

KYBENZ

edited and published by

Jeff Smith

who now resides at the following new address:

4102-301 Potter Street Baltimore, Maryland 21229

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Written material by Jeff Smith and Darrell Schweitzer

Artwork by S. Randall, Jeff Smith and Mike Archibald

Phantasmicom Press Publication #16

Well, fen-here it is: KYBEN 2, the fanzine that you thought you'd never see. But here it is, I say, here it is. The first issue. Why is KYBEN 2 the first issue? Because, of course, KYBEN 1 appeared embedded in PHANTASMICOM 8.

PHANTASMICOM, you mutter, PHANTASMICOM... Haven't you heard of that somewhere? Ah yes, that was the big sercon fanzine Jeff Smith is supposed to be publishing. Well, rest assured, I am. But difficulties ensue. The material is not yet all gathered, and that which is is not yet ready to publish. Two articles need fairly extensive copy-editing, one still needs to be finished (mine, of course), and much artwork is not yet done--though Mike Archibald has just turned his in, well worth the wait.

I was married on June 24, and had expected PhCOM 10 to be out before then. But even now (August 3, as I type the first stencil here) it would take a month. I hadn't sent out extensive changes-of-address because I was planning to use PhCOM for that purpose. Here is your official notice now, finally: I have moved. I am married to the former Angela Lee Sordillo, and am very happy after the first montwith no expectation of any change in this respect. Thank you, thank you.

Another problem with PhCOM is that is no longer as sercon as it used to be. This is not, of course, a Bad Thing in itself, but as #10 will show you when it comes out, things had reached the point where it was the book reviews that were out of place, not the light material. Consequently, when I get 10 out of the way, I am turning PhCOM back to its more serious side. However, I like the lighter stuff too-therefore, KYBEN. Smaller and more frequent than PhCOM. Policy will appear on the next page. Please turn.

Materialwise, I really can't say. Whatever happens. Jeff Glencannon's "Alternate Wordline" should begin here next time, and I have another Schweitzer piece or two. The one this issue is so long it didn't leave room for much else. We shall see. Layouts and arts and such won't generally be too complex, as this is my taking-it-easy fanzine. I'm trying to work out decent layouts for PHANTASMICOM.

(I'm also taking it easy re typos. If the strikeovers are too bad I'll use more corflu next time. But I'm generally not worried.)

Now.

This is going out to the PhCOM mailing list, plus maybe a few others. Free for nothing. Everybody will also get PhCOM 10, the last "combined" issue. It is up to you to decide whether you want to continue to receive just one, or both, or neither. Like, I would assume the Brooklyn Insurgents would just as soon do without PhCOM if all the non-sf stuff appears here. Some people may not want KYBEN, since it's such a silly thing. Some of you may be eclectic, and some may be Mike Glyers and want nothing to do with anything of mine. Let me know. KYBEN is 3/\$1, PhCOM 3/\$2 if you're paying. Contribution to one entitles you to both if you would like. Letters to one entitles you to just that one. Tradezines are entitled to either or both, as they choose.

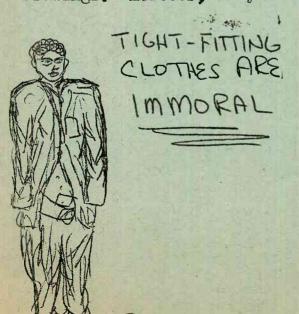
Where do you fit ih, fellah? (Please let me know.)

When I got Dave Hulvey's AFAN 4, I was inspired into faanishness and sent him some marvelous cartoons. He sent them back, the idiot. Rather than entrust them to anyone else, I decided to publish them myself. That's why those odd-looking things abound herein. I promise never again.

The letter from Mr. Hulvey appears below:

Dear Mr. Smith:

We here at the editorial offices of CUNNILINGUS CORNFLAKE, a division of Insights Dynamics Institute, do appreciate your drawings. However, they are not the type of thing we are cur-

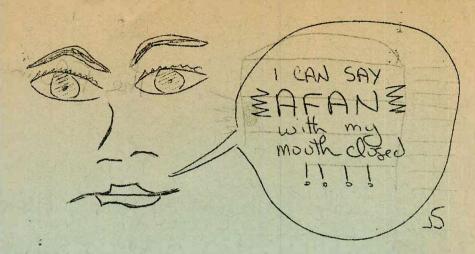


rently looking for since our audience consists of young studs in hot,
tight jeans and sleazy freeks who
practice free shex. Needless to say
your cartoons are humorous and poignant looks at the social commentary
of our time, but certainly they are
not properly erotic in the typically
Graphic Trips design that we here at
the office continue to seek.

But we will be sending you our current catalog when and if it is produced. YAAZZ 3 and AFAN 5 are both on the boards and offer some positively scintillating and stimulating looks at human sexual behavior. A few of the titles just to whet your appetite—BIACK ON WHITE, AT THE ORGY, ANAL INTERCOURSE, MRS. NIXON'S

INTIMATE PHOTOBOOK
(a very hot item, if
I do say so myself)
and I USED AND ABUSED THREE MEN by
Daisy "Chain" Duck.

