
KENNING #26 --from Jackie Causgrove, 6828 Alpine Ave. #4, Cincinnati, OH 45236. Aimed for the 26th Mailing of FLAP and due in a mere nineteen days. Can I beat the deadline? As usual, only time will tell. Also, as usual, about a dozen copies will be given to various and sundry friends and acquaintances who are not members of this august group.

Oh, what the heck. I'll try this ADJUTANT typeface element that Dave 'liberated' from his place of assignment. It appears to be similar to the ELITE element I generally use for my natter sections, and that typeball, being one/^{of}the bracket style, is annoying at times -- like when you want to type a numeral one and forget it doesn't have that feature. It's been a while since I've done any typing, and I'm not sure I'm really up to doing an entire apazine. DaveLo volunteered to finish stencilling from my notes should I run out of steam, but I'd really prefer to do it myself. We shall see.

Four days after finishing the last stencil for FLAP/KENNING 25, I swung my battered canvas flight bag to my shoulder and trudged off to the bus stop. Sandy, my daughter, had agreed to meet me at the point where I transferred to a #51 bus from the #4 -- a place about four blocks from her and Greg's apartment -- but due to me getting on the wrong #4 (an Express, which follows a different route), then the tardiness of the 'proper' #4, I arrived at the transfer point nearly ten minutes late. No Sandy. No #51 bus, either. I fretted. This was a hell of a way to begin a sequence of events which should radically alter my life! Not to worry though, matters became even more screwed up as the day progressed.

Arriving at the hospital complex, I paused at the Information desk to confirm my hazy recollection of the path I followed to the Pulmonary Function Lab the year before. Good thing I stopped, while I recalled the room number correctly, I'd forgotten a twist or two of the circuitous route there. Huffing and puffing, I arrived a mere five minutes behind schedule -- only to discover I was slated for a 12:30 appointment rather than a 9:00 one as I'd been told. (Apparently, when the surgery was rescheduled, so had been the PF Test. Sadly, no one had bothered to inform me of that fact.) The technician, a cheerful soul, promised to squeeze me in ahead of time so there was no harm done, only an extra half-hour wait. After blowing into the laboratory's tube for the allotted time, I wended my way down to Admitting, and there found Sandy waiting for me. She'd gone back to her place when I hadn't shown up on time, and then decided that I had to go to the Admitting Office at some point, so headed over to the hospital complex on her own. We must've missed each other by bare minutes. As there was no room ready at that time, she and I went to the coffee shop, where, the receptionist said, we would be paged when a spot became available. After our third coffee and/or orange juice and some ninety minutes, we went back to check on progress. Oh, the room was ready --they'd wondered where we'd gone off to... *Sigh*

After a brief half-hour pause at X-Ray, we took the elevator to the fourth floor where I found myself in a room two doors down from the one Lou Tabakow had occupied during his stay some two and a half years earlier. Felt eerie. Sandy helped me stow my stuff and we shared that lost feeling one gets when first checking into a hospital. What to do next? It feels weird to change into pajamas or nightgown at midday, and was it really necessary at this point? An Aide came in and suggested that, yes, it was appropriate.

Once I was settled, feeling uncomfortable and awkward, a Blood Lab Technician came in to draw some samples of my precious bodilly fluids. He checked the name over my bed. The card-holder was vacant. He asked me my name then reached for my wrist. "Where's your wrist band?" he asked. Didn't have one yet. Rolling his eyes heavenward, he went out into the hallway and yelled down to the nurses station; "I can't take a specimen from Ms. Causgrove until she's got her wrist band!" He had to repeat this twice before a harried-looking LPN rushed in and fastened the Official University Hospital Identification Wrist Band on my arm. Sandy and I exchanged glances. This was getting curiouser and curiouser. Another Aide came in with my Patient Needs Pack (water pitcher, soap, mouthwash, body lotion, etc.) and asked if I wanted a late lunch tray. Sandy and I had eaten a grilled cheese sandwich while in the coffee shop, so I wasn't particularly hungry, but I thought what the heck. In a few days I wouldn't be eating at all, so I ordered one brought in.

After having heard horror stories about the ghastliness of the food at University, I was pleasantly surprised to find the rumor incorrect. While definitely not of Gourmet quality, the meals were several notches above Fast Food level, were attractively presented, and with the fact kept in mind that they were being mass-produced for people with varying dietary needs and no-nos, quite tasty. Though the kitchen crew always seemed to have trouble reading my request for extra items properly (not once sending up the same salad dressing that I ordered, for instance), I had no real complaints about the food.

Did I mention in last issue about Joni Stopa's gifting me with the makings for a hooked rug? She'd mailed a 5'x7' (or so) blank canvas and what seemed to be a mini-mountain of cut yarn bundled into plastic bags. I'd never considered rug hooking as an attractive hobby, but agreed it would certainly help pass the time profitably while in the hospital. Sandy helped me set up the yarn (I'd spent several evening sorting out the multi-colored bags of yarn--rubber-banding them into managable bundles--then I shoved bunches of the solid-colored bagged yarn into plastic sandwich bags for ease in handling) and my few personal effects into the drawer of the bedside whatchamacallit, and I sat back to learn a new skill. While I worked away at the canvas, Sandy ducked down the hall and against my Specific Orders, arranged for the TV set in my room to be switched on. (She and Greg had talked it over the previous night and decided I'd go nuts without a TV. I think they were right...) I glared at her for a while, reminded her of how ill they could afford to spend the money, and resigned myself to accepting the accomplished deed. Kids nowadays have no respect for their elders.

DaveLo, coming in after his work day was finished, and my supper tray arrived at nearly the same time. I shared my food around, as I was still fairly full from the food eaten earlier (meal times come too close together for my appetite in hospitals--8:30, 12:30 and 5:00 didn't allow enough time between trays for my stomach to empty) and we chatted away the rest of the visiting time after exploring the few attractions offered on the floor. One solarium, one TV, two tables and a dozen or so chairs don't take long to look at.

Another LPN came by with another wrist band -- she seemed surprised to see I already had one. Twice I was asked if I'd gone to the PFT Lab and twice I told them I had (I was asked the same question two or three times the next day as well. I wonder if the results from my breathing tests ever managed to reach the right place), I was asked if I'd gotten my supper tray, whether my Patient Care pack had arrived, if any blood tests had been done. My doubts about the efficiency of the place grew at a rapidly increasing rate. Another bit of news was given in the evening--my supper tray was the last solid food I'd eat before surgery. Dr. Bridwell preferred his patients to be kept on a liquid diet for two days before operating, in order to minimize effects caused by gas build-up in the post-surgical period. Needless to say, after two days of broth-n-coffee meals before the operation and another two days afterward, I'll be quite happy to never see a cup of beef or chicken broth in the next year or so (coffee, of course, remains a favorite).

Except for the need to restrict my diet, I can't understand why I had to enter the hospital on a Friday for Monday surgery. The weekend was B*O*R*I*N*G. My roommate, a young black girl who was in for knee surgery offered no conversation, preferring to watch TV game shows and cartoons--with the sound at full blast. Barring meals and baths, the only respite from ennui was the frequent visit of the blood lab tech. Sunday evening, at last, a little relief came. A Dr. Keith came by to wheel me to the Medical Science building for a brain wave monitoring session. He was a chatty, warm person, and after settling me on a reclining chair (and while DaveLo played wheelies in the wheelchair used to bring me to the room), the Neurologist explained the procedure and asked if I was willing to volunteer for an experimental process they were working on.

It is necessary to continually monitor brain/nerve function throughout spinal surgery, to insure no damage is being done to motor nerves. Generally this requires that the patient be wired up as for an EEG exam, with additional electrodes attached to the heel of each foot. Also the patient is 'brought up' from anesthesia during the operation, to check on function of lower foot movements (I'd been told, over and over, that I must keep in mind the fact that my name would be called, that I must answer and must flex my feet and toes when asked, otherwise the surgery would have to be halted and whatever steps already completed would be reversed). A different procedure, not involving any

'wake-up' phase--which, due to patient unresponse for other reasons, could cause needless time and trouble reversing procedures which did not require it, had been developed. Ten patients were needed to be tested before this process could be accepted, and he wanted to know if I was willing to be one of the ten. I'd still undergo the usual steps, but in addition would have needle electrodes inserted into ligaments in my neck and knees. This way the flow of nervous impulses through the body could be watched constantly, and future patients wouldn't be required to respond in order to continue the operations. I thought it was a Neat Idea (the procedure was already in use for infants and non-cummunicative patients, and for testing hearing and other senses of newborns, so it wasn't a new process, merely a new application of it) and signed the necessary forms. Then I had goop smeared on my scalp, sensors attached, and the Doctor held an electrode to my heel, adjusting a dial on his machine in the meantime. A slight buzzing, tapping sensation was felt, and he strengthened the pulse until my big toe began to twitch in time to its beat. "I'd give it a five," I said. "The beat's okay but the melody isn't much to speak of." After a few more minutes were spent getting readings (inscribed onto a graph as well as dials) for the nerves leading to my big toe and then to the others, we were finished. Quick, painless, and quite interesting, that was one test I didn't mind at all -- at least until I later tried to get the electrically-conducive goop he'd applied out of my hair. Have you ever tried to remove dried-up Silly Putty from a rug? It was rather like me trying to scrape that crud out of my hair. After that application, and the repetition of the same the next day, it took two weeks to get the last of the tenacious stuff off my scalp.

Naturally, despite my calm, placid exterior (*coff*), I was getting more keyed up as the Big Day approached, so I welcomed the offered sleeping pill that night. I kissed Davelo good-bye and we reconfirmed that he and Sandy would be back between 5:30 and 6:00 the next morning. In spite of the pill, I sat up til past midnight, watching TV and hooking on the rug. It had taken years of effort to get to this point, and I was awaiting the oncoming events with more than a touch of dread as well as anticipation.

The next morning Dave, Sandy and I didn't have all that much to say. It was one of those times when the only words are either trivial or too melodramatic, so silence is preferred. We discussed arrangements for my personal effects while I was gone from the room, the time Dave would come back after work (I'd insisted he go to his job that day--he hates hospitals and their environs, Sandy was there to Keep Watch, and knowing he'd be uncomfortable with nothing to do but Wait would bother me), how damn sleepy we all were, and then the crew from the operating wing arrived. I was surprised to find that, instead of using a gurney to wheel patients around, the bed itself was rolled out. They raised it up to it's highest position, and off we went, medical charts tucked at my feet, Sandy and Dave trailing along. Down the corridor, down the elevator, through more corridors, past Recovery and ICU, to pause a moment to say goodbye to Dave and Sandy, and then to stop before the operating room itself. One of the residents (I never got their names sorted out, thinking of them as Bridwell's Litter because of their puppyish enthusiasm) inserted an intervenous tube into my left hand and checked its operation, then rolled me into the room, stopping next to the table. I've had surgery before, and waited for the injection of phenol barbitol into my arm, and the following countdown. The resident leaned over to check the IV with a smile. "We'll put in the arterial IV after you're asleep," he said. A metallic taste in my mouth informed me the barbituate was already flowing in my system--it had been injected into the IV solution rather than using a needle separately--and I barely got a chance to start mentally counting backward (I try to beat my old record when undergoing anesthesia) before the lights went out.

