



MAINSTREAM

#9 in a continuing series, Mainstream comes to you from the happy home of Suzle, and her sidekick Jerry Kaufman, up there near the top of the east side of the Pacific Rim (but not too near) at 4326 Winslow Place N., Seattle, WA 98103. You can get this zine for \$1 a copy, or for trade, letter of comment, or contribution. Mailed under the auspices (and the aegis) of the Northwest Science Fiction Society. This is the October 1983 issue and this page is being typed September 28, 1983, only 7 months since the last one. We're getting faster!



Front Cover by Cheryl Cline (see Suzle's editorial for startling details)

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Collators last issue: Chris Bates, Steve Bieler, Judy Blinder, John Carl, Dave Clements, Shelley Dutton, Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Anna Vargo, Theo Williams, Cliff Wind

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SUZLECOL

SUZANNE TOMPKINS

First of all, thanks to many of you for the lovely suggestions as to what to do with four quarts of frozen leftover vichyssoise. (See my column in Mainstream #9 re: overwhelming party leftovers.) None of these turned out to be necessary, though, since someone (who shall remain nameless) accidentally unplugged the freezer ("Oh, that's what that plug is for!!!"), which we discovered three days later. Luckily the vichyssoise and some strawberries were the only victims; everything else was salvageable.

I should mention that I am attempting this editorial on Marilyn Holt's computer, a Morrow Micro Decision, which I have been learning to use as a word processor among other things for the past few months. She has been quite patient teaching me, considering that although I have done CRT data entry, etc., for a number of years, I have almost no computer terminology and it takes a while for things to sink in.... Next, since a number of our readers have failed to respond to Mainstream for so long that they may possibly have died or something and the rest of you seem to have moved at least once since our last issue, I have to revamp the mailing list completely. So, we're putting it on the computer, which will make updating and running labels a bit easier, especially if we can figure out how to print the labels in zip code order...Mainstream enters the computer age!!!

I haven't mentioned Terry Carr yet, have I? Oh, well, perhaps later.

"Suzle Becomes a Travel Agent"
or
"The Maltese Reservationist"

"Suzanne," Dr. Gyency says in her thickly lilting Hungarian accent, "Suzanne, you wait here...I, I will try to get us zee money. There is a man; he is coming into town with cash for us, I think. I must go now to meet Bob in the coffee shop, then he will, he must give us the cash. You wait here for me. I'll try to hurry."



The small, beautiful woman slips quietly out of her seat, leaving me momentarily alone. Here. Seated in a grimy, stained booth. At The Dog House, an open-24-hours paragon of '30s restaurant kitsch. It is 5:30 pm, Friday afternoon, a July day in 1982. I am not long alone. Jerry joins me to hold my hand, to wait.

Ilona Gyeney, my Hungarian counterpart, will be meeting with the two men, Bob (The Boss) and an unknown gentleman with "the loot." She and they are even now dealing, negotiating, transferring money at The Lower 40, the motel restaurant across the street. I am growing impatient; I toy with my cup of soup. Jerry smiles at me, trying to reassure me as he gazes up from his chocolate layer cake and glass of milk.

Half an hour passes like thirty minutes. We watch a scruffy, dirty young man ask a waitress for change, knowing that he is Mike, boyfriend of my boss's former lover and receptionist, the equally scruffy Cindy. They, too, are waiting, out in the parking lot of The Dog House, with the van in which they live, waiting for the money.

Old people drift in and out of the dining room and lounge where a fruity baritone voice croons in the background. Soon he will leave and it will be time for The Dog House specialty, "Sing Along With Harriett," a favorite with the regulars since 1933.

A shaft of strong summer light blazes through the doorway as the front door is thrown open and Ilona returns. "He makes me seek," the angular Hungarian announces as she sits. "He is a jerk, the liar of liars. But this time, at least, we have the money."

We check to make sure we are not being watched as Ilona peels off four \$100 bills and slyly slips them to me. At last, I think, at last, I have gotten my due. Ilona will now go out to make the payoff at the van in the parking lot and we will be able to leave this place "Where All Roads Lead," "Where The Elite Meet," to make our way home through the cruel Seattle streets, made dangerous by the annual influx of the dreaded "touristas" who stroll about casually, glutting the farmer's market with their warm bodies and easy money, causing locals to place "Have you kicked a tourist today?" bumper stickers in more prominent places.

Ilona motions to us from the doorway. Jerry and I join her to walk briskly to our bus stop,



hoping we haven't missed the last Number 6 to Wallingford and Aurora Village via Stone Way. Ilona's hand flutters her good-byes as she boards her Number 2 trolley to Queen Anne Hill and the end of another week.

Yes, it is Friday, 6:30 pm, July, 1982, the end of my first month's employment, and yes, I have finally gotten paid.

This, I swear to ghod, with Jerry as my witness (or alternately I swear to Jerry with ghod as my witness...) is a reasonably honest recreation of how I got paid for my perfectly ordinary job of hotel/motel reservationist on my second payday. When I started at Computerized Travel Services,

Inc. in June of last year I immediately knew that, well, something was pretty peculiar about the place. I knew that the president of the company was ~~really~~ *really* a bit eccentric, but if the world-wide computerized system that they had developed could be made to work, it looked like a very good place to be on the ground floor of. To make a long story short, nothing ever worked properly except we human reservationists, Ilona Gyeney and her sister, who defected from Hungary a few years ago, and me. There was most often no money to do anything, pay bills, pay salaries, etc., and it became a very stressful scene, wondering from payday to payday if this time would finally be it, the time we would not get paid. This went on for exactly one year, until last June, when I just had to call it quits when it became obvious that we would not be paid again.

This was the closest I've come to knowing people who live on a literal day-to-day basis. My boss would make up stories about vast sums of money coming his way through his entrepreneurial efforts (the efforts were all quite real, with figures in the billions of dollars being dealt with) to keep creditors, and business partners who kept forking out thousands of dollars, at bay on a day-to-day basis for month after month, whilst Ilona and I held on by our fingernails, dodging process servers, inventing stories for the phone company and the landlord, handling varyingly exhausting and infinitesimal workloads, fixing up the office with posters and plants in what we knew was a pointless effort to fool ourselves that actual money was coming and we would become a "real company."

I am left hoping that the training and experience I got out of it was worth the ultimate delay in starting the career I've been trying to begin for five years. The last six months did allow me to work part time for Marilyn and at this moment we are trying to develop her business so that I can work as a meeting planner/conference coordinator. Anyone want to move to Seattle and help us with sales and customer contact?

Although we didn't use his loc this time, I want to thank a certain gentleman from Illinois who called me whilst I was still at CTSI on our toll-free hotel reservation number to request that I reserve a room for him in Baltimore at the Tucker Hotel. I am embarrassed to admit that I actually started to look up the hotel in the Index before I realized who my "customer" was, and I had to inform Mr. Tucker that he would just have to settle for the Hilton or the Hyatt, like everyone else.

I simply must say something about this issue. (My column has run short, so believe me, I simply must say something...)

The cover by Cheryl Cline is a good example of the rubber stamp art and a first for us. She sent us the original which had three spaces left for color rubber stamps, which Cheryl also provided. We mimeod the cover and rubber-stamped in the color figures. Having seen many rubber-stamp fanzines in the past few years, I never thought that I'd have the patience to do the number of copies we'd need for Mainstream, but it did work out quite well. Of course, I didn't do any of it; Jerry and Joan Baker did all of it, but it's the thought...

In "Plaint" by R.A. (Bertie) MacAvoy, she refers to Oolong, a novel that she had just sold, but which had not yet been published. Since then (last June), it was, in fact, released as Tea with the Black Dragon and has received both critical acclaim and very good sales.

We have a lot of Thank You's, of course. First, we have to thank Bob Doyle, our stalwart housemate, for use of his typer and mimeo; they are the reason this issue looks so good. I do think, however, that his arranging to housesit whilst his mother is in Europe and to work twelve hour weekend shifts is a little much just to get away from our house when we are in production. I mean really.

In addition to helping Jerry with rubber-stamping, Joan Baker, our temporary houseguest, has been a wonderful slipsheeteer. Many others have also helped with slipsheeting, including: Chris Bates, Janice Murray, Karrie Dunning, Steve Roylance (an Aussie who wandered in from Worldcon at just the right time), Tom Weber, and Don Keller. Don also helped out with other things such as picking up our paper.

Also, kudos, past and future, to Cliff Wind for handling the bulk rate arrangements and to the Northwest Science Fiction Society, for use of their bulk mailing permit.

Our next issue should be interesting. We already have several pieces lined up, including Eli Cohen's remembrances of the WPSFA Curse, an installment of Stu Shiffman's TAFF report, Jon Singer on we're-not-really-sure,-but-it-certainly-sounds-weird, Jerry on his DUFF trip, Bob Shaw on Beer, and possibly me on the many hilarious times I've had by falling over (a companion piece to the WPSFA Curse, no doubt).

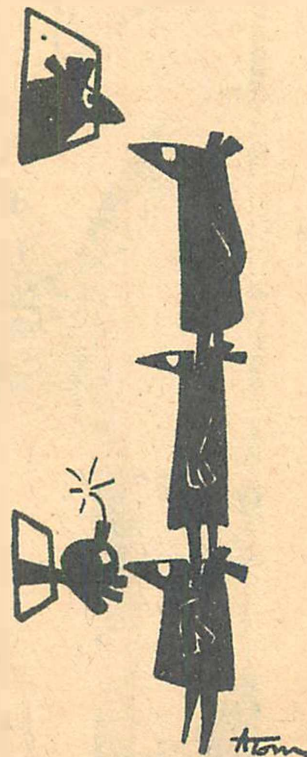
Is it still possible that I've not mentioned Terry Carr? Guess so.

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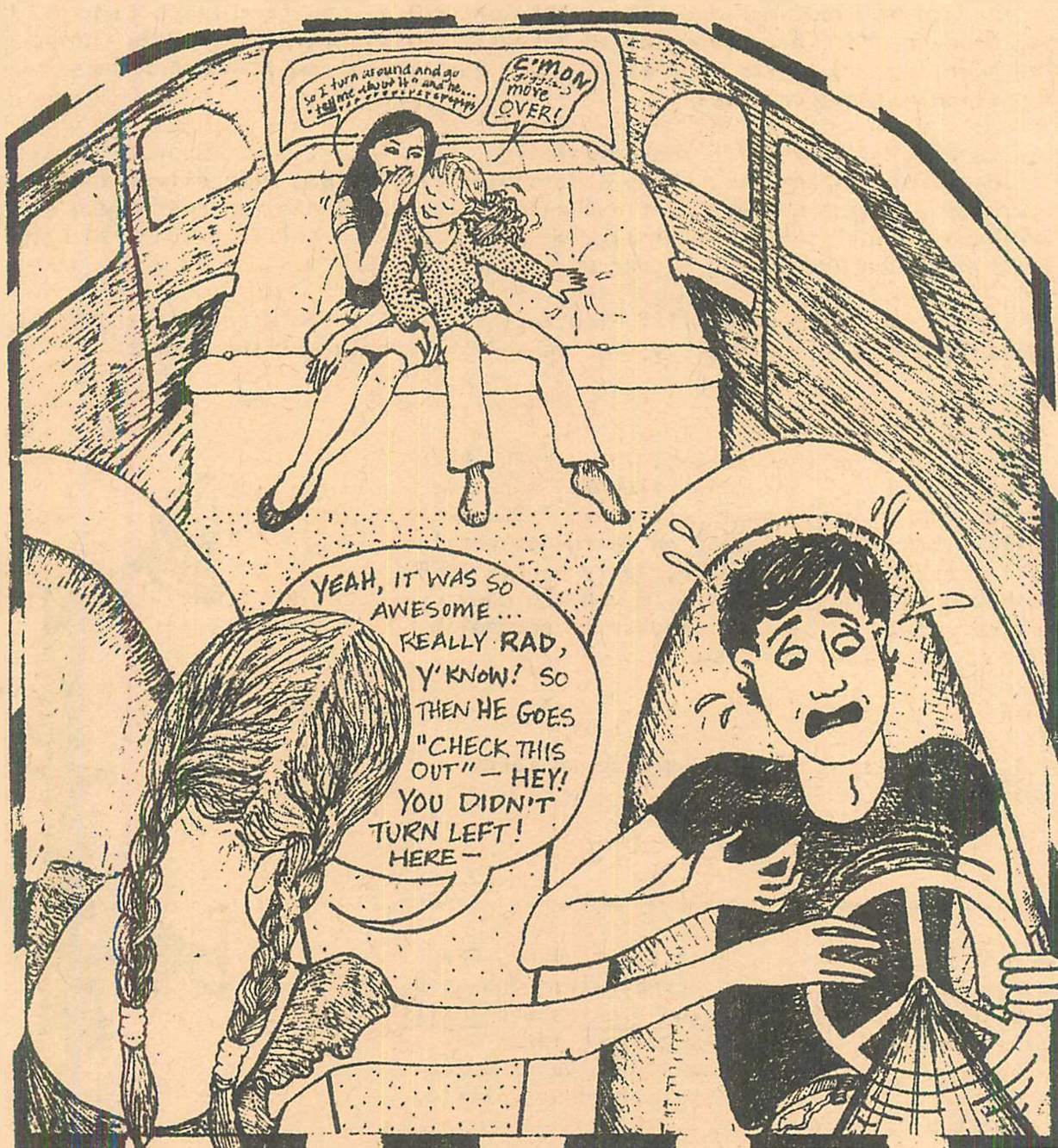
The element of wonder might be best typified by, for those who can remember them, the Bergey girls who used to appear on the covers of Startling Stories and Thrilling Wonder, of which I may be selling some later on today, in which you had almost naked females in outer space, wandering around. It was totally unscientific, but at least it made you think.

--Dick Jenssen, Boy's Own Fanzine



STEVEN BRYAN BIELER:

GAYLE FORCE



When Gayle was young, life was easy, and to me, her big brother, there befell many opportunities to display my manly virtues. I replaced wheels on her toy trucks, played with her and her stuffed bunnies when her friends weren't home, and chased away bad boys when they bullied her. Life was easy. I was needed.

But just as surely as birds and baseball teams return in the spring, so too do young girls grow up.

One afternoon I found Gayle brushing her hair in front of the mirror in my parents' bedroom. With brush poised above her head and eyes firmly fixed on her own image, she said, as if she had been waiting for someone to come along, "I can't do anything with my hair. I can't stand it, it's so ugly!"

She looked at me.

