34 -- Mighod, I thought Bowers used teeny-tiny type in OUT-WORLDS. What reduction factor did you use for your color-phon? Being nearsighted, I could barely get my eyes close enough to the page because my nose was getting in the way. Fortunately, my nose is not overly large...

Suppose it means that I'll be drummed out of fandom now, but I didn't recognize the line -- "*Our teeth grated, and my nipples went spung!*" -- as being from Heinlein's NUMBER OF THE BEAST. In fact, it looks rather like an Ellison phrase. You won't reveal my horrid secret, will you?

Juicy, gossipy issue, as usual, but nothing stands out to comment on. A string of "Um's", "Oh?'s", and "Heh-heh's just won't suit.

ERIC LINDSAY -- MISSED MAILINGS -- I think it's great news that you're doing so well at selling your computer articles. And that you've sold a book about them as well. Do you get as testy as Dean when you're birthing a book?

Daley Jr. did not get to be mayor of Chicago. The city finally elected its first black mayor: Washington is his last name, but the first name escapes me at this time.

Did you salute in the direction of Bubonicon while Becky, Jutz and Bruce faced toward Sydney? Or did they perform the maneuver in vain?

I haven't seen Coleco's ADAM machine yet, but I certainly find the concept interesting. From what I hear, it uses tapes instead of disks for its drive, which slows it up somewhat, but the fellow who writes the computer column for the local paper felt the difference wasn't of much import. When he tested one of the devices, he had expected the time lag to be much more than it actually was. \$600 for a complete rig sounds almost unbelievable to me...

Ice cream for supper? I had thought that DaveLo's batchelor meals were odd, but I can see I was wrong.

I agree that it was pointless for the Westercon people to provoke Pournelle, but there's some strange change that happens to people once they work on convention committees. They get a taste of Power, and it leads them to do silly things like make rules which people MUST FOLLOW even if (perhaps particularly if) it causes inconvenience. Some of the attitudes expressed during SHOFFing sessions I've sat on would make Hitler's cabinet meetings look mild in comparison. It's strange because these very same people get extremely up-tight at similar rules in society-at-large, and protest mightily that their freedoms and rights are being abridged at every turn. *Oh well* That's the way people are, and as far as I can see, it's a fact that must be lived with.

I like the idea of your "Fugghead" badge. It would work better if they were done up in bright fluorescent colors, so they would stand out in a room party. Encourage compliance, through threat of embarrassment, rather than demand.

All you have to eat in the house is celery and wine? (I assume the ice cream must've been consumed during a previous evening.) You surely won't get much nourishment out of a diet like that, but then you probably won't care much about it, either...

TO JEAN: for awhile there were several fannish relationships where the two parties were separated by hundreds of miles. It got to be a joke to refer to "Long Distance Relationships", and most didn't turn out very well, though there were exceptions (one of these, between Mike Harper of Toronto and Sue Levy of Minneapolis is being ended by their marriage the 29th of October). I hope yours and Eric's beat the odds, although most likely the gasoline dealers, post office, and telephone company wouldn't agree.

ARTHUR HLAVATY -- I BRAKE FOR NOSERS 21 -- I like your dot-matrix typeface much better when it's reduced. Full size, like this zine uses, looks, well, tacky. Like those Sweepstakes offers Readers' Digest put out before they got a better printing system.

Did you and Bernadette hold a wake at the demise of Osborne's computer company? I thought of you when I read the news. One more bright person got beat by the system...

I also wish to express my sympathy at the (now old) news that you missed a large chunk of Worldcon because of an asthma attack. By now, of course, I imagine you're feeling frisky and up to snuff, so that comment is pointless as all get-out.

I'm not certain that I consider Nicholas's departure from FLAP as a "gain". Having a gadfly around can liven up the comments we make. However, when the gadfly is as non-communitive as Joseph was, that approach doesn't work as well as it might.

(Wha-a-a?) Since I'd met Taral in person before he was very widely known in fandom, I'd considered him a "self-piting asshole" all along. But I see your point; those who hadn't gotten the opportunity to see the person before they saw his work would think of him as an Artist first.

Thanks for the Dennis book titles. I'll keep them in mind when next I visit the library.

-- ANOTHER REMARKABLE FANZINE 4 -- Bowers brought me a copy of WOOF, so I had already read this by the time it appeared in FLAP. I applaud your attitude in hoping to encourage people to write for fanzines, or put out their own zines, but I can't help but think of WOOF as a Lost Cause.

-- DILLINGER RELIC 30 -- I used to mail my fanzine with a legal-length sheet of paper wrapped around as a partial cover. Problem was that I had to fasten it on somehow. If I used tape just on the wrapper itself (oops) the zine sometimes worked out and the person who received it got only the wrapper. I tried tape, but then, after getting complaints for an issue or two, switched to staples, and never heard a ~~disappointing~~ *Word* negative comment. I thought all fanzine fen had staple grabbers close to hand -- I know we've got two or three of them around our house. And I don't appreciate the stickiness that tape leaves behind on the zines I've gotten that use that method. Guess it all goes to show Ya Just Can't Win...

Sorry to hear that the Lillian marriage is kaput. Wonder if Guy is going to resume his Humbering System now, and if he does, will he pick up from where he left off or will he start afresh? I had thought that a Senatorial Censure wasn't much of a punishment, either. But I read (newspaper? TIME?) that there are other factors to it than merely an official "Naughty, naughty" statement. The person loses seniority rights and privileges, and I think the committee positions held as well. Anyway, there was a lot more to it than just a reading of one's "crimes" on the floor of the Senate or House.

I'm curious whether Mike Resnick has read Sheckley's new book DRAMOCLES. Mike's opinion is that Sheckley burnt out his ~~nose~~ brain cells doing drugs and is all but a basket case. (Mike has some weird opinions on other things, too.) If the book is any good, I wonder if it will affect his view any. Must make a point to ask him about it someday...

Interesting zine, as always.

MIKE SHOEMAKER -- MUGGINS' MUGGLES AND MUBBLEFUBBLES #20 -- Another instance of differing tastes in TV fare. DaveLo and I both enjoy (perhaps that should be in past tense--I haven't seen it on the schedule lately) BUFFALO BILL, but weren't particularly impressed by REMINGTON STEELE. The first show of the new season was okay, but nothing to get excited about.

The weaknesses you see in Russell's DEAR DEVIL and I AM NOTHING are the same ones that bothered me when I read those stories. Forced, moralistic, and more than a bit clumsy. This opinion does not endear me to DaveLo...

Well. I've finished your zine, and though there are things I find of interest, nothing else impells any comment. Sorry.

ROY TACKETT -- DYNATRON 78 -- You didn't mention what sort of stencils you were using when complaining how poorly they took hand-stencilling techniques for artwork or headings. We use two types here: yellow (which DaveLo prefers because what you're typing shows up better) and green (which I prefer because the copy prints better). The yellow stencils are TERRIBLE for drawing on--too skimpy a coating of wax on them, or something. The green ones work excellently (I used them for the past two issues of KENNING for the first page). There's a 50¢ difference in price per quire, which I feel is slight for the difference in quality (\$3.89 on-sale price for the yellow vs. \$4.39 on-sale for the green).

I would hardly call Bjo Trimble an "excellent artist". While nothing of hers was really bad, most of what I've seen looked like the doodles high-school girls would sketch out on their notebooks and such. Rather mediocre stuff, and her sense of proportion and appreciation for anatomy wasn't very good, either. If Donning employed an illustrator for her book, it probably was for the best.

We heard from Buck Coulson about your trip to Michigan. Hmph. You could stop off and see them in your fancy motor home, but peons like DaveLo and I don't rate... Hmph, ~~again~~.

I didn't find the "Artificial Person" concept in Heinlein's FRIDAY to be much of a Big Deal. It could be that I'm just too different from most people, but I consider people who have human genetic backgrounds to be human, regardless of whether their genes were monkeyed around with. As with the brouhaha about "test-tube babies" ("petri dish" would make more sense), my outlook must be askew since I fail to see what's so wonderous about it all. Now if the A.P.s had been genetically constructed out of human and some other sort of being--say a chimpanzee or orangutan--then I could see the point in at least thinking over the matter of "humanity" (i.e. is a person Human if their genes aren't fully). As for Heinlein's "mastery as a story teller"...again, I can't agree. There was nothing in the plot of FRIDAY that pulled me along; I had to push myself to finish the darn thing.

