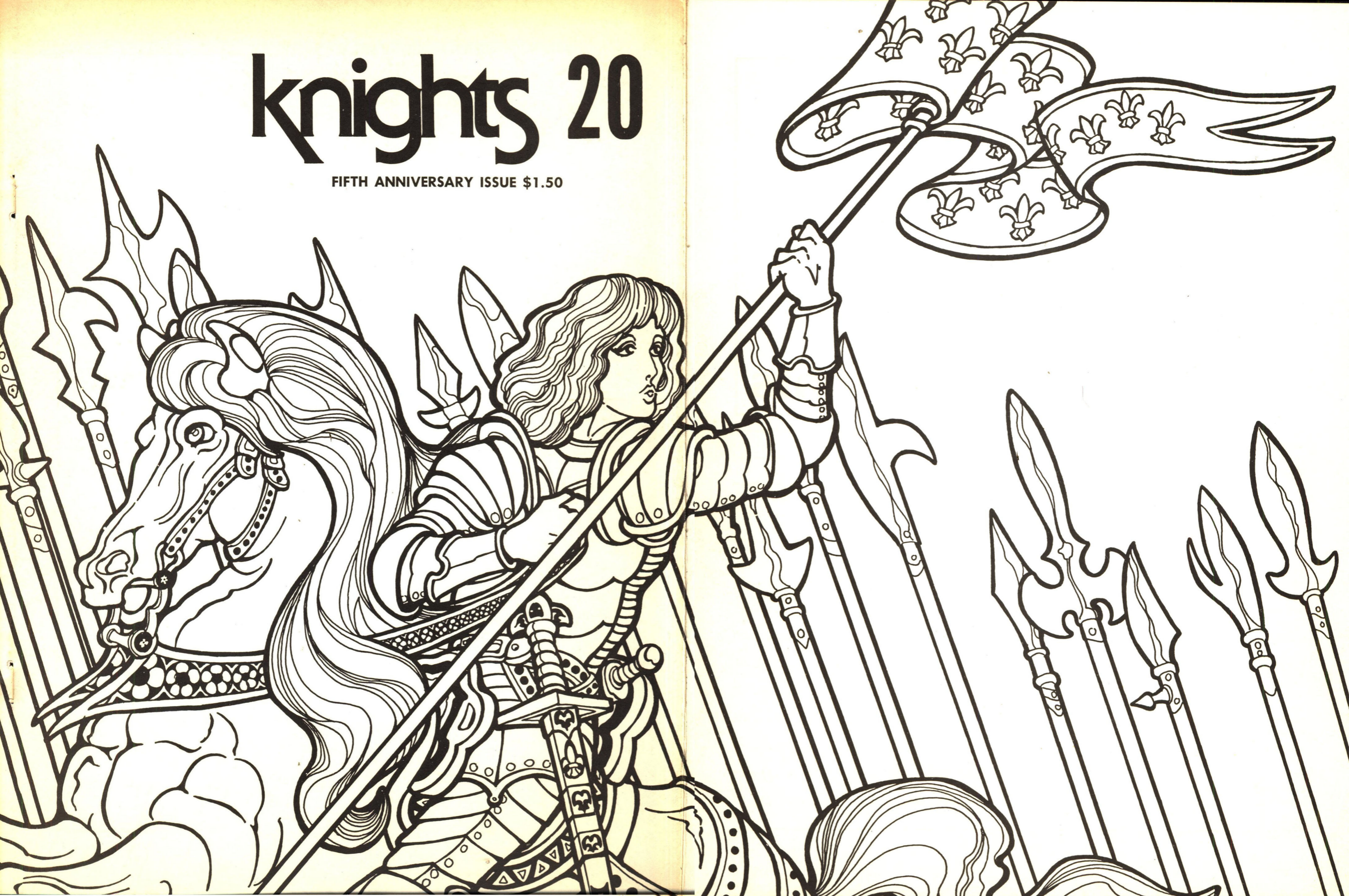


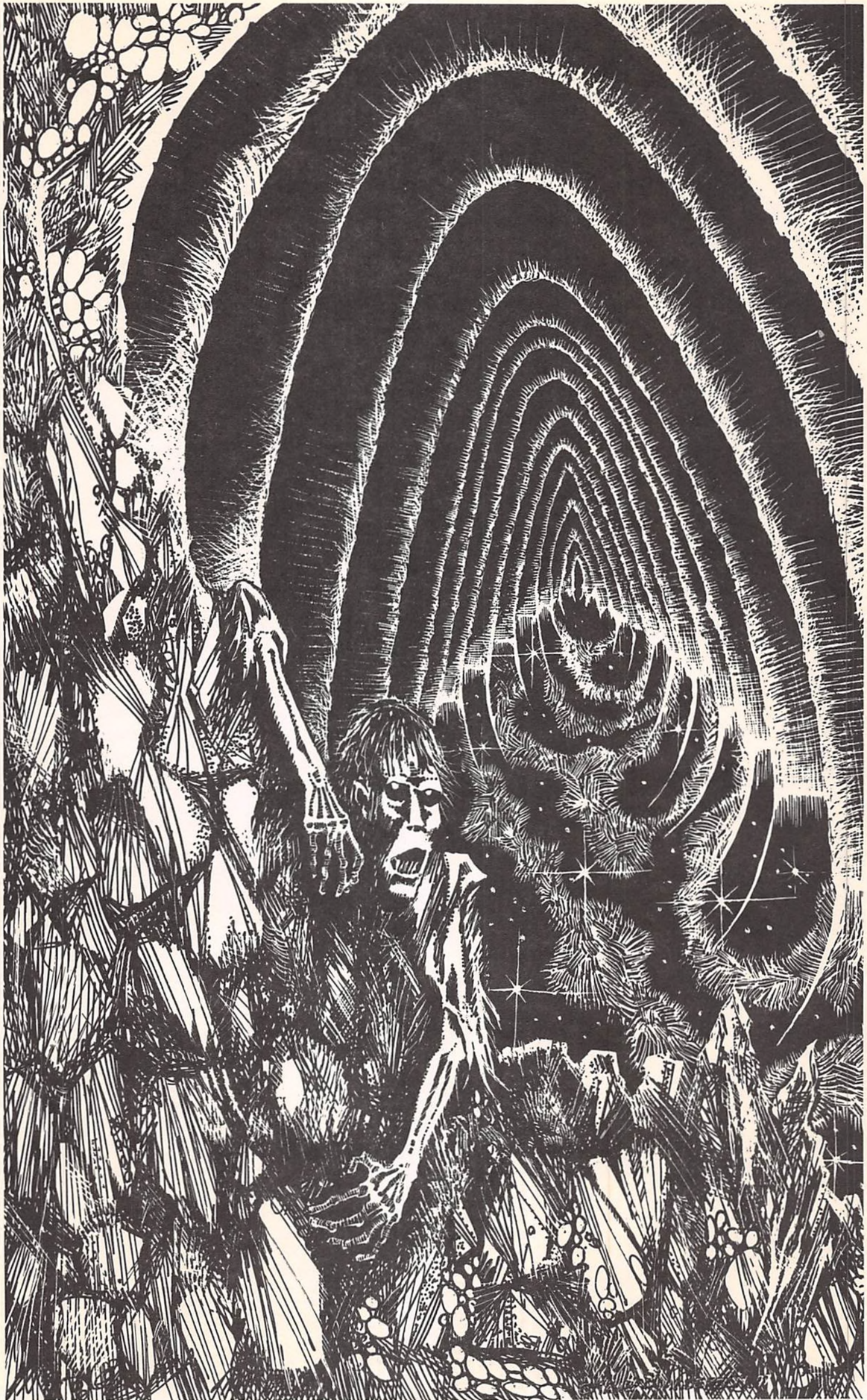
# knights 20

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE \$1.50









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Joe Pearson's cover, "The Maid," should be available as a poster from Imagination Unlimited.

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# Knights

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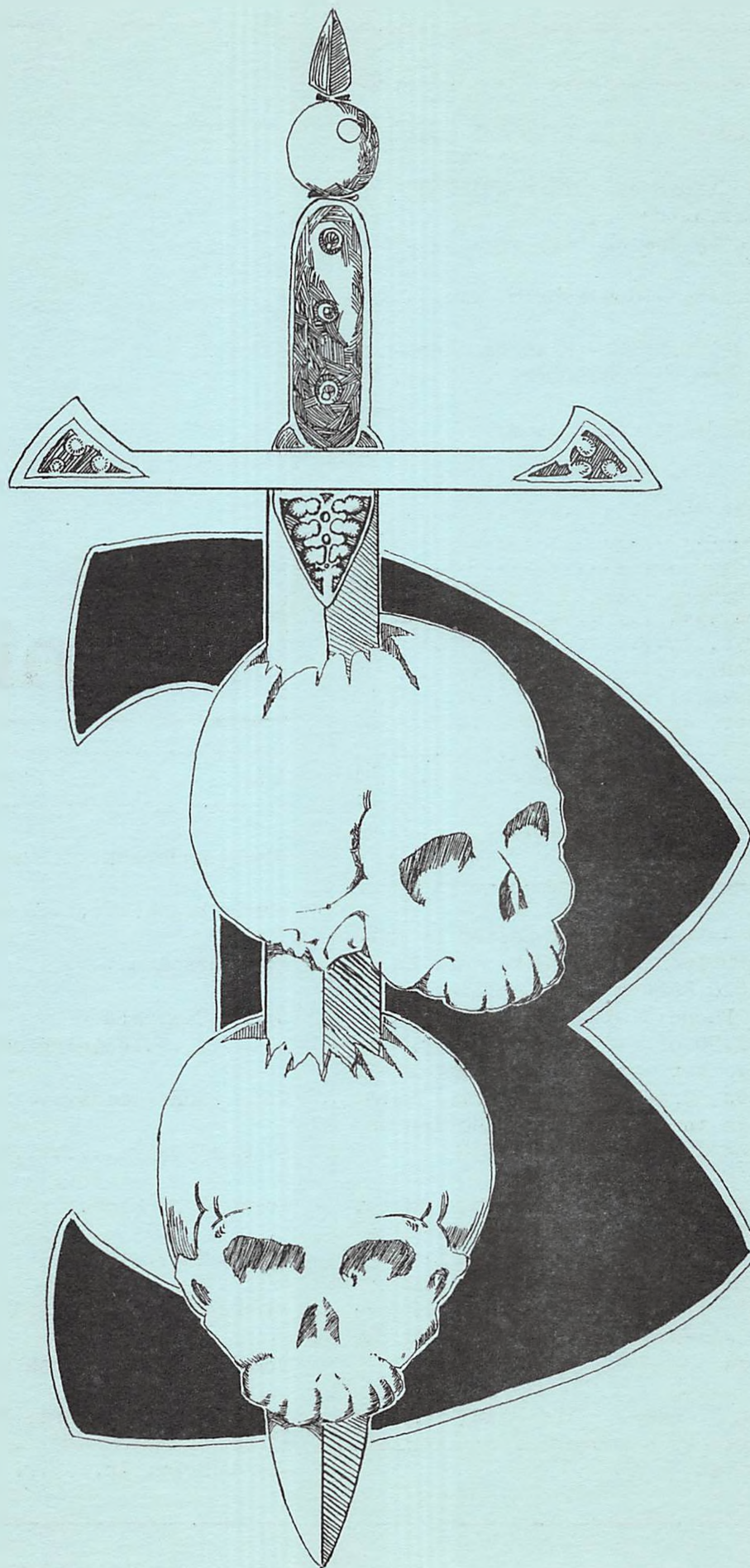
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# Bracken's World

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With five years and twenty issues under its belt, KNIGHTS is one of the oldest genzines in existence. Even so, it has never been among the widely acclaimed or the award winning, and the total readership hovers around three hundred.

What KNIGHTS has meant, and will mean in terms of fan history has yet to be determined, but the history of KNIGHTS is nothing more than a thinly veiled history of my life. For nearly a quarter of my life I've been publishing KNIGHTS and as much as I've sometimes bitched about it, and as often as I've threatened to quit, I cannot envision not publishing KNIGHTS, no matter how irregular the schedule may become.

As detailed in "More Than A Footnote" later in this issue, KNIGHTS began as a monthly imitation prozine when I was in high school, full of ambitious, but poorly written, science fiction. It evolved from those humble beginnings to become a solid quarterly genzine during a year when I had nothing else in my life but fandom. By the time issue 16 rolled around, KNIGHTS was firmly entrenched on the fanzine scene. It was big, frequent, both fannish and serious, and for a short time had very obvious inklings of becoming more than it was. In fact, Andy Porter called it ALGOL in its adolescence and Bill Bowers took it to heart. Yes, it had a very definite future. KNIGHTS was soon to arrive...

...but I went to college and a year passed between issue 16 and 17/18. Most of the contents were out-of-date, and the issue almost didn't get published at all. Issue 19 was published right on the heels of 17/18, but neither issue was quite as extravagant as the previous, and many fanzine reviewers felt that KNIGHTS had taken a step backward. Perhaps it had.