It was one of those moments that makes a man wish again for the days of the stuffed bunnies. What could I say? If I told her that she was wrong, that her hair was not ugly, she would dismiss my contention as something a brother was expected to say. If I agreed with her, if I said yes, your hair is ugly, why don't you burn it, she'd kill me. I was no longer dealing with a baby sister. This was a woman. "Wanna play monopoly?" I asked.

Then there were boys. Boys teased and threw rocks. This had changed, but though their methods were different they were still trouble. The trouble they caused was beyond my ability to deal with. In fact it was beyond my comprehension. When quizzed by Gayle on boy behavior I produced no useful information. Hell, I didn't know why those boys did the things they did. I didn't always know why I did the things I did!

For Gayle's first Big Dance, I was drafted as driver for her and her friends. They assumed I would be less obnoxious than my father. I was given strict instructions of etiquette. "Don't say anything while we're in the car," Gayle warned. Yes ma'am. "Don't show everyone how fast you can drive." Yes ma'am. "Don't come for us until I call you. I don't want you standing around looking at everything!" Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am.

These instructions were unnecessary. Nobody paid any attention to me. The girls chattered excitedly about boys, music, and what Debbie said to Mr. Mahoney in English yesterday without censoring their conversation at all. They didn't care what I heard or said, so long as I took them to the boys. I learned a lot from that short drive. I hadn't realized it took so much work to get boys in the right mood. I couldn't believe the nerve of that Debbie. I don't know how Mr. Mahoney put up with her.

As she was leaving the car Gayle issued her last command. "Bombo & Nudelman is on at ten," she said. "Let me know what happens."

That was, at the time, her favorite program. Ace Bombo and Howie Nudelman were optometrists who solved crimes. Their cars were provided by Ford Motor Company and their wardrobes by Swank House. Bombo & Nudelman was the most violent show in the history of television. Guest stars were regularly shot, stabbed, clubbed, run over by Ford Motor Company, or had their hair pulled. Enough ammunition was consumed in each episode to refight the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Gayle and her friends watched this holocaust every week because of Nudelman. He was stunningly cute. Maybe that was the source of their problems with boys. None of the ones they knew were as cute as Howie Nudelman, Private Optometrist.

I still clung to my old role of helpful brother. At ten o'clock I was seated in Gayle's usual place in front of the television, pencil and paper ready. My father was asleep in his own chair, my mother was doing the dishes, and my brother had escaped the house. It was up to me.

This won't be so bad, I decided. By watching what Gayle watches I may gain valuable insights into her character heretofore overlooked by me. I might even enjoy it!

The show began with the Bombo & Nudelman theme. You can reproduce it by dragging a cat through guitar strings. Two people were beaten and another had coffee spilled on his new suit while the credits were still rolling. The basic premise was quickly given: a beautiful woman was in trouble. Bad boys in big cars from Ford Motor Company were after her. Desperate, she came to Bombo and Nudelman for help and an eye exam. Commercial.

Looked like one of their "message" shows.

"Don't worry, miss," Bombo said. "We'll help you get your inheritance back and take a large percentage for ourselves, too. Won't we, Howie?" Howie turned his face to the camera and smiled boyishly. This was the part where women under fifteen sighed and hugged themselves. I did the best I could.

"Now read that top line," Bombo said, indicating a chart on the far wall of their office. "E-X-I-T," the beautiful woman read. Suddenly a large black car filled with bad boys crashed through the front door. "Behind ya, Howie!" Bombo yelled. Nudelman whipped his surface-to-air missiles from under his lab coat and began firing. The bad boys laughed. They were making a mess of the office, running over equipment and leaving skid marks on the rug. The beautiful woman had fainted. Commercial. I went to make some sandwiches. It looked like a long night.

When I got back Bombo was talking with the Chief of Police amid the rubble of the office. "You can't go after those thugs, Dr. Bombo," the Chief said. "We have to, Chief," Bombo replied. "We're optometrists. We took an oath to uphold the law. Right, Howie?" Nudelman gave us a profile. His nose was bigger than mine.

Half the city was in flames and the beautiful woman had threatened to kill herself if Nudelman didn't marry her when Gayle called. The dance was ending early. Pooh. I got my coat, woke my father and said good-bye. The old man had slept through seventeen shootings, a five-alarm fire, and a noisy love scene between Nudelman and the beautiful woman in the back seat of the Ford Motor Company.

I expected to be treated on the way back home the same as I had been on the way there, i.e., ignored. I was eager to hear what had happened with those boys at the dance. Instead I was the center of attention. Gayle had told her friends that I had stayed home to watch Bombo & Nudelman. A detailed report was demanded.

"Well, there was this beautiful woman--"

We don't want to hear about that!

"Some guy got coffee stains on his suit, and then he was run over--"

What about Howie!

"Well, Howie was pretty good. He remembered both of his lines. He wore that black leather jacket from Swank House over his lab coat and he kissed a beautiful woman--"

What! How could he!

"But he didn't mean it! She made him do it."

That's more like it. What else happened?

"Well, some more people got run over, there was a fire, the U.N. was called in to restore order, and Mudelman smiled a lot."

They sighed.

"Thanks, Steve," Gayle said. "You did good."

I smiled. Maybe I didn't know anything about boys, but I could still be her big brother.

###

TRICKLE

TERRY GAREY

THE FRUITS OF LABOR

One of the nice by-products of working as a temp are the anecdotes and bits of silly information one ends up with to amaze and amuse one's friends.

Just last fall I worked for Castle and Cooke, that charming corporation that brings you Dole pineapple products, Bumble Bee tuna and salmon, and Dole bananas.

The section I was working for was telecommunications, and now and then, when I got a break from the FAX machines, I would wander over to see what the teletype was spitting out.

Once there was a message from a C & C executive somewhere in Africa, telling his buddies back in the States about the python and 20-meter crocodile he had seen. Another time, someone in Central America mentioned calmly that the local government had shut down phone service for a few days due to rebel activities and so reports would be a bit late and sorry about that.

One of my favorite messages was from a shipping concern, admonishing Costa Rica Operations not to hire the ship Turtle again, because it was too old and too slow and had allowed bananas to become overripe. Several times whole cargoes had been dumped at sea.

I was relating this particular story to Debbie Hotkin with great glee one evening and she got a funny look on her face.

"Dumped a whole boatload of bananas! So," she said with an expressive shrug, "they never heard of banana bread?"

###

PLAIN

The stuff I write (in the words of Jerry Kaufman) doesn't have a lot of comment hooks in it --not like the Ever Increasing Number of Danger Signs of Fandom. There is nothing about the history of musical instruments, or the relationship between orthodontia and bondage to prick the gentle reader in his/her fannish center. I'm not complaining about that, mind you. It's just the way it's been.

That changes now. This is my first fannish (faanish?) article. Don't worry; I'll cope.

I sold a book to Bantam this winter, or actually, my agent Elizabeth sold the book. I myself could never get people to look at it. Not even friends, for the most part. My mother read it, however. She said she liked it.

I remember the phone call, when Elizabeth said (in her dryest, most Lexington Avenue voice) "Berta? Sit down." I remember the low buzzing, like a jet engine in my head, and the slight taste of sour metal in my mouth. I remember then the blankness, and later incredible nausea and the panicked inability to wake up.

It may be I've got the memory of the phone call mixed up with that of my knee surgery--the events were so much alike.

I walked around the house mumbling to myself for a bit--hell, the book was years old in my mind, and much rereading had made me painfully aware of its flaws. I didn't trust the phone call. Nor the book. Nor my ability to stand upright without holding on to the sideboard.

Next I made a few calls and mumbled to friends. Then I sat down on the couch and started to shake all over, like a small dog at the vet's.

You have to understand, I've been writing these books for almost fifteen years.

It was after I graduated college, got divorced, and realized there was no place on earth (city nor individual heart) I had any value, that I wrote my first book. It was to be an alternative--no, I mean a preliminary--to suicide. As another person might blow her bank account on travel or rich food before popping the pills or taking apart the Wilkenson sword-edge, I decided I would play with the thing which had always been most important (too impossibly important to try) in my mind. When I lost interest in that, I would then be perfectly ready to curl up under sheets.

That temporary truce with living has kept me well into my thirties. It lost its character of despair almost immediately after I started getting enough food in my stomach. And soon afterwards I realized I couldn't kill myself without also killing a number of inchoate characters residing in my head, some of whom I was very fond of. (Though sf is the literature of ideas, and though sf was what I grew up reading, and perforce writing, neither conception nor plot has ever sparked a thing from me. Unfortunately. Just characters.)

Anyway, I wrote novels. Roughly one a year. I pressed them on friends, because it was urgent that other people met and understood the characters I'd created.

R. A. MAC AVOY

I didn't know about agents, or editors. I didn't know of the existence of fandom til in my mid twenties, and didn't quite understand it until April, 1982 (when I visited Seattle and something clicked). I certainly didn't know how to format a manuscript. I just wrote books and gave them away, saving no copy.

In one of the essays in Language of the Night, Le Guin says something to the effect that, by the time she sold a book, she was just about ready to give up writing in despair. I don't understand. I'm not sure I believe her. Another sf writer (don't remember the name, but only that he's male) came out with the often quoted line that if you don't write for money you're a fool. That, with all its implications that the practice of writing is divided between the class which may and should write (being justified by sales) and that which shouldn't, is one of the most offensive things I've ever read.

I had found my point of balance, writing for myself and those few I could browbeat into reading. It was not quite therapy-stuff, I don't think. I did the best I could with my stories, and my imaginary people knew when I slighted them, and lord how they stared out at me, then.

I will continue to write as long as I live, whether or not Bantam turns belly up between now and next spring (and Mr. Long fades unread into the void.) Whether or no I ever sell another book. (As I write, Friday, June 25th, 1982, this eventuality seems more and more likely, as an editor whom I shall not name is not returning my calls.) There is a circle of people (Jerry Ferguson: the runner, the thief; Martha MacNamara, with her mad fiddle under her chin; Dami Belstrego, with dog and angel; Kalli Palopos, R. Emmett Finney...) sitting in the doctor's waiting room of my head: nervous, trying to be courteous to one another, afraid time will run out before their numbers are called.

In fact, selling Oolong--Bantam doesn't call it that; just me--has threatened my balance more than any of the hundreds of previous private and public rejections. I feel obscurely guilty, as though I've pulled a fake of some kind. I feel somehow I'm the butt of a huge joke. (That actually comes later, of course, after publication, and is called 'the review.')

Ruti: But all this wailing and rending of cloth is merely an introduction to the fannish part, which concerns my time since the phone call from Elizabeth. People's reactions to my sale, and to me. My reactions to them.

Always I have babbled on about the characters in my head: both the agonies I'm putting them through and just how cheek-pinching cute they are (wanna see some slides of my youngest character? Hasn't she got her mother's eyes? And those in that other rack are of my grandcharacters, just learning to talk, and so well behaved...). People like Suzle and Jerry who have known me for years have grown tolerant of this, as they've adjusted to the fact that I conk out at parties at 10 pm.

I don't think I've changed since I signed the contract with Bantam, except possibly to become more reticent. (I do feel a bit like an idiot, you know.)

But I'm getting some very strange vibes from fans I meet.

Nonfans--no problem. They say things like, "Did you put me in it? Don't put me in it."

Write about this place, it's stranger than fiction."

Also "Hey, are you rich yet? When's the movie coming out?" and of course "Where do you get your weird..." etc. Then they'll reach down, munch a thistle, twitch a long ear, and trot off. No harm in them. What else should I expect?

But fans? I'm a neofan. Been one for seven years. Fans have been very kind to me in my slow awakening. Every fan I've spoken to over the age of 16 knows a lot more about publishing than I do. I expected an attitude of casual support for my bizarre fortune.

Instead--how to say?--I've gotten a lot of silences. And I'm beginning to recognize a peculiar motion of the head and eyes which I observe in a listener when I respond to the question "Whatcha bindoin?" with "Writing another book. It's about..."

First the eye contact recedes til my listener is staring through walls at an invisible horizon. Then the face slowly swings to the left (always the left) and the gaze drops to the floor. And stays there. Naturally this throws me off my stride. Sentences die half said. Deep blue-violet silences ensue. The subject is changed.

Bertie feels very, very silly.

This has happened a dozen times since December. It has happened at fannish parties and in fannish living rooms. Not with everybody, of course. There are people I can and have talked to about my writing (and even about this problem) but I'd best not name them, since in doing so I'll implicate by omission others, and I have the feeling this article's going to get me in enough trouble already.

I bring up my writing and an atmosphere of conviviality dies in fits on the floor. Why? Just because it's boring? Then why didn't it happen before?

I promise you all, I was just as boring a year ago.

I asked a few people this question and most merely shook their heads (and let their eyes drift out, left, and down...). I asked it of Jerry (who was the first fan I ever met, at Lunacon in New York, when I wandered in off the street) and further asked him if I could be breaking an unwritten fannish rule (if there can be anything in fandom unwritten) in talking about writing non-fannish stuff. Was it being egotistical, perhaps?

His first response (I think) was to say there was no fannish rule against being egotistical. After consideration he added that fans (fanzine fans: the only kind I know) have a horror of munching thistles in front of writers. He suggested that perhaps there was no possible response to an artist's talking about his art that has not been so cheapened through overuse that it turns the person who makes it into an ass. Except, of course, silence.

And, I would like to add, honest interest. That is never cheap, and in fact can't be bought. And when acquaintances (and even friends) ask me what's up and feed me silence when I tell them, well, what can I believe, except that they have no interest in me?

Or that I've said something very wrong.

Patrick Nielsen Hayden had another suggestion. Fanzine writers, he said, work hard at what they do, and are getting a little upset at going to conventions where the zines that maintain fandom are ignored and pros are fed huge chunks of drivelly egoboo (my words, not P.N.H.'s).

I can sympathize with this, but my reply is, what has it got to do with me?

What does it mean to be a pro writer? Is it selling a novel, story, or poem? (Check A, B, C, or all of the above.) For how much? Does over a hundred dollars make one a pro? Or is it getting income from no other source? (How well do you like your parents? How long can you live on beans?) I'm inclined to think that the best definition of a pro is a person who makes enough doing whatever it is she's doing (in this case writing fiction) to pay the phone bills that somehow swell larger while she is doing it.

I throw a question on the floor; there let it lie and twitch like so many conversations I have broken by trying to talk about my writing.