Of course there is no actual sensation when undergoing anesthesia. One moment you're lying drowsily in an operating room, the next you're groggily hearing someone call your name in Recovery. There is no sensation of elapsed time or of really being 'Out'. Patients miss all the really interesting parts completely. What I awoke to was bright lights, a lot of noise, an oxygen mask, a feeling of tight pressure on my legs and the sight of them elevated on a pile of pillows. Then I drifted off again. This kept up for what seemed like hours but was nearly two days. I saw Sandy occasionally, Dave occasionally, but mostly I slept. I do recall the transfer between Recovery and ICU--a trip from one side of a huge room to another--but that's about it. Apparently I was having a few problems: I stopped breathing with monotonous regularity when I'd fall asleep, so

the Demorol/morphine mixture which had been given to me via the IV was stopped, with injections of morphine as needed ordered in their place; my blood pressure dropped to the 60/40 range and refused to climb, and internal bleeding continued. My legs were covered with a pair of white stretch-material 'anti-embolism' stockings (causing the feelings of pressure on my legs) because of the clotting agents they were giving me in order to control bleeding -- having one incident of phlebitis in my medical history, no chances of a recurrence were being taken. The most annoying thing to me at the time was the blasted oxygen mask. Nurses, Doctors, or visitors would ask me questions and I'd try to lift my arms to remove the darn thing so I could reply and I'd end up with a mouth full of distilled water that had to be spit out before I choked. Don't know why so much moisture was added to the gas, but there definitely was too much. I was ever so relieved when they switched me from the mask to the around-the-face nasal system.

Oddly enough -- or perhaps not -- there was little pain in my back. I was surprised to find myself lying on it; the pressure bandages which covered the incision made it feel slightly as if I were atop a log. What hurt were my arms, shoulders and ribs--coughing (or vomiting, which I did fairly often--unusual for me) was a real thrill, or would've been if I was the masochistic sort. The typical patient reaction of intense thirst was ever-present and I was not below begging for at least a mouth-swab of mouthwash when the dryness became particularly intense.

The nurses kept complimenting me on being so compliant, but to me at the time there seemed little choice in the matter. I did what I was told when I was told to do it--roll, spit, cough (*ouch), present posterior for injection, whatever. I felt the more I cooperated, the faster I'd get out of there. The Intensive Care Unit was not a place anyone wanted to be in for very long. The row across from me and one bed down was occupied by a teen-ager who'd suffered head injuries and he raised holy hell continually--fighting the nurses, the restraints placed upon him to keep him in bed, soundly cursed everyone and anyone who came near (he actually punched one of the nurses in the jaw--it was a wonder they managed to treat him as gently as they did. I later found out his reaction was common in adolescent head-injuries, and that he later died--he'd driven his motorcycle off an abandoned railroad overpass), and caused such a general ruckus that all but the totally comotose patients were complaining. Not that it would've been all that much quieter if he hadn't been there--the room was filled with moans, cries, beeps, buzzes and the yelling of the staff over the general din. I really don't know how the people who worked there stood it for an eight-hour shift. I could at least drift off into a doze and mentally turn it off; they had to keep their ears alert to the sound of the various monitors or calls of patient distress. Dantesque, indeed.

Wednesday afternoon it was decided that I was stable enough to go back to my room. I was given my first 'food'--a quarter cup of the now-abbhored beef broth and a cup of Italian ice -- and rolled back upstairs. Only not to the fourth floor, but to the fifth. There was momentary panic as we sorted out the fact that few patients went back to the room they'd had before surgery, and that, yes, all my effects (and with the rug-hooking material there were a lot of them) had been transferred all right. I lost the lovely view I'd enjoyed--instead of overlooking the entrance with its trees and flower beds I faced a lovely plain brown wall which inspired recovery to no end. My new room-mate was a woman closer to my own age, who was recovering from the eleventh operation on her hand. She'd been partying in a bar with friends and some crazy person had come in with a sawed-off shotgun and threatened to blow away everyone there. Thrusting up her arm to protect her face, her hand was virtually blown off when the nut fired--only a single tendon and a strip of skin kept it on. She was/had been a hairdresser, and now was on permanent disability, having undergone 18 months of pain and reconstructive surgery to regain a hand which appeared reasonably all right, but had little function to it. A smoker, she was pleasant about having to go out into the hall or to the solarium to smoke, as I was hooked up to oxygen until Thursday night (she left on Saturday, so didn't have a chance to enjoy the room all that much).

Sandy came by every day and stayed with me from noon until 5:30 or so. It was almost like having a private-duty nurse--or at least a nurse's aide. University Hospital, like most public hospitals, is dreadfully understaffed, and though they tried their best, it was impossible to cater to the needs of every patient, bed-ridden or not. As I was about

as bed-ridden as could be -- having to keep flat on the mattress with the head of the bed raised no higher than six inches or so for the first week -- there was little I could manage for myself. Everything, it seemed, was out of reach or out of sight. To eat/drink my meals the nurses would roll me to one side and I sipped through a bent straw or had spoonfuls of food fed to me. My arms were useless for much of anything for that period. For the operation the trapezoid muscles had been lifted free of the spine and until they re-attached attempts to move shoulders, neck or arms resulted in little effect save severe pain. (The very worst pain I encountered was the first time I was allowed to have my bed cranked up to a full sitting position to eat my breakfast--on Sunday. Each fiber in my back muscles went into spasm and I sat whimpering with tears rolling down my cheeks until a nurse could rush in with a shot of muscle relaxant. Thankfully it was experienced only the one time, as I recognized the 'trigger point' and would have the bed lowered whenever the trapezoids began to contract to the spasm point. After that, the most I would own up to was "severe discomfort". The word 'pain' had acquired a very precise definition to me.) Dave would come in after work and I'd share my supper tray with him. Sandy usually ate most of my lunch--my appetite would be completely satisfied with but a couple of bites from each dish. Coming in as I did 12 lbs. overweight, I'd expected to loose most of it after surgery. I dropped a whole pound. *Sigh* No activity results in darn little calorie consumption...

After my room-mate left, I relished the privacy of a room to myself until the next day. While Dave and Sandy were visiting, the word came down that I was to be moved yet again. Dave had, just the night before, finished calling most of the people we knew across the country to give them my room number -- the thought of doing it all over again, much less going through all the hassle of transferring all my junk again, put all of us in a tizzy. The Floor Nurse, who had me as one of her patients, had been especially helpful, so Dave went out and...well, pitched a bitch. One of the other nurses griped loud and long, but ended up moving her patient into my room rather than vice-versa. (She later got petty revenge on me for putting her out so. When the Doctor finally allowed me to 'dangle' at the edge of my bed I was supposed to do so for only five minutes and with pillows held against my back to give it support. She simply lifted me by one arm and held me for nearly 20 minutes--uncomfortable to say the least. I hope it pleased her ego...)

My new roommate was something Else again. Fifty years old, she'd suffered polio as a three-year-old, and the disease had left her with a wasted left leg. After years of wearing an ill-fitting brace (apparently she'd gained a great deal of weight and never bothered to get the brace re-fitted), ulcers had formed and were surrounded with skin abscesses and cysts. She'd just undergone a second operation to clean out the infection and was left incapacitated while a new leg brace was being made. Extremely short--she was no taller than four feet or so--and quite plump (over 150 lbs.) she gave the impression of being a chirpy, cheerful soul. Wrong! She was a whiner, a complainer, a constant nagger--except to the nurses. To them she put on a sweet face and coy manners, but as soon as they left the room a song of petty complaints would begin and not cease until another nurse popped in. Her family didn't call often enough or visit often enough, the nurses were too hard on her, her leg hurt ("such pain you've never felt...") no one took her out in a wheel chair often enough, the food was too hot or too cold, or too salty or not salty enough, the doctor didn't care, the doctor was 'keeping something from her' (she was convinced she had cancer, no matter how often the surgeon or the nurses tried to reassure her otherwise), she'd never be able to manage the two weeks she had to spend at home without her leg brace, the clean-up staff weren't meticulous enough. She feared going back home to a rough neighborhood (her house had been broken into the year before, and a robber had sprained her arm stripping her rings off her hands), and fretted about how she'd get home in the first place (arrangements had been made since her admission, but she seemed to ignore the fact) then how'd she fit a wheelchair through her rather small doorways (the fact that she had done so at times before didn't alter her worries), and she cautioned callers that they'd have to phone before coming to visit, but then wail about how she'd have her phone cut off because the calls bothered her. It was a case of having to listen to someone with genuine cause for concern and worry, but who carried it to the Nth degree in a shrill keening voice that soon sent everyone right up the wall with teeth clenched. My head started reeling by the second day, and I was ever so happy when the aides and nurses would take her out of the room for long walks/

rolls through the halls or for a bout of TV viewing in the solarium. (Of course they left her out there too long, she'd complain, then switch to a big smile when a nurse would come in and tell them how sweet they were to her. The looks she got when her back was turned showed that her little act wasn't fooling anyone the least little bit.) At first, when her constant whining began to bother me, I felt guilty for ^{being irked by} the poor soul. But as the days went on, the annoyance grew and turned into disgust. It was no wonder relatives were ignoring her. A nephew, after hearing how wonderful it would be to see her favorite programs on tv, went to the desk and ordered a set turned on for her for the balance of her stay. She bumbled with gratitude, then, when he left, griped that he hadn't gotten her color, and had the sets changed. Of course, at nearly twice the rate for black-and-white, the money he'd paid for the service didn't last long, and then she wailed at how awful it was that 'they' took her TV away. Then she asked me to turn my set to the channels she wanted to watch, and when I said I didn't have a color set, she claimed that color didn't mean a thing to her. B&W was just fine. I had no objection to watching T.J. HOOKER with/for her, but I drew the line at the game shows--which were being watched on the 19-inch color set in the solarium in any case. She could leave the room to watch her favorites; I couldn't. After awhile the nurses took pity and would 'forget' to draw back the curtains after giving me my daily bath and I'd have some privacy for awhile--until she'd complain about being unable to look out the window (at our glorious view of brown-painted cement blocks?) and I'd ask someone to pull them back a bit. One thing I will say for her; she gave me lots of incentive to get out as soon as I could.