Then came issue 20. You hold it in your hands. Another year has passed be-

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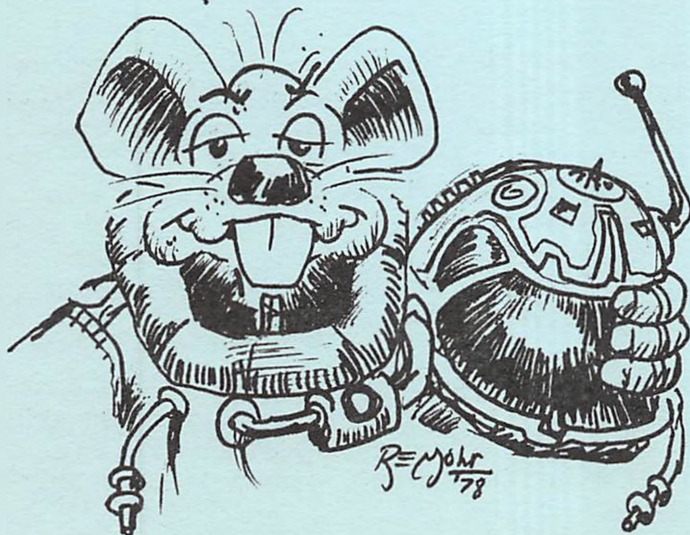
tween issues. Things have changed. I've gotten married, left college, and am working in the composing room of a printing/publishing company. Every intention was there to publish this issue in mid-1978, but so many things interfered. The mimeograph had to go into the shop. The paper I'd spent nearly \$200 on refused to go through the mimeograph. I was working hard and my available time was cut short. In the time I had I was changing into a person I didn't like. I played social games.

This issue has been typed and retyped many times. I rewrote my article more times than I had expected to. I was forced to type Grant's Clarion article nearly three times for reasons outside of my control. It burned me out. Why did I have to repeat nearly every action needed to get this issue out?

I layed in bed at night and cried more than once. Should I quit or should I bull through? Karin comforted me many times, listened to my tearful indecisions. She has helped me retype some of the pages, and she will help me collate and address envelopes.

I don't think Karin really understands KNIGHTS, but she understands me better than I usually do. She noticed all the changes I was going through, and she helped me through them. At this point in my life, more than at any other, I wonder just who I am and where I'm going. So much has happened to change me.

I've begun to fight back, though. I remember when I was really happy with myself and that was when I was publishing KNIGHTS regularly. Karin noticed it too,  
*(continued on page 46)*



YOUR MAILING LABEL:

The number after your name indicates your last issue.

X - This is your last issue. A response would be nice. It would also get you next issue.

? - We trade all-for-all or have some similar arrangement.

! - You seem to have gotten on my "forever and ever" list. A friend, perhaps?

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# Timid Bank Clerks And Other Writers

By Grant Carrington  
Illustrated by Joe Wehrle, Jr.

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It may seem incredible but, although I'd been reading sf since I was 14, I didn't even have the slightest inkling that the world of science fiction fandom existed until I was nearly 30 years old.

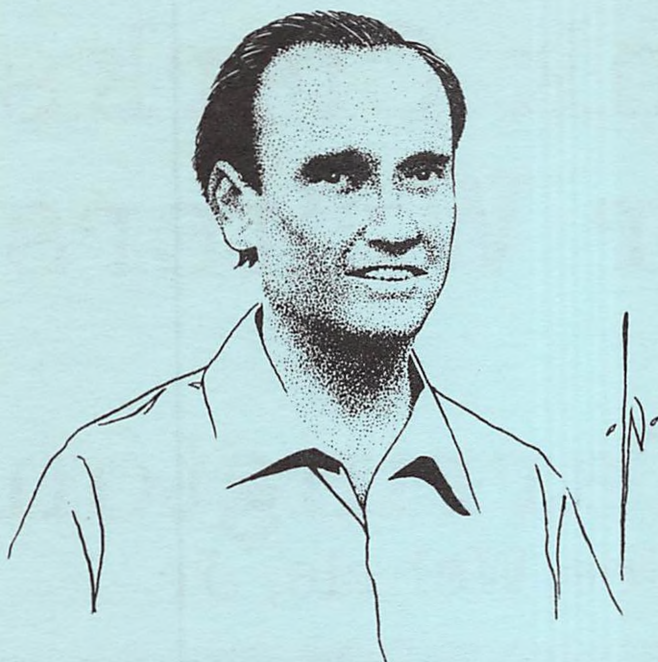
It began with the April 1968 issue of IF, where I read in their SF Calendar feature that there was to be a science fiction convention, the Disclave, at the Regency-Congress Motor Hotel in Washington, D.C. Since I was living near Washington's Dupont Circle at the time, I thought about attending. I even checked to find out where the Regency-Congress was. It turned out to be on New York Avenue (Routes 1 and 50) leading from the north into Washington, a route I took regularly, as it was on the way to my work at Goddard Space Flight Center as well as to and from Annapolis town, where my beloved Jenny was a senior at St. John's College.

In the end I decided not to go, because Jenny didn't want to go and I knew that at the end of the school year, we would be parting and going our separate ways.

So my introduction to sf fandom was delayed yet a little longer. Strange the ways of fate.

In that same issue of IF and that same "SF Calendar," there was another notice, about a "Writers' Workshop in Science Fiction & Fantasy," to be held at Clarion State College in Clarion, Pa. The visiting staff would be Judith Merrill, Fritz Leiber, Harlan Ellison, Damon Knight, and Kate Wilhelm. The coordinator was Robin Scott Wilson. I sent off a letter, asking for more details. Since I had seen stories in GALAXY and IF by Robin Scott, I assumed that Robin Scott Wilson was a woman writing under her maiden name. I wondered about it, however, since

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Grant Carrington

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there was a friend of a friend in D.C. at the time (an Australian) named Robin who was male and a pretty fair country picker.

The Workshop was to be held for six weeks, and attendees could sign up for two-week sessions, although it was recommended that one sign up for the whole period. Somehow, I got the impression that everybody would be there all at once, and I signed up for the middle two weeks, because I couldn't take six weeks off from work.

Despite the fact that I'd been reading sf for sixteen years, I was still unfamiliar with most of the names. In fact, the only ones I was really familiar with were Fritz Leiber and Damon Knight, who had been regular contributors to GALAXY, which was the only sf I read from 1953 to 1966, except for an occasional novel like STARSHIP TROOPER. In 1966, I started reading ANALOG and IF and some of the other magazines. I quickly put down AMAZING and her reprint sisters.

I guess I had heard of Judith Merril, although I don't know where. I had read some of Harlan Ellison's stories in GALAXY, but I couldn't remember anything about them even though I did recognize his name. (After all, it is a rather unusual name.) And I had never heard of Kate Wilhelm at all.

I had no idea what any of these people were like, what they looked like, or anything. I had never met a science fiction fan or a writer of any kind in my life, and only a few people who even read sf.

So on Saturday, July 6th, 1968, I left Washington for my big writers workshop,

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following the scenic and picturesque roads of western Virginia and Pennsylvania. I got to Pittsburgh around four o'clock and took a motel room in nearby Harmarville. In the evening I went into Pittsburgh, searching for the new RAMPARTS and ANALOG, but I couldn't find a newsstand worthy of the name. I also called an old friend, Larry Wolken, but there was no answer. I wandered around Forbes Avenue near the University of Pittsburgh, getting slightly high off the old campus vibes, remembering the year I had been in the Champlain Shakespeare Festival in Vermont. It seemed half of the company was from Pittsburgh's Carnegie Tech, and I wondered what had happened to them in the intervening eight years.

I left Pittsburgh the next morning at 9:25 and drove through the coal towns that line the Allegheny River. I got to Clarion around 11:00 and called Robin's house, asking for Mrs. Wilson. The girl who answered asked if I wanted her father. It turned out that Robin Scott Wilson was male, and my face in that phone booth was red!

He met me at the campus, and this man I'd been writing to as Mrs. Wilson for about two months looked like he could have been a linebacker for the Green Bay Packers. When I started to apologize, Robin laughed, explaining that he had gotten a big kick out of my letters.

Enough for Robin Wilson's sense of humor.

It was Robin, or perhaps I should say Dr. Robin Scott Wilson, who had started this whole thing. He had quit the CIA a year earlier to teach English at Clarion. He was tall but filled out. He was 39 at the time and hadn't published his first story until after he was 30. So there was hope for me. He is a gentle man (except for his sense of humor) and an excellent teacher, with the right proportions of firmness, enthusiasm, and friendliness.

It wasn't as I had thought it would be, with all the "famous" writers there at once. Robin had run the Workshop for the first week, then had been joined by Judith Merrill for the second week. Fritz Leiber was due for the third week, but he hadn't arrived yet. Harlan Ellison would conduct the fourth week, Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm (Mrs. Damon Knight) the fifth week, and the final week, Robin would wrap things up by himself.

Robin took me to Becht Hall, where the Workshoppers were settled in. I had thought of taking a room off-campus, especially if I could have convinced Jenny to spend the summer with me. But I didn't, and so I roomed in Becht Hall with everybody else. Becht Hall was a rambling old wooden structure from the early days of Clarion State College. The Workshoppers had the structure entirely to themselves. The first floor contained a few offices, most of them closed for the summer, and the guest room where Judy Merrill, Fritz Leiber, et al would stay. The girls roomed on the second floor, which meant it was mostly empty. The men were on the third floor but spent a lot of time on the second floor. After all, that's the floor the refrigerator was on.

While climbing to the third floor with Robin, carrying my guitar, suitcase, and typewriter (Robin must have carried one of them), a rather chunky woman with frowzy hair came down the other way. Robin stopped her. "Judy, this is one of our new Workshoppers. Grant, this is Judy Merrill."

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I had the feeling that anyone named Judith should look like a prom queen, shy petite, and demure. Judy Merrill was about as demure as a friendly Saint Bernard. She was a witchy-looking hag with hair going in all directions--but a wonderful hag, with a tongue of acid trying to etch away a proverbial heart of gold. Now that her time as a guest lecturer was over, she stayed an extra two days to enjoy the students and to go swimming. She was full of life and a joy to be with.

Shortly after I got settled in, Fritz Leiber arrived in the little red car (a Datsun?) he had driven across the country. The original illustrations for A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING TEXAS, which had just been published in GALAXY, were taped to his windows, and he had driven across Texas with A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING TEXAS prominently displayed on his windshield. Since this was in the dying days of the Lyndon Johnson administration, that took guts, to say the least.

Fritz is gentleness incarnate. Even then, he had been an sf writer for a long time. He was in his 50's or 60's, well over 6 feet (6'8"?), and thin, emaciated almost, with a huge voice, an actor's voice, white hair sweeping back from a high forehead, and dark bushy eyebrows. In other words, he looked exactly like the protagonist of SPECTRE. He usually wore a bow tie and loose light jacket. A gentle, patient man, almost beyond belief, capable of being a child and mixing easily with the younger people at the Workshop: fencing, singing, playing tissue-paper-and-comb. I liked him immediately, not a difficult task at all, and consider him the gentlest of all the people I've ever known. I'll never be able to read another one of his stories again without a bias for the man who wrote it.

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My main reason for coming to the Workshop was that, although I had been writing ever since third grade and had been reading sf since I was 14, and I had a degree in math and had worked at Goddard Space Flight Center for six years, I still could not write science fiction, although I had written other types of stories without any trouble. So I came to the Workshop in hopes of finding out why I couldn't write sf.

That evening, the sound of typewriters clattered across the Clarion campus and I sat down and wrote a story about a blues guitar player who gets picked up by an alien agent to become part of a band--the other three members being aliens from different planets. It was inspired by an old Emshwiller GALAXY cover I had always liked. I titled it "Saint Louis Tickle," after one of Dave Von Ronk's tunes.

I never had trouble writing sf again.

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Most of the students at the Workshop were about ten years younger than me. The youngest was a 17-year-old high school student, Allan Freedman. The oldest was a retired Navy doctor, Dave Belcher. Dave worked on one story during the entire time I was there, a long 60-odd page piece, "The Price," that eventually was published in ORBIT. Other students included such unpublished writers as Ed Bryant, Jim Sutherland, and Neil Shapiro. There was at least one student, Pat Meadows, who had been published in F&SF and ANALOG. Pat was a Long Island high school teacher a few years older than me, and we hung around a bit together.

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Monday, I went to my first Clarion Workshop session. Although Becht Hall was old, most of the buildings on the campus were recently-constructed buildings of brick and glass, and there were very few students there that summer, as I remember. The only ones I do remember were those at the summer theatre in the old chapel down the street from Becht Hall. I think the chapel was the oldest building on campus.

We met every morning, five days a week, from nine to twelve in a classroom several buildings away from Becht Hall. There were approximately twenty students, most of them neither from the town of Clarion nor the college. (I think there were three Clarion students at that first Workshop.) The first morning (actually the third Monday morning of the Workshop), Robin Wilson laid down the rules of the Workshop for the newcomers, and then I guess Fritz Lieber gave us a short lecture, though now I find that hard to believe.

The rules were simple: everyone was expected to write at least one story a week. Robin would have the stories photocopied and they would be distributed for everyone to read. Each morning, Robin and the guest lecturers would choose several stories to workshop. Then the students would give their criticisms of the stories, what they liked, what they didn't. We were encouraged to give constructive criticism and got rapped hard for any vicious or destructive criticism. Robin and the guest lecturer would be last, so as not to influence the students.

The person whose story was being criticized was supposed to keep quiet until everyone else was finished. That wasn't always easy.

Frequently the criticism would be contradictory, one person liking what another thought was bad, which only pointed out the subjective nature of criticism. Robin managed to tone down the classroom situation by having us sit in a circle, although no one could forget who the professor was and who the pro was.

On Tuesday night, Judy Merrill's last night before leaving for Toronto, she inked "To Fritz. With Love. Judy." on the back of Fritz Leiber's hand.

Becht Hall had two front porches, and the Workshopppers frequently congregated on them, reading stories and talking, while two or three typewriters tapped away in the rooms upstairs. One of the people on the porch, perhaps beginning to feel guilty, would drift off to his own typewriter, while one of the typists would come down to take a break.