The closing was scribbled and unreadable, but it locks something like "Hotly & Valeta Panuco" -- maybe.



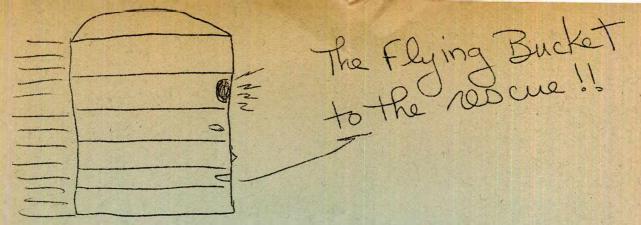
At any rate, since they weren't dirty enough to satisfy Hulvey's deprayed and degenerate tastes, I must resort to publishinging them hero. (Hmm... Wonder if Darredl Schweitzer would have published them in PROCRASTINATION...?)

(I remember back in the first two issues of PHANTASMICOM, when we were ditto, and I was playing with the ditto masters-especially in #2, when we first used colored masters-and doing my own 1969 version of Graphic Trips. I remember word-for-word the one response we received: "What are all those crude designs...?" *sigh*)

I seem to be having problems getting anything published lately, seeing as how I had wanted PhCOM 10 out in May. What's happened is that I haven't been to any conventions, and PhCOM was always geared to be ready for a con-

The first issue was published in the summer of 69, before I had been to a con. I took copies to Philcon that fall, but since I didn't even know anybody to give them to, I brought most of them home. I traded one to Schweitzer for CRAS 2--though he debated for a while before agreeing to the transaction. What happened was Darrell, the perennial huckster, was peddling the thing like mad, and he cornered me. "Wanna buy a fenzine?" and he held out this incredible rag, a real mess. "Only a quarter"--or twenty cents, or whatever. Having all my PhOMs under my own arm, I pulled one out and offered to trade. He carefully examined the issue, and then reluctantly agreed. He obviously would have rather had the quarter. Pleased as hell that I'd been able to even give an issue away, I went to Linda Bushyager's table, where I'd been before and where I had bought several fanzines. I gave her a copy, and to my surprise after my encounter with Schweitzer, even offered to give me back the money for the issue of GRANFALLE ON I'd just paid for and her first impression of PhCOM was "Bleah." Again, happy to be able to give someone a copy, I magnanimously let her keep the money. The rest of the copies of that first issue I brought home with me. And by now you should know the names of the owners of the only four complete sets of PHANTASMICOM that I am aware of—unless Alpajpuri might have another. (And of all the nice comment we received on those early issues, including some from Ellison and Silverberg, Linda's review in GLANNY was one of the ones I liked best and even now Linda is one of my favorite people in fandom. If only she would publish that article/story I sent her over a year ago...)

FhCOM 2 was published for Balticon 70. (Remember what we were talking about long time go?) That was a real touch and go situation,



because we'd already missed our first deadline (Christmas) and didn't want to miss the second. The con was Friday night, and Friday morning we still didn't have a cover. A friend at college, Bob Smith, was supposed to do it, but never got around to it. Finally, at school, he did it, and I ran down to the print shop where they printed it up for me, and Don stapled the issues together while I worked at my mundane job. From then on we geared almost every issue to a con, Having a deadline that couldn't be pushed back ("Hey, Tony; Could you postpone Noreascon a week?") got us to work.

PhCOM 3 went to PgHlange 70, where Harlan Ellison was Guest-of-Honor. It included a statement by Bob Silverberg that Harlan had not known what direction to take DANGEROUS VISIONS in. Harlan read it in Bob's presence. Harlan glared at Bob. Bob stared at the ceiling. 3 had a very solid blue ditto cover, which rubbed off on you if you held it too long. Consequently, when Harlan used me to make his anti-fan points in his GoH speech, he began:

Jeff Smith... Is there a Jeff... Jeff Smith... Where's Jeff Smith? There he is... publishes this PHANTASMICOM, which is a little magazine that puts purple all over your hands. I mean, you read his magazine it looks like Dutch Elm Blight.

4 was supposed to be ready for Philcon 70, but we and Tim Kirk got our signals mixed up, and Tim illustrated the article for the fifth issue before he did that for the fourth. It was a long and involved illustrating job (six Indian miniatures), and so we finally took the material for #5 and published it with the features for #4, in time for Balticon 71. #5, with 4's material, appeared about two months later, without a con. (These issues were mimeo for the first time, although at Christmassime we had almost an entire issue ready in ditto form. We threw it all out when I got the mimeo for Xmas.)