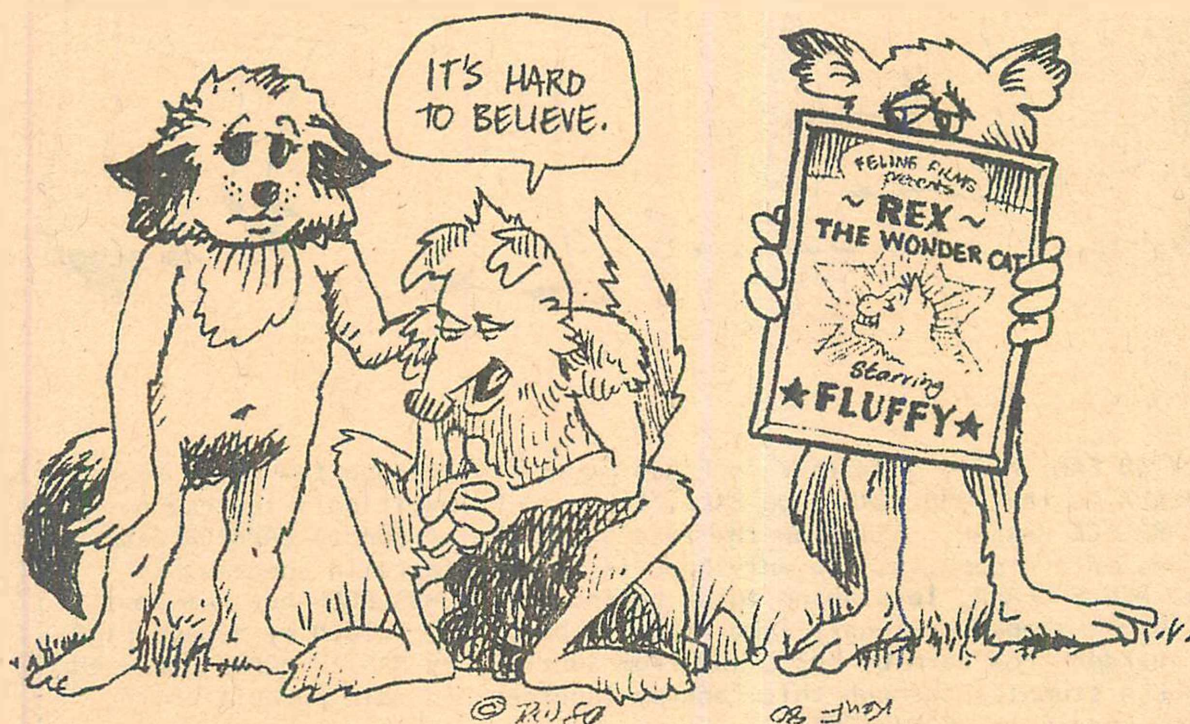
Why does the fun dry up? Is my nose running, my fly undone? Does it seem my ego is showing too much? The third possibility is the one which worries me.

(I'm well aware how egotistical it is to spend precious Mainstream pages maundering on about whether I'm indeed egotistical, but this is the only way I can go about it. I don't have the intestinal fortitude for a face-to-face poll.)

At the moment the question is important to me because my feelings are a bit wounded. If and when this open letter reaches print I expect I will have dealt with it somehow. (That's the trouble with using fanzines as a confessional: too long a lead time.)

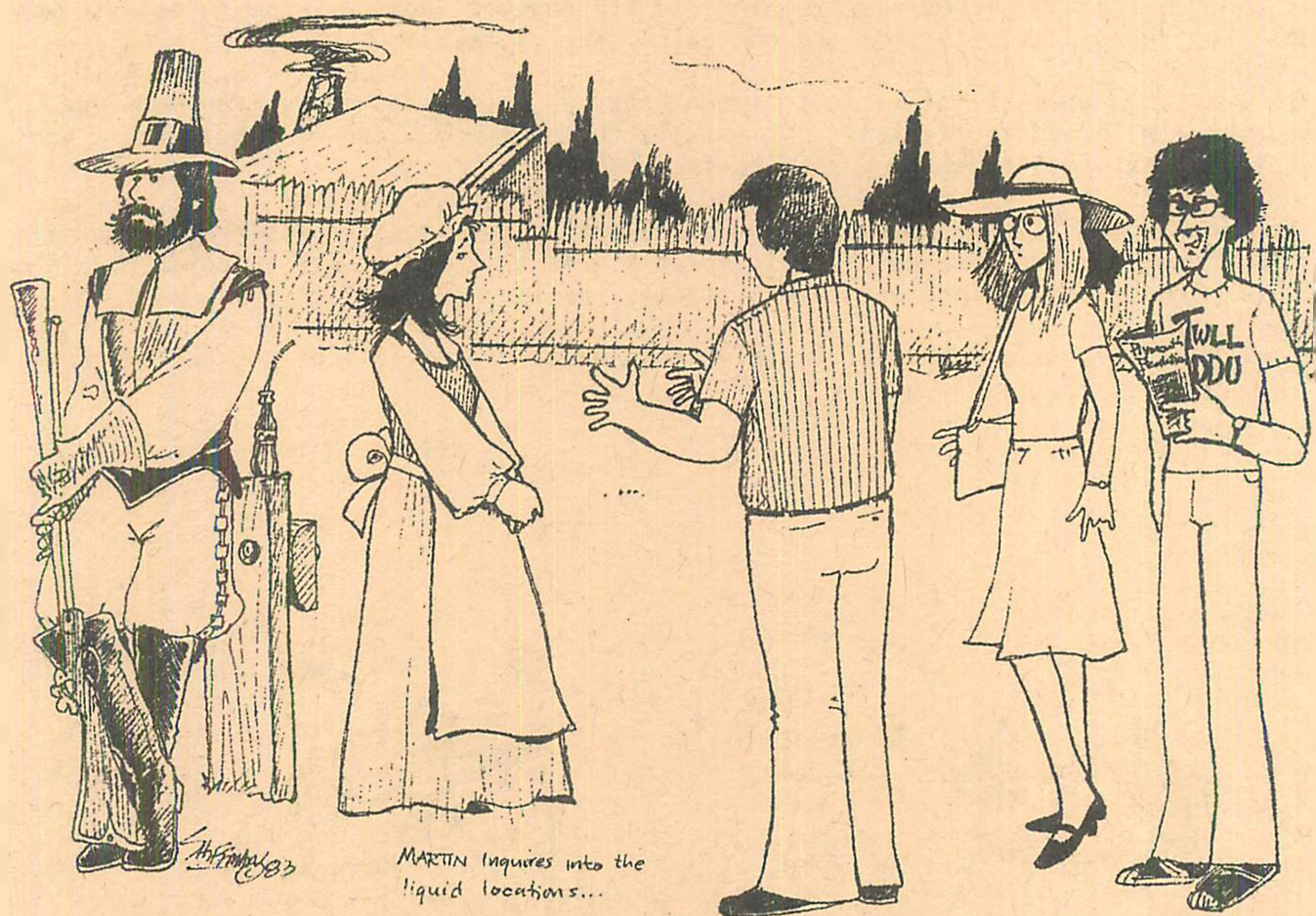
No matter. Just give me a couple of incisive licks and I'm sure I'll be wounded all over again.

###



DAVE LANGFORD:

THE TRANSATLANTIC HEARING AID



THE STORY SO FAR: Fairy godmother TAFF has magically transported grimy young LANGFORDELLA to the 1980 NOREASCON BALL, there to be excitingly ignored by handsome PRINCE HARLAN. Alas, on the fateful stroke of Monday LANGFORDELLA's brain turns into a pumpkin; the only hope is to convalesce in conceivably enchanted NEW ENGLAND, leaving no token behind at the WORLDCON but numerous glass slippers shaped curiously like MICHELOB bottles. Guided by nice SELINA LOVETT, guarded from harm by HAZEL and from sobriety by MARTIN HOARE, bemused LANGFORDELLA stumbles through this fantasy landscape in vain pursuit of the absconding Good Fairy COHERENCE...

Wednesday-Thursday 3-4 September 1980

So bits of New England kept popping up before us like stage-sets hastily constructed to fool the solipsist in that skiffy story "They." Selina's apartment, where Hazel found a travel book whose revelations about the Tamachek (Tuareg) alphabet set her gloating a gloat which if done in the street would have frightened the horses. Quincy, Mass, where Martin lusted after a Snoopy telephone ("I want one for the office"), Hazel studied the US system of social security ("Not as efficient as ours") and in a fit of silliness I bought an Olde Englysshe typeball. (Possibly discerning my origins, the shopman remarked "Cheerio, old chap"; possibly uttering a hideous insult, I answered "Pip-pip, old fruit.") An immense shopping mall lightyears from civilization, where a traditional "English pub" beckoned us with its real plastic wooden panelling and promise of almost real beer; no sooner had we succumbed to its allure than we were bounced for Martin's hideous crime of wearing a t-shirt. Bloody hell, they don't do that at the Ritz, as I told the barman but to no avail.

"Plimoth Plantation" was a reconstruction of an early New England settlement, enclosed by a stockade from which hand-made iron brads ostentatiously protruded. We pretended not to notice the modern steel screws actually holding the thing together. Inside, flies were present in authentic numbers; the local populace, actors hamming it up in archaic dress, had enormous fun treating sightseers as passing village idiots.

"Did you come on the great ship Gloriana this last week?"

"Er, actually, it was the great ship DC-10."

"Nay, we know nothing of that," and significant exchanges of glances, tapping of foreheads.

Martin, being Martin, enquired about local taverns, sparking a terrific simulated argument wherein a mob-capped lady (with whom Hazel tended to side) excoriated the twin evils of men and booze, while pigs grunted and chickens pecked their way between the dingy wooden buildings. A sort of low-tech Disneyland.

Thinking back to all those other wood-frame houses, Hazel tactfully said, "Your architecture hasn't changed much since the seventeenth century, has it?" I was musing that such a reconstruction might never receive a Langford visit if it were 3000 miles closer to home. One goes abroad to see history. For all I know there are similar enclaves in Reading, folk with job titles like brockingman or fugg'or; wielding with trained fingers their immemorial tools of weevilling-iron and scrotum-tongs, and pretending huge annoyance at the recent invasion of 1066.

Yes! We Have Parakeet Diapers said a never-explained shop window on the Plymouth seafront, while with the air of connoisseurs we rolled cinnamon-flavoured saltwater taffy around our mouths and wondered whether the sign NO BAREFEET ON STATE PIER merely interdicted a little-known Indian tribe. I looked at Plymouth Rock, which as the only pebble on the beach with a roof over it was manifestly the landmark to which any pilgrim ship would steer. In other respects it strongly resembled a rock and unlike the Brighton variant does not have the name going all the way through. Hazel probed the mysteries of why saltwater taffy failed to taste of saltwater, and Martin recovered enough from the stark realization that in New England his name is a monosyllable ("Matn") to despatch semi-cheerful postcards saying "Weather hot, women warm, beer cold," only the former items having won his approval.

At the "Discount Center" in a town called Clancy we gritted our teeth and got down to the bread-and-butter of holiday duties, purchasing a musical toothbrush to annoy my little brother and an ethnic wooden aardvark to alarm Peter Roberts (only it was diverted to other friends--tough luck, Peter), not to mention a stout suitcase marked down to \$5, made

necessary by the huge piles of books already acquired. Thus fortified, we sought even huger piles in Boston's bookshops, Selina being gratifyingly startled when the sole sf novel on a table of grubby paperbacks just happened to be the one Brian Stableford had dedicated to the Langfords in exchange for bed and board. (He dropped in to visit, for about a year...) Our city tour took in a joke shop stocking a hundred varieties of cigarette paper (if it had been open we'd have bought some Grape Flavour Reefer Wrappers for, again, Peter Roberts), the handkerchief-sized Granary Burial Ground containing the remains of B. Franklin, P. Revere, et al, the Boston Market galleries which recalled that part of Oxford known as Little Trendy Street--oh, the horror of tables whose glass tops were held up by the arms and legs of supine chimps rendered either in fibreglass or beaten copper, as you pleased... I added choice specimens to my collection of signs, PLEASE ASK HOSTESS TO BE SEATED (would she obey?) and, on the side of a van, ALL PURPOSE TOMATOES.

In New England, as you see, it was the small differences that caught my eye. Washington and New York were far more obviously alien: Massachusetts kept seducing us with its familiarity--Chinatown in Boston is no different from the London version off Leicester Square--until suddenly we'd put a foot through the stage-set, slip on an all-purpose tomato, confront the enigma of parakeet diapers and realize again that this, for us, was a Phil Dick reality that didn't quite fit.

That this was an alternate universe grew irrefutable on Thursday night. At the bedside was a heap of magazines; unearthing a 1979 Starlog Yearbook, I read with growing unease that "In 1978 the TAFF winner was British fan and cartoonist Terry Jeeves." Now wait a minute...

Friday 5 September 1980

Waving from the "Route 128" station platform, Martin and Selina shrank out of sight, eventually, as Amtrak rushed us southward with all the mad haste of Remembrance of Things Past. The goal was Washington, where we planned to accept with all graciousness Avedon Carol's kind invitation to stay as long as we liked with Alexis and Dolly Gilliland. "Hi, I can't hear you," Dolly had told me reassuringly over the phone, so we knew it would be all right.

I sat, and sat, dipping into the Panshins' SF in Dimension (revised edition, each page better than the next), thoughts churning in even slower motion than



the train, something like this--

Can this journey really be going to take nine hours?

Is this Panshin evasiveness about The Number of the Beast meant to be ironic?

Will we ever finish all these suitcase-sized tuna-fish sandwiches Selina's father made us?

Why not just say it's a rotten book instead of poncing around with metaphysics?

What is this abiding horror of bare feet which permeates New England?

Can I really be sitting opposite a pair of hamburger-eating nuns?

"Because of The Number of the Beast, SF-to-come will be non-linear. It will be imaginary and know it."

Gorblimey.

How many Zen Buddhists does it take to change a lightbulb? Two, one to change the bulb, and one to not-change the bulb. Fine, fine, but how can anyone stomach a whole book of these formula gags? In Boston it was a bestseller--maybe because anyone can do it.

(How many fans does it take to report a 6000-person convention? One to do bizarre things and 5999 to write conflicting reports.)

Right, so soon? Oh, a tunnel: doesn't New York look curiously unimpressive from underneath?

Can we really be only half-way?

Can I not force myself to eat one last tuna-fish sandwich?

Do the Panshins not appreciate that by using a worthless book as the fulcrum of their poxy "transcendence" argument they are lending it an undeserved importance?

Might this not be Washington? (No.)

Will the Bushyagers forgive me for not stopping off in Philadelphia?