-- DYNATRON 79 -- Since the P.O. recently announced that they made another profit last year, I really don't think they intend to raise the cost of postage again soon. I certainly hope not, at least!

I like the double column format you used in this issue. Easy on the eye muscles. If I weren't so darn lazy I'd use it for my zines, too.

While I was semi-looking-forward-to seeing JEDI, as time passes the feeling weakens. Oh, to be sure I'd be willing to view it if the price was right, free being the best, but there's no urge to stand in line or pay \$5 for a ticket. Much of my reaction is because I know there's no more to the trilogy. It's like as long as this finishes the story, I can see it any old time.

I was all set to point out that the STAR WARS book wasn't penned by Lucas when I saw on the next page that you found that out for yourself. Another comment shot all to hell and gone...

DaveLo and I saw MARGAMES, too but didn't get the "underlying message" that you did. Have to agree that there seemed to be another message besides the main one, though -- only the one I got concerned how fine it is to bilk Big Corporations out of services (e.g. phone service). The kid, who was the hero relied on technology (little Science was in the film), and it didn't come across as Evil--only able to be misused by Those in Authority...

As a sort of sidelight to the comment you made about human and chimpanzee DNA being 98+% identical--more alike than even two members of the same species of ground squirrel found on each side of the Grand Canyon--SCIENCE 83 (I believe it was that magazine, at least) ran a bit about the strangeness in the DNA of cheetas. Apparently, theirs show no variation whatsoever among different individuals. From one end of their range to the other: each and every one is the same. To my way of thinking, that makes them practically clones of each other, and considering cosmic rays and other things which should cause genetic damage/change that can lead to viable mutations, it's a highly unlikely state of affairs. Unlikeliness, however, doesn't mean it can't be...

I dunno, Roy. In your drum-beating against anti-science stories--or at least the anti-science content which you claim to see in various sources--I'm wondering if you don't seem to be placing a Mantle of Priesthood about anyone and everyone who works in the fields of scientific research. Scientists and researchers are human, just as thee and me and we, and are quite prone to fall victim to the same weaknesses that inflict the rest of our species. They can make mistakes, they can rush foolhardily into areas that can bring about utter chaos if explored without sufficient watchguards. There are people who, while not denying that we should and must expand our knowledge of what goes on in this Universe, feel nonetheless that pausing every so often to cast a bit of light before us to see where the hell a certain path is leading, rather than dashing heedlessly and recklessly into the night, makes sense. Some researchers are so damned anxious to be First, to clear up whatever problem it is that their working on, that they ignore any danger to themselves or to the rest of the world. More than one hot-shot researcher has been found to have doctored his/her results, without consideration for the fact that other researchers would use his or her data to incorporate into other work--which could possibly lead to further complications up the road because false bases were used. GIGO--but the last 'G' could blow up in our faces. I can't see how any sensible person could not insist on safety-minded, double- and triple-checking safeguards and restrictions on research into new fields. To view any and all such restrictions as a barbarian reaction against misunderstood Magick is just as reactionary and totalitarian and those who'd figuratively or literally burn all scientists at the stake.

I think the current (and seemingly never-ending) controversy about nuclear power stations is a case in point. Here we had a new technology that offered all sorts of benefits, as well as dangers, to society. On the one hand we had a bunch of go-go Pro-Science (really, Pro-Technology) people who wanted to get this New & Improved method of obtaining electricity into operation. On the other hand we had a bunch of Anti-technologists who wanted anything developed since the time of Jamie Watt to be stuck into a dark hole with a great big rock set above it. Radical middle-of-the-roaders only wish the two extreme camps would shut up long enough to make sense of it all. In the case of nuclear power, it is obvious that in some cases plants were built without enough knowledge of what the hell we had to cope with--metal crystallization under great heat, changes in the physical components of the plant itself after some years, various glitches have turned up that make some of our power plants a lot more dangerous than they should be. (I'm sidestepping completely the point about what the hell we do with nuclear waste--the problems with the physical plant itself are bad enough.) The technology was simply pushed into production too soon--proper, working safeguards were not set up, unprepared companies were allowed to perform work they were not set up to do, and now we have to live with what's left. The problem seems, to my mind at least, to be more the fault of people and corporations who want profits so badly they'll push something into production before we're fully acquainted with it. A nuclear power station is not a ball point pen, or a microwave oven, or a new-model car. We can't simply let inferior products of that nature loose into the world and make changes later in the factory when the first ones prove defective. And nuclear technology is not the only area where commercial interests want to shove still-aborning scientific achievements into the world of marketing and commerce. I think it is those people--rather than the researchers themselves--who have to be kept under tight leash. The problem is a lot more complicated than Us against Them; it's not as clear-cut as a simple war...

I didn't grow up in the Great Depression, but I sure as hell have difficulty in adjusting to today's prices, even so...

MIKE HORVAT -- WIDDERSHINS 7 -- Now that you have begun a new, virtuous path in your life, and have resolved to participate more fully in this here apa, I can only express the hope that the road ahead proves smooth and no further obstacles loom up to hinder your progress. (This is called Encouragement by the OE...)

Hope the remodelling project goes well (they never do, y'know) and that the results are just what you had invisioned (they never are, y'know) and that you'll be pleased (that does sometimes happen).

Your comments about boxers more-or-less getting what they deserve make me wonder if we'd have mine-safety laws and other worker-protection regulations if everyone held the same viewpoint toward all employees. They all only get what they're being paid for... Sure.

My regard for fandom-as-family is rather close to yours--a feeling of kinship accompanied by the realization that all kin aren't necessarily Nice.

Naw, I don't think skiffy fans are the intellectual hope for the country--no more than any other hobby group. We most assuredly are not the only bunch of people who could be classed as Free-Thinkers (and not all fans fall into that category to begin with), and as a group we certainly aren't very effective in influencing the world-at-large. Discussing various topics with an open mind is fun, to apply lofty-sounding labels and/or goals to it distorts reality. I'm glad you enjoy fandom and the chance it offers for exercising those mental muscles, but if you're seeking the Cutting Edge of the Future, I think you should seek elsewhere. Uncap another Annie Greensprings and relax...

JUDY STEVENS (KAJ) -- THE FRONTIER ALIEN #20 -- If you'd prefer to be called Kaj, then so shall it be. It'll take awhile for the mental adjustment to fully take effect, but be patient; it'll happen.

Enjoyed the con report, but I sure wish you hadn't neglected those All Important Mailing Comments at the same time. We must keep our Priorities in mind, after all...

Now that you seem to have found the hang in handling your ditto, why not try to run your material on both sides of the sheet? Your versos seemed clean enough to do so in most cases. Just let one side have time enough to dry before running off the verso--would save a lot on paper and bulk. It seems there are always higher claims on one's time and money than matters which fall into the category of "pleasure". While attending an occasional con does cost hard-earned cash, the benefits gained for one's own mental equilibrium make it worthwhile. I mean there's no need, on a dollars-n-cents level, to eat anything else than beans and rice, but the inner soul is served well by varying one's diet. Cons serve the same purpose, most likely for the same Inner Soul...

Picayune bureaucrats, like your children's school principal, can get involved in petty power trips just like con-committee members. Ain't it the truth, though... Glad you got that man set straight, and even gladder that you feel good about it.

Yes, Becky doesn't look her age--but you should see that portrait of herself that is hidden in her closet...

Your delight with the artistic aspects of the "Junque" taken home from Los Alamos as souvenirs, reminds me of my frustration when I worked for Pioneer Electronics. All those colorful itty-bitty gadgets! What could be done with them? I kept a weird assortment of some rejected parts around the apartment for awhile, but never came up with any ideas of how to use them. Finally gave most to my oldest son, who gets a kick out of drawing and painting alien, futuristic scenes using "found objects" as models for different shapes. When he's not just simply playing with them, that is.

The Thursday before Midwestcon, local CFGers show up for the early arrivals--didn't the Bubonicon crew do the same? I know a room was always opened at Louisville's Rivercons, too, so thought it a customary practice at all conventions. It sometimes happens that the best conversations are found at the Pre and Post con get-togethers. Not always, but often enough.