Come to think of it, I don't remember taking 6 anywhere, either. Two unconned issues in a row? That issue I semi-gafiated in the mid-dle of, and although I edited it, Don did most of the donkey work. 7 we did for Noreascen, and that was a real rush. All the running-of and collating was done in the three days before we left, and while it was exhausting it was also running smoothly. In fact, here is a piece of my editorial, which I finished while Don was running off the last couple pages:

And so, the saga of PHANTASMICOM 7 draws to a close, with the usual period of hyperactivity these past couple days. But it hasn't seemed nearly as hectic as it generally has been in the past. I suppose because nothing serious has gone wrong for cnce.

(I didn't mention to you that the stationers sold the paper I had

reserved for #3.) I didn't knock on wood after uttering that statement, I'm afraid. In the middle of collating we ran out of staples,
We used a heavy-duty stapler I borrowed from my bookstore, supplied
with our own box of staples. I ran up to the stationers to get another box, with no success. Sold out. No place in Baltimore had the
damned things, so Don and I have our own stapler now. One of the fun
things about fanzine publishing is finding all the new expenses it
incurs.

PhCOM 8/KYBEN 1 was that rarity, an issue finished with time to spare. Its offical unveiling was at Philcon 71, but we had received at least one loc before then. Believe it or not, we finished an issue far enough in advance to send a copy to California and get a letter back before its con. That may never happen again.

9 was a bastard. That was the Balticon 72 issue, and its not purely coincidence that there has been no issue since. There was so much rush involved that it totally exhausted all of us. We didn't finish the collating before the con (which was attacked by a snowstorm, limiting my long and eagerly awaited appearance to Sunday only And while I worked half-heartedly at collating afterwards, it wasn't until Don came back over to run off his HOIWE LOND I, a month or so later, that we got it finished.

10 was going to be ready for Disclave, but I didn't go to Disclave And I'm not going to IACon, though Don is.

By Philcon, though, I promise ...

Or at least next Balticon.

Ann and I are living in Irvington, in West Baltimore, It's a pice enough place, with a wide variety of people living in it, though generally of a slightly lower class than I'm used to from my parents' suburban home.

For five years or so, 1961-66 apprx., I used to live around here Not in Tryington, but within walking distance. It's a little odd, seeing all these places again. There's a cleaners on the corner of Athol and Old Frederick, where there used to be a little grocery-type store. The women who ran it were real crabs, I remember, but mainly I remember one day when I bought something and was given too much change. I was halfway home when I realized it, but I walked back and returned my unearned capital, receiving a gruff thankyou. It involved all of 7¢ or so. My parents thought I was crazy.

A real landmark is the Irvington theater on Frederick Avenue. I was there once. I can't remember the occassion, but my mother desperately wanted me (and my brother, "S. Randall") out of the house. We had already seen the movies that were playing at the Edmonson Village and Westway theaters, but my mother prevailed upon us to go see "Iwis Around the Clock" at the Irvington. Randy and I were probably around eight and twelve, respectively. Mom told us how to get there and sen us off, over my (our?) protests. I did not want to see a Twist movie I was a real snob at the time, and rock&roll was beneath me. But I had little choice, so we went.

I hated it. It was a dumb movie with dumb music. But Randy was all caught up in it. And toward the end, when all the young coloreds

(this was 1962-3) got up and starting dancing in the aisles, Randy got up and joined them. For the rest of the movie I alternately hissed at Randy to sit down and huddled deep in my seat and pretended not to know him. I often had problems with Randy in the movies (he talked so damn much I often went to get candy and sat down somewhere else), but the Twist movie was the worst.

A few years later the Irvington turned to sex films until the neighborhood forced them back to more standard fare. Unfortunately for the management, nobody came to see the regular Hollywood movies, so the theater had to close. It is now used for revival meetings.

There's a very big landmark down here that I must mention; a

COLD DENK

[] [] []

little store on the corner of Beechfield and Frederick, near where my rental office is now. It was at this store that I bought my first science fiction magazine, the August 1964 IF. Previously I had bought a copy of ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE there, to get the story called "Tarzan, Jungle Detective." (I was an ERB fan.) then discovered that this was a retitled chapter of JUNGLE TALES OF TARZAN, but I read the whole magazine and enjoyed it -- so I figured I would enjoy an sf magazine more. I went down to the store, looked at the two they had (IF and GALAXY) and then took a walk, trying to decide which to get. I would have been better off with the GATAXY (Cordwainer Smith, Richard Wilson, Wyman Guin) but I finally went back and bought the IF. I told myself it was for the Heinlein (FARN-HAM'S FREEHOLD *sigh*) but actually it was because IF was 10¢ cheaper. When IF made the jump to 50¢ a few months later, I wouldn't buy it, even though I was in the middle of a Laumer serial. I didn't much like IF, anyway. In December I picked up the January ANALOG with THE PROPHET OF DUNE, impressed by ANALOG's classy looks. And I read ANALOG page for page for several years, longer than I ever read any

other sf magazine--though I did read a slew of back issues of F&SF when I started buying that one. (F&SF is the only one I still get regularly, with an occassional AMAZING or FANTASTIC.)