Will my mouth ever cease to taste of tuna-fish sandwich?

How many Panshins does it take to transcend a lightbulb?

Have I bought too many books?

Have I not rather bought too few?

Are these inane reflections not reminiscent of Edward Lear's Corsican diary?

"Should there not be innumerable moufflons?"

...thus and thus, into a semi-coma; until, far later than any reasonable person could have imagined it, Washington happened.

Dolly Gilliland seized upon us with terrifying competence and threaded the vast echoing halls of Washington station, in which small-town shacks like Buckingham Palace might have

been mislaid without effort. After half an hour's portage through deserted vaults we saw ahead a glimmer of evening light and another of Alexis, who instantly assumed the persona of all-knowing tourist guide, beginning with a sort of indoor Colosseum which functioned--though not just then--as a slide-show of Washington's wonders.

"When they've built the Nixon Monument," he drawled in tones impossible to disbelieve, "they'll be showing the Watergate story here. The musical."

We spiralled through sultry Washington in the Gilliland car, heads twisting right--left--right--left as Dolly and Alexis took turns to point out cosmically important landmarks, every third building another branch of the famous Smithsonian chain. Einstein's bronze statue with his three famous formulae engraved there (and in my confusion I could only remember two), the ponderous and marble Lincoln Memorial, the Capitol, the White House, all looking unbelievably like their pictures, and what was this subdued mutter by my side? "All this monumental stuff reminds me of those newsreels of 1930s Berlin," said Hazel unforgivably.

There came a growing sense of crescendo as we approached the most famous edifice of all, which in later days we'd be proudly shown from every conceivable angle and then a few more. In blank nonrecognition we stared across the Potomac River at that unimposing frontage, or backage.

"That," said Alexis reverently, "is Watergate."

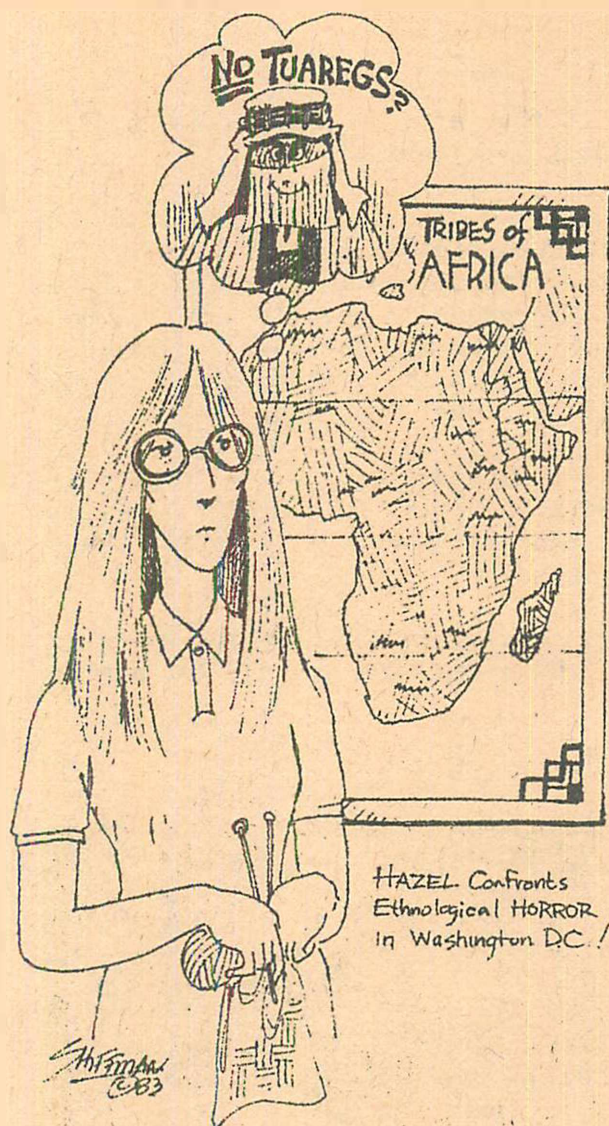
Both of us sat with a wild surmise, almost ashamed that we had no hats to doff, until the golden moment was past.

The sprawling Gilliland house, with huge party/meeting rooms and only intermittent space for actual living, might have been bought entirely for the convenience of the Washington SF Association. Indeed, as I learnt with mild bogglement, it was. "We wanted somewhere with privacy and big bedrooms, but we saw this one and said 'WSFA!'"

I saw how full it was that very night, and deduced: "WSFA!" But not only Wsfa; the thronging members were bemused by an influx of Brits, and even of Terry Hughes, drawn by who knows what dread incantations from the Falls Church vault where from year to year he lies entombed in uncollated Motas. The party polarized, most of WSFA doing the things WSFA does in the largest basement room, while to Alexis' mingled pride and alarm the British and their cronies settled like a swarm of locusts upon his stocks of home brew in the adjacent cellar. Caring nothing for mere comfort, these sots perched themselves on crates of bottles, thus causing arcane indentations in their buttocks which Paul Kincaid tried to interest Hazel in as a new knitting pattern.

Jim Barker was still brimming over with Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society news--"Roz Kaveney managed to stand the Noreascon meeting of the Jakkies for a whole seven minutes before she got driven away by its awfulness, and you may think that's not much, but Rochelle Reynolds only clocked up thirty seconds!" He made an expansive gesture with a can of Alexis' imported Theakston's Old Peculier--seemingly a dilute form of the deadly Yorkshire brew, specially for foreigners--and tipped quantities of it upon the groin of Avedon Carol. Menacingly she told him of how when Susan Wood was introduced to someone called Platt ("Don't mention Platt near Ted White!" cried Jack Chalker from somewhere) she knelt down with amazing grace and sank her teeth into his finger, and he tipped beer on her, and she pitched an ashtray at him...

No ashtray was to hand, but Jim got his comeuppance when Avedon introduced us round WSFA and certain cultured members asked, "Where's Scotland?" Similarly, parts of DC fandom stared at me saying, "What's TAFF?" and one Pat Kelly, after long concentration on Hazel's arcane English accent, was moved to ask: "What part of Australia do you come from?"



heard the English were kinky, and now I know why." To my Welsh ears this was wounding, wounding.

From an improvised wheelchair I later saw the Astral Feat performed by remarkably few eager Initiates, two in fact, of whom one was Charles Gilliland (son of the famous...). Charles, as Avedon noted, is young enough for it not to hurt---even D. West complains of being outperformed by his kids, you know.

Human sacrifice being the traditional culmination of any barbaric gathering, WSFA avoided anticlimax by starting to drift away. When the Brits were finally peeled from the home-brew fridge, it was found to be (as Alexis noted with mingled alarm and pride) empty. En route to bed, Hazel and I paused twice to gape: firstly at the Gillilands' brand new \$7000 Chinese-dragon-pattern carpet, which had actually been exposed to the fringes of the WSFA rout in an act of confidence unthinkable among fans used to Harry Bell or Greg Pickersgill; and secondly, for a long while, at an alien visitation outside the front door. The thick, buzzing night was like warm soup with flies in it, the porch lamp spilled just enough light to where it clung on the wall, and we'd never seen a praying mantis before. Improbably green, implausibly huge, it turned stiffly this way and that with all the unrealism of an sf special effect. We gaped.

"About four inches long," said Newton, who knew about these things. "Small. They go up to six inches or more in these parts." Hazel and I were on the whole thankful that we'd started on a small way. An endless flow of mantis lore came fluently from the Ewell lips, until we reluctantly accepted that the beast wasn't going to seize dramatically on passing flies, discharge laser beams, or cut a swathe of devastation across Tokyo. The mere fact that this sf monstrosity wasn't safely confined in a zoo sent us to bed, at last, with sense of wonder exuding from every pore.

Saturday-Sunday 6-7 September 1980

Again we were wafted off to be tourists, hurtling past notable places where Alexis worked or used to work, such as the Pentagon--a week's experience of American cars not saving me from the instinctive cringe each time my reflexes shrieked things about driving on the wrong side of the road.

With the aid of Terry Hughes we infested parts of the Smithsonian, where notices by each lift-door advised SAVE ENERGY/WALK UP ONE/WALK DOWN TWO, surely a rather energy-intensive algorithm for going down one floor. Almost the first exhibit was a rotten log pretending to be an ecological community: you touched the button and vile insects and fungi grew all over the wood. "The fannish community," Alexis explained. "The rotten log is sf and on it are all these strange growths..."

An exhibit of Iranian textile printing offered us a genuine cloth crudsheet; Hazel bewailed a lack of her favourite Tuaregs in a display of African tribes; homesickness touched my heart when nobody made a Rob Holdstock joke over the reconstruction of Homo erectus; Terry took thought for foreigners as a slide show of the Ice Age impended and he cheerfully said, "You folk should appreciate all those pics of ice and snow."

Hazel was pondering the comparative fewness of actual exhibits--"Can you imagine the British Museum wasting all this space?"--when we reached the first, baffling displays of "Dynamics of Evolution." I stared at the heap of 36 identical shrews evocatively labelled SHREWS, and eight stuffed SOOTY TERMS lying forlornly on their backs, and 221 GROUND BEETLES, none showing signs of evolving; apparently they embodied the diversity of animal life. We passed on to the heavily guarded Hope diamond, which I was afraid Hazel might covet, but she thought the setting vulgar and preferred sapphires anyway, an international incident thus being avoided until we got to the sapphires. I goggled at the even better guarded Moon rocks, speculating on the chance of one day purchasing a lump from the 300+ kilos of unexamined (thanks, I gather, to Senator Proxmire's merry men) samples, perhaps to replace the pumice stone in our bathroom...

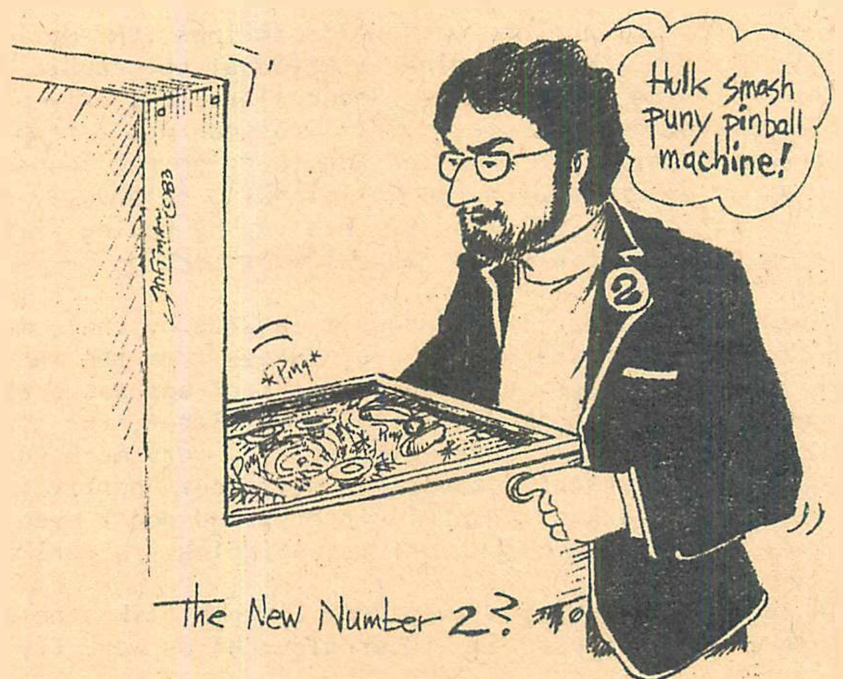
Emerging much later, we passed further monumental things, knocking our heads three times against the car's floor at sight of the IRS building. Hordes of fans converged on "Dino's Steak House," where I fancied the third biggest steak on offer, only to have Hazel complain "That's three times what I give you at home!"

"Well, this is America," I said feebly.

"Not so much a question of what Dave likes as of what Hazel lets him like," murmured a slanderous P. Kincaid, who may yet suffer for that.

All this was the preliminary to semi-drunken revels in Avedon's--actually Avedon's parents'--basement, a large room boasting a bar (bring your own drink), real bar stools, a pinball machine and other attributes enabling nostalgia-smitten Harry to pretend this was a pub really. He, Jim, Terry, Paul, various Gillilands and I took turns to lose miserably to Avedon at pinball, intimidated more than we chose to admit by the notice on the machine boasting a record score of 1,251,250 by The Fabulous Avedon Carol.

Upstairs Hazel, who collects strange alphabets and interesting peoples, was collecting the Armenian alphabet and Avedon's parents, who seemed happy to ignore the noises of destruction from their basement and did not confuse us much by being called Gary and Queenie Avedikian. "The Corpse and the Queen," their daughter translated. From time to time I nipped up to swap hearing-aid gossip and practise shouting with Mr. A, who wears twice as many aids as me. He at once demanded that Hazel come out and be received into the local Armenian church; or that was how it reached my ears...



"Can you trust her alone with that man?" said Avedon earnestly, but already Hazel had gone, carolling, "I'm enjoying myself at last!" It seemed a long while before she returned, making little noises of ecstasy and clutching a t-shirt blazoned with the Armenian alphabet. I had to dissuade her from trying to take the whole family home with us: she compromised by insisting on nominating Avedon for TAFF. Oh, the corruption that goes on behind the scenes.

Meanwhile Jim had discovered that you could run two-player games on the pinball machine. His face split in an enormous grin, and those who knew Jim cast up their eyes in resignation and dread. "He's going to say it," I whispered as Charles Gilliland bagged the Player-1 position...

"I'll be the new Number Two!" said the famous producer of "The Captive."

It was after ten o'clock when Dolly, returning from watching what Avedon swore was the Miss America Pageant on tv, brought Mrs. A's offer of coffee all round. A hollow groan from Harry, who'd just been getting into the mood--"The pub's don't close for an hour yet." I thought I saw teetotal Avedon making mental notes about us; later she merely remarked that if there'd been any witty repartee she didn't remember it. Er, quite.

Next morning Hazel continued to enjoy herself. Having gleaned that there was a genuine authentic mosque in the vicinity, she demanded to see it. Dutifully we took off our shoes in the porch, and a slightly resentful acolyte issued Dolly and Hazel with shawls to cover their infidel hair. ("Argh!" said Hazel afterwards. "I carried my respectable long dress all this way and didn't think to wear it there...") The interior was huge, bare, brightly-tiled and impressive, with exotic carpets and almost no furniture bar a few chairs where women and children respectfully sat while men practised freestyle kneeling and banging of heads against the floor, as though in the throes of unheard disco music. Another and fiercer acolyte urged us to chairs when co-ordinated prayers and chants began. Allah akbar! Hazel was in raptures, Alexis impassive as always; Dolly kept saying through her teeth such enthusiastic things as, "We'll give you just five more minutes."