The Friday after surgery a brace-fitter came in to take a cast of my body. I was swollen up so much from gas distention that I appeared to be seven or eight months pregnant. I asked whether it was wise to fit me in that condition, but was told the doctor wanted me in my brace by Monday--adjustments could be made later. The casting process consisted of placing a sheet of stockingette material over my torso. Then the fitter located the pelvic flare, pubic bone, and lower edge of the rib-cage and marked the cloth with a felt-tip pen (the ink that seeped through took a good week to wash away). Then he covered me from crotch to shoulders with two layers of saturated casting material--waited five minutes (boy, does that stuff develop heat! Felt like a mini-sauna in there)--then flipped me over (the first and almost only time I've been on my back since the operation) and repeated the procedure (no markings, though) on my back. After another five-minute wait, he lifted off the back piece, rolled me over and took off the front one. Voila! A 3-D version of my rotund little body. Whistling cheerfully, he went off to the shop, promising delivery Monday afternoon, Tuesday morning at the latest. The brace arrived for its initial fitting around 3:00 on Wednesday, was taken back immediately for trimming and extra padding (my stomach had dropped by then to almost normal dimensions) and I got it back at almost seven that night. To put it on, I had to roll to one side, have the back placed against my spine, then roll over onto it. The front is then lowered into position, three four-long straps threaded through metal rings, then pulled tight as possible and smoothed against velcro patches fastened on the back-piece. The brace is made of a tough plastic and is lined with dense foam material which is curled over the bottom edge. An opening is cut into the front to allow the stomach room and to permit easier breathing. Besides having to add interior padding to allow for the loss of girth once my trapped gas had dispelled, another fitting problem became evident. I have pendulous breasts, and when lying on my back, they sorta droop off to the sides. In making allowance for this fact, the brace shop had molded two cups into the front--roughly a size AAA (as opposed to my C-cup volume) and located roughly even with my collar bones. *Cush* My skin is middled with stretch marks already, there weren't no give left! After two weeks of complaining about the situation, I finally started producing milk--it's been over 20 years since I nursed a baby--and was forming a couple of abscesses from the constant irritation. The Doctor inscribed lines on the front of the brace and told me to go to the brace shop and have them 'relax' the plastic at that point to allow more room. Instead, they cut a 'window'--about 9" X 3"--into the front. It felt better, but looked rather like an exotic bondage outfit, especially when I wore my dark T-shirts underneath (a cotton garment must be worn under the brace--we tried it once at home without one and the foam lining grips the skin so you literally hang by it).

At first, even without the extra room and even though I had difficulty in breathing with my abdominal muscles rather than my rib cage, the brace -- because it allowed me to sit, stand, and walk; leave that damn bed -- seemed a liberty-giving blessing. I took long strolls down the hospital corridors, relishing in the sense of freedom. Unfortunately, after an hour or less, the tightness of the brace would begin to cause muscle cramps and I'd have to return to bed. I was still weak after the surgery as well, and those two or three laps of the building's floor left me more than a bit breathless and fatigued.

One of the after-effects of the operation, compounded by the internal bleeding which had gone on longer than expected, was a massive "bruise" on my back. Actually old blood that had gradually sought out the lowest level, it looked like I'd been beaten, but there was no tenderness associated with it. I was solid black, from my neck to mid-buttock, for weeks (Sandy took a snapshot so I could see what she, Dave and the nurses were talking about), and whenever someone would wash or rub lotion into my back, I had to remind them that, though it might look awful, it didn't hurt in the least.

In fact, I found the relative lack of pain most marvelous. Perhaps it was a bodily defense, perhaps it was because of the trauma to the nerves brought about by the man-handling during surgery, but I had no sensation at all along my spine. I might hurt elsewhere, but that area was like wood. Now, nearly three months later, I'm only beginning to regain skin sensation back there, and the deeper muscles could receive impressions of touch only weakly about two weeks ago. Altogether the procedure was much, MUCH less painful than I'd anticipated, though I certainly would never willingly undergo it again.

The Doctors remarked on how well I was handling the discomfort. I had my last shot of morphine the Friday after surgery (it was prescribed to be taken as needed, but when I decided that Demorol by mouth did as effective a job at relieving aches, with much less a feeling of being 'drugged', I switched), and took my last pain pill four days after that, relying on Tylenol and muscle relaxant for spasms. Those continued to occur, and did so for over a month afterward. I'd asked one of the Residents to order me some Parafon Forte -- a relaxant I'd had good luck with for several years -- and it worked well when I'd get those first signals that my back was tensing up again. However, the order called for "every six-hours, as needed", and one day I needed it sooner than that. I asked Bridwell if it could be altered, as I wouldn't require it more than every four, and wouldn't exceed six in any 24-hr. period -- much as my at-home prescription was used. (The only times I needed it were when lifting up for meals -- if at all -- and those came more frequently than every six hours.) Instead, he changed the order to Valium -- which annoyed me to no end. That tranquillizer leaves me feeling woozy and disoriented. I inquired about the change at the next visit by a Resident (I saw a Doctor about four times a day--Bridwell usually came late in the morning or early in the afternoon, the three residents would come at varying times during the day and evening, depending on how their individual schedules were arranged), and he said that Bridwell preferred Valium for his spinal-surgery patients and that was that. The next day I asked for the lowest strength Valium, and took that for another day and a half before dropping it entirely. It irritated me that a drug that worked, with no dizzying effects, couldn't be taken while one that caused patient disorientation was insisted on. As I was close to the point that I no longer really needed relaxants, it was a minor quibble, but it irks me still.

Bridwell had told me to expect a three-week stay after surgery, but I was moving so well and had cut down so drastically on pain medication that he asked me if I felt up to going home that weekend. Transportation problems abounded -- Mike and Carol Resnick had offered to drive me home, but they were away that weekend. So was Bowers, the only other local friend we knew with a full-size car (as I couldn't bend with my brace, compact cars were out). I elected to stay til the next Monday, which still meant leaving a full week sooner than anticipated. Also, I hadn't had that much experience yet with the brace--it had been taken away for Bridwell-ordered adjustments, then again when pressure on my hip made my leg go numb -- both times involving close to a full day without it -- so I'd only worn it for perhaps a total of eight hours. I was supposed to be able to keep it on for a full eight-hour period: two had been the best I'd been able to manage because of all the interruptions. In fact, it wasn't until I'd been home for over two weeks that I reached

that level of toleration, and even then it was rare to keep the brace on for more than four hours without a 'breathing' spell. The best I've done to date was one 12-hr. stint, and I generally wear it for seven-hours-on, one off, then another seven-hours-on with some days another hour break in mid-evening. There are days, though, when I can barely stand it on for more than a few hours in a row, and during times when my muscles are really screaming for relief, I seem to be putting it on and taking it off continually throughout the day. Those periods are becoming ever-more infrequent, though.

The day before I left I received a parting "present" from the hospital. While both my roommate and myself were gone from the room, my wallet was stolen. It was my own dumb fault -- Lord knows there were warnings aplenty in the booklet given to each patient at admission that purses, wallets, and other valuables should be locked up, but after so long a false sense of security develops. My purse sat on the windowsill, so I could have access to odd items that wouldn't fit into the drawer of the chest/cabinet beside the bed. Supposedly someone was to collect for phone service once a week, but I'd never seen the agent, and I had \$30 set aside to cover the expected charges, along with the \$11 I'd set aside from my poker winnings at Octocon (my TAFF-DUFF Poker Troll "Tithe"), and a few dollars spending money for pop or whatever at the hospital. Sandy, her husband, Greg, and I had gone downstairs to the vending machine area during their afternoon visit (Greg was working seven days a week as a Manpower Temporary, and had gotten an unusual Sunday half-day off) and I'd borrowed some change for a can of Diet Pepsi. As soon as I came back to the room and went to reach for my wallet, I knew it was gone. The bunch of colored pens I'd kept atop it weren't in sight. Talk about feeling sick! I couldn't keep away the tears. It wasn't the money--with Dave now on a long-term assignment, our cash flow had improved tremendously--but the photos I missed. I'd kept the kids' school pictures, the last surviving snapshot of my father, little notes and cards from Dave, all the funny little 'business cards' passed out by friends at conventions in my wallet... not to mention my I.D. and birth certificate. This had happened before--back in 1970, again at a hospital--but the shock was as strong. It depressed me for days.

The Campus police took my report, and told me that roughly 40% of stolen wallets were later found tossed in some trashcan or isolated corner of the grounds, but I knew I'd never see my keepsakes again. It was like losing a part of myself, only this time there wasn't any way I could replace what had been taken. Oh, the ID could be duplicated in time, but not the pictures and cards. I suppose the best thing to do would be to keep a separate holder for items I want to keep with me but apart from the obvious container for cash. Thieves aren't interested in pictures of my kids, they only want money, and that can be replaced, as can be wallets.

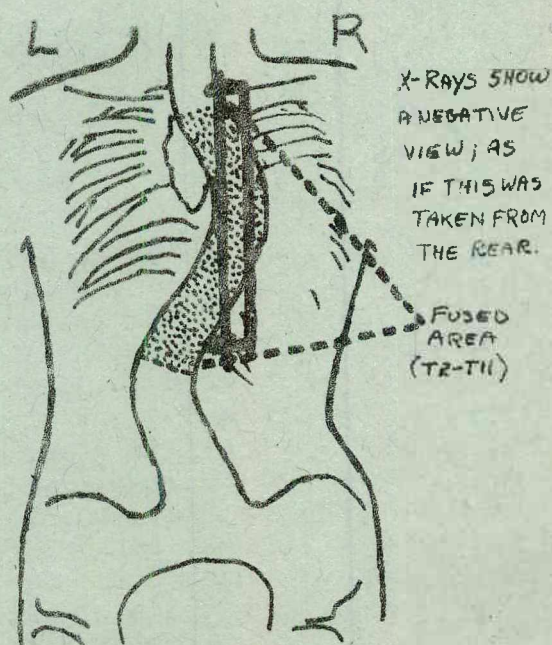
Monday, the day I was to leave, my brace was taken away yet again for adjustment in the afternoon. The Resnicks were to arrive around 5:30, shortly after Dave was due for his regular visit, and as the time passed without the brace-fitter returning, I became more tense and upset. Also, someone was supposed to remove the staples from my incisions, and that hadn't been done yet. By 4:45, I was calling for a trunk. The floor nurse came in and tried to pull out the staples, but she wasn't very good at the task, and took a nip of skin with each try. A Doctor was called for, but Bridwell and his team were wrapped up in surgery. My stomach churned. Dave, the Doctor, and my brace all came within minutes of each other, it seemed, and matters were complicated for awhile until things smoothed out. Mike came bounding in, and helped tote bags of belongings out to the car with Sandy, while Dave helped me into the brace and to get dressed. We switched coats for the trip home; my coat wouldn't button over the brace, so I swam in his--at least it was warm! (He carried mine, braving the cold in shirt-sleeves and a sweater.) Mike drove us home quickly, stopping mid-journey to let Sandy off near her apartment, but I found the brace creeping up and jamming against my ribs even more quickly. My rib muscles were shrieking by the time we pulled up in front of our 4-flat, and I slowly toddled across the street in as mad a rush as I could manage to get in and get the cursed device off. Such a relief! Being home was heavenly. (And thanks again, Mike!)