Someone brought a Ouija board and the Workshopppers, led by Jean Sullivan, tried to contact the dead. Some of them even succeeded. There was a rumor that there was a ghost in the college chapel where they held the plays, so one night, after the play was over, Fritz led a number of the Workshopppers on a ghost hunt. They were unsuccessful.

Fritz also conducted fencing lessons on the lawn in front of Becht Hall. No one wanted to fence with Andy Fitzpatrick, who seemed to be more interested with going in for the kill than fencing with finesse.

I drove out to Mars, Pennsylvania, but no one else seemed interested. Can you imagine that? Twenty fledgling science fiction writers and not one of them interested in going to Mars. Maybe they had the right idea, however--the Viking landers

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found more signs of life on Mars than I did.

Clarion was a small town in the middle of Nowhere, Pennsylvania. There was, in addition to the tiny campus, one movie theatre, a couple of churches, and about ten shops on the town's main street. The nearest town of any size, Oil City, was about twenty miles to the west. The Workshop became a little community unto itself, with a few tendrils into the rest of the college. George Zebrowski got involved with a girl who was in the drama troupe, and Pat Meadows managed to find a very attractive divorcee, Dee, but the rest of us stayed in our own little community.

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After "Saint Louis Tickle" was Workshopped, I rewrote it, incorporating a number of changes that had been suggested as well as some other ideas that their comments had sparked. Fritz Leiber was surprised at the changes, stating that he found it very hard to rewrite a story so completely.

Two days later, I wrote another story, "Fountain of Force," based on an article on black holes in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN earlier in the year.

At the end of the week, halfway through the Workshop, Robin gave a party at his house. We played bocce ball, badminton, volley ball, fenced, played guitars, and sang in his back yard. I took many pictures, both still and motion. The next day Fritz was gone and we were left to fend for ourselves for the weekend.

Pat Meadows, George Zebrowski, Jim Sutherland, and I went to see the college players in "Blithe Spirit" at the chapel. It was pretty bad, but afterwards we went to the cast party.

I brought my guitar and while we were singing, the girl who played the lead

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I drove out to Mars, Pennsylvania, but no one else seemed interested . . . Maybe they had the right idea, however — the Viking landers found more signs of life on Mars than I did.

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kept watching me. But, with my usual savoir-faire, I didn't know what to do about it.

Pat Meadows and the director of the play got into a discussion, learning that both of them had taught high school English, Pat in Peculiar, Missouri, and the director in Normal, Illinois!

Sunday night Harlan Ellison (O great white myth!) was supposed to arrive. If I had known practically nothing about Fritz Leiber, Robin Scott Wilson, or Judy Merrill, I knew even less about Harlan Ellison, nothing about the myth and the stories that had grown up around him. I had read only a few of his stories that had been published in Galaxy. Because I knew he would be one of the visiting lecturers, I read a collection of his stories on the trip from Washington to Clarion. The collection included one called "Repent, Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman," which I had read when it had first appeared in Galaxy. I didn't particularly like it then and I didn't like it now. In fact, I immediately forgot it, although I was trying to remember it. After all, it had won a Hugo, whatever that was. But if I forgot that story easily, I was floored by "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream," which also had won some kind of award I'd never heard of...a Nebula, I think. There wasn't even one of Harlan's usual introductions in this collection, but I didn't miss it, because at that time I knew nothing about Harlan's usual introductions. For some reason (perhaps it was the name Harlan), I pictured him as a timid little bank clerk with pince-nez glasses, like T. S. Eliot. Well, I was part right. Harlan Ellison is little...but in height only.

If I knew nothing about Harlan Ellison when I arrived at Clarion in 1968, I knew quite a bit by the time my first week had ended, although he had yet to arrive. I soon heard stories, about how when he had first met Isaac Asimov back in the Fifties, when Harlan Ellison was a nobody, just another teenage fan (although I still didn't know about fandom, even at Clarion), he had gone up to Asimov and said, "You're Isaac Asimov? You're really Isaac Asimov? You're nothing!" (Although that's the usual fan-story of the meeting, Harlan's version is different. According to Harlan, he said, "You're Isaac Asimov? You're really Isaac Asimov? You're not so much." Not said in derision, but in wonder that this man whom Harlan had expected to be eight feet tall with muscles of iron turned out to be a chubby man of ordinary height with thick glasses. Although Harlan has a slight tendency to exaggerate on occasion, I tend to believe his version of the story this time.)

I also learned that he had just edited DANGEROUS VISIONS, which was supposed to be a collection of sf stories that other editors wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole because they broke too many taboos. I had never heard of DANGEROUS VISIONS either before coming to Clarion.

At eleven o'clock Sunday evening, he had still to arrive at Clarion. Most of the Workshop went down to the bus station to meet him where, supposedly, Jim Sutherland greeted him by saying, "You're Harlan Ellison? You're really Harlan Ellison? You're nothing."

Grant Carrington, being the stubborn iconoclast he is, went to bed. Damned if I'm going to be anyone's sycophant.

So I didn't meet Harlan Ellison until the next morning, when we all congre-

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gated for the Monday morning session. By now, of course, I knew that Harlan Ellison wasn't a timid-looking bank clerk with pince-nez glasses. In fact, he was a muscular little guy with a shock of dark hair, a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, and a pipe. He was wearing a shirt that exposed his hairy chest. He was, in other words, the romantic picture of the Hollywood writer, playing it to the hilt, with stylish boots and all.

The first story we workshopped that day was by Evelyn Lief. Harlan took Evelyn, cut her into little shreds, and left her bleeding on the floor. Harlan and Evelyn both tell the story in his introduction and her afterword to her story in AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS. It was a performance that left us all gasping in agony, for Evelyn, for our future selves. It was a vicious performance that had Evelyn in tears, a complete turnaround from Fritz Lieber's gentleness and the eager friendliness of Judy Merrill. We were all stunned, even Robin, I think, who had probably expected Harlan would be a little more gentle in this situation than he had been at the Milford Conferences.

We took a fifteen-minute break and everyone clustered around Evelyn, trying to console her. We all suspected we would each need some of the same ourselves before the week was out.

The coffee break over, Robin turned to Harlan and asked him which story he would like to workshop next.

"This one," he said, grinning with vicious sadistic glee, venom dripping from his fangs. "'Fountain of Force,' by Grant Carrington."

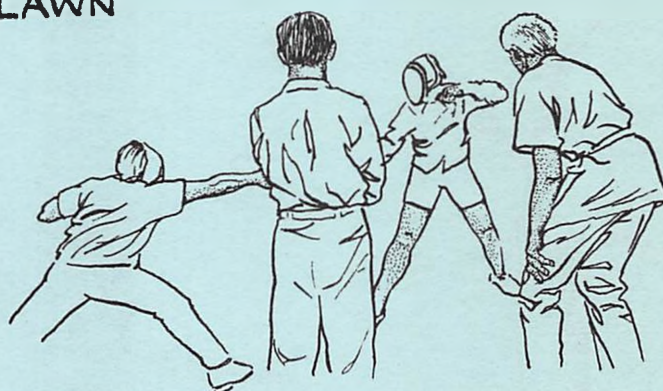
I sat there as the story made the rounds, most people saying nothing, only a few commenting. I haven't the slightest idea what was said, waiting only for it to reach Robin and Harlan, waiting in dread for that moment when the axe would descend and I would crawl bleeding back to my typewriter. I said not a word, made no protest at anyone's comment.

Finally it reached Harlan. He looked around at the twenty students circled around him. "Okay. Who's Grant Carrington? I want to know who I'm talking to." Gingerly I raised my hand. "Man," he said, and my heart began beating wildly, "you've got talent." I bumped my head on the ceiling, and Ed Bryant and Jim Sutherland grabbed me by the ankles and dragged me back to the ground. Harlan then proceeded to tear my story apart and tell me what was wrong with it, in no uncertain terms. But he said I had talent! Harlan Ellison said I was a writer! That handsome man, with the Ipana smile and the classy duds, five-foot-six in stature, perhaps, but a mile high in heart. He said I had talent. I couldn't wait to get back to my room so I could dust off my sycophant uniform.

"All right, kids," Harlan said when he had finished demolishing my story. "The fun's over. Judy Merrill and Fritz Lieber brought you sweetness and light, but now Uncle Harlan's here, and the fun and games are over and it's time to get down to work. I want a story a day from each and every one of one. One thing that was missing in all the stories I read except Grant's was hard science. So tomorrow's assignment is a hard-science story." There was a community groan. "Except for Grant. You I want to write me a story with real people and feeling in it. Get to work."

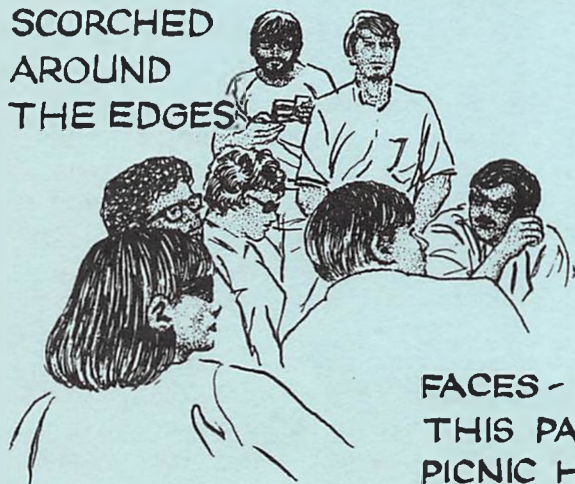
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ROBIN AND FRITZ AS THEY  
STOOD IN THE SHADOWS OF  
THE TREES ON ROBIN'S  
LAWN



THE FRITZ LEIBER FENCING TOUR-  
NAMENT- THE PRIZE WAS AN  
ANCIENT ISSUE OF AMAZING

PURVEYOR OF THE  
ELLISON 1 MINUTE  
LITERARY CRITIQUE,  
A HALF SHEET OF  
TYPING PAPER, GENERALLY  
SCORCHED  
AROUND  
THE EDGES

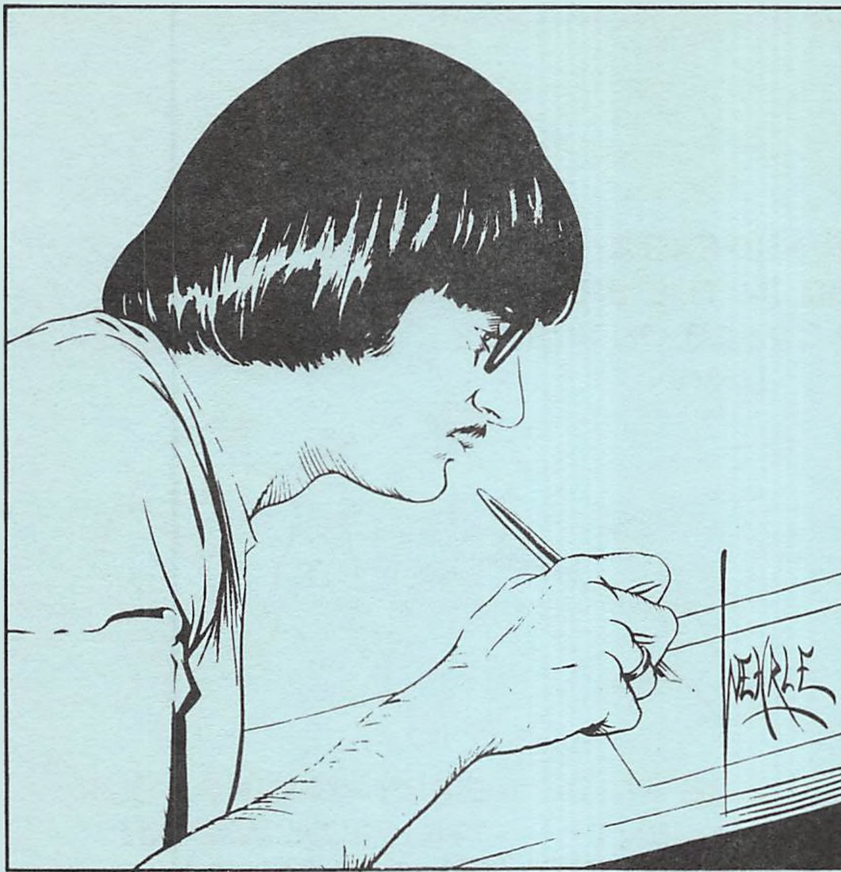


SOME BLUES



FACES - MOST OF THE SCENES ON  
THIS PAGE OCCURRED DURING THE  
PICNIC HELD AT THE END OF FRITZ'S  
WEEK AT CLARION

NEALE



Joe  
Wehrle, Jr.

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Grant tells me he's not sure he even mentioned my name in "Timid Bank Clerks And Other Writers," but that's not too surprising, since I was one of the rare commuters, arriving right before the daily sessions and taking off immediately afterward. And I only attended for two of the six weeks. In short, I missed being one of the famous Becht Hall Brigade!

I stayed longer a couple of times, though: once to show the crew my print of the 1926 film METROPOLIS. This turned out to be a fiasco -- it was a bright, hot day and we couldn't get the room dark enough to see the movie properly. Harlan, who was acquainted with Fritz Lang but had never seen METROPOLIS, got limper and limper, and finally begged off after about half an hour of misery. It was really stuffy in that room. A few stout hearts actually endured the heat and eyestrain for the entire two-plus hours, but it probably wrecked their writing for the day.