Eventually dragged outside by the combined efforts of three strong fans, Hazel was heard to say dreamily, "I could have stayed in there forever."

"It just seemed that way," came a chorus of three voices.

Next stop was another of Hazel's shrines, the National Geographic headquarters, which looked just as I'd always imagined a National Geographic headquarters should look. A temple more to my liking was Moonstone Bookcellars, the only underground specialist detective/sf bookshop in Washington: proprietor Phil Grossman was a fan himself, and lavishly handed out bookmarks, document cases and shopping bags bearing the Moonstone name and logo. "This is why people like to go round with the Gillilands," said Dolly smugly as we staggered under the weight of free gifts. Overwhelmed by this and by having filled out my Edward Gorey collection, I promised a free plug in the relevant section of TAFF report, and this has been it.

Eventually, alas, I was dragged outside by the combined efforts of three strong fans, and forced to read the Gettysburg Address from the inner marble wall of the Lincoln Memorial. Dolly's enthusiasm almost made me feel barbarous and provincial for never having memorized the thing at school--or Magna Carta either, for that matter. The actual memorial is a sort of vault enclosing a whopping statue, very much huger and in slightly better taste than what one of Chesterton's characters calls our "partly joyous institution of the Albert Memorial." We perhaps lack a sense of history, and don't even employ armed security guards to prevent kids approaching our memorials on impious rollerskates.

A long pool stretches away from Lincoln, like the one before the Taj Mahal, with an expanse of green park on either side: kites were flying here and there, and Dolly reminisced

about once having to haul hers in because its string might have brought down the Presidential helicopter. Ah, America, land of opportunities unknown near Downing Street...

There was time for a final sightsee at the Torpedo Factory Art Centre, formerly a (surprise!) torpedo factory, where in dozens of little workshops an array of creative talent was converting raw materials of paint, metal, glass or enamel into money. Lulled into false security by the informal surroundings, one was suddenly blackjacked by the prices; a few more dragons, a few more unicorns, and it might have been the supply centre for those Mor-eascon dealers. Hazel and I scattered admiration this way and that, consulted our dwindling stock of travellers' cheques, and escaped empty-handed.

Being also empty-stomached, we were lured to the Hsaun Foong Chinese restaurant by the promise of a first encounter with that great Sino-American delicacy, fortune cookies. The preliminaries included food and table talk; I misread "Hunan" as "Human" beef, leading to a series of gags about long cow. Dolly revealed that she was born in Reading (Pa.), and Alexis that "Marx is to political theory what Kahlil Gibran is to philosophy." Then came the great moment. Hazel's cookie told her, "You never miss the water till the well runs dry," and she became quite upset--"It's not true! When you've read as many books on the Sahara as I have..." Mine contained the sententious comment "It's nice to be important but it's important to be nice." "That," said Alexis with his usual tact, "means don't drag people into bookstores."

Later, when the rest had gone to bed, he gave me a lecture on his peculiar version of "the oriental mode of production," whereby capitalist societies bog down in regulations and controls, thus achieving stasis rather than going bang in the revolution demanded by Marxist orthodoxy. For some reason my thoughts touched on the BSFA, and then moved on to contemplate Worldcon organization.

"This is a bit sercon," I seem to recall saying, out of my depth. Obliging Alexis switched to telling me about his sf novels. "Somtow Sucharitkul is good at the high-flown stylistic stuff, poetic descriptions...I'm not, I'm good at plot and dialogue. What are you good at? What are you writing?"

Little did he know that this was a question to make me cringe, my first sf novel deadline being at the end of that year and the draft being woefully incomplete, not to say non-existent. A day or two in New York, a flight home, and the bloody thing would have to be written. A bony, spectral hand seemed to clutch me by the gollies.

"Um," I said slowly and painfully. "I've written a title, The Space Eater, and, er..."

"Have another beer," said kind Alexis, letting me off the hook before I could blurt out the horrid truth--that the unwritten work already had the Panshin seal of disapproval owing to its not being Transcendental, so that naturally, I thought, nobody would ever buy it. (I was not as sensible then as I am now.)

With a sense of many missed opportunities in our too-rapid visit, we left the strange and alien American capital next morning, via a train called The Crescent whose air-conditioning turned our breath to white smoke and the smoke to tinkling crystals. To wander off to the toilet was to risk the fate of Captain Oates. Icebergs formed and bumped about in our veins as we trundled through the red-hot day, in what could only be Amtrak's Arctic acclimatization chamber, towards the frozen northern parallels of New York.

Previous segments appeared in Twil-Odu 19 (Langford), Boonfark 5 (Steffan), Habu 11 (Haule), Warhoon 30 (Bergeron), Tappen (Edwards), & The Zine That Has No Name (Skelton); next one in Wallbanger (John & Eve Harvey). Write to Dave at 94 London Rd., Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, England, for info on the one-volume edition.

CROSS CURRENTS

Marta Randall
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I tend to break out in hives when I get fanzines, for one of two reasons: either the 'zines are hideous beyond human description, or they're so good that I'm terrified that I'll be stricken from the mailing list and never receive another one. Yes, I

know, if I want to stay on the mailing list, I'm supposed to loc. So who has time to loc? I've got fiction to write, publishers to threaten, a teenager to civilize, an office to manage, and in my spare time I run around the house trying to keep it from falling into Mountain Boulevard. So what's the answer?

Simple. I have created a handy-dandy instant loc, and intend to have it printed up and keep it by my fanzine pile, so that instead of putting Mainstream or Telos or Wing Window or On Company Time aside to loc, eventually, when I get the time, I will instead be able to apply pen to form instantly, thereby assuring myself (I fervently hope) of a continuous supply of good 'zines.

And, because I'm sure that I'm not the only one in this fix, I'm enclosing a copy of the form here. Never let it be said that I'm not altruistic, okay?



TO: ☐ Mainstream ☐ Telos ☐ Wing Window ☐ On Company Time
☐ Izzard ☐ other: _____

I read issue no. _____ from cover to cover, as usual. The art was
☐ interesting ☐ mind-blowing ☐ competent
☐ wonderful ☐ unfortunate ☐ boring

which ☐ is ☐ is not

usual for your zine. The article by Terry Carr

☐ caught my imagination ☐ went on and on
☐ illuminated the universe ☐ infuriated me
☐ answered questions that never should have been asked
☐ was totally wrong

mostly because

☐ It was grammatically incorrect
☐ It attempted the impossible
☐ it let the metaphorically cat out of the literal bag
☐ I was there and that's not what happened at all.

Ted White ☐ is living in ☐ another era which ☐ does
☐ isn't ☐ paradise ☐ doesn't
☐ Virginia

explain a lot. Debbie Notkin's letter was incisive. Jon Singer

☐ was funnier than usual
☐ wouldn't know a blue moose if it ate him
☐ ought to be in pictures

while the

☐ article ☐ letter ☐ philosophical treatise
☐ discourse ☐ mad raving ☐ editorial
☐ poem ☐ review ☐ filler material

by

☐ rich brown ☐ Greg Benford ☐ Dick Ellington
☐ Avedon Carol ☐ Art Widner ☐ Dave Langford
☐ Bill Gibson ☐ Terry Garey ☐ Harry Warner Jr.
☐ Mog Decarnin ☐ Sandra Miesel ☐ Doug Barbour
☐ Lee Hoffman ☐ Jay Kinney ☐ Dan Steffan
☐ Richard Labonte ☐ you

was

☐ right on ☐ impossible ☐ tautological
☐ libelous ☐ scandalous ☐ funny as hell
☐ sexist ☐ racist ☐ heightist
☐ weightist ☐ helpful ☐ unsavory
☐ lacking in psychological grounding ☐ brilliant
☐ far too introspective ☐ incomprehensible
☐ typically self-serving ☐ thought-provoking
☐ violence-provoking ☐ not in English
☐ sound but only in the crypto-Marxist sense of the term

a tendency which I must deplore. Walt Willis is a wonderful human being and Frank Robinson is nicer than anybody.

☐ Keep up the good work.
☐ Don't do it again.
☐ I await an answer.
☐ I'll see you in court.
☐ My second will call upon you tomorrow.

signed: _____

Laura Haney
345 Main St, 5A

Eek! Help! Stop me before I read more!

White Plains, NY 10601 Mainstream #3 arrived in today's mail, and I wasn't going to even open the envelope until I was on the train because I have to look glamorous tonight and do you have any idea how long it takes to go from butt-sprung blue jeans to glamorous? But I found myself ripping open the envelope.

Just "Suzlecol," I told myself. Then, just "Suzlecol" and "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered." I progressed to "Trickle." One by one I read most of the articles and at least half the letters and I'm supposed to be turning into Madame LaZonga but I'm at the typewriter instead.

Mike O'Brien
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It makes me feel right at home to be among fans some of whom, at least, have read Star Maker. There just aren't that many around. Even my network sf digest has been taken up with "Well, if we've proved that Luke is Leia's mother, and Chewie is Vader's sister, then the Ewoks must be related to the Emperor somehow." In fact it's gotten so bad over there that they've started coming out with AM and PM digests just to handle the load. I just got done printing and deleting over a megabyte of that crap.

Mind you, I'm not complaining. We just got our machine up on the Usenet, and that, my friends, is another kettle altogether. About one million words per week on stuff they used to chew over down at the general store, from cameras and autos to Star Trek and poetry, with not-at-all brief digressions into philosophy, politics, humor, and one category just called "flame," for pointless ranting and polemic on any subject whatsoever. Category "misc" is for any subject, but not for ranting. Is the distinction clear? Good, because after enough of that, I'm certainly not clear about anything.

Sort of makes those 120-page genzines look like peanuts. Self-publishing with a vengeance. Whatever the phone lines will carry from machine to machine. "Crunch like an elephant, spread like a germ," to paraphrase one of our great cultural leaders.

If David Emerson will be made any happier by the thought, most of the current wave of video games are shortly to go the way of the mechanical pinnies--pinball Darwinism strikes again, and Pac-Man will become a collector's item. The cause? Laser video disk. Afficionados will already have taken note of Dragon's Lair, the first step in this direction. It's tv-screen technology, but with a real picture, and I mean a real picture, not something made out of not-so-little dots and looking like nothing in particular. They went out and got Don Bluth (you remember, the ex-Disney animator who formed his own studio and made The Secret of NIMH) to do a bunch of sword-and-sorcery animation about this dimbulb type who's trying to rescue a princess out of a castle. At every decision point you tell him which way to run or to duke it out, and then watch the character either live or die. It's reasonably fast-response, about five or six seconds per segment. Unlike any other current game I know of, it can be won (though it takes about \$35 in quarters to get to that point of skill). I'm not a games aficionado (why pour quarters into a micro when I can play with a mainframe for free?) but this sucker's fun to watch. Big doings ahead in this area, particularly as it would be easy to provide something like this at home which would have the same resolution as the thing in the arcade, which is certainly not the case now.

Actually I prefer the ones with the one-inch metal ball bearings rolling around, myself.

Anybody who's ever noticed how large and well-used the corpus callosum is, will be a tad surprised at all the left-brain right brain noise. Certainly the stuff associated with the "left side" and the stuff associated with the "right side" represent truly different cognitive modes, but Jon's right to get ticked off about her /author of Drawing on the

Right Side of the Brain/assumptions about how his brain works. As I recall, in most folks, it doesn't matter whether you're left- or right-handed...the localization, such as it is, still puts spatial stuff on the right and inductive stuff on the left. But the localizations are loose at best. Myself, I finally figured out that I have to use both of them to do that which they pay me such scandalous sums of money to do, i.e., be a real wizard. On those rare occasions when I'm running full-bore on something, there's no doubt whatsoever that I'm running in both modes at once. I'd never be able to do what I do if I didn't use so-called "right-brain techniques" just as much as "left-brain techniques" in roaring through some of the really knotty code which has contracted a serious case of twisty bits. It's a very pleasant experience and I highly recommend it to anyone. Run right out and become an expert in something that makes you think really hard. Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance come to life. It really is very Zen, because the self disappears.

I like Greg Benford's notion about what to do with Star Wars (have Luke spout Marxism, have Darth Vader blow a planet away and spout Capitalism). However, the movie was made in 1927 and was entitled Metropolis. It elicits about the reactions you'd expect.

Greg's musings on Fandom got me to musing, in turn. Now, I've been in fandom, more or less continuously, since 1968 (Fredcon, to be exact). Never, in any of that time, have I been what you'd call a Big Name Fan. Far from it, in fact. It's rather amusing. I know most BNFs by name, at least, and many by sight as well, from my con-going days. I know of many famous fanzines, ordered the Villish with everyone else, follow the games of musical editors with interest, keep up with the literature, and all like that. But very few people know me any more. I had a good time some years ago at a small con in Chicago where several BNFs came to relax. I was seated at a table eating with many of them, and a helpful person started to tell me who everybody was. I was a bit exasperated and went around the table. "Yes, and you're so-and-so, and you're so-and-so, and..." until I'd named them all, then cried, "I've known you people for years!" Since then I've become reconciled to the lot that my inactivity has left me, and rather enjoy my role of the Unknown Fan.

Now I find myself in a different position. There's a rather popular computer operating system called UNIX in which I happen to be an expert. In a manner easy to explain in hindsight, but difficult to predict at the time, it has become very popular indeed. I've been around since early days...Second Fandom, you might say. Well, those of us who've been around for a LONG time tend to have private parties at the conferences, go out to dinner together, exchange electronic mail a lot, spread gossip, both technical and personal, by telephone, and...my heavens! Why, I've chaired the national conference, with 1,000 in attendance! Everyone knows my name! I'm accosted by people who swear they've met me, and whom I no longer remember!

I can't possibly read all my mail anymore, and still get my work done! I'm appointed to committees! Consulted! Respected!

I'm (gasp!) A BNF!

Who'd 'a' thunk it? I don't know of many people who've gotten to be both Joe Phan and a BNF at one and the same time. Are there any others out there who live dual lives in two fields?