Your meeting with Jack Williamson struck a familiar chord in my memory. It was quite like the time I first met Bob Tucker. I think I felt more embarrassed about acting so tongue-tied and, well, awestruck (I wasn't awestruck, but I know it sure as heck looked that way!) than I have about almost anything else. I'd never paid much attention to the names of writers and books--I remembered story-lines but seldom titles--but Wilson Tucker and WILD TALENT was an exception. Buck Coulson fortunately had a copy of that novel among his huckster wares, so I picked it up and then awkwardly presented it for an autograph later in the evening at a room party. I was thirty, not forty, but I felt the same flusteration (?) as you describe. Kept thinking that if I'd been fifteen and in pig-tails my reactions would have been much more appropriate.

Your ceramic "thingys" all looked cute. Perhaps you could ship a few up here in time for next year's Confusion (in January). Thank you, too, for the "commision" you sent for passing on the dragon idea. If I were prouder I'd refuse it, but instead I'll just say that there is no need to do things like that. You'll find enough people with their hands out in this world as it is, no need to go looking for 'em...

I used to correspond sporadically with Terry Floyd, back when he was a neo and lived in (I think) Oklahoma. He really moves around a lot! Was a bit surprised to see his name crop up in connection with Austin in 85, as I thought he'd gafiated as he moved out of his teen-aged years. Glad to see he's still in fandom. I found the sheer joy expressed in your report to be most touching. Brought back some of the magic I felt when I first encountered fandom and conventions. Thanks. Appreciated it.

That car-wreck incident is one of those things that'll most likely stick in your memory for the rest of your life. Excitement like that I don't care for. Yes, it was a good thing Kent acted so quickly--did any of you ever find out how the man was doing? I think I would've called the hospital to check on his condition, but perhaps Kent felt better simply Not Knowing.

Was it all due to the Hand of God or the result of circumstance. Some will believe one way, some the other. I don't think it makes a difference.

HARTY HELGESEN -- GLADDENING RAYS OF BRIGHT FUTURITY (24 FZ) -- Your title reminds me more of horse-racing than anything else. Could be the name of a book directed to the horse-crazy teen-aged set.

Enjoyed and chuckled over the bits and snippets you included about the two cons you attended. The Smurf fad engendering a Save-the-Smurfs Bluepeace movement made me laugh aloud. (Thanks, I needed that...)

Good explanation of the usefulness of expressions like OOK-OOK in response to Suzi's cavil. How else to express the groans one is expected to make in reaction to a good pun? *Groan* would do it, too, but someone's already gotten OOK-OOK into the fannish vernacular, so why not use it? Down with suppression! OOK-OOK supporters, arise!

Thanks for the info on "sirrah"; I'd never considered it as a contemptuous term--merely an archaic one which could sometimes be used in the sense of "explain yourself, sir, before I call you out on the duelling ground", only with a wry grin on one's face. I don't hold Eric in contempt, and would never want to give that impression.

None of my dictionaries agrees with your statement that "Modern 'Secular Humanism' is distinct from the humanism of the Renaissance.", and I still think that adding "secular" to the term "humanism" is redundant, since the word itself already excludes religion. But I can see that all we're doing is saying "It is," and "It isn't" to each other, so I'll consider the matter closed.

Not only did the Medicaid SSI claim go okay, but today I received notice that our food stamp allotment is being increased. It helps alleviate the fact that our rent is going up next month. (The one hand taketh while the other giveth...)

Covered bridges gathering for a bridge party...cute.

It's been ten days since I worked on this, so I imagine that a natter break would be in order. Several things have occurred in the intervening time, and I've attended Octocon, but I'll try to keep this section short despite temptation.

First off, I received a phone call yesterday (Oct. 17th) from Dr. Bridwell's secretary, who asked me if I would approve rescheduling my surgery from Nov. 7th to Oct. 31st. She recalled that there had been some reason why I didn't want to enter the hospital until November, but had forgotten the details. In the meantime, something had come up that necessitated Dr. Bridwell's attendance in Lexington, KY at noon on the 7th. The patient scheduled for the 31st had cancelled out, so it seemed reasonable for me to switch. I refreshed her memory about the possible loss of SSI benefits if I should be kept in the hospital for a full calendar month, and said that if the doctor felt that there was no chance at all that I'd be in for over 30 days, then the advanced date was okay with me. She called back an hour or so later to let me know that Bridwell felt it virtually impossible I'd stay that long, so the new date's been circled on the calendar. (*Sigh* Of course, I had just finished telling everyone in the immediate universe about the date, and now there's no way I can spread the news of the change/ to everyone I'd informed Phobie.)

As a capper to the above, it also meant that yesterday was my last day for smoking. I sat up til past two o'clock, lingering over my pack of Now Menthols, dreading the new day. Can you see my dazed expression? Notice the frequent licking of lips? At least my hands aren't trembling (though if past experience holds true, they will, they will).

DaveLo's "marketing" assignment turned out to be the easiest--and conversely hardest--job he's ever had. He was a Guide for people participating in a by-invitation survey of public reaction to several makes of 1984 automobiles. As it was a self-guided tour, all he did was stand in place for hour after hour and occasionally remind someone to close the car doors after they'd inspected a vehicle, and insure the proper colored form was filled out for each auto (apparently other "guides" weren't as conscientious, so the data gathered isn't terribly accurate). The long hours on his feet--there wasn't even a place/there the guides could lean up against something--gave him a sore back, the tediousness of the "work" numbed his brain, but his feet managed to come out of it in fine shape. Right now he's off applying for work downtown--the Sunday paper advertised for market research interviewers (several positions with a local company were available)--and has another interview scheduled tomorrow for a part-time job driving a bus at the State Mental Hospital. It's not from lack of trying that there's been no progress on the job front...

Octocon had an odd feel to it. For years it had been held at the Green tree Motor Inn on Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio. So many complaints had been made about the deterioration of that facility, that Cavin had signed up at a new motel, a Sheraton located in a shopping mall a few miles from the old site. It was quite similar in layout to the new hotel used for Midwestcon this year, but all the differences were on the downside--it was noisy, echoing, chlorine-saturated, and far too large for the size attendance (85 registered) Octocon draws. The reaction to the hotel restaurant was mixed--some people had good meals and good service, some just the opposite--but several alternate eateries were within walking distance, and another couple of dozen were within a half hour's drive. Complaints weren't too loud on that score, though they came in fast and furiously about a really rotten rock band that played in the open public area, about fifty feet in front of the con suite, and forced everyone to keep their doors shut to muffle the racket. The hotel had so many people come up to gripe about the noise that they refunded half the room charge for the pool-side rooms for Saturday.

I had ridden up with Mike and Carol Resnick, who also gave a ride to Margaret Keiffer, and we apparently arrived shortly after the con-suite had opened. Barb Cross, a CFGe who lives in Dayton, said she'd gotten to the hotel about 2:30 and nary a familiar face was in sight until past three. (We rolled in a few minutes before 4:00.) Suzi Stefl had offered me crash space in her room, but there was a spare bed in the room next door to the con suite, so I took that instead. (Suzi had expected to come in on Saturday, but showed up Friday evening.) I propped my pillow up on the king-size bed in the con suite itself, and chatted with fans as they arrived.

Bowers had run off OUTWORLDS 35 the Wednesday before the con, and as he couldn't make it up to Sandusky that weekend, he asked me to pass out a dozen or so copies to those on his mailing list that were expected to attend the con. I threatened to pitch them all in the trash and simply tell him I'd fulfilled my assignment, but my better nature won out and I managed to get them all doled out (well, all that were addressed to people who showed up, that is) before midnight on Friday. I'm billing him for my agent's commission.

Joni Stopa had expected to drive in with her daughter, Deb, but a change of plans substituted her husband, Jon. The two of them treated me to dinner Friday and Saturday, and she gave me two 1.75 liter bottles of "fanzine fuel", along with a flannel-lined trench/rain coat, and a mini-mountain of jams and jellies. She also flatly refused to let me assume part of the cost for supplies we picked up for the surprise shower we were hosting for Steve & Denise Leigh Saturday afternoon. Joni's too generous for words...