The next few weeks were chaotic. Arrangements were made for Sandy to come over each day to stay with me while Dave was at work, as I couldn't strap on the brace by myself. Our bed proved to be too soft for comfort, and when Joni called to tell me the balance of the

non-existent 'Fund' -- apparently well-meaning friends had continued to send her cash even after I'd asked for such goings-on to cease -- was on its way to me, some \$318, we began shopping for a replacement. Though our bed was too soft for me (I awoke aching, rather than refreshed, after a night's sleep), it was just perfect for Dave's comfort. Since there were also problems with enough space, now that I had to lie on my back in one position throughout the night and we couldn't sleep in our usual curled-about-each-other pattern, a king-sized bed frame, with two separate twin-sized mattresses in different firmnesses seemed to offer the best solution. Between that purchase, and getting a comfortable reclining chair for the living room, it was fortunate that Dave's bank had raised the credit limit on his charge cards.

New bed and all, it wasn't the same at home as it had been at the hospital with its electrically-controlled raisable bed. Rib and shoulder muscles raised a mighty protest, and I recalled that I still had one refill left on my prescription for Parafor Forte. Calling on Mike Resnick again for a lift, Sandy and I bundled and braced me up for a trip to the druggist, way on the other side of town near our old apartment. Mistake. The brace rode up till it cut into my armpits, sending my ribs into spasm again. Sandy tried to readjust the brace once, with me standing outside holding onto the car for support, but it was of little avail. I had to spend the rest of that day, and all of the next flat on my back, dosing myself with Parafor Forte and aspirin before my body recovered from the trip (we have since found that the rear seat--accessible now that I can move easier in the brace--of Resnick's car is better to sit in with the brace. The angle of the seat back doesn't push the back of the brace quite so drastically).

I suppose I could explain just what was done to my spine in order to make clear why the movement was so excruciating. During the operation, the vertebrae which were at the 'peak' of the curvature--which had fused from arthritic build-up--were broken apart ('shattered' is how the surgeon described it). The disks which cushion movement between the vertebrae were removed, the bottoms of the intact bones were roughened with a file, and bone slivers, taken from a 3" incision over my pelvis, were inserted to fill the gap that was left. Altogether ten (of the 17 from neck to pelvis) vertebrae were fused. A pair of 3/8-inch rods, extending from my neck to just below the ribcage were wired to the spinal column, after it had been pushed and pulled into as straight a confirmation as the surgical team could manage. In order to reach the spine, all connecting tissue was pulled aside, and the muscles and tendons attached to the thoracic (chest) portion of the spine were freed. Until those muscles and tendons re-attached themselves, they were inclined to go into spasm when activated, so movement of neck, arms, or shoulders was extremely limited. Jodie Offutt asked me for a diagram, so I drew one to include, scaled-down from the X-Rays that were taken in '77 (those being all that I had to go by). The placement of the rods is as I best recall them from the one X-Ray I saw during one of my post-op check-ups. The curvature shown is actually a bit more than exists now. This shows a 60° degree bend, where I had shifted to 75° and now have a mere 50°. The lower curve--which was left uncorrected--is a bit more than is shown, 55° degrees rather than the 45° which existed at the time this X-Ray had been taken. As the two curves are more equal, the Doctor doesn't believe further shifting will take place in the lumbar area. If I had elected to undergo the 2-stage procedure--which would've involved a much longer hospital stay, two-to-four weeks in traction and, of course, a lot more pain besides two separate operations with increased risk--I would've gotten a 30 degree result. I didn't think that a



sufficient result for the expenditure of time, energy, and money -- even granting the fact that Medicaid was picking up the doctor and hospital bills. As it is, I've regained 3/4s of an inch of my 2½-inch loss in height (I'm now 5'6½" tall), the "rib prominence" (hump) on my back has been reduced nearly 50%, and my shoulders have leveled off (the left one formerly drooped an inch-and-a-half lower than the right). The depression in my chest, caused by the out-of-line breastbone, is gone, and I can breathe more deeply--when I'm not wearing the brace, that is.

In anticipation of having loads of time on my hands while in the hospital and recuperating at home, Bill Bowers lent me a stack of books, and Steve and Denise Leigh contributed a small mountain of magazines I hadn't seen. I'd taken a pack of blank paper, envelopes, and stamps along with me to help fill what idle time was left when I wouldn't be working on the rug. Well...time I had aplenty. But what did I do with it? Talked. Stared out the window (at that marvelous view). Watched TV. Slept. I came home with not a page of the reading material scanned, not a line written on the paper, and perhaps eight square inches of the rug canvas covered--all of which was done prior to surgery. Either my brain seemed too chaotic to track on anything requiring a modicum of concentration, or I was too lethargic to care to do anything at all. I feel more than somewhat disgruntled about this; it seemed such a splendid opportunity and now the time's gone forever. *Sigh*

Because of the shoulder/arm sensitivity, when I got home, I found I was unable to write or draw--beside the discomfort, I also had to deal with the fact that my glasses would not let me focus at table height. Later, as movement in the neck and shoulder area became easier, Dave taped together a couple of boxes that I could hold on my lap and use as a sort of easel. I've drawn a few fanzine pictures, but haven't yet begun to respond to the pile of correspondence that glares, accusingly, at me (most of it in the form of cheerful, chatty almost-daily notes from Jodie...should I not get to them before you read this, Jodie, I want to thank you. They perked me up almost as good as a visit.

Despite all the shuffling around of surgical dates, rooms in the hospital, and phone numbers, Mike Harper, Joni Stopa, Martha Beck, and my son Kurt called long distance to chat and extend good wishes, and Bowers and the Leighs came by to visit. As Dave had asked friends not to call or come over during that first week--when I was pretty well out of it--the contacts and visits seemed to be almost crowded to my recollection. The stale advice about keeping calls and visits short makes sense to me now; I felt almost exhausted from the socialization I had.

Twice Mike and Carol Resnick came to my rescue after I'd gotten home; interrupting their daily routine at the kennel (and from Mike's stints at the word processor) to drive me either to the hospital to have brace troubles checked out by Bridwell, or to the brace shop to have adjustments made to it. A friend of Sandy's and Greg's, Cathy, drove me in twice, too. People pitch in to help each other when the need arises, reminding one that perhaps the human race isn't quite as cold and uncaring as might be suspected at other times. Dave and I appreciate all the various assistances that were given, and we'll try to pass on the good karma at first chance.

Altogether the recuperation period has gone much more slowly than I had expected. When I compare how weak I was when I was discharged and how far I've come along, the change had been drastic, but I'm still quite a ways from being up to snuff. The brace handicaps me a lot, bending and stooping is a no-no, and lifting even a gallon of milk puts a great strain on my shoulders. But I'm able to putter around the kitchen, make most meals (as long as someone's around to get things I need from the lower cabinets), and even do the dishes once in awhile (Dave does them, usually). We went out to dinner as a Xmas-gift/celebration the Wednesday before Christmas (I'd entered Ohio's lottery, when the grand prize was over seven million dollars, and won third prize--a magnificent \$54. The following week, when the big prize dropped to 2 mil. I hit 3rd again and won the same amount. \$108 return on a \$3 investment 'tain't bad at all...I've put my buck in every week since, though without further success) and also attended two of three New Years Eve parties, thanks to rides given by Joel Zakem (Cincy fan currently in exile at Law School in Louisville, KY). We passed on the final one, though; we were both too pooped. By the end of December I'd built my strength and nerve up to the point that taking the bus for Dr. appointments was practical, but mostly I stay home. Risking a 10.

Re/^{THE}SILENT GONDOLIERS: that was one of the books Bowers lent us, and both Dave and I read it. I liked it more than he did--I found it a simple tale told somewhat charmingly, but he didn't seem to think it worth his while--and think it could've been written by Goldman or Farmer. Dave leans more toward the latter, but he's got a better grasp of "style" than I do, so I'd trust his judgement more.

Being less-than-sober at Silly Poker games has been an advantage in my experience. It's somewhat amusing, in a sadistic sense, to watch the "odds" players go completely batty in trying to decide whether to stay or fold, and that adds another element of fun.

I knew LASFS could, and has, kicked people out, but I didn't know that members were voted in. I thought all it took was attendance at a certain number of meetings, but DaveLo tells me a vote is taken at some point or another before a person is "officially" in.

No, I'm a lapsed (I liked Jodie's term, "recovered", better) Catholic, but the laying on of guilt trips is passed on to female offspring in Irish and Eastern European cultures almost as well as it is in Jewish homes. My Grandmother was a Master (Mistress?) of the Art, and I picked up a few points. I hadn't thought of an actual costume that Nicholas could be wearing, but the one you describe--a plastic bag and attending as a prick--certainly seems likely...

I believe you denied your Dealership status before. I believe you, Arthur, I believe you!

DAVE LANGFORD -- CLOUD CHAMBER 21 -- Why is it that some people, like your Mother, don't consider writing to be Real Work? That seems to be a much commoner attitude than I would think, judging by remarks other writers have made. I certainly hope that matters improve soon for you so you can wave a fattened bankbook before the disbelievers eyes.

Mike Resnick last night passed along the rumor being spread via SFC that various legal entanglements have been threatened at you--one of which I gather is in regard to the ARROW/TIMESCAPE deal about your book THE SPACE EATER. I was aghast. Sweet Langford being threatened with lawsuits? Croggles the mind, it does. (One party Mike mentioned was Andre Norton--what on Earth could anyone possibly say about her that could be that annoying?!) Anyway, I can't see all that sort of stuff improving your mental depression any, and most sincerely hope it all blows over quickly. (I'd be willing to act as a character witness in your defense. We've never met, but what has that to do with it? I recognize a character when I see or read one.)

--CLOUD CHAMBER 23 -- No need to apologize for using all those obscure Britfannish references in lastish. Esotericism is something we US fen have learned to deal with successfully, ~~THANKS to Bowers~~ (Damn it, I really miss not being able to insult Ole Bill in person, as it were...)

I'm glad that writing a 'depressionzine' helped ease you from that funk. Doing so never works that way for me; I just get blusier (bluesier? *Sheesh*).

I agree that Marty often comes off sounding arrogant. I used to have a similar problem (and still do, on occasion) in dealing with Alex Eisenstein (husband of Phyllis) when he was opinionizing. I finally found that if I mentally add a whole slew of "I think,"s, "In my opinion,"s, and "As I see it,"s, his pronunciations became much easier to bear. Perhaps if you did the same to Marty's it might help. (I think I do it unconsciously, the habit having once been assumed.)

Needless to say, I hope you find yourself in a better position come next bi-month. We enjoy your company and would hate to see you drop out...

MIKE SHOEMAKER -- MUGGINS' MUGGLES AND MUBBLEFUBBLES #21 -- DaveLo, who has been reading (note, not skimming) an odd gathering of words called MRS. BYRNE'S DICTIONARY, came across the definition of "mubble-fubbles", to whit: a fit of depression. Now that we've solved part of your title, why not have the good grace to reveal the rest of the secret?

PBS is full of garbage and propaganda? Oh, so that's what Bill Buckley and NOVA dish out! I hadn't realized...

DAVE LOCKE -- WITH A STRANGE DEVICE -- Reading your reflections on Autumn while shivering in some of the coldest weather Cincinnati has encountered in January makes for the sort of timebinding that is more discombobulating than fun. Echoes of "Lest We Forget" keep reverberating through my mind. *Sigh* May the seasons turn soon...