How did I get into the workshop? Probably because I was at that time doing illustrations for GALAXY and IF, and I think Robin wanted to get an illustrator's viewpoint when we discussed stories. I had done very little writing up to that time, certainly hadn't submitted anything anywhere, but was extremely interested. I'm still primarily an illustrator, but have sold a number of stories and comics scripts over the past few years. My Narbeck Forest stories (which I was writing at Clarion) did not prove popular with editors in this country, but I sold one in Australia, and another will be published in Germany later this year.

-- Joe Wehrle, Jr.

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That night, for some reason I can't possibly explain, I wrote a pornographic sf story, "Penultimus." The next day, I went for a walk to the grocery store with Evelyn Lief and Lynn Marron. I didn't know whether or not I should turn the story in to Robin to have it photocopied. "What's so bad about it?" Evelyn Lief asked. "Let me read it."

"I don't know if I should." I still had rather chivalric and romantic notions about ladies, despite the fact that a couple of years earlier I had lived with a hundred-dollar-a-night call girl.

"Come on. I'm not a kid."

Reluctantly, I forked it over and Evelyn began reading, passing pages to Lynn as she finished them. "Oh, my God!" she gasped. A few moments later, Lynn said, "Oh, no!" and began to laugh. Evelyn grinned. "You reached that part, did you?"

When we got back to Becht Hall, we gave it to someone else (Jim Sutherland, I think), and watched him read it, laughing at his reactions. It was a whole new art form: Creative Reading! Give someone a copy of "Penultimus" and watch him/her read it. Finally, Harlan came out on the porch. "What's all the noise?" he asked.

"Here. Read this." Evelyn shoved "Penultimus" in his face. Harlan began reading while we all sat around smirking, eager to watch the great Ellison's reactions.

He started page two and said, "I'd better read the rest of this in my room." And that was the end of Creative Reading.

I was eventually convinced that I should submit it to the Workshop; even Harlan saw no reason why I shouldn't have it photocopied. So Robin collected it along with the rest of the manuscripts, and dutifully turned it over to the lady to have it photocopied. And the shit hit the fan. Robin hadn't looked at the manuscripts, but the Xerox lady did, and it wasn't long before the president of the college had a copy of "Penultimus" in his hand and Robin Wilson on the carpet. Fortunately, the Workshop was also important to the president so the matter ended there.

Except for a small lecture by Robin to the Workshop in general, without mentioning names, about our responsibilities and the fact that Clarion was a small town and not as cosmopolitan as New York, Los Angeles, ect. and we should be careful not to offend the natives. He also took me to one side, mentioning that he thought I was mature enough to avoid doing things like that. "After all, the rest of them are just kids, but you ought to know better."

The next day a bunch of us got invited to another Clarion party, being given by a Clarion student named Patti. In addition to several of the Workshopppers, there were a number of Clarion students there as well, mostly Polish, and Pollock jokes were being told left and right...by themselves.

Harlan Ellison came along and immediately cornered the only really attractive girl there, Cindee. She and he made a couple for the remainder of his stay.

The only other girl worth looking at was the hostess, Patti, who supposedly had been a model. A bunch of us, including Ed Bryant, Jim Sutherland, and myself,

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clustered around her, but somehow an 18-year-old Amazon named Muriel attached herself to me, and when she had to get back to her dorm, she wanted me to walk her home. I immediately declined the honor, but the Workshoppers wouldn't allow me to let this poor defenseless judo expert walk home alone in the dark. Ed Bryant, bless his black hearted soul, pushed me out the door with the admonition, "Come on, Grant, be a man."

Muriel took us down every dark alley and road she could find, while I walked nervously as far from her side as I could. If I could have walked on the other side of the road, I would have.

"I think you're cool," she said.

Cool? If I'd been any cooler, I'd have been an ice sculpture.

Finally, despite all her peregrinations through the dark streets and alleys of Clarion, we wound up at her dorm, where I couldn't avoid her kiss, and then I walked quickly back to the party, wondering if I would be able to avoid her in my remaining days in Clarion.

Back at the party I tried to gain Patti's attention but failed. She was a fairly attractive large girl with big breasts. The outline of her nipples was clear through her sweater.

But if I struck out with Patti, so did everyone else at the party. Harlan went home with Cindee, George Zebrowski with his girlfriend from the drama group, and Pat Meadows had his divorcee, Dee. The rest of us went home alone.

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. . . the Workshoppers wouldn't allow me to let this poor defenseless judo expert walk home alone in the dark. Ed Bryant, bless his black-hearted soul, pushed me out the door with the admonition, "Come on, Grant, be a man."

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As I said, Harlan was a lot cooler than I had expected. (If he'd been any cooler, he'd have been an ice sculpture.) I had been determined to dislike him, but by the time he left, I think I would have walked through hell for him if the price was right. He's just the opposite of Fritz, being 5'6" or so and very active. On opening day, he told us that he had waded through the worst tripe he'd ever read when he read our stuff.

He had us writing a story a day. And, to show us that it could be done, he wrote a story a day himself. I remember two of them. One, whose title escapes me, was about a group of people trudging across a desert. They finally came across the Empire State Building, half-buried in the sand. One of the characters, a whining dislikable person with oily hair, was named Grant.

The other story I remember was titled "The Pitll Pawob Division." When Harlan had arrived at Pittsburgh's airport, his typewriter was on another plane. The airline promised to send it to Clarion as soon as it arrived. "What do you mean?" Harlan screamed at the ticket attendant. "I'm a writer. That's my means of making a living." He marched into their office and took a typewriter. "I'll return this to you when I get my typewriter," he informed her. She called the airlines manager, who eventually allowed Harlan to take the typewriter, on which was a piece of embossed tape with the words, "Pitll Pawob Division." He didn't know what it meant, but he wrote a story around it just to show us it could be done.

My own stories were "Penultimus," "Nothing Personal," "Will the Real Harlan Ellison Please Stand Up?" and "A Sky the Color of Anger, A World Full of the End of the Universe." (Pat Meadows threatened to write a story titled "I have No Scream and I Must Mouth Off.") That last story was written for a painting that Neil Shapiro had brought with him from Rochester, by a friend of his. The painting showed a shattered city in the background with a few rusted vehicles in the foreground. The predominant color of the painting was red, and I wrote a sequel to "Saint Louis Tickle," the first story I had written at the Workshop. We all were supposed to write a story around that painting, but not many Workshopppers did, since Harlan would be gone by the time the stories were to be workshopped. (Harlan's desert story was written around the painting.) Harlan saw the title of mine and asked, "Are you trying to make fun of me, Carrington?" I assured him I wasn't, and when he read the story, he agreed. The title originally was supposed to be the first line of the story, but I liked it so much I decided to use it as the title, something that admittedly wouldn't have even crossed my mind if I hadn't seen the titles of some of Harlan's stories.

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I had one more run-in with Muriel. A couple of days after the party, I was walking down Clarion's main street with our gopher, a regular Clarion student who had somehow attached himself to the Workshop without being a member of it. It was he who had gotten us invited to the party where I had met Patti and Muriel. As we walked past a gas station near the campus, I noticed the car getting gas was driven by Muriel. "Keep walking," I said to our gopher.

But as we passed the gas station, I heard Muriel call out my name. "Just keep walking," I said without looking back. The gopher smiled and took me down a narrow

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alley between two buildings as I heard Muriel's car start up. We walked slowly down the alley, hoping that she hadn't seen us dart down it. It was too narrow for a car, just a sidewalk, a path, really, between two buildings. Muriel's car zoomed past the mouth of the alley then, about half a minute later, it went past the other end of the alley. Apparently she hadn't seen us go down the alley, however, for she never returned and I never saw her again.

And that was the first and only time in my life I've ever been literally chased by a woman.

Friday night was to be my last night in Clarion. I went to the town's lone movie theatre to see "Wild in the Streets," which most of the Workshop had already seen. As I left the theatre and walked back to the college, I ran into Patti and Dee coming the other way, and I walked back to Patti's apartment with them. I didn't get back to the college that night, and the next day I drove back to D.C. with Patti. After a night in my apartment, we went on a quick sightseeing tour of the town (Patti especially wanted to see the Kennedy grave) then I drove back to Clarion, taking a wild road through the Pennsylvania mountains, a winding road with many switchbacks, a joy to drive in my Renault Caravelle.

The next few days I returned to the Workshop but I was no longer truly a member. I paid two more weeks' tuition to Robin but I didn't stay at Becht Hall. As the morning Workshop session ended, I went back to Patti's apartment. But she treated me like a puppy dog, someone to trail around after her as she went to see her friends, someone to obey her commands, and that soon got on my nerves. She was living quite well on food stamps, and cadging extra groceries and other necessities any way she could, and I think she was taking only one course at the college. Like most of the regular Clarion students I met, she was from Pittsburgh.

We spent one evening at the apartment of some of her friends, a veteran and his very attractive Mexican wife. She was very intelligent and attractive, and she told us about seeing a flying saucer while riding a bus in Mexico. She said she never believed in them until she had actually seen one herself.

On Tuesday night, Patti, Cindee, and I went for a walk behind the Clarion graveyard. There was a small pond down there, and we sat and talked. Cindee said she came down there often to get away from the hustle and bustle of Clarion to think.

But I couldn't take the way Patti was treating me, and so Wednesday afternoon, after the Workshop session, I packed up my Renault and drove to D.C. I got one letter from Patti and never heard from her again.

Meanwhile, of course, in my last three days at the Workshop, I had met Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm, who were a great couple--Damon slight, with a pepper-and-salt goatee; Kate, good-looking, with looks to last. Her hair was beginning to turn white even then, although she couldn't have been any older than her early forties. Their young son Damon, about three years old, was with them and, instead of staying in the downstairs room at Becht Hall, they took up quarters in several rooms on the second floor, just down the hall from the refrigerator.

Damon, of course, was well known as the leading critic of sf as well as the co-founder of the Milford Writers' Conference, on which the Workshop was based,

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and the Science Fiction Writers of America. However, it was Kate who was the most respected critic at the Milford Conference, a quiet woman whose criticisms went right to the core. Supposedly, Kate was the only person whom Harlan would sit quietly and listen to while she tore his stories to shreds.

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Despite the rather sour taste left in my mouth by staying those extra few days with Patti, the Workshop had been a good experience, lots of fun, and one that gave me more confidence in my self, not only as a writer but also as a human being. That confidence was to be destroyed in the ensuing year, but Clarion was my first contact not only with successful writers but also with other would-be writers who had genuine talent and desire to write, rather than the dilettantes one usually meets in creative writing classes. My whole romantic outlook on writing had to change as I saw that writing, more often than not, is just plain hard work, a job...but a job that finds its best rewards in those rare moments when it is not plain hard work but a pure joy. Unfortunately those rare moments are only earned and worthwhile after the hours and days of plain hard work, the times when, as Robin Wilson put it, one is "crapping rocks." But even those rocks can turn out to be diamonds and sappires...or at least some pretty quartz.

-- Grant Carrington

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# More Than A Footnote

*"The beginning of 1975 was a disaster for Fort Bragg Fandom. Patrick Myers told his parents where to go, packed up his Volkswagen, and drove off to see the world. My mother died and I moved to Tacoma, Washington to live with my Grandmother. And God only knows what happened to Joe Walter. We three, the controlling ingredients of Fort Bragg Fandom, separated, each to go his own way."*

*-- Mike Bracken, "Ending It,"  
A FLYING WHAT? 3*

That's how I ended the last of the Fort Bragg fanzines. Most of A FLYING WHAT? 3 was on stencil when I was packing my car to leave Fort Bragg in May of 1975, and Joe gave it to me to do with as I saw fit. Late in the year I added a cover to the zine and a very short memorial to Fort Bragg Fandom titled "Ending It."

Thus it ended.

During the year and a half of semi-official existence 19 fanzines under six titles were published, along with two one-page supplements. Three issues of a fanzine were published by Fort Bragg Fandom's only honorary member, Wayne W. Martin. Joe, Wayne, and I were also founding members of APA-50 and we contributed an unknown number of apazines to it. Even so, we faded quickly from APA-50 and, to the best of my knowledge, none of us have ever ventured back into apas.

## Mike Bracken



Mike Bracken, 1975



Joe Walter, 1975

Of the four major names who made up Fort Bragg Fandom, and the endless number of nameless bit-players, I remain the sole fannish survivor of the disasters of 1975. Patrick Myers disappeared completely. Wayne W. Martin was forced away from it all when his mother died in February of 1977, but his fannish activities appeared to be on the decline before that. Joe Walter's only remaining connection with fandom is KNIGHTS, which he co-founded.

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Joe Walter and I first met in the science lab of Fort Bragg Junior High shortly after I had moved to the tiny town on the northern California coast in the middle of ninth grade. I was shy and scared: this was my umpteenth experience as "the new kid." Joe was stable: he'd lived his life in a fifty-mile radius. By the age of fourteen I had held residence in three states; Joe had only been outside California once.

Because of a teaching system known as tracking, Joe and I shared no classes, and so knew each other only by name. In fact, we had at least one push-and-shove fight as a result of "the new kid" syndrome. (It amounted to nothing when compared to the number of times I was called to the office, and the one suspension I received from knock-down-drag-out fights with other students.)

During the summer between junior and senior high Joe and I became better acquainted only by accident: our mothers both worked for Sprouse-Reitz and they became friends. We soon discovered that it was easier to walk the mile between our houses than to walk the two and three miles into town. We had more in common than either of us expected: not only did we both live with step-fathers we couldn't get along with, we seemed to idolize our mothers because of it. We also discovered each other's interest in reading and writing an escapist literature known as science fiction.