The shower turned out fine. I'd been growing more nervous about it as the time set in the invitation drew near--only one or two people had mentioned anything about it--but by three o'clock, presents were mounded on one of the tables in the con suite, the punch Joni and I had whipped up was set out near the glasses and napkins for the cake (which Carol Resnick had kindly volunteered to provide), and a half-dozen bowls of munchies were scattered at various spots about the room. Suzi had gone to Bob Evans Restaurant--where Steve, Denise, the baby, and Hanjia-from-Toronto were heading for when Joni and I had met them as we came out of the store loaded with groceries--to entice them back to the con suite at the proper hour with a ~~lie~~ concocted story of being needed for an autographing session with folks who'd bought Steve's newest book. Hanjia practically had a heart attack when Suzi started her spell about the "surprise the con had come up with"--she knew about the shower and had every intention of making sure the Leighs were lured to the proper place at the proper time--but Steve and Denise bought the autograph party story and it took a couple of minutes after they came into the room before it dawned on them that it was a baby shower, not a signing session, that was the Surprise. (The look on Denise's face was worth it all--seeing the gifts left her speechless.) They reaped a bountiful harvest of baby clothes, winter wear, toys, and assorted supplies, including ~~freezer~~ dried infant foods suitable for use while travelling, as well as a goodly-sized chunk of cash (we'd gone in on a gift certificate with several other fans, but decided to come up with an untacky way to give them cash instead of a certificate, and DaveLo outdid himself composing "instructions" for using the crisp new bills and then chewing on the checkbook cover which had held the cash).

Other than that, I did the same things at Octocon I do at any other convention: talked myself hoarse, drank too much beer and booze, played several hours of poker (Won one session, lost at two, but still came out ahead by \$9.00...), smoked too many cigarettes, got too little sleep--in other words I had fun abusing myself.

Since Mike and Carol were leaving early on Sunday (well, it was an instance where 11:00 was practically equivalent to the crack of dawn), I grabbed a ride home with Roger and Michael Jordan. Made a mental mix-up between Sunday and Monday's work schedule for DaveLo's job, and visited the Jordan's house, had supper with them, flipped through some really neat woodworker design books, and came home fifteen minutes or so after the time I thought DaveLo would be arriving home himself. Turned out he'd been in since 6:30 or so, so ~~so~~ had spent four hours alone unnecessarily. *Sigh*

Of the people I chatted with, conversations with Peggy Rae Pavlat (doing marvelously well at building a fresh life around a large hole) and Mike Glicksohn (about his and Doris's new-found joy in ownership of a house) stand out the most, though Barb Cross, Ellessar Tetramariner, Margaret Keiffer, Mike Lalor, Leah Zeldes, and Howard Devore exchanged more than a couple of passing phrases--and, of course, the time spent with the Stopas was filled with ~~goodly pleasant conversations~~ enlightened exchange of illuminated viewpoints. All told, it was a relaxed and comfortable--albeit a trifle over-loud--weekend.

Oh, yes. I should inform you all that fellow FLAppan Suzi Stefl ~~butchered the~~ gave me a haircut Saturday night. She appeared dreadfully worried that I'd be upset after the fact, but I reassured her that I had, after all, gotten just what I'd asked for. (I ~~re-~~ cut the sides and top after I came home, but the back is where I needed the help.) Thanks a lot, Suzi. And that's not meant sarcastically...

Son Kurt phoned a bit over an hour ago--I'd called to tell him the change in plans last night, but he hadn't gotten home yet from work (as Night Janitor at the Beecher High School). Apparently the message was put in an out-of-the-way spot and he didn't see it until nearly noon. He passed on the news that Brian agreed to come out to Cincinnati for a visit while he's home on his leave before being shipped over to Germany, so I have something to look forward to in November other than getting used to a body cast/brace. Well, that pretty well brings everything up to date--except for the half-jillion details that completely escape me when I'm sitting at the typer and staring at a blank stencil--so I'll resume my eruption of Mailing Comments....

BILL BOWERS -- XENOLITH 25 -- If you simply had to leave us *in favor of DV and your DV and cable subscription*, then it might have been more fitting that you waited until this mailing to go--the number of zine and Mlg. would have matched then, and you know how much you like it when things like that occur...

Though I can't say that you really interacted with the group, your presence will be missed. It's much the same as your absence at Octocon--you may not say much, but it feels strange to be at a con and not have Bill lurking about in the corner or corridor, wearing his cryptic smile and esoterically-labelled badges and T-shirts... (There, that ellipsis is done in your memory. Aren't you touched?) Any time you feel like changing your mind, we'll have the corner cleared away for you so the room will be there.

BECKY CARTWRIGHT -- ROUND TUIT #14 -- Hmmm. I should point out that I don't have a name for my press/publication enterprise, even though DaveLo and Bowers refer to *somesuch* name that has given people the impression that I have bestowed pseudo-corporate status on my belongings. May. I don't name cars, or typers, or virtually anything inanimate, so don't feel that you're committing some grievous fannish blunder if you don't call your zines by a publishing-house name. You were not alone.

I left you for awhile--the above was halted yesterday afternoon when DaveLo came back from his interview (actually just the filling out of an application blank; he may or may not get an actual interview as a result). Today is just as gloomy and cool a day as yesterday was; I'm still light-headed from trying to stay away from cigarettes (advancing the date of surgery advanced that cut-off date suddenly as well *grunch*), and I'm mulling over the news my daughter passed on yesterday evening--her home pregnancy test proved positive. *Sigh* Neither has insurance, they have no savings, in fact not much furniture. Greg is ecstatic at the prospect of being a daddy--most of his buddies have new-born infants and he felt alienated. Now he'll learn to really appreciate the fun of being broke. Do I sound peevish? I am. They know not what they're getting into. *Oh well* It's a good thing it's the young ones who have babies--once you get past a certain age, the urge fades *and common sense steps in* and our species would be in deep trouble if reproduction depended on the co-operation of women in their more *coff* mature years. (Actually, considering how nuts about infants Sandy has been, practically since she was one herself, I'm surprised she held off as long as she has.)

The on-off switch helps control the noise of an electric typer, but I seldom manage to remember it for those many brief pauses encountered while composing (the longer ones, encountered while skimming the mlg. and then thinking of a response, are quiet, since I do switch off the Selectric). At one of the places I worked at as a temporary typist, a secretary had the ingrained habit of flicking the off switch with her pinkie whenever she paused--whether it was to think of what she was composing, or answer a phone, or to light up a cigarette. She had made the gesture utterly automatic. Wish I could manage to do so...

I enjoyed diagramming sentences, too--but I never did it in high school, only in grade school. Thought the practice was like working out a puzzle; and puzzles are fun, not work.

Your ct Wixon, expressing sympathy about his lack of balls as a child, displayed one of the excellent, caring facets of a typical empathetic FLAPpan. To a 'T'. I'm still sniggering...

A site for a FLAPvention that would be midway between us all could fall somewhere in the vicinity
12.

10/10/83---12:55

of Dallas, I'd bet (or I should say that Dallas would be as close to such a midway point as it would be possible to get, considering the addresses of our members). How big a house did you say you and Kent owned? (I would suppose it's Wixon who's the next closest to being the Central Member, and from his description, his digs seem pretty ample, so please, don't feel pressured into volunteering. I'm certain DaveW would be more than happy to act as back-up.) (Tee-hee)

In re your daughter Ramona's experience with infected ears: once my youngest, who normally went to sleep fairly quickly after being put to bed, kept sobbing (not screaming, or weeping loudly, just an occasional sobbing sound was loud enough to reach us in the living room) and I kept going in to check on him. He had had a cold that week, but without a high temperature (I guess it was around 100° or so), and I wasn't really concerned until the continual crying began. As I was stroking his head, trying to console him (he only said he "didn't feel good") he suddenly stopped and started dozing off. As I stood up to leave, he rolled over onto his back, and there was a bloody stain on his pillow. His eardrum had ruptured. (Called the M.D., but he said not to worry about it then; a next-day visit was good enough. Once the drum breaks there's not much to be done. But there was no sign of anything drastic going on until the darn thing broke. As it turned out, no permanent damage resulted--his hearing's fine and all--but I really felt shitty for awhile afterward. As if, by some Magick Means, I should've known....)