((Sorry we couldn't reproduce that final "A BNF" as it appeared in your letter, typeset to be five times as large as the surrounding print. By the way, I know of some people who lead dual lives in one field, and others who lead single lives in four or five fields. jak))

"Adrian Last's letter set the hackles gnashing their sackcloth and ashes." William Bains,
*****Vector #104*****



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i have to say that loren macgregor & greg benford come at the top of this issue's goodies. i may not even peek at people in the supermarket anymore (but then i might not see ray bradbury, that genius). as a dedicated halfan, i can see a lot of validity in greg's remarks on the value of fandom, a lot more than i see in some of the (over) praise raised recently

in some quarters, & anyway, i like just about everything the guy writes, & love the idea of reading star wars as an allegory of the mess in central america. (my one bright idea: fandom is a place outside the usa, with a relationship (psychologically) quite a bit like canada's. hmm?) the lettercol as usual traverses a lot of time & space & was therefore great fun to read. why i will never be a faneditor: or fanarticle writer (aside from all that awful sercon stuff): here i am telling you i like all the tale telling & the fun & games, but ask me to come up with something & zilch. i enjoy it, but i dont have much to offer in that vein (or vain). because i guess i am so on the borderline of fandom, & dont participate in fannish activities enough to be part of the network. might had i the time (let alone world enough). instead ive got to go now; write a couple of essays on tolkien & zelazny as fantasy writers. gee whiz. also have to read about 50 more books of canadian poetry for my yearly review article. see what i mean? yet i enjoy that, just as i really enjoy reading some tough theoretical minds like derrida, when i find the time. but then to read delany one has to doesnt one? i keep creeping along behind him trying to read at least some of what enters his texts in such duplicitous ways. & so it goes. anyway, sometimes i take time off & read fanzines; mainstream is one of the ones i enjoy the most.

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i particularly enjoyed MacGregor's characterization of the back from People. When pro, or amateur, journalists have interviewed me they invariably have been as thick and urgently insensitive as Mr. Greene.

i found that it was dangerous for me to discuss what i taught in my classes because the reporters would simplify to the point of absurdity. For example, when i was teaching at the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee, i taught linguistics and dialectology and as a part of the regular courses i included descriptive analyses of the major social dialect in America--Black English. In the mid-seventies Milwaukee was in the painful throes of "desegregation," so the press began to get interested in what the university was teaching teachers. Well, since i teach the structures of dialects in a non-judgemental fashion, it was newsworthy to some types that i was not condemning "bad" English, that is, the non-WASPish types. At the time, Milwaukee was in the habit of classifying many black children as MBDS (Minimal Brain Dysfunction) mainly because their vowels, consonants, and syntax were not a common variety of North Central English. i taught my students, who had to pass my course in order to certify, that such stigmatizing labels based on differences, rather than real deficits, was at best bad pedagogy, and at worst, racist. Marquette invited me to lecture while the journalist types were making me out to be an ivory-tower idiot. At Indiana i taught in all-black classrooms so i knew what i was talking about but those journalists just could not see that if a person says, "He happy," rather than, "He is happy," that there is not any cognitive dysfunction going on. Actually the Procrustean mind-set, that condescending gestalt of simplification, which too many journalists operate

with by reflex, may be more indicative of brain dysfunction than non-standard dialect forms. Even here at South Dakota State the journalism majors I get in my advanced composition classes are the worst writers. They have a simple-minded diction; they don't know what a paragraph is; they can't spell; they use too many passive verb phrases; etc., etc. Notice the pronouns here--they. I get paranoid when they tell me I am wrong. But, the bottom line is, I know more about their bible--the AP Stylebook--than they do. They still think data and media are singular nouns!

Your response to Ted White interested me. As a neo, I have felt welcome in a way I never felt when I joined various professional groups like the Modern Language Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the American Association of University Professors. These groups officially claim to be collections of open-minded humanists (even the scientists often make noises about ethical, human choices). The neo-scholar, as I was ten years ago, hardly experienced the warm, generous acceptance that fandom offers. Those organizations are striving to be hermetically sealed elites and, by and large, they succeed. The cost, in terms of time, money, and soul-selling, to become "known" in those granfalloons is withering. You may have condescending attitudes towards the N3F but at least you view Neffers as "family"--perhaps too faannish or fuggheaded to be kissing cousins, but certainly kinfolk nonetheless. That is not true of the Modern Language Association and the Linguistics Society of America, however. It may be that the paradigm of fandom (paradigm in Thomas Kuhn's sense in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions) currently is undergoing radical changes because Americans seem to be getting more and more aliterate. They can read, but they choose not to; or if they do read, they consume the spin-offs from the electronic media. Fandom began with the word, has lived by the word, and may now be mutating away from logos into videocy. Trufans may be an endangered species as vidiots grow up aliterate. Your analogy to music strikes me as being apt, though. In fandom, as in music, the more things change the more they stay the same. Plus ca change, plus la meme dreck. Sturgeon lives.

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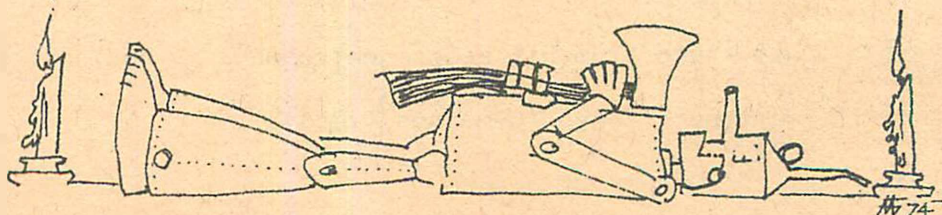
So there I was at this party given by Steve and Grania Davis for Don Myrus of Best of Omni, and a small horde of the local sf writers was milling about hoping to get next to Myrus's word-rates or at least the Omni-stocked buffet. I found myself talking to Charlie Brown.

"Did you get the latest Mainstream?" Charlie asked. I nodded. "I don't know why it is," said Charlie, "but I can't read fanzines anymore. I mean, I was in fandom when Quandry was coming out, and I loved it. But the current fanzines...I just can't read them. I can't even get involved in the stuff Ted White writes about Sixth Fandom."

"Well," I said, "it may be because fandom isn't a very good spectator sport; it helps if you're involved in it, and especially if someone mentions your name."

"That seems right. Greg Benford wrote about me in Mainstream, and that was the only article I really liked. I even read the parts that weren't about me, and liked them."

I hadn't read all of this Mainstream then, but later, when I'd finished it, I found myself agreeing with Charlie: Greg's piece was easily the best in the issue. Greg has been one of the best fanwriters



for over twenty years, and it's odd that he's never gotten the recognition he deserves in fandom; he had to write a bunch of sf novels before he got famous. I thought Greg's piece in Mainstream was excellent, well up to the standard he's almost always maintained.

Which isn't to say that your other articles, especially those of Loren MacGregor and Terry Carey, weren't good contributions. Loren is a good writer, as I've told him in person (at a party at Lizzy Lynn's for Fritz Leiber's sixtieth birthday), and Terry ought to write more, too.

Jerry's Olaf Tablespoon parody was fun even if he did steal a joke or two from other people... somebody's got to steal jokes from people who won't write them down. (Which reminds me to repeat Tom Whitmore's subtitle for Norman Spinrad's The Void Captain's Tale: "Did the Ship Move for You?") Suzle's editorial was of course too short; I look forward to reading about her current job, whenever it's over, whether or not she mentions my name. (Probably not, I guess.)

((The job is over. I wonder if Suzle will write about it? jak))

The lettercolumn was good too--you seem to be editing it tightly, which is a good thing except maybe when you fail to print every word I write to you. Being a fan as old as Charlie Brown, I find it funny to read people worrying about how to get new fans when those worriers are as "new" to me as Jan Brown or Linda Blanchard are; their worries always seem to me to be self-negating. Fannish types will always find fandom by hook or crook, it seems to me, because fandom is a tropic area that draws faans to it whether or not there are fanzine-review columns in the prozines or fanzine rooms at conventions. I'm very much in favor of the latter, but I really feel that trufans will discover fandom even if we put blocks in their way; somehow I think of fandom's attraction being like the Call of Cthulhu, dark and obscure but very powerful.

I loved Jerry's hypothetical question to Ted White about how Ted would feel if there were no new musicians to bring us new music; it seems to strike to the core of the question. In his music-reviewing days, Ted always struck me as being very concerned with new voices--as Dick Lupoff, for instance, did when he was reviewing rock--so it's interesting to see Ted arguing, apparently, that the older participants in an artform like fandom are still among the best. I don't think he ever thought that of Louis Armstrong, Kid Ory, or Mutt Carey, and it's pleasurable to me that he may consider the older practitioners of even the fannish arts as setting the standard. Has Ted finally become an oldphart, or is fandom somehow different now, with the productions of new fans being devolved and/or pale imitations of what's gone before? If it's the latter, I suggest that Ted begin listening more attentively to the performances of George Lewis, Louis Barbarin, and even Turk Murphy.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson Greg Benford asks of Godzilla film plots, "Why does no one...
P.O. BOX 20610 drop a tactical nuke on the damned thing?" He then tosses off
Seattle, WA 98102 the notion that these films may be very deep indeed, a statement
 which is possibly more pointed than satiric, for there is a
reason for not nuking Godzilla.

Reflect that Japanese monster movies hit their stride shortly after MacArthur left Japan; They were already starting to fade out as popular cinema in the 1960s, but in the '50s, they were hot tuna.

Godzilla was freed from his aeons' entrapment by nuclear tests.

Godzilla destroyed Tokyo (numerous times).

Godzilla is a nuclear bomb.

Is it logical to stop a nuclear holocaust by dropping more bombs on top of old?

President Reagan thinks so, but the Japanese filmmakers did not.

Steve Miller "Special When Lit." If you guys who like pinball and video games
56 Lower Gate Court like a setup with about fifty video games and twenty to thirty
Owings Mills, MD 21117 pinballs, stop out here in Owings Mills when you visit Worldcon: a
 place called The Space Station, local mecca. Must admit that
David's place sounds like a good place to drop in on, especially if you can have a beer in
the same establishment. A Tempest addict? Sigh, that one's always been too much for me;
I nearly broke my wrist the first time I played it...

I liked Loren MacGregor's 37¢ piece. I'm not a "Great Fan" of Bradbury, but I have read
much of his sf/fantasy and some of his poetry. Loren did a good job in showing how the
newspaper/newsmagazine hack must work sometimes. I'm afraid I must have done similar
things when calling for last minute stories myself: "Tell me, Mr. Davix, oh, that's Davis,
I see, exactly what ties do you think the best fly-tiers will be tying or trying to fly
this year for the Trout Unlimited Tournament? I see. Tell me, what do you use when tying
flies, anyway?..." When you're ignorant and in a hurry you can really make a bad impression.

Andi Shechter So I'm working in an office where a bunch of people are skiffy fans or
1901 Sixth Street know people who are skiffy fans (if you call Stephen Donaldson a
Berkeley, CA 94710 skiffy writer) and what I want to know is what do you say when people
 say, "Oh, sci-fi. Yeah, I know some people who read that stuff." No,
this is not a new question--this is just a request for the best responses to people who
use "sci-fi." All responses, graphic, snide and otherwise, welcome. But what I'm really
looking for is tactful responses which aren't putdowns.

Response to Loren's column and tied in with the last remarks--when you tell someone you
know XYZ who wrote ABC (or that you met them once, or that they live in the Bay Area or
yatata yatata) what do you say when they ask, "What's s/he like?" In fact, what the hell
do you say when anyone asks you that about anyone? "Tall, mumbles a lot, manly handshake,
receding hairline, wears mismatched socks..." What do they really ask for? What do people
really want to know when they ask that question? Why do I always cop out and say, "Oh,
s/he's very nice." (Even if I don't think so, what if this person's their first cousin
out spying on me? Why am I so paranoid?)

In re Greg B's "Stochasticities"--no, I think those other than fans would catch the humor in
what Charlie said (which I found very funny, then I stopped and thought a minute, murmured
"no, no..." then stopped and thought a minute, said "naw..." stopped and thought...)

And what I think I finally figured out (wah?) is that almost anyone I know, no wait, that's
not true (and yes, I actually do know people other than fans), no, a lot of people I know
would think that's funny and...dammit...they're all...yup, Greg was right...only fans
would think that was funny. Everyone else I know would think it's tasteless or ghoulish
(it is) but wouldn't smile about it. Damn, are we that weird? Ghoulish? I don't think so,
maybe it's a question of manners. We aren't well-mannered in the way of many--polite, no
sick jokes--on the other hand, we aren't as catty, I don't think, or as slashing as Greg
thinks. Well, let's put it this way, when Debbie Notkin and I gossip and dish, one of us
usually precedes the discussion with a cat-like gesture (FKB fans, note reference). Catty,
yes, but I won't accept the label of either condescending or slashing (wry, however, I'd
love to be). Which goes back to my first question--how do you explain why one should not

use "sci-fi" without being all those nasty things Greg described? Or do you?

((What are "FKB fans"? No condescending or slashing, now. Jak))

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"I am surrounded by...husbands who will divorce their wives for things I and most fans don't think twice about." Poor Ray Nelson, stuck in an environment where people think twice about their relationships, and failing to think twice before projecting his mindset onto "most fans." As Peter, Paul & Mary intoned: "Don't think twice, it's all right."

Recruitment and cross-fertilization. Jan Brown in particular has an interesting comment: "...if we don't start cross-fertilizing a little, fandom--our fandom--is going to die of in-breeding, and the mediots will take over." Fanzine fandom is a special interest and always has been, though it no longer encompasses most of the movers and shakers when it comes to such other special interests as conventions. I don't consider this important. I also don't like words such as "mediot," which as I see it is an understandable but thinly-disguised variant of "nigger," and neither word is acceptable in a discussion about "cross-fertilizing" (Star Trek brought us "Trekkies" and some of today's more well-known fannish fans. Currently the big influx of neos is from the more general sf film media, and some of tomorrow's well-known fans are today referred to as "mediots." We seem to have a penchant for spitting on our recruitment media while wondering where the neos are.). We have seen that fandom evolves not only on its own but as a consequence of what science fiction is considered to encompass. If fandom doesn't wish to accept a rising tide of interest in sf media, then we're fighting the influence that science fiction is expected to have on science fiction fandom.

All the special interests which make up what we call fandom serve as recruiting grounds for each other, although the recruiting process is largely informal. Many fans have more than one special interest in fandom and these are the people who informally provide much of the cross-fertilizing. In fanzine fandom (ie, general fanzine fandom and the apas) I've learned a lot about other special interests because fanzine fans write about them. At conventions I see fanzines made available to non-fanzine-fans. In the prozines, sf readers are made aware that such a thing as fandom exists. I'm uncertain what deliberate measures might aid the processes of either cross-fertilization or recruitment, though I consider the latter more important than the former.