Our friendship grew during the coming school year until it reached the point where we were almost inseparable. We adjusted our class schedules so that we shared Drama, and we both worked on the school newspaper (though during different semesters).

During the summer of 1973 I spent a month with some friends in San Jose, CA. When I returned to Fort Bragg I was devouring myself with the thought of publishing a science fiction magazine. At midnight, my first day home, I walked the mile to Joe's house, roused him from his bed in the garage, and told him of my plans. In a sleepy stupor he agreed to help if the idea ever bore fruit.

The seeds sown at that midnight meeting eventually became the first issue of KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP (KPSS). Because of a good relationship we had built up with Mrs. Richmond, head of the English department at Fort Bragg High, we were able to cajole her into giving us the supplies necessary to publish a "science fiction magazine." Joe and I co-edited issue one and brought it out in December of 1973. It was 15 pages, ditto, and contained bad sf written by high school students.

Neither of us had ever heard of fandom.

KPSS switched to mimeo with the second issue, but remained essentially the

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same through the first six monthly issues. Our contributors and typists were classmates and friends with little or no knowledge of science fiction. Other contributors came as a result of sending sample copies at random to California high schools. John M. Robinson, two years ahead of us when we entered high school and off to college by the time we started KPSS, became a regular contributor with issue four.

Even so, most of those early issues were written by Joe and I, and we became so dependent on pseudonyms that one of them eventually became a major member of Fort Bragg Fandom, and a fanzine editor himself. Originally, I wrote as Patrick Myers to avoid the appearance of dominating KPSS, but he rapidly progressed from a simple penname into a way of saying things, and writing about incidents, outside the boundries of Mike Bracken. His forte was faan fiction, a style that captured Joe Walter and myself shortly after we discovered fandom, and his high water mark was a collaboration between Joe and I titled "Volkswagon Weekend" in KPSS 11. None of Joe's pseudonyms ever gathered enough momentum to become a hoax, but "...And Then There Were Eight" (published under the name J. A. Van Horn in KPSS 2) won third place in the Santa Rosa Junior College/Press Democrat high school writing competition, fiction category. (The next year I was to tie for third in the newswriting category.)

The use of pseudonyms went unnoticed by fandom at large, and most fanzine reviewers mistakenly assumed all of us were part of a high school sf club and that KPSS was a high school clubzine. Even after the pseudonyms were allowed to bite the dust, it was hard to shake that image.

During the production of the first six issues (December 1973 to May 1974) Joe and I not only discovered fandom, we began to get on each other's nerves. Fandom was a large audience open to just about anything we wanted to do--just the opposite of our classmates. We began pulling in different directions and we were rapidly losing any sort of editorial continuity. I doubt that any of our incessant bickering ever showed up in the pages of KPSS, but it led to a number of arguments that stopped just shy of punches. It was a very volatile time, and one that could have destroyed our friendship had it not been for Joe's calmer attitude.

With issue six came the final division in the ranks and it resulted in Joe leaving as co-editor (a move I had previously considered). I was left with a fledgling fanzine and a stable title; Joe had only his ingenuity. Our wounds healed very quickly and we were both soon working on separate fanzines. I finished issue six of KPSS and Joe began working on A FLYING WHAT? (AFW?).

Before Joe was ready with AFW? 1, I published KPSSes 7 and 8, and it was issue seven where Wayne W. Martin first appeared in a fanzine, having the last letter in that issue's lettercolumn. I had gotten Wayne's name and address from a list of APA-50 members distributed prior to the first mailing, and had sent him a sample copy of KPSS. After that, Joe and I began having pretty steady correspondence with Wayne and it led us to later declare him an honorary member of Fort Bragg Fandom.

Issue eight is where Joe first distributed a flyer announcing the formation of the Science Fantasy Press APA (SFPAPA). (Science Fantasy Press was a conglomeration we had concocted to number every fanzine published by a Fort Bragg fan. The first two issues of Wayne's THE E-STARIAN EXPLORER were published under this

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banner.) SFPAPA was a disaster: perhaps three people outside Fort Bragg Fandom were interested, and I can only remember receiving contributions to the first mailing from one person. The first mailing was never made.

By August 1974, Joe was ready with AFW? 1, and I had KPSS 9 in hand. We decided to mail them together to save postage and I tossed in the first issue of a six-page fanzine called OZONE. I had published OZONE to use up a ream of three-hole-punched mimeo paper I had received as a gift, and it never saw a second issue. In IT COMES IN THE MAIL 13, Ned Brooks reports that I also enclosed POOPED SHEET, a one-page mimeo effort explaining all the things crammed into the envelope. I cannot now locate a copy of POOPED SHEET.

Right about this time Wayne was expressing an interest in publishing his own fanzine, but, living in Fresno, CA, with no known fans nearby, he lacked the necessary equipment and the money to purchase it. Joe and I offered to print his first issue if he would keep the page and copy count relatively low. We also began sending him contributions.

The second issue of AFW? came out in October of 1974, right on the heels of KPSS 10. I went into near hibernation after that and began work on KPSS's first anniversary issue--a task I was to finish while laid up from foot surgery.

November saw the publication of Patrick Myers' first and only fanzine, THIS THING HASN'T GOT A NAME YET, GOT ANY IDEAS?, a two-page ditto affair that mostly called for contributions of a fannish nature. It was sent to approximately twenty people and received a response disproportionate to its size and distribution. Since it never saw a second issue the submitted articles were either returned or published in KNIGHTS 13.

In late November, in the middle of preparations for my massive first anniversary issue, I received a package of stencils and a \$9.50 money order from Wayne. The first issue of THE E-STARIAN EXPLORER had arrived and was ready to print. Officially published in December of 1974, EE was ten pages long and very heavily influenced by Fort Bragg Fandom. The major contributors for the first two of its three issues were Joe and myself.

Mid-December saw the distribution of KPSS 11, the first anniversary issue of the fanzine and the first anniversary of Fort Bragg Fandom. At 56 pages it was the largest fanzine any of us had ever done.

Joe returned in January of 1975 with the last fanzine he ever published (though not the last he edited), a 13-page one-shot called FANTABULOUS CRUD, and the first and final issue of his ill-fated perzine, DISASOCIATION (sic). It was shortly after that when Joe, Pat, and I got together and voted Wayne an honorary member of Fort Bragg Fandom. We sent him a certificate proclaiming him such and I later saw it hanging on the wall in his living room.

Fort Bragg Fandom was beginning to destruct: starting in January my mother was in and out of the hospital until her death on March 4, 1975. Both Joe and I were in danger of not graduating from high school (due mainly to our habit of cutting classes to work on our fanzines or on the school newspaper which, at various times we were both editor of), and I was getting hassled by school administrators for an editorial I had written in the school paper. They claimed it was

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libelous, closed down the paper, and took the whole matter before the school board, who wishy-washed and called upon the District Attorney to resolve the matter (unfortunately I left before his decision was to be announced, and am unsure of the outcome of the entire event).

Joe's homelife was never idealistic, and I have reason to believe that it was growing worse during this time. (His mother separated from his step-father during this period, and divorced him not too long after I left California.)

Wayne's mother was slowly dieing of throat cancer, but it wasn't to take her life until two years later. His father had died years before.

In the midst of all of this we must have printed the second issue of Wayne's fanzine because my copy bears an April 1, 1975 postmark, and I can remember driving to Fresno to spend a weekend with Wayne in early April.

The last KPSS before the name change, issue twelve, was published in April of 1975 and my only editorial was a brief tribute to my mother. I was still mailing out copies in July.

Only a few short gasps were left.

THE E-STARIAN EXPLORER ended with the third issue. The postmark on my copy is October 1975, and the issue contains little of the neo-fannish craziness of the first two, and the distinctive touch of Fort Bragg Fandom is drastically muted. Wayne gave up the fanzine in an effort to publish a semi-prozine. He purchased many stories from pros and fans (myself included) and had the first issue ready for the printer when his mother died in February of 1977. It took all his money to bury her and he has yet to get the first issue of MULTITUDE into print. I hear from Wayne infrequently, and can't remember seeing his name in any fanzine within the last year. I assume he's gafiated.

I published the third and last issue of Joe Walter's A FLYING WHAT? as a last-ditch effort to revive the old comaraderie. Unfortunately, it failed in its appointed task. The issue itself is exactly what Joe handed me when I left Fort Bragg with my grandmother in May, with the exception of a cover and a short afterword.

Patrick Myers faded out of sight the way all good pseudo-people should.

I am the only regularly active fan to emerge from Fort Bragg Fandom, and, despite a slight name change, KNIGHTS remains as a last testament to a year and a half of hyper-fanac. Issue thirteen of KNIGHTS cleared away all the remains of the charred and broken body of Fort Bragg Fandom by printing nearly every piece of artwork, and every article, remaining in my possession from various defunct Fort Bragg fanzine titles, and subsequent issues have marked many changes in my lifestyle and fannish attitudes.

The hectic publishing schedule and the intense interaction of friendship that made up Fort Bragg Fandom heavily influenced at least three people's lives, and the effects of that year and a half can still be seen lingering faintly in the words and deeds of a small handful of fen.

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Fort Bragg Fandom: it wasn't the Derelicts, and it certainly wasn't LASFS. It was, however, a small piece of fan history which deserves more than a footnote in some future tome.

-- Mike Bracken

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A GUIDE TO FORT BRAGG FANDOM'S PUBLICATIONS  
(apazines excluded)

December 1973, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 1*, edited and published by Mike Bracken and Joe Walter, 16 pages ditto -- Ft. Bragg, CA

January 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 2*, edited and published by Mike Bracken and Joe Walter, 21 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

February 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 3*, edited and published by Mike Bracken and Joe Walter, 18 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

March 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 4*, edited and published by Mike Bracken and Joe Walter, 18 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

April 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 5*, edited and published by Mike Bracken and Joe Walter, 20 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

May 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 6*, edited and published by Mike Bracken (Joe Walter leaves as co-editor in the middle of production), 13 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

June 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 7*, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 23 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

July 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 8*, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 22 pages mimeo w/Xerox cover -- Ft. Bragg, CA

August 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 9*, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 28 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

*A FLYING WHAT? 1*, edited and published by Joe Walter, 13 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

*OZONE 1*, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 6 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

*POOPED SHEET*, supplement to *KPSS 9*, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 1 page mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

October 1974, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP 10*, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 18 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

*A FLYING WHAT? 2*, edited and published by Joe Walter, 23 pages mimeo w/Xerox cover -- Ft. Bragg, CA

*MUTATED MUMBLINGS*, supplement to *KPSS 10*, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 1 page mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

(Note: Simon Agree's *ABBA ZABA 1* distributed with *KPSS 10*)

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November 1974, *THIS THING DOESN'T HAVE A NAME YET, GOT ANY IDEAS?* 1, edited and published by Patrick Myers, 2 pages ditto -- Ft. Bragg, CA

December 1974, *THE E-STARIAN EXPLORER* 1, edited and published by Wayne W. Martin, 10 pages mimeo -- Fresno, CA

*KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP* 11, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 56 pages mimeo w/Xerox covers -- Ft. Bragg, CA

January 1975, *FANTABULOUS CRUD*, a one-shot, edited and published by Joe Walter, 13 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

*DISASOCIATION* 1, edited and published by Joe Walter, 2 pages mimeo -- Ft. Bragg, CA

March 1975, *THE E-STARIAN EXPLORER* 2, edited and published by Wayne W. Martin, 13 pages mimeo w/offset cover -- Fresno, CA

April 1975, *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP* 12, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 58 pages mimeo w/offset covers -- Ft. Bragg, CA

#### LAST GASPS

September 1975, *KNIGHTS* 13 (formerly known as *KNIGHTS OF THE PAPER SPACE SHIP*), edited and published by Mike Bracken, 104 pages mimeo w/offset covers -- Tacoma, WA

October 1975, *THE E-STARIAN EXPLORER* 3, edited and published by Wayne W. Martin, 21 pages mimeo w/offset cover -- Fresno, CA

November 1975, *A FLYING WHAT?* 3, edited by Joe Walter, published by Mike Bracken, 11 pages mimeo -- Tacoma, WA

#### RISING FROM THE ASHES

December 1975, *KNIGHTS* 14, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 62 pages mimeo w/offset covers -- Tacoma, WA

March 1976, *KNIGHTS* 15, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 76 pages mimeo and offset w/offset covers -- Tacoma, WA

June 1976, *KNIGHTS* 16, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 69 pages mimeo and offset w/offset covers -- Tacoma, WA

July 1977, *KNIGHTS* 17/18, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 120 pages mimeo w/offset covers -- Edwardsville, IL

December 1977, *KNIGHTS* 19, edited and published by Mike Bracken, 70 pages mimeo w/offset covers -- Edwardsville, IL

-- Mike Bracken

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# Gremliana Grant Carrington

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## REQUIEM FOR A GENTLE MAN

On Monday, December 5, 1977, Robert C. Danek died. I know the name means nothing to you. It means nothing to anyone connected with science fiction except me. But Bob meant a great deal to me, and I feel the necessity to make some kind of gesture, some kind of scream against the implacable night.