Nonstopparagaphing--as the system I've been using to show a new comment has begun is called--was invented years and years ago somewhere by someone. As you can see, I've got all the info at my beck and call... Seriously, I disliked it when I saw someone using it in a zine back when I first encountered it, but it kinda grew on me--much like the use of certain acronyms did--and it does allow an appearance of skipping a line between paragraphs/comments without a corresponding waste of precious stencil space. Merely indenting for a paragraph makes the text seem too dense for comfort, and half-spacing between chunks of text makes going back to correct errors when one proofreads after reaching the end of stencil a bit harder than desired. Nonstopparagaphing, on the other hand, gives a lighter look to the page, keeps the lines even -- well, most of 'em anyway -- and is a "natural" when using a typer with an 'index' button.

My tendency is to agree with Judy/Jutz/Kaj about your make-up serving as a "mask", but whether it is or isn't is beside the point. You feel it's important, so you use it. It therefore becomes (in a sense) an aspect of your personality, to be accepted or not by others in the same way they'd accept or reject you because of other personality aspects. I had asked you about it earlier because I didn't want you to feel that 'formal' make-up was considered a social necessity by me or DaveLo (some people really think that way, y'know--if you don't bother with full war paint, then you are slighting them by a display of unconcern), or by most fans, for that matter. The fact that you still choose to wear it has been accepted, and though I may quibble about some of the reasons you use (i.e. they strain the truth a bit; since you don't look bad without make-up), there's no problem with the concept itself. Somewhere along the line the notion of thinking of make-up as a clown's costume struck my fancy, and it's been something I can't shake. That's MY hang-up, not yours. But it was just one more of those things, like requiring females to wear nylons, or men to wear ties, or demanding that both sexes shave certain portions of their body hair while extolling the beauty of hair left intact in other areas--head, eyebrows, eyelashes, male chests, etc.--that I considered ridiculous. An example of the human trait of enforcing uniformity. I rejected the whole schtik then, and still do, but I also continued to feel that just because I felt that way, it wasn't required that everyone do. Joni, for instance, hardly ever wears make-up, but at times she feels it's needed in order for her to be really "dressed up". Suzi wears it frequently, though not always (or else it's so lightly applied I don't notice), and I don't know about Pauline. Joyce, I'm not sure about. I don't recall anything but lipstick, but I may be mistaken. Jodie usually wears some make-up, and has gotten fully decked out on occasion. There's many variations on the theme among the people I know, like, and respect. Yours is but one path to take, and is just fine--as long as you don't expect everyone else to follow (which, as far as I can see, you don't). And, as far as perhaps becoming "looser" in regards to writing more personally-revealing material in FLAP, it's been noted before that often people find their typewriters to be a form of defense, a shield of sorts. We

hear/read of "paper persona", which sometimes are entirely different from a person's "real" or "in-person" personality, and that can be an extreme example of using one's writing as a shield. Others seem to open up more on paper, as if doing so doesn't really count when it's not done in person, so they feel easier about doing it. I have no idea how I got off on this tangent, or what any of it has to do with you writing on more personal topics lately, but when you compose on stencil, you sometimes get weird results. *Sigh*

I do appreciate the difference you mean between "woman who works" and "working woman". Shitwork, like most office work, is much easier to deal with when you know that no one would be hurt if you walk away from it. When the job is necessary, for whatever reason (from keeping food on the table to keeping expensive pets), one's perception of it changes, and the little hassles one meets every day on any job become magnified as a result. I hope the day returns when you can look on work as a hobby again.

Wasn't it Armadillocon that you, Sandy & Greg went to last year and didn't particularly care for? Hope that this edition is more enjoyable--perhaps you'll know more people...

Barbed wire meant end-of-trail. Oh. *Blush* I had the image of riding alongside of it, as so many of the horse books, set in the West, read as a teen would mention that chore being a common one for cowboys. Got to the point that I don't look on a fence as a sign to halt, merely to switch direction and ride parallel. I'll try to rearrange the mental machinery to accept the new input.

If DaveLo and Glicksohn know and/or use any short jokes that don't apply to the same sense of "short" that you share with them (only more so), they've been polite enough not to use them when I've been around.

Don't know if it's fair to answer for Bowers, since he's not here, but I gather his "on-purpose cold" referred to the fact that someone female in whom he had a great interest was in full flower with a cold, and he engaged in certain physical displays of affection and attention that more or less guaranteed he'd get the virus from her, and he was willing to assume the burden. So he didn't complain when he could barely speak later in the week--he knew what he was getting into at the time.

Interesting con-report. I was mildly surprised by your comment that you loathe crowded areas--you seemed to be comfortable at Martha Beck's room party during the Windycon we went to in 1980 (mighod! It was that long ago?!), and there aren't too many places at a convention that get more crowded than that room was...

The "Okrahoma" cartoon was chucklesome...

The various outbreaks of animal mutilations seem to run in spurts. I've read of several, ~~in the past decade~~ sometimes more than one in a year, and since there's been no mention of any in the paper lately, I'm assuming they're keeping a lid on such stories in hopes of not encouraging copy-cat-ism. I hope they catch whoever it is who's running loose in your area, although I don't share your desire to have them treated in the same manner as the animals they've killed. Unfortunately, I don't recall any such perpetrators to have been snared; or even killed "accidentally". The assumption seems to be that they're members of some occult cult, or a bunch of crazies like the Manson Family, but I've never heard of anything actually tying the events with a specific group--it's generally idle speculation, not hard fact. Weird, in any case...

PAULINE PALMER -- MOCK FENNEL SOUP #13 -- Cute bit about Time Warps in your home. Such spots aren't unique to your house, you know.

One is located right around the area I sit in, next to our dining room table. It's a variable warp, though. At times, the flow isn't affected at all, during others, hours go by in a few minutes (though I don't recall ever losing whole days, much less two). I've also experienced the opposite effect--wherein a few minutes seem as hours. Time warps are curious glitches in the fabric of everyday life, and I think they should be studied more closely than scientists have heretofore. Maybe they can be "tamed" and made more predictable. Wouldn't it be nice to flip a switch and have one activate while you wait in a doctor's office, or in a traffic jam, or during a boring airplane flight? The possibilities are almost endless...

Looking back on the few years I spent as a flat-track roller-skate racer and comparing them to the regimin your daughter Tilda willingly assumes in order to be on the JV tennis team, it's obvious why I never made it as an athlete. I was too damn lazy. Twice a week was plenty of practice, as far as I was concerned, and no one on the team did calisthenics or hard workouts, even those who did a hundred or so laps daily. When I surprised myself by finishing fourth in the U.S. during our National meets, I stopped skating--to better that mark would require W*O*R*K, I preferred to busy myself with fun things (like fandom?), not something I'd actually have to strain myself to do. Your kid seems to have a better attitude than I did.

I've pointed out Mohammed Ali's speech slurs to DaveLo before, but I don't think he wants to own up to their existence. Glad to see someone else confirm my "diagnosis"...

The group insurance you have seems rather reasonable in cost (except when you add up the cost for a year...), and sounds similar to the policy my Ex had during the early years of our marriage (his was \$50 deductible, but the percentage after that was the same). Does your employer pick up a portion of the cost, though? Frequently companies, even those who charge their employees for such protection, pay up to ~~\$\$\$~~ 50% or so per person. The steel industry (bless their lil' hearts) picked up all the costs.

Which Nancy Drew book did you read? Mine was The Case of the Twisted Candlesticks, and was so awful that I've never forgot the title, despite a strong inclination to forget such things.

Oh, foop. Your question to Jutz/Kaj about how silver oxide would help in a lead poisoning case reminds me that I recently read a newspaper squib about the method they use for leaching metals from the body...and I forgot to clip the darn thing out *Grump*. I'm back to where I was last mailing--recalling that some sort of chemical was given intervencously that "bound" the metal and was flushed out through the kidneys. (The initials SET or SEP come to mind; might be the drug itself or something to do with the procedure.)

The word seems to have been spread quite widely about the success of NorWesCon's Fanzine Room. Whoever set it up should take a bow.

Suzi played some Silly Poker at Octocon this year (I mean sillier than our usual wild-card games; silly enough to keep me down in the con-suite), but I liked her remark that they really aren't fun unless you're playing penny-ante. Occasionally Howard Devore will sit down for a few hands, and it's a cruel amusement to call out increasingly outre games to watch the increasingly strangled look on his face....