((A few points: First, I think there was a time, when fandom was both younger and smaller, when "fanzine fan" was a redundancy. Perhaps this was the early fifties; perhaps it was the early sixties. I think, in fact, that fanzines were necessary to fandom's existence, the essential network that defined fandom. I don't see them as that anymore, though they are certainly my "special interest" now. Second, the prejudice you pinpoint is tough to avoid. You yourself show some of it when you prove that media fans should be welcomed because they might turn into fannish fans. To use your own analogy, this is like saying that they turn into white folks. Third, I don't think I want to cross-fertilize. I want to meet people who are interested in science fiction and fan-

dom, but I don't expect to become even a bit of a Dr. Who fan (to simplify the point). I do mean to be friendly, or at least civil. But sometimes I have to wonder whether I want to do anything that could be construed as "cross-fertilizing" with people I almost find frightening in their intense role-playing. I think it's the role-players that sf fans find so distressing, not the media fan per se. And no wonder, when the role-players stay in their self-assigned characters not only at conventions but at parties as well. Do these people have any "real" selves? In light of D. West's article, "Performance," it's a question we can all ask of ourselves. I wish someone would undertake to ask the question of the role-players in more depth than I can muster in this comment. jak))

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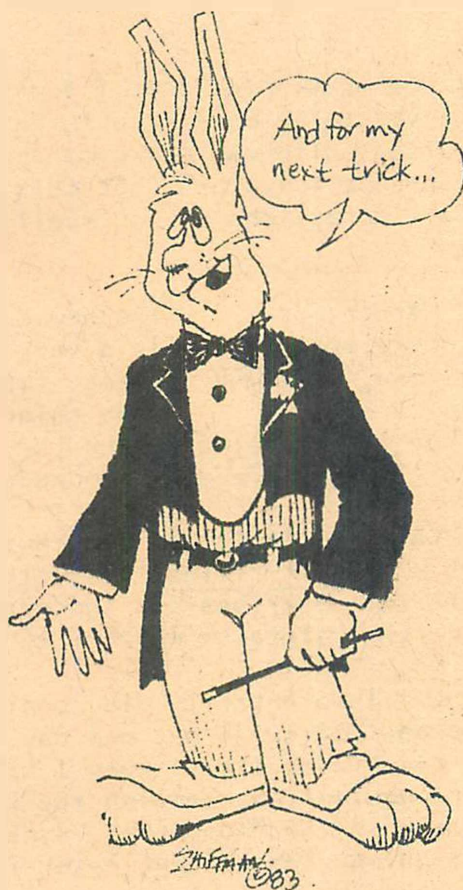
I've just realized why I
can never be a trufan.
The trufan has a well-
developed social conscious-
ness; he/she worries about the state of fandom, as
well as the problems attendant upon all these fake-
fans standing around isolated while aping their
betters.

"Eclectifens soon find out they don't fit anywhere"? Funny, that never happened to Juanita and me and we've encompassed fanzines, conventions, filking, Star Trek in the early days, becoming dirty pros, huckstering... Is there anything we've missed? We even got invited to a Dorsai Thing once, but didn't go; as I recall, I'd already used up my vacation time. (Oh, yes, I'm a stf collector, too...and Juanita has this file cabinet full of Golden Age comics...) Okay, we're not masqueraders, though I did participate in one masquerade and have been a judge at two others, and Juanita has judged several. (My one masquerade appearance, by the way, was in a Star Trek costume--no, not with the ears. I picked the side of the villains, naturally. No, not Klingons, either.) And we collect fan and pro art...

I'll agree with Jan that there is a fair amount of, well, not cliquishness but "groupishness"; con-fans, fanzine fans, etc. But that's due mostly to the size of fandom coupled with the drive for egoboo. It's fairly easy to be a big frog in the small puddle of fanzine fans or the larger puddle of con-fans, and well-nigh impossible to become a BNF in the older sense of the word, that is, known to everyone in fandom. So the fan who wants to be noticed naturally opts for the easier and quicker course: to become a name in apa-fandom or genzine fandom or con-committee fandom.

I think that confusing the nice man from People magazine was unsporting. Sitting ducks and all that. Loren should just have told him that Bradbury wrote a whole novel called Switch Off the Dark and let it go at that. Of course, it wouldn't have made a good fanzine article that way.

Isn't that "Jerry Kaufman and Suzle" just a wee bit demeaning to the female half? Doesn't she rate a full name and the chance to go first once in awhile instead of being one step behind like an Indian squaw? Why are you putting male chauvinist headings on your fanzine? Are you really a reactionary masquerading as a liberal? Come clean!



((Jerry's mentioning that I don't particularly like my name appearing as 'Suzle Tompkins' has proven to be more trouble than it's worth. I certainly didn't mean to cause problems. Suzle is a childhood nickname that I don't use anywhere else except in fandom. Elsewhere I'm 'Suzanne Tompkins'. At this point, I suppose I should say that I no longer care what you call me as long as you spell it correctly. svt))

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The new Mainstream has such a fascinating pair of covers that there is a very real danger some of its recipients might never open its pages, for fear of finding everything inside an anti-climax. It's a good thing I'm such a print-oriented person that the first thing I look for in a fanzine is the pages most solid with type. It might have happened to me, if I were like most fans and looked first at the pictures.

Terry Garey's little article caused her to take form in my mind's eye. She looks exactly like Ria in Butterflies, the British series which is running on some PBS stations. The adventure she describes and the part she plays in it seem exactly like the charming female lead in the telecasts which I've watched occasionally in recent months.

I think I involuntarily did cognitive modeshifting when I was quite young. I no longer remember how old I was but one day I realized suddenly that I was thinking in words for the first time in my life. When I tried to think without words again as I'd always done in the past, I couldn't accomplish the reversion. What's more, I've never been able to think consistently in the "nonverbal, synthetic, simultaneous, timeless, integrative and spatial" way Jon Singer describes, later in life. When it happened to me, I was unsure if I had dreamed up the whole thing or if I had experienced the first stage in brain decay. On the matter of lefthandedness, I saw an item just the other day about a survey which purported to show lefthanded batters have been on the whole superior to righthanded batters in the history of major league baseball, for reasons related to the two sides of the brain. But I have my doubts about this particular finding. For one thing, the two hands and arms play nearly equal parts in the act of hitting a baseball, no matter which side of the plate you stand on. For another, a lefthanded batter can see the ball coming from a righthanded pitcher a bit better than the righthanded batter (it is less likely to emerge from the camouflage of the pitcher's uniform and the pitcher's arm comes around toward the center of his vision instead of toward its side) and most pitchers are righthanded, so this could account for the difference in batting averages.

((Stephen Jay Gould, in a recent issue of Vanity Fair, tackles the same study you mention, and raises the same points you do. jak))

Maybe fans had such success with the putdown way of life because most fannish communication was conducted for many years by correspondence and publications. It's safer to putdown the other fellow if the worst that can happen to you is a putdown on paper in return. Some evidence of all this continues to turn up occasionally even today, despite the way congoing and visiting and clustering in large cities have become the most prominent forms of fanac. Witness the way Joseph Nicholas recanted his earlier critical self after he emerged from his semi-isolation and began to travel extensively throughout fandom.

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The current issue is a very comfortable one to visit, but there's nothing much to set the soul afire, other than Jerry's editorial which I would have enjoyed very much, had it not included the obligatory kowtowing to Willis in the last paragraph, and Greg Benford's piece, which was definitely the most entertaining in the issue.

((That wasn't "kowtowing"; that was acknowledging a source. jak))

Don't get me wrong, I didn't find David Emerson's piece that bad, except that, since I don't really care about pinball, the article didn't relate to me. Loren's piece was one that I should have included when talking about the high points of the issue, but since I don't rough draft letters, I forgot it. His piece almost ranks with the story John MacPharlin tells of the insurance salesman who visited him once. It appears that John had, for some reason known only to him, a copy of Asimov's Foundation and Empire on his desk when the salesman visited. Salesman looks at John, and says, "Hey! You're into sci-fi huh? I read a lot of that stuff too. Tell me, is that Asimov guy one of the new writers? I've never heard of him." Exit one salesman sans commission.

But onto the article that I didn't like, which is always the best place to get a bit of loocking mileage. Why print the piece by David Bratman on the chicken and the egg? Said topic has been done over in far too many drunken party philosophical raves, and it's not as if Bratman adds anything to the discussion. He doesn't even go into the genetic detail that such conversations usually go into, and he misses totally the point that the question is trying to place an arbitrary division into what is bascially a continuum. Though people like to place clear lines between animate and inanimate, or between species, nature doesn't work that way. There are continua, and one can no more draw lines there than one can between, say, science fiction and fantasy. At one end of the line, there is a lizard-like thing with the beginnings of feathers, and at the other end there is a chicken. Anyone can tell the difference between these. It's just in the middle, where the question of chicken or egg lies, that that sort of distinction is not possible. There is no answer to the question.

((We ran David's column because it's about more than just pinball, of course. And we ran David's article about eggs and chickens because we thought it was funny. When we have drunken raves it isn't about philosophy that we rave. jak))

Tell me, is Ted's letter decrying new fanwriters serious, or is he just coming down with terminal hardening of the arteries? Certainly, old fanzines are good, and it is good that the older fanwriters continue to produce material, but, as you point out in your reply, new people are essential. I rather wish that you'd put Anders Bellis' letter after Ted's, as Anders' approach seems to be just the sort of thing that Ted is asking for. (I recall that, at Denvention II, when Shayne McCormack announced that the Pat Terry Award had gone to Walt Willis, Anders and Rojer jumped to their feet, and almost raised their arms in a salute more commonly found in Germany in the thirties.)

((Wait a sec...I don't think Ted was "decrying" new fanwriters...he was just not caring if they appeared. I presume this was on the theory that they would appear without anyone needing to worry about the matter. I find this complacent, but I've never thought Ted was actively hostile to good new writers, editors or artists. (As for his definition of "good," I find myself agreeing with about 90-95% of his fanzine reviews.) jak))

Being a resident of areas where blue ring octopi are very common--contrary to William Gibson's implication, they are quite happy in the cool waters off South Australia--I don't know of anyone who has tried to eat one. They're a little small to be cut up. I gather though that the poison is the type that needs to be injected into the bloodstream, thus eating it probably wouldn't be too dangerous, unless you had any cuts in your mouth. Getting bitten though is something else again. (In the Gulf here, they are customarily found in the shells of a large mollusc called the razor fish. I used to go out looking for said shells when I was a kid. The flesh made good fishing bait. Fortunately I never found one occupied by an octopus, as, had I done so, I would probably have tried to play with it. It wasn't until I was in my teens that the poisonous qualities of the blue ring became common knowledge. I think some serviceman on R&R in Sydney was the first widely publicised victim.)

John D. Owen
4, Highfield Close
Newport Pagnell
Bucks. MK16 9AZ
UK

In your comment after my letter, you say that I seem to exist in an English fandom quite other than the one you know. The Pasha of Pimlico has leapt upon that remark with glee, sending me rude locs, not about the last issue of Crystal Ship, but about the status slip that went with it, and using your comment as if it were pejorative in the extreme. I chortled over it when Joe mentioned it (which was a day or so before my copy of MS arrived), and laughed even more when I saw it in context. Ra-

ther than it being pejorative, I take the remark as a compliment!

To you guys out there, English (sorry, British, or the Taffs and Jocks and Paddies will be up in arms) fandom is visible via that top part of the iceberg, while the rest of the fanscene is invisible under the water--but never forget that seven-eighths of the iceberg is there, and it's that portion that supports the visible section, and from which arises the folk that replace the visibles as they run out of steam, gaffiate, drop dead with alcohol poisoning or whatever.

((I didn't mean either per-joration or compliment, but simple observation. If you want to use icebergian allegory, then I wouldn't put you underwater with the seven-eighths of someone else's berg, but at the visible tip of your own. jak))

Darroll Pardoe
11B Cote Lea Square
Southgate, Runcorn
Cheshire, WA 7 2SA
UK

It used to be quite easy to get a good game of pinball in Liverpool; there were arcades that had a lot of reasonably

well-maintained pinball machines, and Ro and I often used to go in to play them. But then, four or five years ago I suppose, the first 'Space Invaders' machines started to appear, and suddenly all the pinball vanished and was replaced by rows of the early video-games (they were in monochrome, and unsophisticated by the standards of today). I suppose this was in response to the youth of Liverpool, who got really keen on this new activity. Kids used to try to cadge money off you in the street so that they could go and play the arcades,



and there were strange tales in the newspapers of children who spent £20 or £30 a week on video-games (heaven knows where they got that sort of money: theft most probably).

But a year or so after Season-time (1980 or perhaps early 1981) the pinball machines started making a comeback, and most of them were the new electronic ones with their attractions such as incomprehensible voices with Japanese accents, double playfields and LED score displays. They became quite an attraction, enticing the kids back off the Invaders. I was very pleased to be able to get a game of pinball again (at one stage in 1972-79 there was nowhere in Liverpool that had a pinball machine at all, although five miles away in New Brighton there were still a few).

But then what happened? The video-games got more sophisticated, acquired colour and more interesting programs, and the kids went off the pinball again and back onto the purely electronic games. The current situation is that there are still a few pinball machines available on Liverpool, but never more than one (or at most two) in any arcade. I hope they don't vanish altogether again. There's nothing so satisfying in video-games as in the flight of a steel ball down a playfield, and the feel of the flippers under your control. It beats pushing buttons, and anyway you can't "nudge" a Space Invaders game.

Jim Meadows III It has been several weeks since I've written to a fanzine editor. I don't
P.O. Box 1227 know what's come over me, but these past six months, my letterhacking has
Pekin, IL 61554 gone all to crumbs. I have some fanzines, especially the overseas ones,
 that have been waiting nearly a year to be replied to. I don't dislike
fanzines, I still look eagerly in my post office box for a little something. I even enjoy
writing this letter to you two. But my fanac seems to be fading away. I even have a tough
time keeping up my very modest load in the apa I belong to. Mother of God, is this the end
of Rico? ...hmm, wrong last words...how about...*Rosebud!*...nope, still wrong.

At any rate, it is three long intolerable months since you published your 8th issue, and I still have no witty barbs and caustic rejoinders for it. It is a handsome zine, full of all the sort of fannish stuff I love, including a nice little loc from me, but my mind is a blank. What can I say about blue food? Why should I even care if today's fanzines are on their way up or down? Where could I find a witty remark to put in about Ray Bradbury? What could I possibly come up with to plunge all fandom into war?