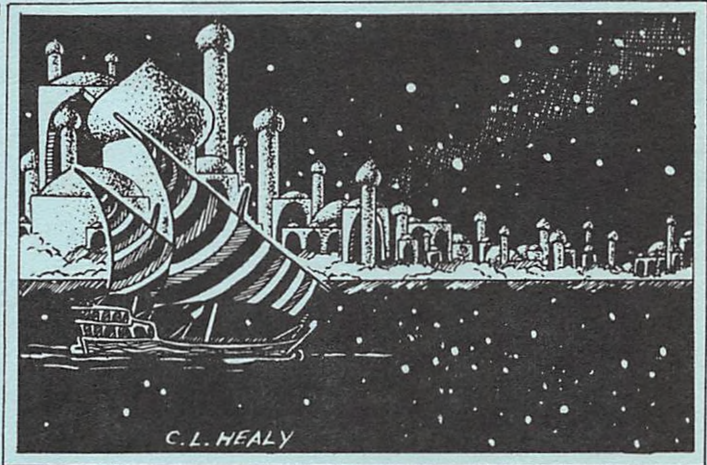
Bob Danek was my supervisor at Goddard Space Flight Center when I worked there from 1962 to 1968. He was a kind, gentle man, one of the very best I've ever known. The only person I can think of who belongs in the same class as Bob is Fritz Leiber. If you know Fritz, you know what high praise that is.

But Bob was a very private person. He would do wonderful things for other people but would never let anyone do anything for him. He joked and flirted playfully with all the secretaries at Goddard but, as far as I know, he never dated anyone and he never married.

In 1963 he contracted ileitis, and it plagued him the rest of his life. He retired early in 1973 on a physical disability pension, although he was only in his forties. This cut him off from his work at Goddard and the people there, although we tried to see him regularly. He was, I guess, a very lonely man.

Bob had a very gentle but a sharp sense of humor. When I first came to Goddard, we used to draw pictures and put them on each other's desk. Once I left a drawing of two gunmen on a western street with the caption, "Draw, stranger." When I came back to my desk, it was lying there with Bob's notation: "I can't

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draw any stranger'n this."

When I came to Goddard in 1962, I was fresh out of New York University, with the ink still wet on my bachelor's degree. I had been hired as a computer programmer, but I knew nothing about computers. I hadn't even ever seen one! While it wouldn't be precisely accurate to say I learned everything I know about computers from Bob Danek, I wouldn't be anywhere near as good a programmer as I am today (and I'm a damn good one) if it hadn't been for Bob. Bob taught me the basics and laid a firm ground for what I would have to learn later. In those days, the IBM 709<sup>4</sup> was the big computer and Bob could make it do tricks. He was one of the best programmers I've ever known, if not the very best, and moving him up into management was a loss, although I might never have met him otherwise.

I was the first person he had to supervise, and in the next few years he gathered around him a small group of excellent programmers, all dedicated to Bob. We all loved him. This group was (and I guess, still is) the major computer systems programming group at Goddard, the people who design the computer software. It was our job to find out why a particular part of the computer software system didn't work and get it fixed. A lot of time was spent helping other programmers with their problems, which usually meant convincing them that they had made a mistake and not the computer. In his gentle, quiet way, Bob set the tone for our tight little organization.

I won't say Bob didn't have any faults. Like the rest of us, he wasn't perfect. But some of his faults were the result of his virtues. As I said, Bob was a gentle man; he didn't like criticizing others. He wasn't really cut out to be a

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supervisor. Thus, when we got a turkey in our group, a programmer who wasn't pulling his/her weight, Bob couldn't bring himself to give that person an unsatisfactory rating, even though it meant some of us who were working hard would be put in the same category. It meant we had to do that person's work as well as our own. We would be unhappy about it and grumble about it, but we weren't loyal to Goddard. We were loyal to Bob, and we realized that it was just one of those things we had to accept. It was a fault of generosity, not a fault of meanness.

When he retired from Goddard, he told Pat Barnes, his secretary, that he didn't expect to live past fifty. As it turned out, he was right, but it just doesn't seem fair. I'm not sure what ileitis is, but, as best I understand it, it is an ulcerated ileum (the small intestine). Since that's where we do a lot of our digestion, it can be quite painful. The small intestine is, quite literally, digesting itself. I believe Bob had a large part of his intestine cut away. Nonetheless, he continued to eat just about everything, smoke like a fiend, and do his share of drinking, though he was no more than a social drinker.

In the last few years, there would be times when he was heavily sedated. But we all thought that, despite his claim, he would make it to fifty. There was a period when he looked pretty bad but in the past couple of years he had made a comeback. He never took care of his health--for a while he had beri-beri and the secretary who called me to tell me of his death said that they thought he had died of malnutrition. Personally, I can't believe that.

When I first met Bob, he was a driver. He loved driving and he drove just for the hell of it, out to computer meetings on the West Coast, which he loved too and always talked about moving to San Francisco. Once he had accumulated more leave days than allowed and he had to use some of them or lose them. So he took off, drove 36 hours at one stretch, drove all the way to Mexico City, turned around, and came back. In his last few years, he began collecting cars. He had the same car for ten years, a Valiant (which he swore by), a Porsche, and a Hudson, among others. In 1977, he had two car accidents. In the first one, he broke his leg and was in the hospital for quite a while before anyone outside of his family knew about it. He wouldn't let anyone visit him.

The second one occurred just before the Thanksgiving weekend. His brother said he was lucky to get out of that one alive. He broke his leg again and he left the hospital earlier than he should have. Many of us suspect he died of internal injuries from that accident.

He used to collect paychecks. His own. He would walk around with four or five of them, uncashed, in his jacket pocket. Finally he got a call from the Government Accounting Office, asking him to cash them, because he was fouling up their records!

I miss Bob. He was a good man and he was good to me, and I owe him more than I could possibly have repaid. And now there won't be the chance. I regret not doing more to help him, more to try to break down those walls with which he kept people at a distance while he helped them. In one sense, he didn't have any friends, because he never let anyone get close enough. In another sense, he had a great many friends, all willing and eager to step in and help him in any way, if he would only let them.

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And why should I burden all of you with this? You never knew Bob, you don't really care, and nothing I can write will make you care. I guess it's just that it doesn't seem right to me that such a good man, such an intelligent man, such a talented man, should die and leave so little behind.

In Ferenc Molnar's play LILIOM, the heavenly policemen tell us that it is not over as long as there is someone who remembers the tread of our feet, the sound of our voice. As long as there is someone on earth who remembers us, it is not over. And so it's not yet over for Bob Danek, not as long as Pat Barnes, Jack Balakirsky, Jim Weld, Lou Thomas, and I and others remember the way he chain-smoked, remember those gentle blue eyes, the way he said "Sheesh!" whenever someone was being stubborn, the cold coffee he drank, the way he could find a long-forgotten memo in the middle of the seemingly disorganized pile of papers on his desk.

Dammit, dammit, dammit.

Bob, I hardly knew you.

-- Grant Carrington

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# Knights



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# Letters

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Grant Carrington, North Augusta, SC1/30/78

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Your editorial was strangely disturbing, especially your reaction to meeting fandom in person. A fanzine editor who doesn't like fandom, or at least who wouldn't associate with them outside fandom? While I understand the sentiment and even agree with it, it somehow seems contradictory. A very strange editorial, to say the least, and possibly the best I've read from you.

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J. Owen Hanner, 211 W. Lake St., Libertyville, IL 600482/5/78

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KNIGHTS 19 was the most depressing fanzine I've read since SCINTILLATION 10 or 11. I mean, some of the things said about sf and fandom and how really petty and pointless it all is just may be true, but personally, I love both sf and fandom and I, for one, do not like reading about it. I had to stop at several points to check that this really was an sf fanzine, and ask myself, what's going on here anyway? Maybe it was just a Clever Ploy on your part to get more letters, but I found it extremely disquieting. I don't like it when a whole fanzine is made up of people taking pot-shots as something I love as much as fandom.

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Victoria Vayne, PO Box 156 - Stn D, Toronto, Ontario M6P 3J8 CANADA1/30/78

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You ask, after the Wayne Hooks article (which may be a little outdated, since the feminist-fan subgroup that arose with the feminist fanzines of the last few years and the Women's Apa may have been still too new at the time of compiling the article for him to include in detail), "how do I attract a representative cross-section of female-fan writers, artists, letterhacks and readers without drastically altering either the type of fanzine I wish to edit or my editing style?"

The answer is, you don't. You don't go about deliberately attracting female participants if you want to continue KNIGHTS the way you've liked it. What you do is you continue editing and creating KNIGHTS the way you like it, and those female fans whose interests are such that KNIGHTS also interests them, will come to you with contributions and letters and fistfuls of cash for copies. Those female fans whose interests don't coincide with yours, won't. Neither will those male fans whose interests don't coincide with yours. If you don't want a feminist fanzine in KNIGHTS you won't publish articles thus slanted and those fans who participate in this sort of interest group won't come to you, won't move to change the nature of your zine. As far as I can see, and as I have awkwardly been leading up to here, you don't have a problem at all.

This isn't sexist. You're not excluding anyone from the ranks of your readership; anyone can buy or trade or write a LoC for a copy. Nowhere does it say that you have to include material to cater to any specific interest group. You publish what interests you; and should your interests turn to feminist matters at any time, then you would publish feminist-related material. You pay the initial bills, you sign your name to it, you call the shots.

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You seem to have answered your own question even before you posed it, with "it could simply be that the fanzine I am most interested in publishing, while not necessarily stagnating, just isn't attractive to those women who are fans, and is unknown to those who might become fans." A bit too general, maybe, Mike, because there are women who are fans, but who are not feminist fans, who do find your fanzine of interest. There are women who are feminist fans, who also find your fanzine interesting, but leave that at the moment. It's that first group of women, the female active fans--who tend not to be feminist, but also not sexist, and in fandom on their own--who find your fanzine interesting for exactly the same reasons that your male readers find it interesting. This is not a large group, and hasn't many active LoCcers, and maybe you haven't noticed them. They're not feminist fans, and they're not fem-fans; they're fans. Maybe the fact that this group doesn't tend to get noticed is a victory over sexism.

I don't think KNIGHTS is a "male chauvinist" fanzine. Since opinions-expressed-by-the-columnists-are-not-necessarily-those-of-the-editor, one can safely say that KNIGHTS is a non-sexist fanzine. There are those who would say that since KNIGHTS contains no material by women, it must therefore be very, very sexist. Not so: as you yourself say, you are not excluding material by women; and, importantly, neither are you going out of your way to inordinate lengths to get material by women--shades of the quota system--which would be something far more sexist than merely accepting the material as you've been doing all along on the basis of its interest to you, regardless of the gender of the author.

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Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ontario m6p 2s3 CANADA

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2/9/78

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KNIGHTS 19 is rather an interesting contrast in terms of packaging. It is highlighted by a truly impressive Derek Carter cover which is so damn good it managed to over come the moderately shitty printing job they did on it and still remain most effective. And the layout is crisp, clean and attractive. But your artwork is almost all mediocre or worse and a few pieces look like they're printed using crummy thermal stencils. If you could get some artwork to match the quality of the cover and your design, KNIGHTS would be a most superior visual package indeed. Sigh...

I was intrigued by your editorial comment that most fans are people you wouldn't associate with outside fandom. Personally, most fans are people I wouldn't associate with inside fandom either (Tom only exaggerates by an order of manitude in his savaging of fans) but the people I've met whom I've formed friendships with I'd associate with anywhere they'd permit me the pleasure of their company. I suggest that probably you've been to too few cons to have realized that, while 90% of fans are crud, the other 10% still mounts up to a pretty decent number of potentially close friends if you'll stick around long enough to get to know them. But I agree it takes a careful screening process and a high tolerance level for cretins and turkeys.

I must take umbrage at Tom Monteleone's wanton disregard for the facts in his description of "actifans". This distorted and highly prejudicial view of fans craps up...er...crops up periodically and it's, literally, a gross exaggeration. I happen to be one of fandom's "higher profile members" and consequently I've met a

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hell of a lot of the other members of that group. And I can think of few if any who are anywhere near close to the way Tom describes them. With the single exception of their being bespectacled in which he does happen to be correct. Note that I'm not saying that there aren't many fans who are "physically unappealing" (how could anyone who has ever been to a Midwestcon deny the charge?) and "ungainly, clumsy, acne-ridden" and "loud and boorish...cultural cripples": they definitely do exist. But few ever reach the "actifan" status. (Whatever the hell that means.) look at last year's ten Hugo nominated writers and artists, who might justifiably be considered to represent the "higher profile members" of fandom: Don D'Amassa physically unappealing? Susan Wood clumsy and acne-ridden? Grant Canfield loud and boorish? Bill Rotsler a cultural cripple? Hell, even I wash occasionally and can sometimes walk a straight line! I've already stated elsewhere in this letter that many fans are types I simply don't wish to know, in or out of fandom, but the great majority of the more talented fans who reach the level of BNF (which is probably the term ol' Tom is looking for except he doesn't know enough about fandom to realize it...coff, coff...) are pretty well-adjusted, pretty capable, competent people with average looks and a respectable degree of social gracefulness and culture. Much like Tom Monteleone, come to think of it.

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Laurie Mann, 5501 Elmer St. #3, Pgh, PA 152322/10/78

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Rereading Robert Bloch's "Stomping Tom" made me laugh until my stitches ached. Can you make "Stomping Tom" an issuely feature? He's gotten me so riled up in the past few issues that I'd love a chance to stomp him myself! After saying this, though, I must admit that Monteleone didn't "rankle my tail feathers" that much in this issue. I disagree that mainstream is easier to write than sf. Sf tends to be more gimmicky, concentrating more on building intricate planets than intricate characters. Fortunately, this trend has been dying out for a while, and I think that the gadgets are almost gone. I think the reason why Monteleone thinks mainstream is easier to write might be because it's easier to sell a mainstream novel--there's a great audience after all. An incredible novel like ORDINARY PEOPLE should not be dismissed as a "snap." Or almost anything by Gore Vidal. Or Mary Renault. Or any number of other superb mainstream writers. The writing I've seen by Monteleone, so far, does not come close to any of these writers.