Re yct Marty about the boy being held back in school by his father in order to be bigger when he makes the football team in high school--since when is it that the parents decide that a child should repeat a grade? I know on border-line cases their input is asked, but I never knew that a parent could decide, unilaterally, to hold back a student who was already receiving passing grades. That astounds me. Though I suppose it shouldn't. A neighbor of my Ex-father-in-law was bragging on his son, who was doing very well on the varsity football team. As my Ex relayed it, Mr. Franke shrugged and said "If I had a 21-yr.-old running over 17-year-old kids, I think I'd keep my two cents to myself..." The "kid" was declared ineligible in mid-season because of his age.

Enjoyed The Lower case, as usual (only I just now noticed the odd way they set the title--think I would've been tempted to type it out as The lower Case...)

DAVID HULAN --FENRIS 35 -- As I mentioned on the phone, from our point of view your temporary schedule for APANAGE works out fine--it almost splits the period between one assemblage of FLAP and the other in half. From your point of view, of course, the time between when you receive FLAP and have to mail out APANAGE isn't good enough (or vice-versa--don't recall which one came first...). Hope you manage to slide into a more tolerable schedule reasonably soon. Good Luck!

Glad to hear that Rachel is doing well, and that the Project is nearing completion. The addition sounds roomy and useful.

10/19/83--17:45

15.

Now that you are a family of three, living in a new house (to all intents and purposes), the lifestyle adjustments must be many and somewhat upsetting...at least I assume that they'd upset me. When do ^{YOU} expect things to settle down into a predictable routine? Is Rachel going to get a part-time job during school, or wait for summer to take a dip into the job market?

Interesting reading, and I'm glad that progress is being made on all fronts, but I'm afeared comments are hard to come by. Next time?

SUZI STEFL -- JUXTAPROSE JOURNAL #24 -- Gads but you sound domestic as all get-out, what with all the canning and pickling and wine-making going on. I canned the harvest from the garden out in Beecher twice, but since we had a huge, chest freezer, I decided I preferred frozen to canned and gave away all my processing equipment. Now that I don't have a freezer (well, one not large enough for long-term storage), I dearly wish I had those jars and lids and pots and racks back! I grit my teeth whenever I pass a veggie stand, trying my darndest not to peek and inflame my veggie lust. Ain't Autumn wonderful, though?

Kids-n-dirt, boy, do I ever remember those days! The two worst incidents took place while camping. The first occurred when our car broke down on the way home from Turkey Run State Park in Indiana. We had been camping with my Mother, and she left for home a bit before we did. The car died (and I mean died, we ended up junking it after taking the two new tires and battery we'd installed the week before) about thirty miles from the campground, perhaps two outside of a good-sized town. While I babysat the kids on a cleared out spot used to park road construction machinery, my Ex trudged down the hill to try to call my Mother whenever we guessed she'd get home. The only water we had was what was left by the ice melting in our cooler, but still the kids managed to get themselves muddied up! The soil in that area is tan-colored clay, and what wasn't muddied was covered with a layer of chalk-like dust. It took about six hours for my Mother to reach us (two-and-a-half to get home, time to unload her car to make room for us, shower, and then come back--thank ghod we weren't that far from her place!), and when she laid eyes on us, she stood there and laughed til tears streamed down her cheeks. She took snapshots so I got to see what we looked like, and the grungiest cast for TOBACCO ROAD ^{our} couldn't have looked worse. *blech* The second time was while we were waiting for ^{our} house to be finished. We were camping out at a KOA about six miles from the building site, waiting for the finishing touches to be completed, when the heavens opened up and it began pouring--for five days straight. The kids were coated with rich, dark, thick Illinois mud from head to toe, inside and out. We sat in it, lay in it, swallowed a little with every breath. After the sixth day I cracked--I didn't care if the house was finished or not, I didn't care if we were having legal squabbles with the contractor (the house was only 14 months behind schedule), I wanted to get under a roof and out of the rain! So we broke into our own home, and our kids' had their first showers standing in the laundry room with me pouring buckets of water over them, flushing the pounds of gunk down the floor drain. (Later this added to our problems when it turned out that the floor drain had never been hooked up to the septic system--but that's another story.)

The APANAGE crew is compiling a cook-book, so my enthusiasm for such a project is somewhat blunted. I have no objection if you want to go to all the trouble of compiling and printing, though. Any suggestions for the kinds of recipes to include? Do you want them sent to you or put in our zines? When? ~~WHY?~~

I'm looking for a cat, but DaveLo isn't. The one you're...er...offer ing wouldn't be suitable, though. 1) she's not a siamse or a grey, and 2) she's a she (I want a he). Thanks for the offer though...

Since there are only 52 weekends in a year, and there are not as many conventions in the winter as in the summer, how did you manage to make it to 107 cons in two years!?! The math simply does not compute. (Even Travelling Giant Rusty Hevelin, while working on the 7 For 77 bid, didn't get to much more than 35 or so in a year...)

Re yct Joni about buying plants with Bob...boy, and I thought Bowers could be esoteric... Did he give you lessons, or did you just learn it by osmosis?

A good diet should result in a change in eating habits that'll stay with you for life. You can imagine.
16. 10/20/83---10:48

gine the distress I felt when the MDs at the Ortho Clinic told me I had to gain 12 lbs! It went entirely against my grain, and took me quite awhile to make the adjustments to my diet to let me put weight on instead of warding off every ounce as I had for some 26 years. Of course I zipped right on by the 130 lb. goal and finally rolled to a halt at 142. Then came the rough part--readopting my intake to make me actually lose weight, yet at a slow enough pace I didn't overshoot again in the opposite direction. I've managed to drop about 5 of those excess 12, and figure the normal strain of surgery should take care of the rest...

I do want to compliment you again on your weight loss. More and more you're looking like the Suzi I first met. How much more are you planning to lose, or do you intend to merely shape up what's left?

I assumed submarine races weren't local, since Mike Shoemaker mentioned them first, and I knew damn well they weren't recent, as I first heard of them in the mid-fifties, but I sure am learning fast that they were epidemic.

I had no idea you were weak on remembering names. Gee, we're gonna be in big trouble if people rely on the two of us to identify other fen. There are still people around that I've conned with for a decade or more and don't know their names. Each year it seems I finally get one more matched up (I have generally heard their names and seen their faces for ages before something goes *click* and I pair them properly).

Thanks again for the hair cut. My severed braid rests securely in a plastic bag. Maybe some day I'll have the cash to get a fall made from it, maybe I'll just keep it to remind me that my hair will grow out, eventually, for those discouraged times when it seems it stays the same length for years...

LON ATKINS -- MELIKAPKHAZ #96 -- Sympathies on feeling so far behind on everything. At least your sensa'umor is still functioning. I gasped and wheezed my way through your colophon.

I am now winking and squinting. Today I have taken the Big Step ~~INTO~~ OLD Age and begun wearing *gasp* bifocals. *W*E*I*R*D effect! I have no trouble whatsoever seeing straight ahead, but looking down, like at these typer keys, gives me a "swimming" sensation, rather akin to the optical effects used in the filming of...what's the name of that movie, Dave?...IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE? (Hmmm, he's not sure--the one scripted by Bradbury, in any case, where the camera occasionally used the viewpoint of the alien's vision, and used a fish-eye lens that gave a rippling in-focus/out-of-focus effect at the edges. That's what it feels like when I drop my eyes to look through the lower part of the lens.) Gee--in one 7 day span I have my hair cut, learn I'm to be a Grandmother, and obtain bi-focals. In two weeks I get a new-improved-straighter back...what else can happen?