I've been reading They Stand Together, a book of C.S. Lewis's letters to his longtime friend, Arthur Greeves. Now, Lewis was a champion letterwriter, and his earlier correspondence with Greeves (they met when both were in their teens) has that same chatty intensity of a lot of letters between fans. Lewis and Greeves shared a love for mythology, fairy tales and fantasy that they talked about with the intensity of those who realize how very few people share their interests. Of course, Lewis and Greeves knew nothing of fanzines, amateur press associations, conventions, BNFs, and the like. They also talked a lot more about Milton, Jane Austen, and other writers who rarely get adapted for Heavy Metal.

One big difference between Lewis and me at this point, besides all the other big differences, is that Lewis was a champion letterwriter, not only with Arthur Greeves, but with everybody. He was extremely conscientious about replying to everybody who wrote. I do not doubt (although Lewis has been dead 20 years) that there are fans still active or still remembered today who wrote verbose argumentative letters to Lewis to belabor some aspect of his Space Trilogy, or of his religious beliefs, and who still possess the courteous straightforward reply that Lewis sent in return.

I suppose I should be using Lewis as a role-model. Be a champion letter-writer like Lewis, and you too can become a champion scholar, learn six languages and possess a brilliant intimacy with Renaissance literature, besides dabbling in science fiction and children's

fairy tales, not to mention having solemn scholars publishing your old laundry lists after you die. Bet they won't do that for Philip K. Dick.

((Too wrong, mate. Paul Williams has already started. Dick's laundry lists should be pretty interesting, since the CIA was behind the missing buttons and over-starched shorts. jak))

Arthur Thomson Like Marty Cantor I envied your collators: a lovely bunch. When Terry
17 Brockham House Hill was running off his 80-page Microwave Annish at Vince Clarke's,
Brockham Drive I went over to offer help and encouragement. All I actually did was
London SW2. 3RU sit in an easy chair, drink tea, look at fanzines, and cheer every
UK time they announced another page finished. Y'see, Vince and Terry are
 so technical and full of the duping/mimeo know-how that it ill be-
hooves anyone to get in their way when they are operating full blast. They have three or
four duplicators scattered about as well as about six typewriters, and appear to be using
them all at the same time, piles of mimeo paper appear and disappear like magic, stacks
vanish from one side of the room and grow up in the other. Every now and then the two
producers of all this activity meet in the middle of the floor for some sort of technical
discussion, then separate to continue their mysterious art.

I approach the Jon Singer tale about the amazing Tibetan hand warmers a little warily.
That 'gTum-mo Yoga' thing that all these monks engage in...well, it seems a lot of sheet
to me.

I didn't quite get the gist of his Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain. If you want
to talk about actually drawing by hand on paper, well, I've always been told that I'm
ambidexterous. When drawing I always say that I use the hand that's nearest to paper.
But it's not quite like that, it just seems that sometimes it's better to use one hand
than the other to draw a particular bit of the illo. What tells me so, or why I should
change hands I don't know; all I do know is that for some reason I use both hands to put
down the lines on one drawing, changing the pen or pencil from hand to hand whenever it s
seems right to do so. There's no conscious thought about it, it's a completely natural
action. I have the same faculty in the use of any holding implements. I can hammer, saw,
file, cut, using either hand to hold the tools. I suppose it must seem strange or unus-
ual to some. A few months back I was at a oneshot session at Terry Hill's house. Terry,
Vince, and Elda Wheeler were typing up stencils at a table and needed a quick illo cut.
I went over to the table and with a stylus cut the illo whilst they waited; naturally,
for me, I used both hands. Finishing the illo, I looked up to find them all looking at
me. "It's tru!" said Vince.

That's strange, Greg Benford writing about 'putdowns' and his own style of humour. This
is the second time he's brought this subject up. The first was in Gambit or Boonfark when
he was replying to something Ted White had written about the Void editors and pubbing
times. Greg seems to think that he shouldn't have developed a cynical putdown style of
writing in his Dallas days, and that it had gotten into his soul and fannish being, and
in some way needs exiated. The times I've been in his company his verbal humour has been
funny and wry all at the right times; certainly no bad cynical putdown style is apparent.

Steve Green I suppose it's all Dick Bergeron's fault again; ever since that
11 Fox Green Crescent crack in Wiz about "interesting Britfans" I keep receiving all
Acocks Green these inch-thick fanzines from the far side of the Big Pond, from
Birmingham B27 7SD all these triffic Americans out to sabotage the ancient British
UK prejudice against "the Yanks." Hence, I imagine, the copy of
Mainstream 2 thrust into my hands at Albacon 11 the other month by Dave "I'm Nearly

Famous" Langford.

Only trouble is, if there was a centre of the Interesting Universe right this moment, Britain would be the furthestmost point from it. The country is in the throes of election fever, a five-yearly illness which promotes energetic movements all over the land by our "leaders" and instant catatonia amongst the majority of the population. Seriously, if this tedious ritual was repeated any more frequently, the British public would be laid out in a permanent snooze.

The race took an even weirder turn the other week when the present incumbent of Ten Downing Street took a leaf from your statesmen's books and went Hollywood on us at a "Stars for Maggie" junket: "highlights" included comedian Kenny Everett waving a pair of huge plaster fists and screaming "Bomb the Russians!", and Eurovision Song Contest loser Lynsey de Paul singing some dirge with the chorus, "Vote Tory, Tory, Tory/For election Glory." Bet that'll pull the voters in tomorrow. Ronnie would've loved it.

I even caught up with the Blessed Margaret on her whistle-stop tour of Birmingham, surrounded by security heavies and pursued by dozens of pressmen, myself among them. In the blur of arms, legs, and mouths which ensued I managed to reach the Leaderene and ask her opinion of the exhibition she was visiting before she was whisked off onto a tacky platform to deliver some crap about being there mainly as a housewife "who did other things as well." Grief, and the crowds below swallowed this junk, hook, line and sinker, which only goes to prove that the British voter is just as gullible as the American.

(Meanwhile, Elvis Costello sings the stunning indictment of British colonialism in the South Atlantic, "Pills and Soap"; tomorrow the record is deleted, a political statement no doubt lost on the viewers of the television show he is performing it on.)

((We never hear about this sort of excitement on television, Say, Steve, would you like to know who else wrote to us? There was Harry Andruschak, your pal Dick Bergeron, Ned Brooks, Brian Earl Brown, Randy Byers, Terry Carr (again), Giulia De Cesare (of Tasmania), David Clements, Glen Crawford, Leslie David ("Having wasted 3 years as an anthro major before switching to English I really appreciate your backover."), Alan Ferguson, Brad Foster, Alexis Gilliland, Mike Horvat, Kim Huett (twice), Ethel Lindsay, Marta Randall (again), Mike Rogers (with a real form letter, Marta), Bob Shaw, David Stever, Joni Stopa (who says that she and Dave Locke are publishing a new fanzine together), Arthur Thomson (on an earlier issue), Bruce Townley (to announce that he's taking over Space Junk from Rich Coad), Bob Tucker, Gene van Troyer, Jean Weber, Robert Whitaker, and Jim Young.

While I have your attention, egoscanners, I'll toss a few CoAs at you:

Shelley Dutton, 566 W. Olympic View Drive, Coupeville, WA 98123. ***

Fred Haskell, 2501 17th Avenue S., #3, Minneapolis, MN 55404.

Loren MacGregor, 134 Freelon, San Francisco, CA 94107.

If no one has anything further to add, I'll just end this agony here. jak))

*** For those of you who are copying down these changes, Shelley would like us to mention that if you received her letter substitute/COA, that the address was slightly wrong, and the above is the correct one. That is all.

BEWITCHED, BOTHERED, & BEMILDRED

JERRY KAUFMAN

You all know about the first robin of spring and the first swallow of summer. Here's a new cliché for you: the first Australian of autumn. Her name is Karen Janezic, and she called September 9th from New York, to ask for a place to stay in Seattle. To prove this thesis about the connection of the seasons with the migration of exotic beings, Peter Darling called the next day, also seeking domicile. The two Aussies arrived on a Saturday and the blue of summer (along with the mountains of madness) fled before them. (A week later the blue returned, even though another Australian, Steve Roylance, stayed with us.)

Since I'd bragged in my DUFF ballot about playing hostelier to Aussies, it became a kind of obligation to put more and more of them in the basement guestroom or on the couch. I even managed to play tourist guide to some extent, though Steve was pretty much on his own, having arrived during the working week. When I stopped to think about it, I realized that this was only one of a number of obligations I'd acquired, like a clutch of souvenirs, during the trip to "great big beautiful brown country," as the Australian folk group Red-gum puts it.

The ace obligation, the big one, is to administer DUFF. To that end I've included a new DUFF ballot with all US and Canadian copies (assuming that Marc Ortlieb is doing a good job of papering the Australian (fannish) landscape). Vote early, vote often. I'll only count the first one, but DUFF can always use the money. I can also use outright donations of money...or items to sell or auction, like fanzines, books, maps, posters, stuffed wombats, or Peter Toluzzi's cast-off shampoo bottles. And if you want to run your own auction, go right ahead. Just write me for details. (Kudos to Steven Bryan Bieler on being the first American voter.)

Another obligation I've taken on seems rather simpler: I told Roger Weddall that, certainly, sure, I'd be the US agent for Thyme, the Tasty Newszine. It seemed easy enough at the time. I knew that Roger was mailing copies direct to his US subscribers, and Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden (note to Constellation committee: see how easy it is to spell?), the previous agents, often said they had nothing to do; it was so easy that for awhile they were able to fill their spare time by publishing a monthly fanzine. But now there is a



little more work involved. I'm now mailing out the US and Canadian copies, and Roger will soon send a large batch for distribution to you, the readers of Mainstream. Several subscriptions have come in, too, as a result of a flyer Roger sent to Worldcon. (It appears that there was a special subscription rate offered there, of 10 issues for \$9. The regular rate is \$1 per issue.) As you'll soon see, Thyme crackles with personality and prints more Melbournian changes of address than the American mind can imagine.

My goodness, my mouth ran ahead of me in Australia. I promised to try to find Transfinite Visuals, a plastic model of a submarine, for one of their productions (slide shows with music and narration) but it's no longer produced. I said I would act as U.S. agent for an enormous purchase of Twiltone or similar paper (we use Fibertone) for the 1985 Worldcon, but the publishing projects they planned have been cancelled...for the moment. I think I even promised Bob Ogden to write an article about Western Australia for his projected fanzine. But I see (in Thyme, of course) that he's moving to Adelaide, so I'm sure he doesn't have time for fanpublishing, which gets me off the hook. Again.

There's one hook I can't get off, and that's the damned DUFF report. Honest, as soon as I get one or two little things out of the way, like Mainstream, I'll be ready to go. I even have a few pages written already...three, I think, or four. I'd been asked by two or three fanzines for excerpts, but I'd been inclined (yes, I was leaning) to write the thing all in one piece, and publish it myself, with vast amounts of help from Suzle and the willing hands of Seattle fandom. But then Alina Chu and Teresa Minambres published an excerpt from my letter in Nothing Left to the Imagination in order to publicly commit me (and embarrass me) into providing them with their DUFF section. Okay guys. Just for you I'm going to pick out the most boring section I can. How about two thousand words on "Saturday Afternoon in Alice Springs, or the Drunks Around the Corner"?

The silliest job I got myself stuck with (here the cliché "tarred with his own brush" takes on a new, unwelcome, meaning) was the chairmanship (with Cliff Wind very much the co-conspirator) of the 1985 Australian National Convention, the first con with schizophrenia. I imagine that you've read about this scam in File 770, Locus, SFChronicle or Thyme, but I'll

explain it all again: one night at Syncon, I enquired about the bidders for the 1985 Australian National Convention, and was told, "Adelaide's bidding...I think. Nobody else."

"Maybe Seattle should bid," I said. "Hey, Cliff, do you have a program book? Let's see what the rules say."

The rules had no objection, and neither did Cliff. (Cliff is a fan of Art Deco, Esther Williams movies, Middle Eastern desserts, Australian jazz, and abstruse philosophical discussions; only the latter appear in his fanzine Rhetorical Device.) We wandered around the con floor and room parties, gathering supporters and a "committee" (everyone in one of the room parties).

I hoped that all would be forgotten by next morning, but just before the business meeting the next morning all those supporters came up to me, in ones and twos, to be sure that the bid went on as announced. Since I was the announcer, I also got to be the speaker for Seattle, while Jeff Harris spoke for Adelaide. Then Cliff and I answered questions about our hotel, our public transportation, our weather and attitudes, while Jeff and Gary Mason did the same for their site. Robin Johnson read us the plane fares to Seattle. Jack Herman looked bemused. He called the vote. Seattle won. Cripes.

Cliff and I stared grimly, grinning, all through the voting. We didn't vote for Seattle, folks, and rather wish we'd voted for Adelaide. I hear it's a pleasant little city. The moment the count was in I gestured to Cliff and together we grabbed Jeff Harris and dragged him aside. (Gary Mason disappeared, and I never saw him again.) Our deal was that both cons could call themselves "the MatCon" and Adelaide would hold the business meeting and award the Ditmars. Seattle would have the "main" programming and the good parties.

You're wondering, I hope, just how we're going to pull this off. We announced at Syncon that the MatCon (which we nicknamed Spawncon) would be held in conjunction with Norwescon. That's Seattle's elder convention, running six years now, always has interesting guests, large crowds, three-ring circus programming, and lots of West Coast fannish types in attendance. We thought that, at the least, we could hold a big Saturday night party. I've talked to Richard Wright, the chairman, and I think we can have a bit more: Australian-oriented programming, for instance. Other possibilities are still in the suggestion stage, so I oughtn't mention them yet. I do want to remind you Australian Travelling Giants that fares to the U.S. are lower in March (when Norwescon occurs) and that since you have the Worldcon that year you won't need to travel here for that. (That's probably one of the reasons we won. Many people at Syncon told us, half seriously, "We've got your Worldcon, so I guess you can take our MatCon. Just give it back." Only one person said, "But keep the Ditmars.")

Any future news will appear in our official Spawncon progress report, Spawn of Prophecy.

Did I make any other promises, take on any other obligations? I hope not. If I did, someone is bound to remind me. Who said that the DUFF trip is free? It costs plenty. But it has its rewards, too. After all, I did come to like Vegemite. Well, a little, anyway. (Marc, is that case on its way yet?)

###

Ezra Pound I can handle; Greg Benford is another matter.--Don Keller

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