And there are lots of other places I recognize -- the baseball field, the long and winding road to the church, the library I had a few problems with -- lots of places.

Very odd--getting married and starting life anew in an old familiar place. Is that good or bad? I dunno--I'm a sci-fi fan, not a thinker.

I sire more policy changes than I do fanzines. Since typing the first part of this editorial (which, since I didn't name it, I will heretofore call "Nameless"—and, yes, I'm aware of CRY OF THE NAMELESS, but this is also a private joke) I've decided to publish PHANTASMICOM IO in November for Philcon. The long wait is brought on by the fact that I don't have too much material for the issue at the moment. What I had lined up was mostly non-sf, and I'm pulling that all out and will run it as KYBEN 3, which will be out before PhCOM 10.

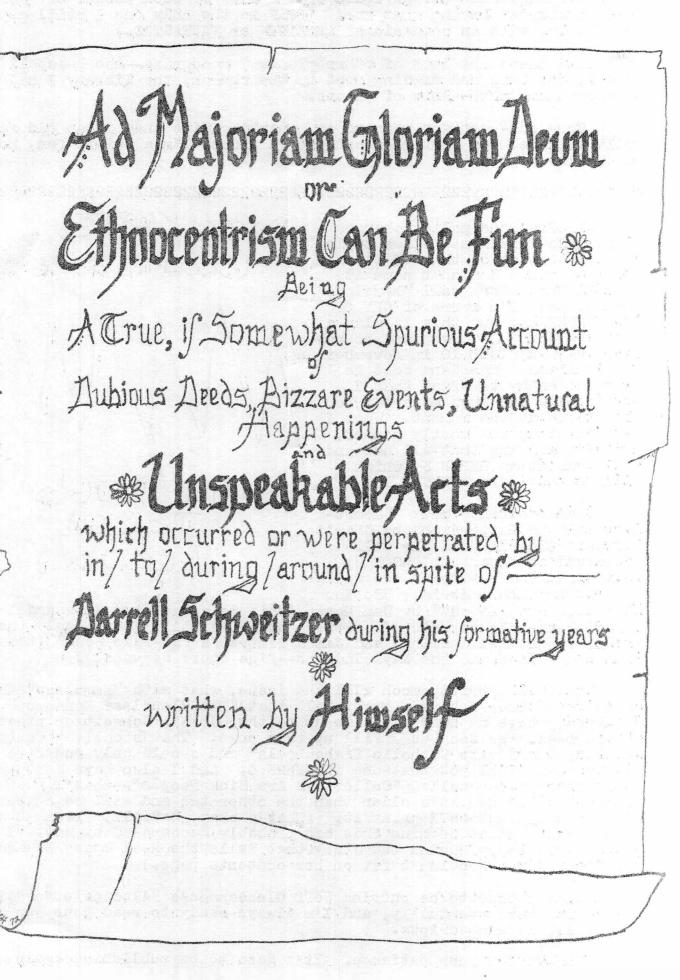
Said contents are: "Gemutlichkeit in Osterreich" by Charlie Hopwood (Charlie did the wellreceived conreport in PhCOM 8; this one is a result of two weeks in Germany and Austria); "So You MY DOG'S TEETH (LOWER)

Want to Go to IACon?" by Dan Mertz (this is somewhat dating and I wish I had been able to print it sooner, but it's still funny--only the frame around it is aging) and James Tiptree's "20-Mile Zone" (this time on Mexico and the Maya Indians--fine stuff as usual).

That will pretty much fill the issue, what with "Nameless" and a lettercolumn-I hope. Might call that "The Cloudless Monsoon." I already have on hand a follow-up to the Darrell Schweitzer piece which begins as soon as I fill up this page. That's called "Theta Worship in Private Watholic Highschools" and should only run five or six pages. I'll put that one in KYBEN 4. And I also have another Schweitzer piece called "Collectors Are Sick People" -- that'll have to go in 5, although it's older than the other two and will be a year old probably before I print it. (That's okay, Darrell. Linda Bushyager has a piece of mine that has probably decomposed by now. I guess "The Story Behind the Story that Tells the Real Story Behind the Story" just wouldn't fit on her contents page.)

Also I hope to be putting Jeff Glencannon's "Alternate Wordline" column in here eventually, and I'm always ready to read your own grimy little manuscripts.

Thanks for your patience. It's good to be publishing again.



Fans have always prided themselves, usually rightfully, for their tolerant and cosmopolitan outlook towards society and the world in general. I don't doubt that the classical green, tentacled, three-eyed BEM would be rapidly accepted as one of the crowd in most fannish circles. This is one of the wonderful things about fandom. We weren't all born that way, you know.

It all started when my mother got pregnant, and, well, one thing followed another and there I was. This occured somewhere in southern New Jersey (either Woodbury or Newark, idunno) and I lingered in those regions for some five years and went to kindergarten in Woodbury.