The story, as revealed in conversation with the postal clerk, about how the delivery of mail to your condo was stopped because the carrier couldn't unlock and open the door to the lobby with one hand, reminds me of the New Improved Delivery System some apartment complexes around here now use. They have a cluster of mailboxes--the upright, brass-fronted ones like you see in most apartment buildings (well, brass or stainless steel, depending...)--mounted in a brick wall, like a California yard fence, or a windbreak, here in the Midwest--solid, three-quarters of a foot thick, but free-standing. The tenants have to go outdoors to get their mail. Just like a bunch of rural mailboxes, only the shape/formation is different. Looks weird, as if something had been forgotten when the buildings were erected, and added as an after-thought. Perhaps something like that would solve your problems--though god knows how much it would cost... I thought they looked dreadfully inconvenient. For one thing, where are items too bulky for the mailbox to be left? Usually, carriers leave such items on the stairway, or in front of your door (if they don't have to climb umpteen flights to get there)--that can't be done if the boxes are outdoors and there's security locks on the front door to your building. *Oh well* More and more the "Service" part of the USPS is disappearing. (I still recall, with fondness, getting two deliveries a day. At least we're ahead of the Canadians and get Saturday delivery. Count your blessings--it would be impossible for you to get mail if you lived in Vancouver...)

BRUCE ARTHURS -- LAST STAGE FOR SILVERWORLD #16 -- Sorry you felt so washed-out when you did this zine. It almost read as if you had mononucleosis--only I recall throwing up quite regularly when I had it back in Ought-Six (well, okay, Fifty-six, if you insist). Hope it's gone away and not foreshadowing anything more complicated than a temporary illness.

I think your new kitty-kat was quite ill-mannered to drop her kittens all over the place rather than selecting one spot and sticking with it. I've never had that problem with cats--in fact, I've never had a cat give birth to kittens anywhere else except the littering box I've prepared for her--but I have had trouble with dogs, who--because of their size--are much messier about the whole affair. Beds, piles of soiled laundry, and table linens stored in a dresser drawer have been the spots that immediately come to mind. I'll take kitten birthings over puppy-birthings any day; even more so when collie-size dogs are concerned.

I'm glad she didn't have 22 kittens, though. Looking at a stapled or glued, flattened corpse shoved in the middle of a mailing would have undoubtedly caused me to upchuck, making it mighty hard to do my mailing comments (unless I could upchuck 22 times, of course...).

JODIE OFFUTT -- WHISTLE POST #2 -- You people are developing into a regular college-oriented family, aincha? When are you going to sign up for Andy's class and get really incestuous?

I note you're having trouble coping with the mass of typing on the face of the booklet stencils you've been using (at least I assume that's why you've been leaving the unmarked band in the middle of the stencils). In a couple more zines, when this quire is used up and a bunch of letter-sized size stencils obtained, you'll really appreciate the difference. In the meantime, though the blank band looks odd, I can't blame you a bit for skipping over that section on the stencil--it's impossible to read what you've just typed unless the stencil is off the typer and held up to the light!

A typical thing happened--you related the woes you have experienced with vitamin B-6 (of which I'd never heard) and a week later the medical column in the paper mentions the same New England Journal of Medicine article and warns its readers about B-6. I'm glad the trouble you were having turned out to be so easily solved--tingling and numbness in one's body is so damn unsettling! Did the M.D. give you any idea how long it would take for the effects to go away completely? (And though I appreciate the advice to flush away any B-6 I have around here, I've been taking it for years with no ill effects--my dosage is only 4.2 mgs, though, nowhere near the amount you were taking.

Have you ever flown into Cincinnati Airport and wondered what the designation tag initials meant? CVG are the letters, and we've tried all sorts of ways to make sense out of them. Finally the local weatherman explained it--when the airport was built, in Northern Kentucky, as you mentioned, several sets of initials were suggested. CIN was already being used by some small airport (which, oddly enough, is no longer in business, so the initials are now available, should anyone want them), as were the initials that would suit the actual location of the place--Fort Thomas, KY. As Covington was the closest city (and at the time was the second largest--maybe third--in the state, CVG, meaning CoVington Greater, was chosen as the designation. (I'd still like to know what the 'D' in Chicago's O'Hare airport's designation means--ORD doesn't compute...O'Hare Regional Something-or-the-other--as well as the 'X' in LAX. Anyone here know?

It really puzzled a lot of the people on that Air Canada plane that caught on fire and landed at Cincinnati Airport when they received notices to appear at the hearing in Kentucky. As you said, frequently even the crews of the planes don't realize the airport is in another state. I wonder if there's any other metro Airport located in such a weird place? (Not that KY is weird...you know what I mean, doncha?)

I'm not glad you didn't do a Midwestcon report. Wish you had...

Andy loves the color of the coleus plants? But...but...I thought he was color-blind? Is it only partial, or does coleus look attractive even in shades of grey?

The latest ad for SFBC, on the back cover of F&SF, lists WINTERMIND among the slew of books available at the new member price of 5/\$1.00. That was almost enough to tempt me into rejoining (DaveLo gets an assignment, and I go Bonzo!). I was very impressed with Parke Godwin's writing in (oh, dear--I've forgotten the title! FIRELORD?) the novel about the Arthurian legends. Have you read that one? How does it compare with the new book?

As I explained in a letter, members have multiple offerings in the mailing when they feel like sharing other zines they do (besides their FLAPzines), or when something happens to delay shipment/arrival of ones intended for earlier mailings (that happened with Langford recently when an ANSIBLE got put on a s-l-o-w boat ~~for LINDA~~ and didn't reach us in time for the mailing he was aiming it for).

I'm another one who loves to drive, and even though I acknowledge the point when people gripe about how boring they are as compared to other routes, I also enjoy the Interstates. When you're traveling on a shoestring, there is simply nothing else that compares to them for ease and speed in getting from place to place around the country. When it's scenery you're interested in, the State and other Federal routes are still there, and because of the Interstates the more local roads are safer to use because they're not jammed with travellers trying to get to X city in Y hours. I really hope that this surgery will enable ~~me~~ to tackle long drives again. I'm so damned sick-n-tired of being a passenger all the time!

Unlike Andy, I kinda like the "silly wild-card games" at convention poker games. Not the really weird ones, but at least some alternatives to five-card draw and stud, and seven card stud. Playing only those can put me to sleep in an hour or less...

I still recall practically having to restrain you/leaping out of the car in Phoenix when a bunch of us were going out for supplies at Iguacon and you spotted a Yard Sale sign on the way to the store. A tension-packed moment there! I'd say you were addicted, all right.

About a block from us is a small--10' X 15' or so--building, set in a little park by the tracks, with a SILVERTON sign on it, that looks reminiscent of a Currier & Ives print. DaveLo and I thought it rather nice that the community preserved its past like that. Then, while working on an assignment at the City Hall, DaveLo learned the darn thing was erected in 1976 as a Bicentennial project. Took all the charm outta it for me.

Amen to your comments about Public Displays of Affection at cons. "If it feels good, do it" is nice, but sometimes some fans "feel" too darn much!

BUTTALK -- The Half-Assed One-Shot -- BECKY & KAJ -- You know my policy on one-shots.

Ignore 'em; let 'em die a natural death. For being the two newest to fandom in the group, you both seem to have grasped the hang of these things well. Perhaps neither of you was inebriated when you did this, but I certainly spot a sense of spaciness--perhaps from the long drive after the con?

And therein end the Mailing Comments. Let me flip through the stencils and see if there's anything to add to the natter sections... Ah, yes. As I noted in my comments to Lon (this is for those who don't read things not addressed directly to them--do any of you do that ~~terrible thing~~?), I'm now wearing bi-focals--and having trouble adjusting to them. Think I'll visit the Dr. tomorrow to see if anything can be done about the feeling of pulling and burning I get in my left eye whenever I use the lower lens a lot. (I've noted that the image doesn't line up--there's a good 1/4-inch jump vertically, which causes strain when reading.) Sandy had a Positive reaction to an at-home PG test, so it seems I'm to be a Grandma sometime early next year. Right now DaveLo's at work, on a long (6 to 8 week) assignment in downtown Cincy at a pre-paid Health Care Plan's offices. This means a bit of a kink for our plans of How to Manage Things while I'm in the hospital, but nothing that can't be worked around (and it'll mean so much to our finances that passing it by for that reason/~~would have been~~ stupid to the Nth degree). I failed at my Stop Smoking endeavors (no surprise to me) but have cut back to a mere 5 cigs a day. Smokers cough went away months ago, so I'm not too disappointed... Bye for now.

Speaking of Language

By William E. Lasher

IMMEASURABLE CONFUSION

There's a movement afoot to change the national language in this country. No, the plan is not to do away with English, but with our other language—the English system of weights and measures.