And then, there was Monteleone's ideas about fans. Well, I do agree with him there, with a funny, ironic smile on my face. Being overweight, ungainly, clumsy, somewhat acne-stricken, and bespectacled, as well as often loud, I also disagree. I feel something like Janus. As much as loud, obnoxious fans annoy me, I realize that my brashness has probably annoyed other fans, too. Monteleone does come off as sort of a snob. Some authors I've run into at cons also "...have little substance in their words other than the psychologically plaintive cry: 'Look at me! For Chrissake's look at me!'" It would have been a little heartening if Monteleone had recognized that as well.

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Algis Budrys, Evanston, IL1/18/78

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I teach a class in sf writing at Columbia College in Chicago. Most of my students are black, and the most aggressive is black and female. Some of them are

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products of the Chicago Public School system, and so have gotten to their junior year in college without knowing much about reading or writing as skills. One guy, who has a great deal of talent for picturing scenes and plotting action, is going to have to go into audiovisual work because he was never taught spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, agreement of tenses and cases, or any of that other stuff that makes written communication possible. He is going to make a very good comics writer or scripter, but there is no chance he will ever communicate via conventional prose. When coded language skills were being passed out in other communities, he missed them. This is a result of Chicago policy. The blacker and more economically disadvantaged your family was, the less chance you had of being shown even the most elementary tools of intellect. There must be concentric patterns of communication disability in Chicago and other major and minor cities. A really good anthropologist could probably deduce my guy's neighborhood at Age 6 just by talking with him for a while.

I don't wonder at all why there aren't more black fans and writers. Sf looks like a luxury.

The pupil who's taught me the most is Pat. She's in her late thirties, a veteran of brushes with several institutions, and is raising a couple of kids alone, in a part of town where the feral dogs now and then break into your house. She knows exactly what's important and what isn't. If it wasn't that she needed





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the credits for her degree requirements, she wouldn't be messing with this fantasy and science fiction stuff, which has nothing to do with survival.

I don't know whether that's any clue to why there aren't more females in sf, but it seems possible that females have less time for something that, from the outside, looks impractical. Males, as lords of the Earth, have always had additional leisure in which to discover its underlying attractions.

Nevertheless, I think Bob Bloch is right. I haven't seen the original Monteleone column, of course. But if it pursues the line of overkill which has become fashionable in arguing just about every social cause, then I am delighted it aroused an adversary of such stature. Another thing I am learning from heavy social contact with a number of young black intellectuals is that they are just as tough as their older siblings, but very uncomfortable with the situation in which 1968-style rhetoric has put them. The guy in my class who probably has the best prose talent, and certainly the best ability to present empathetic characters, really wishes very much that he could just write about people and life, instead of being under constant pressure to write about symbols and doctrinaire cliches. He doesn't feel anywhere near as straightjacketed by Whitey as he does by the most articulate spokesmen of his own revolution. And one of these days, he's going to have outlived them. I see no reason why his case is essentially different from that of females, gays, grays, or any other group that has adopted Moaist techniques. They work, short-term, and then suddenly the Angel of the Revolution finds she's actually been one of the Notorious Gang of Four.

Blacks, females, gays, grays, and all the other people who've been down in the lower levels of the social pyramid are more than due for their day in the sun, and there's no question they'll never have it if they don't fight for it. But classic-

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ally there has always been a price to pay for overkill, and I mention this so that the overkillers will fully understand the total cost of their dedication.

About the interview with me:

Thought it came out pretty well. I was hoping for some other descriptive term besides "portly;" couldn't we have "burly," instead? Nor have I ever thought of myself as "huge." I am a millimeter or two less than 6 feet tall, and while I grant you most of you Earthmen are a slight, frail bunch, still and all I could mention a fair number of other sf people who loom over me. Some of them even loom around me.

Some small factual corrections:

My full name is pronounced Ahl-gir-das Yo-nas Bu-drees, with the accent on the first syllable in Algirdas and Jonas, and on the last in Budrys. But there ain't no zhi in girdahs, and there ain't no boo in bu. Maybe Mike's tape is noisy. Anyway, what it really is is Gordon John Sentry in that funny old Sanskrit-related dialect us non-Slavs speak.

I don't know what I said that came out sounding like "Greek Russian" culture. Maybe I said "Great-Russian," which would merely cause my family to disown me. At any rate, if there were such a science as gastrographics, and you were to plot dietary habit distributions across a map of Europe, Asimov and I would be natives of the same color belt, and neither of us would be a Russian or a Greek, or a Russian or Greek or Ukrainian Orthodox, or--atypically in my case--a Roman Catholic. Neither of us would be a Ukrainian. (One of the features of European-style antisemitism is that you can live in the Ukraine three hundred years, but some family of goyim that moved in a mere century ago is a Ukrainian while you, Jew, are not.) The major affinities in Slavic Europe have nothing to do with race, creed, or economic status, all of which are so thoroughly farschmelt by the physical actions of history that every crossroads has its name available in a dozen languages and there isn't one towheaded blue-eyed babe in Poland that doesn't have a little Asiatic blood. It's mostly a question of what the soil will produce in the climate per available unit of human energy, and cabbage soup does more than Lenin can to justify the Plan commission's ways with Man.

Never went on vacation to the US. Went on vacation to Lithuania. Came to the US permanently at 5, almost 6.

Consulate General never closed. It's still there, and my mother still works there. My father, a tough, charming, burly man, died at his desk of his eighth heart attack in September, 1964, having successfully maintained Free Lithuanian presence in the US since 1940. What happened in 1940 is that the Russians assimilated Lithuania into the Soviet Union. My father, uncertain of the future, bought a farm and put my mother and me on it. He stayed in Manhattan, living in bare rooms and working 16 hours a day, essentially acting as a PR man for the idea of a free Lithuania. PR, done right, is a tough job. He'd come down and visit every other weekend. Eventually, it became clear the US State Department was convinced. So when I began going to college, we sold the farm and my folks moved back to the city.

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Other than that, I think I said some brilliant things, and am planning to understand them as soon as I can.

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George Flynn, 27 Sowamsett Ave., Warren, RI 028856/6/78

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Charles Grant's distinction between the characteristics of sf and horror stories is interesting. Let me try to get at another aspect of it: The strong point of good sf, as sf, is particularly the novelty of the concepts involved. Horror, on the other hand, largely depends on the manipulation of a familiar background of concepts. I recognize that this distinction has its weak points. For one thing, sf certainly does have its own familiar repertoire, but in the best works this serves as a time-saving bridge to the introduction of still farther-out ideas. And on the other hand, it is possible to introduce new kinds of horror (not "supernatural" in the traditional sense), but this is apt to be perceived as moving the work into a different genre. So there may or may not be something here worth further development.

With regard to the Deborah Lewis interview, I suppose it should be pointed out that there is at least one genuine sf Gothic: Anne McCaffrey's *RESTOREE*, she has often said, was written as a deliberate translation of the Gothic conventions into the sf mode. Probably there are others too (not necessarily done that way on purpose). As for saying that "people like Bellow or Roth" work in reality, Roth has written at least two novels (*OUR GANG* and *THE BREAST*) that certainly qualify as sf/fantasy.

Monteleone says that "a majority of the hardcore fans do not come to the conventions to enjoy science fiction, not to talk with the authors," etc. Well, this is true enough, but by no means with such sinister implications as he suggests. The majority of the fans I know well go to conventions primarily to see each other, at least after they've been around long enough to have a circle of acquaintances. But I don't think he realizes how many different kinds of behaviour go on in parallel at conventions. There are those who, as I say, seek out each other's company and see little of the formal program; those who spend most of their time shopping in the huckster's room; those who would watch films 24 hours a day if they could manage it; those who haunt the art show; those (most often newcomers) who attend every talk and panel; and, indeed, some who seek out authors and often make a nuisance of themselves. Alas, it is the latter group that the authors are most likely to encounter, but they shouldn't be regarded as typical.

Well, let me try to answer Charles Grant's challenge to me: "so just because there aren't enough of us to drive out 'junk' in one fell swoop means we shouldn't try? That's like saying your vote doesn't count in an election." Good comparison. I spent three months working in the McGovern campaign; it was a great experience, but I can't say that it accomplished much. Yet at least there seemed to be a fighting chance there. However, this doesn't really address my point. I wasn't saying that a "crusade" for higher literary standards is necessarily futile, but that fandom makes a rotten base for such a movement, being fundamentally frivolous and anarchic as well as tiny. Good intentions should not keep one from looking at the odds, and of the many worthy "crusades" one might take part in, this does not seem among the better investments of one's time. (But of course I might feel differently if it were my livelihood involved.)

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Don D'Ammassa, 19 Angell Dr., E. Prov., RI 02914

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2/5/78

David Moyer asks about my teaching experience. Well, yes, I did force my students to read some Shakespeare--KING LEAR, in fact, since I could later take them to a performance of the play at a nearby college. Most of them seemed to enjoy it, one flunked, and a few actively asked me to recommend other plays for them. The course was English Lit, so I couldn't have had them read O'Neill, but I would have covered Shaw if I hadn't left the school system before we got that far.

Did I slow down for slower students? No. I made my time available during free periods and nights for any student that wanted help. Only one made use of that time. He wasn't the one who flunked.

Gary Grady misunderstood my point. In the short run, fuel will not directly lead to the end of the space program. But it might well indirectly. Even if the energy loss were minuscule, the public isn't intelligent enough to realize that, and is still likely to insist that, in a crunch, space frivolities be terminated. Gary's problem is that he is a logical, reasonable, rational, sensible person, and expects the public to be the same. It is not. It must be coddled, cajoled, flattered, and bamboozled for its own ultimate good. If this makes me a rotten cynic, then so be it.

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Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740

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1/27/78

The front cover was marvellous. My unartistic self probably exaggerates the amount of work involved, but I can't imagine anyone drawing something of such complexity in so skillful a manner without devoting full time efforts for three or four weeks. I assume that the original is considerably larger than this reproduction, because some of the finer details seem to be just on the edge of visibility in this form, and that original must be even more startling. It would be wonderful, if Derek Carter were assigned to the task of creating the definitive animated cartoon version of fantasies which aren't suitable for live actor movie versions. Maybe he couldn't train animators to accomplish things on the level of this cover, but I'm sure the result would be vast improvement over anything that's been done since Disney's artistic peak.

Thomas Monteleone struck a bullseye on my own psyche in one of his explanations for why pros lose some of the enjoyment of writing science fiction. I started when I was 16 years old to try to sell to the prozines, failed consistently, and it wasn't until I was about 32 when I finally began to sell some science fiction. I was blissfully happy until I'd sold about a dozen stories, and then I stopped trying. I knew I would never be a really great writer of fiction, I didn't need the tiny sums that these stories brought me, and I'd proved to myself that I could write fiction. I haven't made any real effort to sell fiction since then. But the past few years, I've been thinking that I'd like to find time to write a novel or two. Until I make the effort, I won't know for sure, but I have an awful suspicion that what I really want to do is find out if I can still sell fiction to a market which has such different requirements today.

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The letter section was interesting. I agree with David Moyer about homes forming the main reason why education doesn't work as well as it should. But I think part of the fault should be put on the expedient philosophy of educators that students should be kept in schools at all costs. In theory, I think this is professed on the grounds that it will keep young people out of the troubles that idleness breeds, will avoid traumatic consequences of expulsion or repeated failures, will improve the students' abilities in subtle ways even if they learn nothing. But in practice, I suspect that it's done to avoid drops in enrollment which would reduce the number of available jobs for teachers and supervisors. I see no reason why the student who has proved all through elementary and middle school refusal or inability to learn should be coaxed into remaining enrolled through high school. If the hopeless ten or fifteen percent of the student body were expelled and dropped out around the age of 15 or 16, there would be fewer disruptive influences in classrooms, a higher level of scholarship to emulate.

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Bob Tucker, Jacksonville, Ill 62650

3/20/78  
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I can't get excited about the possibility that male writers may have been deliberately excluded from one (or more) anthologies of female oriented science fiction--even if those stories were turned away unread, as some allege. I see nothing wrong when a female editor decides to put together a female anthology, and does so; or even a male editor putting together a female book. Geez, there are seemingly a thousand (well, only a few hundred) other anthologies where the male writer may submit his fiction; there isn't all that much shortage of markets. If a male writer's story is good enough to sell, it will sell to a magazine or an anthology so why decry one or two markets where his work isn't wanted because it doesn't fit into the editorial theme?

I'm one of those people who believe that science fiction is the mainstream. It slipped into the mainstream about 1943 when Don Wollheim published the first paperback science fiction book (a collection of stories, published by Pocket Books), and has been steadily absorbing what was thought to be the mainstream, ever since. In the early days of paperbacks a sale of one hundred thousand up to a quarter-million copies was not all that unusual, and a very ordinary book of mine in the 1950s went into the second hundred copies. It is only recently, with about a thousand science fiction title per year, has sales fallen to a low of twenty or thirty thousand.

The one thousand title per year is significant, and persuasive. I maintain that is mainstream, while other categories (including hotshot bestsellers by the Robbins-like writers) are now up the tributaries formerly occupied by science fiction. I'm awaiting the annual report by Publishers' Weekly to learn which is the dog and which is the wagging tail.

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Gene Wolfe, Barrington, Ill 60010

3/8/78  
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Wayne Hooks' article was excellent; but still, I can't resist picking a few nits. To begin, Wayne says, "Racism is prejudice against one for the color of one's skin; sexism is prejudice against one because of one's sex." As long as we

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think those things are as he defines them, we will have them in plenty. We must learn to say: "Racism is the prejudice I feel toward one of another race; sexism is the prejudice I feel toward the opposit sex."