This is where the subject of this article first reared its mitered head: the kindergarten was a religiously affiliated institution. I believe the parish that ran it was named St. Patrick's, but about all I can remember about the place was a teacher who had been nicknamed "The Lion" because she roared a lot.

That summer my family moved to St. David's, a pinprick town in the suburbs of Philadelphia, along the famous Main Line of the Penn-sytucky Railroad. We lived in a little log cabin.

I kid ye not. The neighborhood was once the estate of some fabualously rich type who had built the thing we called our house for the amusement of his ten-year-old daughter, out of lincoln logs specially brought down from Canada. It was originally one room, but others were later added as afterthoughts. When the estate broke up, all its buildings save for the chicken coop became private dwellings. Across the street from us was the main house, which dated from the 18th century, being built shortly before the Revolution (the first one, dammit!) and next door someone made a rather impressive try at converting the barn into a 20th century middle-class suburban domicile.

So it turned out that I was the only kid on my street who was living in what was originally some rich brat's playhouse. (Ah, but people don't spoil their kids like they did in 1900....) I was also the only one to have a 25-foot high log living room with a huge fire-place at one end--it all looked more like Theoden's Hall than anything you'd expect to find in the 20th century US of A.

For us kids, this whole neighborhood was sort of, ah, isolated, On the north side was the famous thing after which the entire area was named, a four-track span of the Pennsy Railroad, on which the local juvenile delinquents used to delight in piling boulders and all sorts of debris in hopes of wrecking a train or two. Rather than calling it The Place of Mangled Bodies and Smashed Railway Cars, it became known as the Main Line. (Actually, no one ever did bag a train, though some destructive types used to snipe at them with BBs from hilltops, The police eventually put an end to this when someone was killed by flying glass from a window. I can still recall one time when all the older kids in the neighborhood were picked up for questioning. Ah, but that's another story.)

Our other boundries included US Route #1, also known as Lincoln Highway, also locally known as Lancaster Pike (all the way out to Lancaster, in the middle of the Amish country) and which was a dirt road and major highway back when Geo. Washington and all those types were running around. To the east was a golf course which I've often seen depicted on turn-of-the-century black and white photographic postcard and to the west was a rather large tract of land owned by the local dentist, whose house was the local tayern back when the aforemention

colonial types could come galloping up Route 1, stop by and get plastered.

So this small area not more than the equivalent of two city blocks was The Neighborhood, and leaving it was Going Somewhere, and required a reason and parental permission. I had a rather sheltered childhood for a couple reasons, this being only one of them.

Besides what I've already mentioned, something was unusual about the immediate area I grew up in. This does not hold for the entire Delaware Valley, or even the whole Main Line--just the Villanova-Rad-nor-St. David's-Wayne-Strafford-etc. area: it seems that 90% of the people living in this little enclave are Roman Catholics. Without having taken a census, I think I can safely divide up the population this way:

Irish Catholics: 40% Italian Catholics: 40% misc. Catholics: 10% others: 10%

My guess is that this area is a typical case of the invasion/succession process you find in sociology textbooks. These people are grandchildren of immigrants, who became reasonably well-to-do and move out of the city, forcing those aristocrats who didn't want to mingle with the peasantry to take off for more exclusive parts. The whole area is positively littered with fallen and abandoned estates. There remains only a small enclave of Upper Class people in Devon.

My family didn't have anything to do with driving out the WASPs; we sort of meandered in after it was all over.

Needless to say, my upbringing was rather orthodox. In gradeschool I sort of took of it for granted that almost everyone was Catholic. Sure, there were Protestants around, but the four churches of various denominations couldn't begin to match the congregations of the two Catholic ones. We were taught that Protestants are fine, just mistaken. The others didn't rate so highly. Jews were something you read about in Bible History, and Muslims were those guys in bedsheets who went storming up the walls of crusader forts in the movies. Every one else fell into the category of Pagan, those poor unelightened souls who through no fault of their own had never received the Gift of Faith or heard the Word of God and could not, unfortunately, even If they were good they get to heaven because they were not baptised. went to Limbo, if not they went to Hell with the rest. We collected pennies for the missions in the hope that we might just help some of these unfortunates to be Saved.

Atheists, of course, hated God, Religion, the Pope, pious little kids, and were synomymous with Russian Communists. They were bent on enslaving the world, wiping out the clergy and committing unspeakable blasphemies in the churches. The conventional image was a huge soldier with a red star in the middle of his helmet, holding a smoking machine gun and standing over a pile of dead bodies, some of which are still holding rosary beads in clenched fists. Although one of these people would repent and be saved occassionally, this was rare and they were generally to be considered unredeemable. We were supposed to be perpetually on our guard lest some Communist Agent tempt us and shake our faith and lead us down the path of sin and corruption and depravity. If necessary, we should all be willing (and glad even;) to suffer martyrdom for Christ's sake.