I'm wondering if anyone else besides Jean and I hew to the axiom that parties need no excuse. I've hosted gatherings that were in honor of birthdays or anniversaries, but most of the ones that I've held were for no reason at all other than the fact that it seemed a good idea at a particular time. I've noted that you seem to feel a need to come up with some excuse, no matter how frivolous, for the invites, but I've never seen the necessity for doing so, except that you appear to have more fun in working out the wordage that way--the more ridiculous the "excuse", the more enjoyable you seem to find the process. Since such "excuses" are never mentioned during the party itself, the effect is generally minimal, to mine eye. What's wrong with simply saying "We're having a party. Would you like to attend?"

I echo your assessment of Platt's DREAM MAKERS volumes, and though I began Paul Walker's interview book, SPEAKING OF SCIENCE FICTION with high hopes, I found myself skimming by the time I reached the middle, and never bothered to more than flip through the latter half. Odd, as I recall the interviews he did in Connors' MOEBIUS TRIP/SF ECHO with fondness. Perhaps it was a case of 'you hadda be there'?

Oh, but puns should be acknowledged -- the look of anticipation on the face of someone who has come up with a 'good 'un' practically demands some sort of reaction. In person it is expected that the hearer(s) will groan, or wince, or raise their eyes heavenward. I see nothing evil in typing out OOK-OOK in response to a written pun or other piece of verbal play. (I don't do it, mind you, but I see no harm in the practice.)

Diagramming sentences is of no more 'practical' help in most people's daily lives than is a knowledge of trigonometry or chemistry. Must all education be considered 'practical' in order to be valid? Why not simply send students away from school with a basic vocabulary of 35,000-50,000 words, a rough grasp of how to put them together, and congratulate ourselves for a swell job of 'educating' them? True, not all students gain from learning how the parts of sentences go together in a visual manner, but not everyone gets the hang of geometry by proving theorems, either. It is just a tool, a learning aid that may assist some pupils in their study of the language and how it works.

I'm not certain, but I believe a 'Mid-Life Crisis' is generally reached at a later age in men than women. (Doesn't make any sense, really, when you consider that most men don't live as long as most women, but as it points to that period when a career person ceases to be a "person with Potential" and becomes someone who supposedly had "Made It", it makes more sense.) 40-45 is the age I've seen indicated when men will most likely face that crisis of spirit that most women seem to face at age 35-40.

I also vote that Suzi give us an update on Jonathan's reading progress. ~~Now that I'm to be a standard I want to know what I can use to help Sandy about what she'll be doing with all~~

I didn't realize that you had a mild phobia about sharp-edged weapons. That goes far to explain the worried expression you wear whenever I worked on a carving, and all those muffled gasps that would come from your side of the table when my knife blade would slip. Here I thought you were simply trying to make me feel incompetent...

Another reaction a foriegnner could have to a "PED X" sign would be to cross his/her legs, which could give passers-by the idea that some sort of urinary distress was occurring.

Since Jodie likes shopping malls, and you do also without realizing you had spiritual kin around, a new meaning may have been brought to bear upon "Tis a proud and lonely thing..."

ARTHUR HLAVATY -- THE DILLINGER RELIC 21 -- Haven't I commented to you before this Mlg.?

Oh, you just decided to drop by again? Well, it's nice seeing you again.

Interesting cover. Fox's illos always seem to be illustrating a story. Wonder what he had in mind when he was doing this one.

"I had never been to a convention in Baltimore."

And despite your attempts to change that situation, you seem not to have done so this year, either. Sorry to have heard of your asthma attack at Worldcon. What a disgruntling time for it to occur!

Martha Beck recently had a similar thing happen; a critical asthma attack in allergic reaction to medication (in her case, an antibiotic injection given to her by an M.D. she's seen for ten years or so despite the warning that it may cause asthma attacks to patients allergic to it. She'd never taken it before, so had no idea of her susceptibility to the drug) that put her in the hospital's ICU for three days (and in the general care section for another three). She was scared witless--as she put it, a la ALL THAT JAZZ, she passed anger and rejection and went directly to Bargaining...Take her husband, take the dog, take her father, take ANYONE but let her draw another breath. I can't imagine the fright a victim of asthma must feel in the midst of a full-blown attack and most sincerely hope that I'll never experience it.

I read Rucker's THE SEX SPHERE and certainly was not as impressed by it as you were. The very faults you mention (pacing and his assumptions of how the genders behave) were the major ones to me, too, but I also thought the entire thing a piece of frivolity. In no way could I rank it as a "best SF book", read last year or in any year.

Touching words in memorium to Mike Wood. Though his death was a shock, it should be also kept in mind that Mike was frequently disattentive to the requirements of his disease, and sometimes had to be reminded to take his insulin and/or eat properly to maintain his health while having diabetes. Though it doesn't sound nice to say so, his death could be used as a Horrid Example to fen who suffer from the disease. Maintaining oneself with insulin is not a task to be taken casually; its regimen MUST be adhered to.

Again, I thank you for including the cautionary FOOTBALL ALERT to such commentary. It save me lots of wasted reading...

Much of the Holistic Health Movement's expressed attitudes ring akin to those of Christian Scientists and their teachings, only with the addition of "natural" herbal medications to buttress one's 'healthy' outlook. To be sure, one's mental attitude has an effect on one's physical condition -- there's just too much evidence to deny it -- but the emphasis they place on outlook-above-all swings them into the Quack Camp for me.

One of the physical differences between human males and females is an extra layer of fat tissue directly beneath the skin of most women. In order to display their musculature, female body builders have to reduce their fat levels to what could be dangerous levels (a recent Donahue show on that topic had a guest in the amateur events who mentioned one contestant who became ill from fat deficiency). Since I view female body-builders the same as male body-builders--people who emphasize something basically desirable to the point of deformity--this information adds to my repugnance to the "sport".

If one of those articles on asthma that St. Onge sent you is a general description of the condition, I would like to borrow it if you wouldn't mind. My son-in-law is a person who shares a common misapprehension that asthma and bronchitis are the same (he has a mild cat allergy that sometimes kicks off asthma attacks. My daughter has occasional bronchitis, and he insists she and he share the same condition). I'm sure if he could see something Scholarly and Authorative on the subject, he'd change his mind, but so far he believes as his Mother taught him, and that's that. (My daughter wants to keep her pet cat...)

ERIC LINDAY -- MISSED MAILINGS -- The woes you mutter about concerning genzine production are particularly apropos right now: Bowers is in the midst of birthing another issue of OUTWORLDS, and it's already past 60pp of material. We're getting almost daily reports on what progress is being made (since he'll be running off the issue here), and I bet he wishes Genzine Editors had the option of having some time-n-effort saving procedure like Mothers do for over-sized babies. But, alas, I know of no way to perform a C-Section in this case...

RE burial as "joining with

the soil": I'd even skip the cardboard coffin and simply lay the deceased in an old-fashioned winding sheet into the grave. Since the health laws in this country won't allow that, I lean toward cremation and having one's ashes scattered in a field or somewhere that the remaining elements can merge back into the Earth. All the talk I've heard at Funeral Directors about 'preservation' of one's mortal remains via gas-tight coffins and hermetically-sealed concrete vaults literally makes my skin crawl. For all our lives we live off this planet, what's so horrible about giving back what's left?

Re yct about the dated computer used in WAR GAMES--it was pointed out that the system was cobbled together from used and out-moded machines sold second-hand. The same thing holds true for the TV ~~fluff~~ series WHIZ KIDS--the hero's father aided him in his acquisitions by selling him equipment being replaced by newer, better models at the place he worked at. The fact that their equipment was not the Latest Stuff made the film and TV show seem more Real to me.

JONI STOPA -- ANOTHER MIDWESTERN B.P. -- But...but, Joni! It wasn't we who were in Colorado Springs, but you and Jon. So you couldn't have stranded us there by leaving off in mid-trip-report, but only yourselves. Welcome back, by the way. Bet you're darn sick and tired of 'mountain high' and all that stuff. Gosh, I'm really sorry that you had so many problems with those "generic tennies" you'd bought at K-Mart on the way out to Colorado. However I can't shed any tears about it, since I became the beneficiary of your decision to Get Rid Of Them. They feel fine on my feet (and seem to work better than my boots when it comes to handling icy sidewalks). So while I regret the pain you went through, for me it was a mixed cursing...

I've been at the Indiana Dunes when a wind was blowing hard, so I know somewhat of how you speak concerning the stinging sensation you can get when the grains strike your skin. Though the Dunes sand is more rounded and thus smoother than the sort you describe that make up the Great Sand Dunes National Monument, it still hurt. Your legs must've been really sore from the sandblasting you got.

It seemed odd to read that list of shop-types to be found in Durango. That name always conjured up images of ~~K/A~~ a rough Cowtown. *Sigh* Another mental myth shot all to hell and gone...

Since Dave and I now live in Silverton, reading that name/~~y~~our report took me aback a bit. A train from Durango to here?!? I know there are tracks two blocks from here, but I think the company that operates it is called something other than the one you gave. Trip reports can be so confusing!

You did a good job in giving us the highlights of your trip. Naturally, there were many chuckles as I read it, but none I could point out to in a coherent comment. Appreciated the light touches, nevertheless.

Wish you'd been able to locate your missing copy of FLAP so you could've continued your mailing comments. You seemed to ~~off~~ on such a great start! The copier the Lodge bought worked nicely (once whoever ran it off found how to do both sides on one sheet, that is). It's a vast improvement over the other machine. It was taken outdoors and shot, wasn't it? Or did someone choose a nastier way to dispose of it?

BERNADETTE BOSKY -- MY AIM HEISST TREU #22 -- What am I doing talking to you? You won't answer, anyway, anyhow. *Sheesh* Guess I'm trapped by my perverse habits. Well, as long as I've gone this far...

Reading of your typing this at 6:00 in the ayem reminds me of the idyllic days of yore when I kept hours more suited to my mightowl nature. While 6 was even then a bit late for me, I commonly stayed up til 4 in the morning. Best of all times for getting writing done!

Once again I stand (feel swept aside, really) in awe at the schedule you maintain and the doings you do. Keep up the dazzling pace, it seems to suit your personality perfectly.

-- WARP -- Interesting reading. Too good a zine for WOOF.

-- CHILDHOOD FEARS -- I'm one of those people who didn't seem to have problems with fears in childhood, although I have developed some in adulthood (fear of height, for instance). There is a tendency to pooh-pooh at irrational fright at things like open closet doors, unexamined bedrooms (I had one cousin who insisted his room be searched each night before bedtime. What it was he thought could "get him" if the task wasn't done was never made clear), shadows on the wall, dogs barking in the distance and other non-threatening things, but I generally feel that fear is fear and that is what should be approached with care. Too often mild childhood fears can develop into full-blown phobias, or lead to compulsive, ritualistic behavior that can cause other problems in and of itself. Being a reasonably logical person, I had thought it best to meet such terrors with the "calm light of reason", explaining to the child how harmless the closet was, the security of the building, the baselessness of the fear. It totally buffaloes me when these explanations had the same effect as a feather striking a mountain, and I'd retreat in utter bafflement. It still bothers me that the most effective action one can do to soothe a child's fear is to hug them. (It's a pleasant thing to do, true, but solves nothing.) In any case, I wish you had offered something a bit more concrete in this essay, other than advice to acknowledge that a problem exists without making light of the person who has it.