When Wayne says, "There is also a lack of minority fans," he seems to be thinking exclusively of blacks. Jews are a minority surely, and there are many Jewish fans. Males are a minority too, as Geis points out much later in the article.

And Charles Saunders is a bit misinformed. He says, "To my knowledge there are no black professional sf writers, and few active fans." As far as I know, he's right about the fans, but one of the very best pros is black--Samuel R. Delany.

As for women, there have always been women in science fiction, as Bloch points out in "Stomping Tom." Besides the dozen he names, what of Margaret Brundage, Pogo, Morojo, Doe Baumgardt, and Kate MacLean? Most KNIGHTS readers are probably too young to recognize the majority of these names. What of the real originator of Science Fiction, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley?

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Jessica Amanda Salmonson, Box 5688 Univ. Station, Seattle, WA 98105

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1/18/78

I think it is important that essays like Wayne's be written. I don't think it touches the crux of the problems of racism and sexism in fandom, but it's a good try. My own parts in that article, where Wayne quotes me, sound naive and poorly thought out, and I don't think anyone else touched the problem any better.

Sam Delany, in KHATRU, defined racism and sexism in fairly easy, understandable terms, and drew fairly nice parallels to sexism. I think the major missing feature of Wayne's essay is a working definition of racism and sexism.

I can speak with reasonable clarity on sexism, not so easily on racism, partly from my own lack of knowledge and partly because "racism" is more loosely defined than sexism. Sexism is the cultural and social power men as a whole have over women as a whole. It is often wrongly used to mean what one sex does to another, but by the definition of sexism as "men's power over women," there is no such thing as a sexist woman, because a woman can't have a man's power over women. Sexism is also a cultural "condition" that reinforces sexual stereotypes, that keeps women scammed into maintaining a "feminine" role that is arbitrary and cultural rather than "normal," and keeps men scammed into being "masculine" by an equally arbitrary definition--but this aspect of sexism is but another way by which men maintain power over women. Sexism may indeed harm men, but only indirectly; sexism specifically harms women. This means that ALL males in fandom are sexist, and NO woman in fandom is sexist. Some of the women may be awful, unfair, oppressive, biggoted and stinky, and some of the men may be sweethearts and anti-sexist--but there's no such thing as a non-sexist man. Because, to drum it all the way in, ALL men have power over ALL women whether they understand how it works or not, whether they like it that way or not, whether they're fighting it, supporting it, or going with the flow oblivious to the cause or effect.

If racism is similarly the power of White races over peoples of color, then

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all Whites in fandom, male and female, are racist. In the Marxist sense, this is clearly true. We live in, and reap rewards from, a racist society. We all have cultural and social power over Chicanos, Blacks, Indians, et cetera. However, "racist" has become too ingrained as a swear-word rather than a description of a cultural condition, and lost much of its political connotations. A racist is a super-ass-hole who wants to hang non-White races, keep them out of good all american White schools, et cetera. We aren't like that. We aren't racist. "Racism" then is something we point to to prove we're not racist--an excuse to maintain our power over people of color.

I get very angry when I see "sexism" misused, when someone says "Some women are sexist too" for instance, when to be male-identified and fight dearly against women's rights even if you're a woman is not sexism. It is the nature of a classist society to turn oppressed groups against themselves, and if Blacks peddle drugs to Blacks it isn't because they're racist, and if women tell women to be subjugated wives and mothers and stop trying to destroy the american way, it isn't because they're sexist. I am afraid the word "sexism" will go by the way of "racism." That is, you point to a rapist or a chauvenist piggie, and use him as an excuse to maintain your own power over women, to say, "He's sexist, not me" and the status quo remains unchallenged.

Delaney, in KHATRU, in discussing sexism, started from the premise of "I am a sexist." Understanding that all men have power over all women, he couldn't claim to be anything but sexist. He is also one of the few men I've seen in print discussing issues of feminism almost as well as many women I know. I doubt he meant it in terms of "I'm an awful man, I'm a rapist and a woman-hater." Similarly, I must admit I'm racist, though that is not to say I'd like to see that proverbial school bus full of Black children going over a cliff. I am leery of men who claim to be feminist, or non-sexist. A feminist-supporter, or an anti-sexist I am more willing to trust--someone admitting that he's sexist and willing to work toward a society and a time where he doesn't have to be that anymore. Any man who denies his sexism--and I count many "nice" men among them--is a deadly foe to women. He can be of no aid in building a better future without confronting the fact that the problems are in the Self as much as in All Those Others.

I know that Charles Saunders, with a closer more personal consciousness than mine, disagrees with me on the definition of a racist. He'll tell you it's the baddies who are the racists, not sweethearts like you and me who'd never DREAM of willfully oppressing anyone on account of race. I think, though, our long history of locking up "criminals" of this society has changed nothing, and it's time we stopped and asked ourselves, each time it becomes necessary to lock up a criminal, "What is there in my contribution to this society that is partly responsible for this crime?" As Pogo has been telling us for a long time now, the enemy is us.

I recently received a fanzine called HARBINGER, in which the editor maligns an entire continent of Asian races, and further suggests we should keep our noses out of South Africa, apparently approving of a terrorist government's slaughtering and imprisoning the native race. It wouldn't be worth arguing with such an extremely bigoted racist that the time of colonialism is over, and we must invest an interest in the world as a whole (through efforts like the United Nations, NATO, Geneva Convention, Salt<sup>+</sup> Talks, possibly even Interpol--the concepts are good if not the products) or we set back and wait for certain Armegaddon. Perhaps more shocking than the colonialist notion of "stay inside our boundries" is the

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overt and extreme racism--that goes unchallenged by that fanzine's readership--accepted into fandom with a warm embrace. The liberalism of fandom includes "accepting" bigots and feinds as our friends. So, the final thing missing from Wayne's essay is a hard, definite accusation of racism on the worst personally bigoted level as well as the more deadly cultural level.

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3/15/78

There is an intriguing thesis presented by William Richter in his book LOGIC AND CRITICISM (New York: Chilmark Press, Inc., 1963) that states the value of criticism is not in the conclusions it reaches but in the interest it arouses on the way towards a conclusion. Based on this premise I find little to titillate, let alone arouse, along the way towards those conclusions reached by Rod Snyder in his review of Philip K. Dick's A SCANNER DARKLY in KNIGHTS 19. The review is, at best, superficial and simplistic. After reading it I was reminded of Polonius' advice to Laertes in act I of HAMLET, "be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar," advice Snyder could well have used.

To exemplify my contention, in the second paragraph of his review Rod writes that the action of A SCANNER DARKLY happens in 1990, when in fact there is, on page 3 of the Doubleday hardcover editon, the sentence, "It was midday, in June of 1994." In the same paragraph he labels the main protagonist, Arctor, a "head" when in fact throughout A SCANNER DARKLY the opposing social/cultural factions are labeled "dopers" and "straights." Then, in the third paragraph, Snyder writes this curious sentence, "Fred is a scramble suit." Aside from the unusual syntax, this "sentence" implies that there is a "scramble suit" named Fred, which is not true at all. In A SCANNER DARKLY there is a character named Fred who on occasion wears a scramble suit to disguise and protect his identity.

Most disconcerting, though, is Rod's declaration in the fourth paragraph that, "Arctor, you see, is a junkie posing as an undercover nark named Fred." This is not at all explicitly substantiated by the plot of A SCANNER DARKLY. In fact, there is more internal evidence to indicate that the obverse is the case. On page 32 a character named Barris says, "there's a great deal about Bob Arctor you're not aware of. That none of us are. Your view is simplistic and naive, and you believe about him what he wants you to." Arctor himself thinks, "he always had a strange feeling as to who he was" (p. 20), and, "What is identity? he asked himself. Where does the act end? Nobody knows" (p. 21), plus, "what am I actually?" (p. 21). Most telling, however, are these words at the top of page 17, "Fred, who was also Robert Arctor," in conjunction with these from pages 74 and 75, "how many Bob Arctors are there?...I'm the only person in the world that knows that Fred is Bob Arctor. But, he thought, who am I? Which of them is me?"

What has happened, I believe, is that Rod noted the fact that the viewpoint character throughout most of A SCANNER DARKLY is Bob Arctor and assumed Fred to be, therefore, Arctor's doppelganger. I find it fairly obvious that Arctor is, in fact, Fred's double, though I would admit some abiguity on the matter. The ambiguousness results from the fact that even though the apparent central theme of A SCANNER DARKLY is the horrors of drug use/abuse and the drug culture, an important parallel theme exists which has to do with Dick's long time concern with the nature of reality. As Dick wrote in a letter published in SCINTILLATION 12, March

1977, "most of the sf readership knows that in my work I am constantly asking, 'What is reality?' and, 'Why does it seem to differ from person to person?'"

Consider, then, that the word reality appears seven times in A SCANNER DARKLY, ranging, out of context, from "...as if the reality around him had gone sour" (p. 63) to "...her taking on a symbol and a reality that outweighed her" (p.189). Combine this with Dick's latter question about reality seeming to differ from person to person and it can be seen that the split personna character Fred/Arctor is meant to generate questions about how such an individual would perceive and experience reality. That this is the case is further supported by these words from page 86 in A SCANNER DARKLY:

"I believe (with Wigan) that each of us has two minds in one person... In many of those taking Substance D, a split between the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere of the brain occurs. There is a loss of proper gestalt-ing... What is now received from the percept system is contaminated by being split, so it too, therefore, fails gradually to function, progressively deteriorating."

And, indeed, the Fred/Arctor character does progressively deteriorate due to a drug induced, or at least drug accelerated, schizophrenia of the hebephrenic type.

Finally, it's important to note that as interesting as those aspects in A SCANNER DARKLY which Snyder does discuss are those aspects which he does not discuss. There is no mention in Rod's review about the significance, if any, of the title of the book, of Arctor's middle name, of the eleven Planet of the Apes movies, the dichotomy between "dopers" and "straights", and a character named Bruce. Such are Snyder's conclusions and lack thereof. I hope I have aroused some interest on the way towards mine.

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Also heard from were: Craig W. Anderson, Harry J. N. Andrushak, Gregory Benford, Robert Bloch, Richard Brandt, Donn Brazier, Bill Bridget, Avedon Carol, Dave Cockfield, Brett Cox, Terry Floyd, Gil Gaier, Glenn Garrett, Mike Glycer, David Govaker, D. Gary Grady, Charles L. Grant, Joan Hanke-Woods, Hank Heath, Ben Indick, Fred Jakobcic, Keith Justice, Neil Kvern, Craig Ledbetter, Marty Levine, Mark J. McGarry, Thomas F. Monteleone, Michael Shoemaker, Milton F. Stevens, Rick Stooker, James Turner, Roger Waddington, and A.D. Wallace.

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I SAY, CAN'T  
you find  
something  
to fill this  
blank space?



*Bracken's World (continued from page 4)*

because when she first met me I was just beginning work on issue 19. In fact, she has many times told me that she never would have bothered digging beneath my "smart-ass" facade to find the "real" me if she hadn't read the editorials in many, many issues of KNIGHTS.

I very much want to get KNIGHTS back onto a regular basis. But there are problems. With the delays between issues KNIGHTS has lost contributors and subscribers. The old stand-bys have moved on to other things. And because of the delays between issues, I've lost touch with quite a bit of fandom. I've spent the past few weeks reading fandom 1978. Quite a few of the fanzines I received in 1978 had just sort of stacked up, and reading them made me feel like I'd missed something. And the names had subtly altered: some of my "contemporaries" had become memories, and others had become BNFs.

I long for the past and pray for the future. But what I have is the here and now.

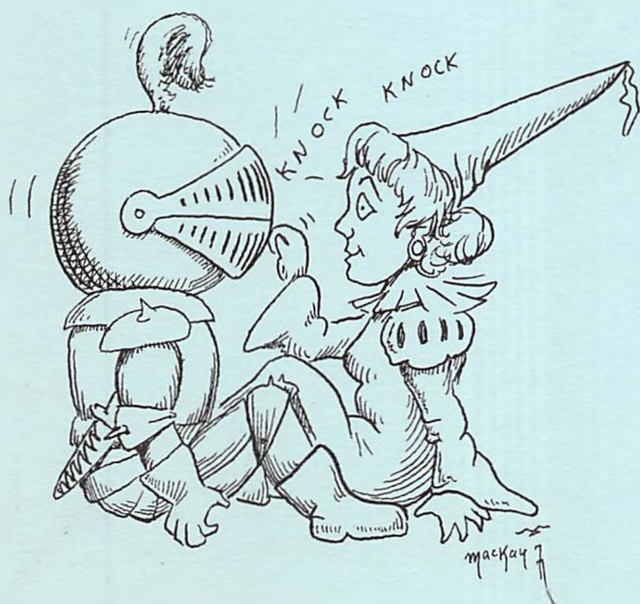
KNIGHTS will never die. As long as I live I expect KNIGHTS to be alive in some form. I hope to publish frequently in the future. I don't like publishing yearly extravaganzas.

I don't want to be a memory, and I don't want KNIGHTS to be.

It's alive.

It has to be. Or I'm not.

-- Mike Bracken



## Knights 21

Coming next issue:

*The Mistakes They Make*

Victoria Vayne on fanzines.

Illustrated by Taral Wayne MacDonald.

*Babes On Bourbon Street*

Mike Bracken on New Orleans' French Quarter.

*Gremliana*

Grant Carrington on death, middle age, and science fiction writers.