Now this kind of thing begins to wear off about the time the average kid is through the 6th grade (unless he becomes an altarboy, which can delay things a while) and the shame of it is that as he begins to perceive the absurd nature of the whole thing he rejects everything with a Christian stamp on it, even those aspects of the religion which are worthwhile. Maybe someday someone will drop a hint to Mother Superior that the primary source of those apostate/a-theist/commies is none other than her own gradeschool.

Being hopelessly reactionary for openers, I didn't reject everything, just threw out the more ludicrous things as I went along. Actually I suppose the real reason is that both of my parents are quite liberal in both religion and politics (my mother opposed the war in 1964) and this tended to offset the Penguin indoctrination. But I is the exception rather than the rule.

After gradeschool I went to Highschool. Catholic institutions have no concept of junior and senior highschools; the break comes after the eighth grade and you're merely in highschool.

I went to three of them, all Catholic. The first was a monstrous arch-diocesan affair with some 4000 students, arranged in the traditional Catholic manner. Boys are completely seperated from girls, and the two halves of the school have different teachers, facilities, and even seperate administrations. This leads to a special style of architecture found only in such places, with cafeterias, labs, gyms, etc., all in duplicate. For all practical purposes the average Catholic highschool is two seperate institutions connected only by a corridor or two, and occassionally sharing something like a library. It is a very impractical and unweildly system and the priests and/or brothers who run the boys! halves would just as leave combine the two, but the nuns have always blocked such moves, fearing for the virtue of their girls.

One of the more extreme aspects of highschool #1 was its gymnasium. There was only one, but segregation of the sexes was maintained by a gigantic wall mounted on wheels and retractable, which could be removed for basketball games, but was kept in place at all other times—lest the boys see the girls in their gym suits and be led astray by lustful and impure thoughts. One of the boys' favorite pastimes was trying to get a volleyball or somesuch to accidently go over the wall (nicknamed The Berlin Wall) so that the person responsible would have to go over to the other side to retrieve it and lose his innocence by discovering that girls really do have thighs.

After my freshman year I left this school because another was being builf closer to where I lived. (Incidently, I had moved out of the log cabin after the 7th grade.) This was just like the first one save that it was smaller, and still under construction at the time it opened. However, the atmosphere was completely different. More in the solutional mid-city highschool there was a rumble nearly every day at the train station after school, and one time I came out on the wrong end of a brawl and a tactical withdrawel had to be made. (The vast majority of the kids there never did find out what had happened to me, and must have given me up for dead.)

Highschool #3 was privately run by the Piarist Fathers, a very tiny order of Hungarian priests, most of whom were refugees. It seemed they'd been running a recruiting drive in South America lately because those who weren't Slavic were of Spanish descent. The place was sort of a cross between a monastary and a funny farm, run by a



THE COMMIE OF HIGH SCHOOL #3

bunch of half-senile (though often brilliant) clergymen with the kind of attitudes that made the Spanish Inquisition what it was.

Rather than segregate as most Catholic schools do, they solved the problem in a very simple manner—there were no girls. Sex was... ahem...just, uh...*blush*...well, you get the idea.

Unlike the other places I have described this one was somewhat conservative -- religiously, politically and socially. Although something like 99% of all graduates went to college (a neat trick with 52 seniors, you must admit) and the students came from families with incomes considerably higher than the average (well-to-do all the way through Filthy Rich; I felt a paupe among them), their attitudes were more like those traditionally ascribed to hardhats and sons of hardhat In the 1968 election about 40% were Wallacites, and the rest were Nixon ians. There was a small lunatic

fringe of pinko radical hippie liberal freaks who ran from Humphrey through McCarthy to Pat Paulsen, but these comprised less than 5%. I was the local communist.

Most of them didn't take their religion very seriously, as conservative and respectable as they were. There are limits to anyone redibility, you know. (Hang on. I'll develop that.)

These priests were a rather superstitious lot. As you may or may not know, the Church actually does continue to practice exorcism and it is considered highly possible that a person might sell his soul to the Devil in exchange for magical powers. I once cornered a priest on this (at a college, no less) and asked him if there was any thing in FAUST that couldn't happen any day, and the answer was negative.

From ghosties an! ghoulies an! things that go bump in th! night

The atmosphere of the place was great for hauntings. The school was built on an old estate, complete with a huge mansion full of dark rooms and lofty ceilings with gargoyles every place you could possibly want one. To top that off the upper three floors were positivel off limits and one could only wonder what unspeakable deeds went on up there....

Seriously, what was on the top three floors were some of the priests quarters, little cells that resemble those of a monastary. (This order had a vow of poverty so it figures.) However, there is a verified case of a newly arrived seminarian finding a one-armed human skeleton dressed in a cassock lying in his new bed, whereapon he ran screaming out of the room, and the skeleton was never seen again.