KAJ -- THE FRONTIER ALIEN #21 -- Gory-looking kid you chose to use as a "model" for 1984. I can only hope that his warlike appearance won't have any connection with reality (a slim hope, but still there).

April 10th, 1982 was the date of my first visit to the Ortho Clinic at University Hospital (then Cincinnati General). October 31st, 1983 was the date of surgery. Yes, it really was a year and a half--and then some. The first time I went to a doctor about the increasing pain of my scoliosis was August of 1980! Though I'm definitely not comfortable yet, I am at least off the merry-go-round that was dizzying me so.

Sympathies on the loss of your father. My stepfather died of lung cancer about four years ago, and like your father, it was extremely quick. (Al had been diagnosed as having bone cancer in his shoulder in late January, it spread to his lungs the next month and he was dead the month after that. Caught everyone flat-footed, as it were.) Some people aren't as fortunate to be taken so fast; they go through months and years of agony, draining themselves and their families. At least you can comfort yourself that your Dad didn't have to go through prolonged pain. Scant comfort, I know, but it should be kept in mind.

Currently my Mother is undergoing X-Ray therapy for throat cancer. She found a lump under her chin in mid-November, and further checking by a M.D. found it was the tail-end of a tumor that had sprouted from her larynx. It was removed (entirely, so the surgeon reassures her), and she's been having post-op radiology sessions since. Her salivary glands have ceased to function (a temporary condition, say the medicos), her sense of taste is making food take on a metallic flavor, and she's losing her voice (again, all temporary), but after an initial depressed reaction, she's handling it all quite affirmatively. She just counts herself lucky to have found it when she did--the tumor was solid and relatively "young"; no metastasis had occurred as yet. She's quit smoking after some forty-odd years, but it was because cigarettes tasted awful during the X-Ray treatments, not from what you'd normally expect.

Good luck in your group's efforts to stop the at-sea burning of chemical wastes. You gave a few more details than what I've read in the magazines about it, and I already had thought it a Dumb Idea. Sometimes I get the impression that the Higher Ups have a massive Death Wish when it comes to environmental dangers, not merely a huge Blind Spot or warpage of cost/benefit ratios.

ROY TACKETT -- VOMBIS #11 -- Please, don't go all Macho on us and apologize for having the gall to be depressed and to show it. Some of the signs of depression -- terseness and withdrawal in particular -- can be seen as indications of dislike by those around someone who is depressed, and can result in fractured friendships and other relationships that wouldn't have happened if the situation were known. To hide one's feelings can cause genuine Problems (what's with the line spacing here?) to evolve.

While it's true that only the person concerned can "cure" the depression, it certainly is a big help to have others around to bolster spirits or simply Be There (even if at the time you wish they'd go away and leave you alone). I'm glad that some people in FLAP were able to reach out to you, and feel regretful that my own concerns at the time made me procrastinate. I'm not glad to read you apologize for giving them the chance to show their concern. You might be Horrible, but we love ya!

Your views on TAFF follow mine pretty closely (or, rather, vice-versa--you was der first, Charlie!). Too often of late it seems people want to win TAFF in order to perk up their fannish resume. The whole thing has taken on some of the more unflavorful aspects of a political race; not unlike some of the campaigns for Hugo awards that have been mounted. TAFF candidates should be those who fandom wants to pat on the back for a job well done, not a Prize, to be sought or contested for. Unfortunately, fandom hasn't been in the mood to reward its peers lately. Criticism, rather than handing out accolades, seems to be the highlighted activity, and feuders rather than doers get all the attention.

You're the first First Fandomite I've heard who didn't describe the great financial strain being hooked on the pulps caused. I mean, some of the stories about doing without school lunches, or working at tough, underpaid jobs and the like were enough to tear your heart out. Its a relief to find that not all young Eofen had to Suffer for the Cause. (Your family was in booze, eh? Sounds like an interesting story there...)

In Chicago at the time I was growing up, cream soda was a clear, colorless beverage. Sometime in my teens a brand was introduced that was a golden amber in color. I was in my thirties before I tried red cream soda, and I thought it awful until I closed my eyes and decided I was being affected solely by the unexpected color. Here in Cinti a beverage called Red Pop -- sold under different brands -- is the "vin ordinaire" of popdom. It's plain old strawberry soda, which at least has the point that its color matches its taste in its favor. How on earth did someone decide that a vanilla-flavored drink should be red? Strawberry or cherry flavored drinks yes, but vanilla?!!

Mae Strelkov always had Religion, it simply has assumed a different face. I think it sad. Most of her research into old root forms and such in language was in her search for supporting evidence for her beliefs in a naturalistic sort of "Goddess" (somewhat akin to the Neo-Pagan Goddess, from what I gather) that mankind had somehow lost track of. While I didn't give much credence to her reasons for doing the research, the work itself seemed valuable, and I think it a damn shame that it's all gone now.

I know replacing 15 amp fuses with 30 amp ones is technically dangerous, and we only did it because 1) the 15 amp fuses were blowing and 2) all the other fuse boxes in this buildings had been switched to higher-amp fuses. Actually, if this were my own home, I'd call in an electrician and rewire the place. As it is, 15 amps is not sufficient for a kitchen. I doubt if we draw even 20 amps though, so we're not really overloading the circuits to a great degree, only allowing enough amperage for our fridge to turn on without breaking the circuit. In such an old building, you can rest assured that we take care to make sure we're not using too many appliances. The outlets in here look rather octapoid, but only one item at a time is used. I don't want to have this place go up in flames, even if I don't own it I do live in it, and my goods and furniture would be at risk in the event of fire. (Actually 20 amp would have served our purposes as well; the hardware store didn't have any at the time...)

While the local power company didn't announce a brown-out, I think a drop in voltage was to be expected, considering the weather. Cincinnati Gas and Electric, along with two other power companies, was building a nuke plant some 30 miles up-river from here, but just this weekend announced they were switching to coal, so completion is put off for another seven years or so. We'll just have to limp along with what we have in the meantime...

Who was "breast-beating" about the American Indian situation? I had said I used to feel anger about the treatment doled out to Indians (prime example, the Cherokee and the story behind the Trail of Tears), and feel we should be alert so that further injustices are not committed. Some of the deeds that were done to Indians were merited, a lot was

not, but all those things were done in the past (and by no kin of mine). Today, the Indians have rights under our current laws which are being attacked in various ways. I feel a threat on one group of Americans is a threat to us all. If one group can have their rights taken away for convenience's sake, so can we all. What's that old saying? The price of freedom is eternal vigilance? I don't think the way I do out of guilt or any sense of breast-beating--I act out of self-interest. If "they" can do it to "them", "They" can do it to me... (I also admit that they can, but if we make it too much of a hassle to do so, maybe we'll be left alone to go our own way.) In practical fact it is impossible to rectify actions taken in the past which are seen today to be injustices. If all captured territories were handed back to the descendants (if any) of those whose land had been taken, where do the dispossessed go? What's done is done, and no amount of hand-wringing can alter that fact, which is why I don't wring my hands about it.

The last median age I read about was somewhere between 22 and 23 years. It was quite some time ago--perhaps in 1980 or so--but I still don't believe it's passed 25 (though I'm willing to be corrected on that). We've begun a Baby Boom; haven't you heard? The offspring of the big Baby Boom of the 40's are having kids of their own. In a few years we're going to start feeling another Classroom Crunch after the lessened demand of the past fifteen or so years. Babies all over the place, just check out the situation at the neighborhood supermart. (I shall, of course, blame it all on Suzi--she started the trend with Jonathan...) TIME magazine even devoted a cover story to it a while back.

-- VOMBIS #12 -- What a concise trip report! The essence of the midsection of America in 28 50 words or less.

Did you know it was illegal to sell candies with a liquor content of more than 1%? This fascinating fact was discovered recently in reading of the seizing of a shipment of imported brandy cordial chocolates (from that Den of Iniquity, Belgium) from a specialty shop in downtown Cincinnati. Seems at one time our Federal Fathers felt it was dangerous to the health of our children to permit sinful booze in candy, so nowadays, while you cook up a batch of it at home for yourself, you can't buy decent spiked candy over the counter (so-called cordials with liqueurs contain 1% alcohol or less--the confiscated candies held a whopping 6% alcohol content. *Sigh*). Guess you'll have to tackle the gin or martini chocolates on your own turf...

RE the "Hollywood" flavor large cons have gained: in a recent radio call-in broadcast, it was announced by the "fan" guest that nowadays conventions are attracting not only Celebrities, but even SF writers! (My, my.) He raved about the wonderfulness of being able to see and hear all "your favorite stars and other Celebrities" at the speeches, panels, and banquets to the point I wondered what Fandom he was talking about. Turned out he was a Trekk~~er~~er--and a Dealer to boot. Don't know by what means the station chose him as representative of a SF Fan--except for the fact that he and his ilk outnumber us by far, so they get whatever label they wish...

Sorry to hear you've developed bursitis. My Mother found she had it about 12-14 years ago -- in her bowling arm, which made it a Major Disaster. I gather it still causes occasional Bad Times, but seems to be manageable (she still bowls, though her average Ain't What It Used To be--but then, neither is she) and hasn't caused any great readjustment to her daily life. Let's hope yours remains a mild case, too.

I don't want to think about the country's economy--mostly because there ain't nothin' I can do about it. I'd always considered myself upper-lower to lower-middle class, but after having a taste of the woes someone at the bottom of the economic ladder has to live with (and I was nowhere near the bottom--close, but not there yet), I actually fear being in that situation. The feeling of utter helplessness in the face of powerful Forces one is unable to deal with, much less combat, can actually paralyze one. All I can do is hope, and keep my fingers crossed; both in behalf of my kids and myself. Thankfully, things seem to be on an upswing this year. I'm expecting the upturn to continue.

Loved the photo page! Cute idea, good snapshots, and I thank you for following-through on the urge.

JODIE OFFUTT -- WHISTLE POST #3 -- Thanks for the 'cheering' thoughts--though I think it may be a bit longer than "next semester" before I try out for that cheerleading position...

As I said to you before, I can't get over the number of fannish offspring that are going overseas this year. Your son Chris, Resnick's daughter Laura (worked as a tutor at a summer camp in the Alps, then spent several months back-packing over Europe), my son Brian (transferred to an A.F.B. in Germany). I have yet to come to grips with the idea of people I know casually up-and-going off on adventures like that. Most people of my acquaintance who do visit Europe, do so after half (or more) a lifetime of scrimping and saving. I think it's great--seeing other countries, other cultures, can't help but give valuable Life Lessons to a young person. (I also agree with Carol Resnick, who when asked if she'd like to do what her daughter was doing said "I would have loved to do it when I was 21, but not now. I've gotten used to more comfort than that.")