We're among the few remaining people who don't speak metric, who have refused to undergo that nearly religious experience known as "Metric Conversion." Even though a federal commission has been established to foster the conversion, and a new word has been coined to describe it—"metrication"—we continue to speak in terms of inches, ounces, and cubic yards.

We don't think of the metric system as a language, but it is a system of symbols that communicate meaning. It is more logical than our system, which is based on 10s instead of 12s, 16s, and 3s, but we like what we have.

The road signs between Cincinnati and Columbus are bilingual, telling us how many miles and kilometers we have to travel, but we can't even agree on how to pronounce "kilometer": is it stressed on the first or second syllable? How can we adopt a new language when we can't say the words? And how are we to know what a centimeter is, or a liter, or a cubic meter?

There's the rub, because we Americans don't know what metric units mean. Trying to learn this new system is like trying to learn Russian by listening to two Moscovites in conversation: you can hear the words, and perhaps mimic them, but what do they mean?

Metrication is actually a language problem, where we're expected to learn a different language without much help or much incentive to do so. Americans have never been very keen on learning foreign languages anyway, since we find ourselves isolated from people who don't speak English.

But the greatest blunder of all has been the attempt to reach Americans to translate from our system to the metric system and back again. "One inch

equals 2.54 centimeters." "One liter equals 1.056 quarts." Learning to translate from one system to the other is like learning to find square roots: at best an interesting exercise, but not very useful in everyday life.

What we need to do is learn the metric system as a native language, while we are children. If our children grow up asking for a half liter of pop or buying half a kilogram of cheese, they will think metric and talk that way. But they won't learn metric as they grow up if no one around them is using it. So we have a kind of chicken and egg problem: children won't learn what the adults don't use, and adults won't use something they didn't learn as children.

We laugh at our one-step-forward, two-steps-back approach to metrics, knowing that no change will occur until we see some reason to change. However, as we begin to realize how few Americans students become fluent in Russian and how many Russians become fluent in English, we may see some strategic danger in our linguistic isolationism.

There may be some economic danger as well in retaining the English system of measurement as we gradually become the only country still speaking that language, putting us deeper into isolation.

What we may not realize is that metrication would actually change nothing except our perception of things. An inch would still be an inch, but we would see it as two and half centimeters or 25 millimeters. Just as "thin" and "narrow" can describe the same width viewed from different perspectives, the metric language describes the same world in different words.

"Going like 60" might actually change to "Going like 100," but either way, the meaning's the same.

William E. Lasher is an associate professor of English at the University of Cincinnati. His field is linguistics.

If you have a question or comment about language, write to Dr. Lasher c/o The Enquirer Magazine, 517 Vine St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45201.



Speaking of Language

By William E. Lasher

RHYME TIME

Recently I received a call from a man who was involved in an argument over whether "twinge" would rhyme with "orange." This appeared to be one of those questions anyone who spoke English could answer, so I asked why he thought the two words might rhyme. His reply revealed the real problem:

"Technically," he said, "Both words end in the same sounds—it says so right in the dictionary. That means they rhyme, doesn't it?"

The problem was whether to trust his intuition as a speaker of English, or to believe in a technical definition of rhyme.

Almost everyone I know would say that "orange" and "twinge" don't rhyme, but they might not be able to explain it in technical terms. I told the caller that part of the technical definition of rhyme required that the two words be stressed or accented on the same syllable.

The "inge" in "orange" isn't stressed, while the "inge" in "twinge" is. You'd have the same problem trying to rhyme "item" as spoken with "dumb," even though there's the sound of "dum" in both.

The heart of this caller's dilemma is a common one: should we listen to our own instincts about the language, or should we follow the rules laid down by some authority—a dictionary, a grammar book, or a handbook?

Linguists are interested in this dilemma because they've found that our own intuitions, as native speakers of the language, are invariably on the mark. For example, speakers of English have no trouble at all telling a grammatical sentence from one that isn't, like this: "Them green with to happy jello." They know that "splunth" could be an English word, but "ngrebm" couldn't. In short, they know the language without anyone telling them why or how things are as they are.

It doesn't take an expert to speak English. All an expert can do is try to describe how it's done. Why, then, do people look to the experts to tell them what to do? Perhaps it's our training,

perhaps just a built-in insecurity about using something that is complex and hard to explain.

More than anything, though, I think it's because we are judged by our language. No one took the "Elephant Man" seriously until he spoke—then people began to treat him as a human being. We separate man from the animals by speech, and we classify men by the way they speak. And since we are judged by our speech, we look to the authorities to help us.

But what can the authorities provide? The dictionary, for example, shows the same phonetic spelling for the "inge" in "orange" and "twinge"—but they don't rhyme. If someone is asked whether a nursery rhyme sounds like poetry, the answer will be in the affirmative. But "Hickory, Dickory, Dock" doesn't follow the rules of meter that are taught for Shakespeare or Milton; it doesn't even have the same number of syllables in each line.

The real expert on English is you, the speaker. If I want to find out whether something is done a certain way in English, I have to ask you. Do you say "Plato" and "Play-Dough" the same way? Would you say, "The man sat down who came in the door"? How do you pronounce "cement"? If I want a better idea of English, I should ask a hundred experts like you, or a thousand, from different regions and with different backgrounds.

In all honesty, dictionaries and grammar books are not the best sources of information about English: its speakers are. If you want more information about the "Valley Girl" dialect, you won't find it in a dictionary. If you want to distinguish a northern from a southern dialect, don't look in the dictionary. If you want to teach Johnny to write better, don't depend on a grammar book, because writing is a process, not a collection of rules.

Language itself is something we do, not something that merely is. If you want to know more about it, just listen.

William E. Lasher is an associate professor of English at the University of Cincinnati. His field is linguistics.



Speaking of Language

By William E. Lasher

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T WRITE

For several years the evidence has been piling up: many students leave high school with serious writing problems. These are not just mistakes in punctuation or capitalization, but problems in writing sentences and writing sense.

And those with severe writing problems outnumber those with severe reading problems, leading to the question, "Why can't Johnny write, if Johnny can read?"

Students spend much of their time in school reading, whether in English class or in history or in science. They get practice in reading, and the tests they take on entering college indicate they read fairly well.

But how much practice do they get in writing? Some students say they wrote only one paper in high school; some say four; some have written a good deal. The results reflect this situation: students are doing worse on writing tests—where they are actually required to write—than on reading tests.

What happens in those twelve years before high school graduation? Most English classes concentrate on reading literature and learning grammar, not on writing. But there is no convincing evidence that someone who can read well will be able to write well. The hypothesis that writers simply imitate what they read has never been proved, yet many teachers believe that someone who reads great literature will learn to write "by osmosis."

There is also no evidence that learning grammar is helpful in learning to write. In fact, some research indicates that it gets in the way of writing. Learning parts of speech and diagramming sentences is seen by students as a kind of abstract exercise, not connected with writing. If they don't think about nouns and verbs when they talk, why should they when they write?

That leaves one major question: why don't we teach students to write? We teach them everything else about English, but they don't get enough practice in writing.

One answer to that question is that no one really enjoys teaching writing: it's difficult and time-consuming. Another answer is that most teachers have not been trained to teach writing. English teachers primarily learn to teach literature, as history teachers learn to teach history, but no one learns to teach writing.

Also, at one time, only the small percentage of students who learned to write "by osmosis" went to college. Now we have many more students going on and many more writing problems.

The last quarter century has seen a real explosion in research on language and language learning, and on learning to write, but most of this research has never reached beyond the universities. Perhaps it's time to pass it along to our high school teachers.

The problem with graduating students who can't write goes far beyond college, however. In a literate society writing should be as important as reading, and in many jobs it certainly is. Not surprisingly, there are many people who never completed high school but who write better than most of our graduates. They have found the necessity of "on-the-job training," and they have taught themselves to write.

Even without modern research, the dedicated teacher can teach students to write. It takes a great deal of practice, patience, and hard work spent on writing and re-writing. But we tend to ignore that dedicated teacher; instead we establish priorities in reading, mathematics, and science.

Perhaps we need another priority: to make sure Johnny can write. Otherwise, the dedicated teacher will disappear, research in the field will be ignored, and we will be left wondering why no one can write. ■

William E. Lasher is an associate professor of English at the University of Cincinnati. His field is linguistics.