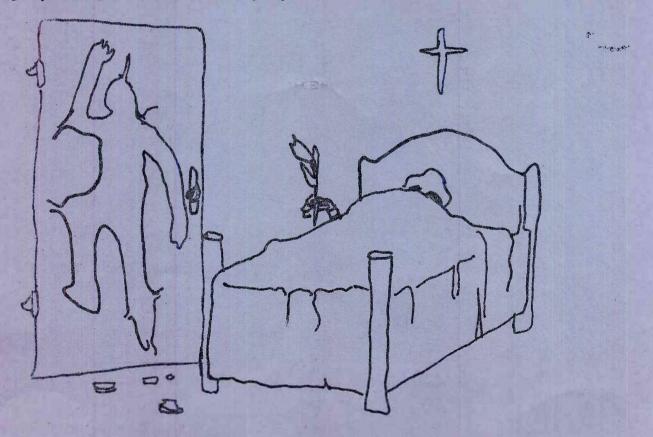
Strange noises were heard at night for a variety of reasons. For one thing there were no screens in the windows, so during the warmer months bugs and vampires and all sorts of things could come flapping in. In addition to this the school had its very own resident ghost.

You see, the mansion originally belonged to a family named Lee, who were owners of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and blended in nicely with all the other millionaires who inhabited the area around the turn of the century. Now it seems that Mrs. Lee had died and below the basement there was a crypt, supposedly sealed off (ha!) wherein she reposed. The problem was that she wouldn't stay there.

She seems to have been a rather obnoxious person in life, but her actions after her demise show that she did have a kindly streak in her. The most frequently repeated Mrs. Lee story involves a woman who came to Devon Prep (the zoo I have been talking about) to register her son, and was given a very rude "we don't want any" brushoff and nearly driven from the premises by an old hag who was taken to be the maid. But the headmaster later explained to the bewildered mother that they didn't have a maid and the only woman on the grounds was his secretary (with whom he later eloped; blew his chances for becoming a Monsignor...) who didn't at all fit the description given. The "maid" was later identified from a picture. It was Mrs. Lee.

Now it seems to me that anyone who would try and save a kid from being enrolled in such a place must have a good side to her....

There was also a supporting ghost, who was never seen much. He was a priest who was also buried on the grounds who supposedly had been seen several times late at night in the chapel going through the motions of celebrating the mass. It is said that if a priest dies before having fulfilled all his promises for saying masses for people, he has to do them anyway.



To add to the flavor of the place, beneath the mansion (the school was divided into the mansion and some modern classrooms added on later) there was a vast maze of unlighted corridors, empty wine cellars and rooms, which were basically unexplored and doubtless altimately led to those deep caverns beneath the Earth where Nyarlathotep, the mad faceless god, howls blindly to the riping of his amorphous fluteplayers—not to mention Mrs. Lee's daytime residence. I never took this too seriously, and with a companion I actually explored a good deal of it, but I do know one person who stated outright that he was afraid to go down there alone.

One of the less believable legends about the place involved a griffin at the base of the main stairs which was reputed to fly around at night. It isn't likely that this is true, but there were times when it would be missing and then show up again later. Never was gone for more than a couple days, though.

The intellectual life of the place was somewhat medieval. Admittedly some of the teachers were geniuses (the assistant headmaster had a Magna Cum Laude from the University of Budapest; a whole string of Ph.D's; had written the Latin textbook; taught Algebra, geometry, calculus, theology, physics, chemistry, biology, Russian and Italian. Besides that he spoke thirty languages. When last heard of he was just mastering Croatian) but just as many were absolute idiots. Anything could go on there. If you don't believe me, I'll tell you a couple closet stories:



- Once someone made a tape recording of a toilet flushing and placed this in the closet before the beginning of a class. About halfway through he stood up and said, "Father may I be excused? Before he could get an answer he stapped into the closet, waited a minute, then turned on the recording and came out, pulling up his zipper, and sat down as if nothing was amiss. The priest never caught on.
- The classrooms were lined up end to end in a single row. Through the back wall of one you could hear someone writing on the blackboard of ano-One day a student from the class behind mine slipped into the closet right before the class began. About fifteen minute later he emerged, asked, "Father, may we borrow some chalk? , scooped up some from the blackboard and went back into the closet. Noohing happened

I could go on forever this way and tell you about the student who pretended to drop dead in class and collapsed to the floor, only to be ignored; or the indoor frisbee tournaments; or the icicle caper; or the time a firecracker was exploded in class and the teacher was convinced that the noise was a window blowing shut upstairs (this was in the new part of the school—there wasn't any upstairs); or the time some students smuggled a bewildering array of screwdrivers, crowbars, hammers, saws, etc., into the chapel during the weekly mass and started to dismantle the pews; or I might mention the weekly Skinflik Theatre in the Dark Room. This is why graduates always spend hours swapping Devon stories, even years after they have escaped the place.