It must be the genes. My kids never were all that great at communicating via letters. Put a telephone receiver in their hands and they can talk for hours (well, Brian isn't too hot on that, either), but their brains seem to freeze up when facing a blank sheet of paper. Chris seemed to feel completely at ease with the idea of 'talking on paper'; simply relaxing and being himself and telling you what he wanted just as if he'd been sitting near you and speaking. I really enjoyed sightseeing through his eyes, but can't help wondering: does he give lessons? I'd be willing to foot the postage for all three of my kids if he'd be willing to give them some hints.

Sounds like you've found a new love in your life. Do you think your enthusiasm for the comforts of your car will lead you to take more trips this coming year? Hope so!

The price of books and shoes are the ones that continue to shock me with each increase. I've also noticed a drastic rise in the cost of over-the-counter medicines. A bottle of Dristan which had cost me \$1.89 a few years ago, and \$2.59 the last time I bought some, cost \$3.89 last week at the store. That's ridiculous!

They did spray paraquat not too far from Cincy, in a patch of wilderness in Northern Kentucky. That was right before the announcement was made that a larger operation was going to take place in Daniel Boone Nat'l Forest. There were some protests made around here, but not nearly enough (for one thing, I don't think anything had time enough to get organized. There was a few weeks notice for your area.) to affect anything. What gets me is that two helicopters, with three-man crews, I-don't-know-how-many on-ground personell, and all sorts of expensive equipment was used to destroy a patch of pot that one of the Sherrif's deputies said would've taken two men about half a day to pull up. It's certainly not a very cost-efficient way to control the crop--even if I did agree with the program's aims. They even had to use a crew of six to eight men, clothed in full protective gear (as if dealing with Times Beach Dioxin) with respirators, to gather up the dead plants--lest any curious kids later find it and take it home. I have no idea how many thousands of dollars the project cost, but cheap it wasn't.

Appreciated your call the other night between CHEERS and HILL STREET--even if it did mean we missed out an episode of BUFFALO BILL (another good comedy show). It's really okay though; we'll catch it on re-runs...

Sure, there's people I dislike in fandom too--but there's also a few of my family (aunts, uncles, cousins) that I'd never miss should they drop off the face of this Earth, too. Still and all, I do consider even the few I don't like as "fans", entitled to exactly the same rights and privileges as the rest of us (meaning: precisely none). I can recognize the affinity while reacting to the negative aspects of their personalities as they deserve. (Although, to be fair, often it's not that the disliked person is actually unlikeable, it's usually due to conflicts in personality or attitude.)

I use green pepper (cut in chunks and frozen) in an ersatz "stuffed" green pepper dish. Just spread tomato sauce on the bottom of a pan, add a layer of pepper, then put in a mixture of hamburger, ground pork, onion, rice, salt and pepper, formed into 'logs' (about twice the length of a meatball), then cover with

the rest of the can of tomato sauce (size depending on how much you're making, of course). Tastes just as good as regular stuffed peppers--in fact, Dave and I like it even better; you can take as much or as little of the pepper as you want, yet the flavor gets a chance to percolate throughout the meat. You also can pull out a few chunks of pepper and cut them up while frozen (they handle much better that way than if allowed to thaw first) and add them to chicken dishes, omelettes, or anything else that would benefit by the addition of that flavor. I keep a supply on hand on the freezer shelf at all times, just as I do sautéed mushrooms. Never know when it'll give that perfect touch to a dish.

MIKE SHOEMAKER -- THE SHADOW-LINE #13 -- The only books I've read in the list you gave were ROGUE MOON and MICHAELMASS--both of which I enjoyed, unlike yourself. I read ROGUE MOON when it first came out, long before encountering any reviews by Blish (in fact, I was unacquainted with fandom or prozines except for F&SF and an occasional ANALOG). I didn't care for MICHAELMASS as much (DaveLo liked it more than I did), and though I agree it seemed to become a bit muddled toward the end with aliens and such, I still found the book, overall, to ^{be} worth reading. It also seemed to reek of being the precursor to a series--yet one never evolved. Wonder why that was?

Enjoyed your reports on the "waterfall" hikes the most of any you've run so far. It recalled one of my favorite camping trips with my Ex and the kids to northeast/Central Missouri about ten years ago. We were based at Blue Springs Park and took drives to locate the various springs in the area and decided to take a side trip to view some rock formations (name forgotten). En route, road paralleled a river that had cut a deep gorge into granite (I think rock). I was driving, keep^{ing} my eyes on the road (mostly) but the kids spotted a mob of people down below. At one point the gorge had narrowed, and apparently the steep walls of stone had collapsed, filling the river. The waters rose behind the blockage, and eventually forced dozens of routes through the rubble. It didn't appear on any map, but the locals certainly knew about it! There were at least a hundred people--men, women, and kids--romping about in and about the water. There were races, where the water rushed along through chutes of smooth stone, and pools, and "tiered" falls, each with its own basin. The largest "fall" that I saw was about twelve feet, mostly they ran from one to four feet or so, but there were jillions of 'em in a length of river about a quarter-mile long! We parked the car (next to an abandoned gravestone quarry, as it turned out, which gave us exploring opportunities afterward) and clambered down to the river's edge. Naturally it didn't take long before some of us "slipped" and "fell" into the water so there was no longer any reason not to jump right in despite the lack of bathing suits. You could ride the chutes on your rump and get all the thrills and chills of an amusement park ride, or wade in a still pool and look for whatever creatures lurked within, or climb across water-swept rocks to your heart's content. My kids still bring up comments about that place, and it brings a grin of fond recollection to everyone. *Sigh* Maybe I'll get a chance to look up that place again...

Eric Mayer's LoC certainly satirized your bushwhacking reports to a 'T'! I love little things like this, particularly when they're done so unmaliciously and with such flair. Chuckled all the way through it.

DEAN GRENNELL -- THE FLATULENTICULAR LENSEPERSON -- What, no more "Oustiti" puns? I'm amazed (and somewhat disappointed). Thought you'd continue the series for a good while longer than you did...

My pizza dough is simple to make: half a packet of dry yeast dissolved in (roughly) 1½ cups of warm water (with a half tsp or so of sugar mixed in for Good Luck). Add some flour (½ cup or so) and stir. Let sit until froth appears, then toss in a bunch more of flour (you can see I measure all of this very carefully)--I guess about 2 cups--a pinch of salt, and combine well. (If it stirs in easily, you haven't added enough flour.) Turn out on well-floured board and knead until the dough won't accept one more particle of flour (sprinkling on more as needed), and then 10 times more. Put into greased bowl, cover with a towel, put atop fridge (warm spot) for an hour and a half or so, then roll/pat out onto cookie sheet, 10" X 14" jelly roll pan, or whatever. Well...maybe your version is a mite more simple; but this really is easier than it sounds! Everything you mention as a topping (save the pepperoni for us both and the black olives for DaveLo) sounded

fine to me. Usually I fry up some ground pork (cheaper and much less fatty than sausage) until the grease is rendered out, drain off excess fat and season the crumbled meat with garlic powder, ground celery seed, oregano and ground basil. I coat the spread-out dough with tomato sauce, sprinkle with oregano, basil, garlic, salt and pepper, add the meat, toss on some chopped onions and green pepper, dot with sautéed mushrooms, then top with lots of grated mozzarella. I finish it off with a light sprinkling of parmesan cheese and bake at 400° until the crust is browned and the cheese is bubbling and taking on a golden-brown tinge. Loaded, the pizza tops four pounds, generally. Mmmm; I'm getting hungry all of a sudden. Wonder why...

Maybe Kent isn't really so cold-blooded, even when a camera and flash goes berserk before his very eyes. Could be he just goes to discos, with their strobe-light effects, and has become enured to such things. (Did you notice if he seemed to be tapping his foot to the rhythm of the lights? What about his hips? Did they twitch, even a little bit? Does Becky really know what he's doing while she's at work?)

Interesting bit about the discontinued film. Do any of the camera or film manufacturers ever hand out samples of their products to you for testing or free trials? How do some of the more-highly-touted new super-fast films seem to you?

LON ATKINS -- INCHOATE #0 -- You do such marvelous work when under pressure. This apparatus-saver was a delight to read. The comments were brilliant and so perfectly concise (though I would suggest at least a skim through the past few mailings--you might discover Joseph won't be seeing your ~~VERY~~ ~~LOVELY~~ insightful remark to him, alas) that I fear to respond lest my imperfection become enlarged in the mirror of your greatness. I really, really, REALLY hope that matters arrange themselves into a more manageable pattern so you have a bit more than 10.6 seconds to devote to fanac. Where are those California quakes when you could really use one?

I have to express my grateful thanks to you for your sweet gift at Christmas. I galloped through LITTLE,BIG until about 100 pp. from the end, and have been reading it ~~e v e r~~ ~~s o~~ ~~s l o w l y~~ since; partial pages at a time. It's so enchanting (literally) that I don't want it to end (and I have fears it won't work out as I wish it would). Such a strange, yet captivating fantasy! (And the book-marks you included were too extravagant for words -- I gasped that you dared entrust the package to the tender mercies of the mails. (Which hadn't treated it all that tenderly; there were rips in the wrapping paper--which tempted me to peek at what was inside before Dave could come home and share the pleasure.) Luckily, all was untouched inside (at least we assume so). Your karma is magnified...)

MARTY HELGESEN -- A WEREWOLF ON THE MOON (25 FZ) -- Thank you for generously offering to handle Emergency OE duties. It's a great load off our minds to know the apa is covered should some Disaster strike. You have ~~won the battle~~ ^{been} Named Officially, as noted on the Officiousness Page.

One of the reasons the Catholic hierarchy does not come out more strongly in favor of tuition credits could be because of an attitude similar to the one expressed by the Pastor of the church I attended as a child. Some pressure was being placed on him to apply for some State Aid that had become available due to court rulings made at the time (regarding subsidies for busses--the parish later did apply for aid, and received it, though after I had gone on to high school) and he was very resistant to the very notion. He felt that parents should sacrifice for a Catholic education for their children, by paying the tuition fees and arranging for their own children's transportation (some of my classmates had to commute around 15 miles one-way). He said the schooling would mean more to both the students and the parents if effort was required in order to gain it. I assume other church people share his viewpoint even today.

Re yct Becky about "snipe hunting". I recall, as a teenager, hearing references to going out on a snipe hunt, and being a bit puzzled as my definition of the term was the same as yours, while, in context, it was obvious a "submarine race" was being referred to. The meaning must vary from area to area and person to person.

Reyct me about not having the face to make a comment about 'pokers': I dunno, Marty, you look pretty straight to me. (I hope the compliment didn't bring a flush to your cheeks.)

Minicon, used in the sense that Becky and Kal did, is a generic term for small, intimate conventions. The convention held in Minneapolis (or St. Paul, as the case may be in a given year) is called Minicon, with the first letter always capitalized. I'm not sure if the generic was in use prior to Minicon 1, which would add a punnish element to the name, but it wouldn't surprise me if it was. While I generally use the term 'relaxacon' for the smallish gatherings, I have heard other congoers use the term 'minicon' to refer to conventions of that type. (We have a local--relatively speaking--gathering called Rubicon, down near Lexington, KY each Febuary, that is often called a minicon. Attendance has never been over 60 persons as yet.)

PAULINE PALMER -- FLAPDRAGON -- Okay, I won't consider this Mock Fennel Soup #14, but only because you insist it isn't, even though you're going to count it as such yourself. I'm used to people who don't really mean what they say, although most seldom are so bold as to come right out and say so...

Cute selections of clippings this time around (almost slipped and said "this issue"). Wish there had been a tad more of Pauline Palmer to accompany the off-the-wall material, but I'm getting resigned to seeing mlg. comments from you only every so often. (By the way *hic* the recipe for *hic* rum cake was quite good. Reminded me of one I saw for Chicken in Wine that gave a bottle of burgandy as one of the ingredients, and then never mentioned it again until the very end when the final comment was: "Bake at 350°. Open wine; drink. When bottle is empty, chicken should be done." The chicken had been pre-cooked as one of the preliminary steps, to cover the eventuality that someone would chugalug the wine, I suppose.)

DAVE WIXON -- THE BIG BRONZE FAKE #13 -- I'm going to comment out of order about your marriage situation. I'm sorry to hear that you've reached such a drastic solution to your feelings of unhappiness. I can understand them, but I still regret that two people I like have to go through so much emotional turmoil. Your decision could not have been reached easily, nor are you the type to take such a step cavalierly. I wish I lived close enough to offer both of you a hug and a kiss. This has got to be a rotten time for you both. Please tell Caryl I think of her and wish her the best. Quick healing to your hurts to you both. It's a damn shame things couldn't have worked out better.

I've heard several Horror Stories about the conditions people in the Minneapolis area had to deal with in that terrible, snowy period. I would imagine that matters were similar during the arctic cold snap we had awhile back (what? Only last week?! How soon we forget...). Cincinnati was almost paralyzed by a 2-3-inch snowfall about five days ago. It was to laugh.

The hardest thing, from what I gather from your words about it all, that you're facing is the fact that you have fallen out of love with Caryl, while still liking and respecting her; n'est pas? It has to be an agonizing situation, but you two seem to be handling far better than most could. You're both hard-working, sensible, and decent. That combination should help out a lot. Combatting guilty feelings will undoubtedly be a major hurdle, but if you approach your friends in the same spirit as you show here, they should all be supportive and help out in the transition. I'm also certain that not everyone will act in a sensible manner; I only hope it won't be too many near and dear to you. It's tough enough breaking up a household; losing friends who take sides only makes it all even more painful. Unnecessarily so.

Good luck.

SUZIE STEFL -- JUXTAPROSE JOURNAL #25 -- Miss the mailing comments. Glad to hear that Jonathan's doing so well at his reading--it's stunning to realize he's just had his 3rd birthday this month and has mastered Dr. Suess already. From the Terrible Twos to the Tyrannical Threes: if "I'm not" was his favorite phrase last year, watch out for "You're not," this twelve-month.

The story was readable enough, but I wasn't enthused about it. Perhaps it would be helpful if you

gave some sort of motivation for the bitchiness of the supervisor. As it is there seems to be no rhyme or reason to her attitude, and that gives a slightly adolescent feel to the story--the anti-authoritarian bit. I mean, the supervisor knows her job; why is she down on the lead character's case so much? As it stands, again, I would imagine you could polish it a bit and send it out to a market aimed for the younger reader of SF--like, say IASFM, or Scithers' AMAZING. Ghod knows there are lot worse stories in print, and you've got to start somewhere...

BRUCE ARTHURS -- LAST STAGE FOR SILVERWORLD #17 -- The Bem Phrenology cartoon above your colophon was cute. Seemed to be accurate, too -- by the standards used on Pulp covers and early SF films, that is.

It must be extremely depressing to recall a convention where the only person to express any sort of physical affection was Don Thompson. How long did it take you to recover from the blow to your self-respect?

My deceased stepfather's daughter was a border-line anorexic. She stood about 5'7" or so, and weighed about 105 lbs, yet considered herself as being fat, fat, FAT. Always dieted, always made self-effacing comments about her "fat problem", but didn't--so far as I know-- go on the eating-purge-eating binges that I've heard of some victims doing. She seemed to always ill, too; continually either coming down with or just getting over a cold or the flu. The sort of person who'd die rather quickly in a famine, but with a smile on her face...

I don't know if I could cope with a debilitating disease like arthritis. I simply marvel at people like Hilde who seem to live each day as it comes and keep right on striving despite being on a downward spiral. There has to be days when depressed thought of "What's the use?" occur, and I think they'd come too often for me to handle. The admiration I feel for Hilde and others in similar situations actually borders on envy at times--which would most likely anger the hell out of anyone in that position. I only wish I had the inner strength that some reveal when faced with bleakness.

I think I'll let your suggestion to Neil Rest...er...uh...rest.

Sorry your scheme for dittoing the zine didn't work out, but glad that you were able to salvage the zine by offsetting from the masters. Sharp thinking there.

And thus endeth the MC's. Sorry for running out of steam, inspiration, or whatever it was--my commenting seemed to get weaker the closer the end of the mailing came. Let's see what I can come up with the finish off this stencil...

Thanks to Suzi, for accepting my "offer" of sharing a room, and to Bowers, for accepting my "bffer" of acting as passenger in his car, I'll be attending Confusion this coming weekend. I've even ~~made the mistake of~~ volunteered to help Roger Reynolds person the Fanzine Room--a new-to-Confusion item. Nancy Tucker asked me to bring zines for display, so I intend to select a few oddities and contrasting examples from my collection. Musing about the possibilities has used up more time than it's worth, perhaps, but I found it amusing at least. The convention is giving each returning GoH a \$50 honorarium, plus a free banquet ticket, so I think finances won't be a problem at all. (And like me, Suzi is a bring-foodstuffs-along-and-eat-in-the-room type, so a Potluck feeling should exist. I enjoy potlucks...)

No definite word yet on whether Dave really has a job at ChoiceCare, but everyone there acts as if there's no doubt he'll be hired that we can't help but feel optimistic. To do so without Firm Evidence is against my better judgement, but so it goes.

My back seems to be healing nicely. I do daily battle with the brace and get weary at evening-time but definitely notice the difference in strength as time goes on. (It's the damn plateaus and/or minor backslides that are annoying--progress overall, while not as good as I'd expected (I'm Superwoman to my mind's eye, remember) is steady. DaveLo and Sandy continue to amaze me with their help and support, and if I'd only learn to count my blessings and disregard the glitches I'd be...well, someone other than who I am. See y'all next time around, hey? ...And say, I forgot to thank Kaj for that neat lil unicorn she sent: Thanks!! (Sometimes I really wonder where my mind's gone to...).

Speaking of Language

By William E. Lasher

LOOKS LIKE...

Ever since we learned to talk to each other, we humans seem to think the only way to communicate is by speech. Trying to signal our intentions any other way seems too much like what the animals do.

But watch two young people in love, or a married couple having an unspoken battle, and you'll see that talking isn't everything. We may not recognize non-verbal communication consciously, but it is crucial in getting across what we mean.

Someone who cannot hear is at a real disadvantage in communicating, but so is the person who cannot see. My own experience is that, with eyeglasses removed, my ability to comprehend what someone is saying drops by as much as one-half. Without visual clues, understanding language can be difficult.

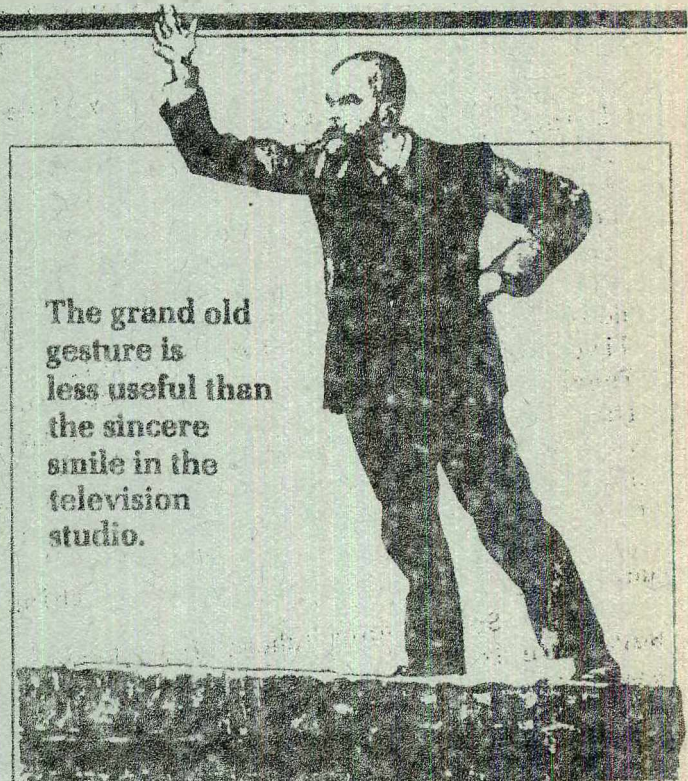
Unspoken communication makes up two-thirds of our "conversation," by some estimates, but some of us don't like to "listen" to it. Males are especially unsure about trusting what is not said, hence the classic "Does she or doesn't she?" dilemma so many men face. What she doesn't say may be quite clear, but he wants to hear it, with his own ears.

There's really a kind of ballet that takes place when two people are com-

municating—one moving forward, the other back—arms and hands flailing—eyebrows moving up and down. To see the ballet, just turn off the sound while watching a good movie on television. Marlon Brando, for example, has always mumbled his words, but he communicates with the rest of his body—and is well paid for it.

I recently watched some film clips of Presidents Truman and Kennedy giving speeches, and was struck by the way they flailed the air and poured the podium as they spoke. Our last two Presidents, on the other hand, have learned that television has established new rules for speechmaking. Small movements, and facial movements, are more important for television. The old grand gesture is less useful than the sincere smile in the television studio.

People who have looked at non-verbal behavior have found it to be nearly as systematic as language itself. One way to find out the rules of any system is to break them. Try talking to someone without once looking him in the eye, or try smiling while you criticize him. Back away from someone during a conversation, or keep your hands behind your back.



The grand old gesture is less useful than the sincere smile in the television studio.

And if you look closely, there are, I think, some non-verbal "billboards"—signs put up for all to see. Many women employed as secretaries walk with their arms folded in front of them, saying "Don't bother me." They may feel forced into that behavior by the men they work with, but the message is clear.

A man walking with his hand around his female companion's neck and shoulder says, "She's mine." A constant stare is not only impolite, it's downright hostile among men and beasts. And a hand in front of the mouth

means either "I'm uncomfortable" or "I forgot to shave my upper lip."

When we get to school, someone teaches us to read and write a form of our spoken language, but very few people have tried to write down their non-verbal communication. We forget about it, think it's unimportant, until we're really not sure about what someone is saying. Then we look at his face and gestures, and we know. That's communication.

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