But all the things I have mentioned so far have been secondary. The main attraction in this particular freakshow was a Latin and Religion teacher, a priest whose name was unpronouncably and unspellably Hungarian, who was generally known as Ripple ('cause that's what he had on his forehead). Even among the fossils of DP he stood out as backward. I think he fancied himself a latterday Christ, because he always preached in parables. However, unlike most parables, his sounded as if they had been written by Dr. Seuss--the cast included such dubious personages as Willy the Worm and Creepy the Caterpillar. I never actually heard one of these because he got laughed off the pulpit too soon, but I understand that the last one had only been delivered a week or so before I transferred in. (Rip had also been in a parish briefly, but after a couple of sermons he had to leave.)

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He was very concerned with our spiritual well-being, and was always trying to save us from the evil influences of the Forces of Darkness and keep us away from Near Occassions of Sin. rather involved. Check your catechism.) His was one of the first classes I had at the Prep, and shortly beforehand the class president whispered to me, "This is sort of our 'romper room'," and when the usual chaos exhorted Rip exhorted everyone not to corrupt me because I was new and he didn't want me to fall into their Evil Ways. Alas, this was to no avail, because in a year or so I was masterminding schemes, even if I usually didn't carry them out. Although I had a perfect discipline record I was responsible for more trouble than generally given credit for. My greatest accomplishment was getting ar issue of the school paper suppressed and as a result everyone else but me was thrown out of the upper echelons of the thing. So I guess Rip's attempt to save me before it was too late failed, but I appreciate the thought.

He was funny enough when teaching Latin, but in Religion he out-did himself.

For one thing, he told us outright that it was a mortal sin to look at a girl in a miniskirt. For the benefit of the non-Catholics in the audience, this means that it is an offense against God and the Church of the most serious degree, and the doer's soul is for all practical purposes dead. If he dies before repenting he'd be damned without a second thought.

Although it was understandable for Rip to take a conservative stand in these areas, he eventually went a bit too far:

- 1) If Adam and Eve hadn't sinned we would have a different means of reproduction. Something more "clean."
 - 2) Evolution is a heresy. (Heresy is what they burned people



EVOLUTION IS A HERESY, BOYS.

at the stake for.)

This last one gave birth to what was perhaps the most extraordinary thing that happened in all the $2\frac{1}{2}$ years I went to Devon:

Of course, Rip got a lot of ribbing over his revelation, but it didn't stop there. He announced this truth to us during the fall of my senior year, during which time preparations were being made for the school play and I was assistant set director, which meant that my goons and I could be heard hammering away until late at night working on the stage. As can be expected, there was much screwing around and very little work done.

It happened that we were at it in earnest Sunday night, the famous statement having been made on the preceding Thursday, when all of a sudden someone came up with the brilliant idea that we should all go up on the roof. Fine. Everyone went storming out and around to the back where the gym is low, and we all climbed up on the roof. It was a clear night and the moon was full, and weird shadows of cavorting figures flickered across the rooftops. The light was so bright that from the ground only silhouettes were visible.

Just then Ripple came wandering through the wooded section behind the gym. We saw him first, and a brilliant inspiration struck.

As he neared the building, we all bent over and began howling and beating our chests and leaping about and prancing wike chimpanzees, all the while chanting: "We are evolution! We are evolution! We are evolution! We are evolution! The stopped dead and stared, then whirled around and bounded back towards the mansion as fast as he could go, his cassock flapping wildly behind him. He later returned with several others. I don't think they believed him. (Need-less to say, we were gone by then.)

The next morning his usual plea of "Why do you torture me?" changed somewhat. When something or other started, he turned to us with a pained expression and asked:

"WHY DO YOU HAUNU ME?"

I doubt Mrs. Lee could have done any better.

...epilogue...

5

This, then, is Catholic education as I experienced it. Intellectually prehistoric, socially petrified, but delightfully absurd in day to day life. I have only scratched the surface of my "adventures as a Catholic highschool student" and I don't think it could really be adequately handled here. It has been suggested to me by Devon graduates that I write a book on the place (LOST IN THE FUNHOUSE?), but I don't think that would do. A TV situation comedy series would be better.

I have been brought up in this background, as have many others. This might give you some insight into why as many as 50% of everyone brought up as a Catholic abandons his religion about the time he graduates highschool. It is damned hard to respect one's clergy and take religion seriously when it is presented so ludicrously,

There are unquestionably harmful effects from all this. Experience is extremely narrow and sooner or later you get hit with the realization that the world is not run by Roman Catholics. As for understanding one's fellow mancoo

As for me, I am quite glad I got into fandom when I did. It widened my mental horizons immeasurably. Among other things, after I became a fan I actually met and talked with a (*ghasp*) Jew.

I've gotten used to the Krishna Awarsness Society, too.

02-301 potter street Utimore md 21229 Brooklyn NY 11201 Porter requested 3rd class AG 16 PM

