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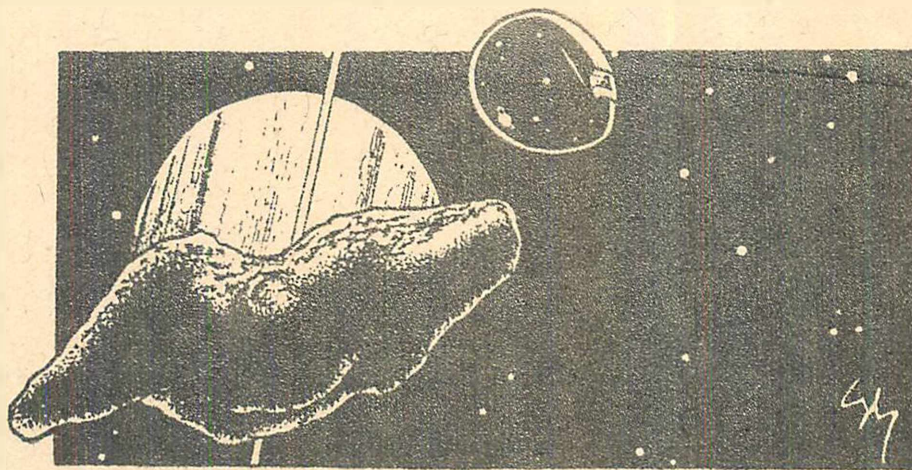


mainstream on 10

ML-12.5% alc. vol.







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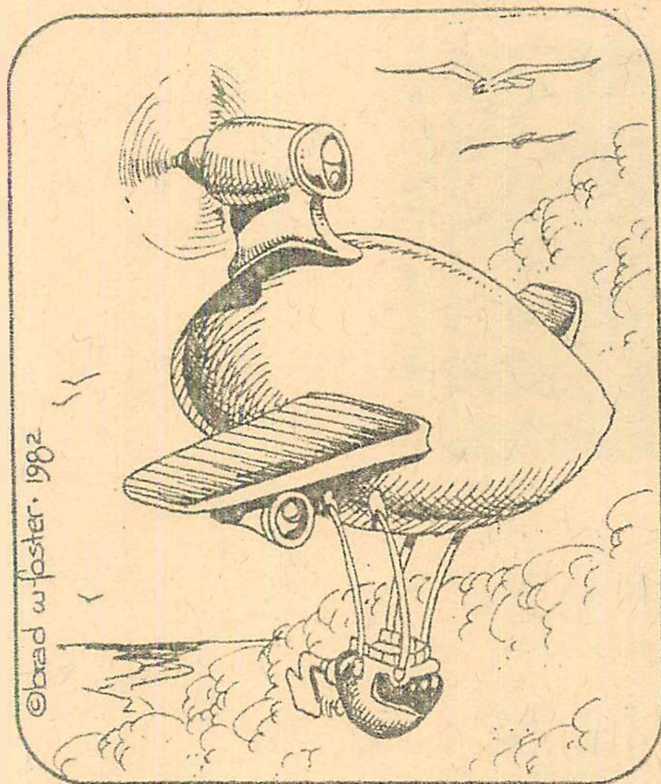
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Collators of the previous issue: Greater Seattle Fandom  
(after a year, I've finally lost the list). Official  
Mailer: Cliff Wind; bulk rate permit courtesy of the  
Northwest Science Fiction Society. Last-minute Loccer:  
Gary Deindorfer.

Overseas readers, note that we won't include TAFF or  
DUFF ballots for you, since we're mailing this surface.

Mainstream 10 is produced by Suzle (aka Suzanne Tompkins) and Jerry Kaufman, at 4326  
Winslow Place North, Seattle, WA 98103 USA (206-633-2375). It is available for trades,  
letters of comment, contributions, drinks at conventions, rubber stamps, statements of  
passionate interest, or \$1 a copy if you're at your wit's end. This stencil typed  
October 22, 1984.



LAST ISSUE I amused you with the story of the American conquest (in June, 1983) of the Australian National Convention. I told you how Cliff Wind and I started a bid to hold the 1985 con in Seattle. Now I can try to explain why Cliff and I are no longer the chairs of the official NatCon. This story will serve as clear warning to the SMOFs among you: when you go to the business meeting at Aussiecon II, be prepared for anything.

To begin, I'd better clarify the constitutional issue that allowed us to play our little joke. Under Section 3, Conventions, of the Australian Science Fiction Society,

rule 3.02 reads, "Australian Science Fiction Conventions shall be held within the Commonwealth of Australia, except when the site selection meeting determines otherwise." We've been told that the wording was intended to leave a door open for possible New Zealand bids, but it obviously allowed for our Seattle bid as well.

We never expected to win; we meant only that the bid be entertaining and satirical. There's a strain of Aussie and New Zealand fan that thinks such a joke is funny only if it has a punchline. Several of these jokers made sure that we carry our evening's fun into action at the business meeting, and then made sure that we got the votes needed to win. Our "compromise" of asking Adelaide to hold a convention with all of the "official" events (awards and meetings) was our way of getting out from under.

We were vague about the events of this year's business meeting, at Eurekacon, until we talked to Jack Herman at LACon II. Not even Thyme, Roger Weddall's Aussie newszine (for which I am agent), printed a very clear report on the meeting. Here's what Jack told us.

First, 3.02 was changed. The whole phrase following the comma is gone. No longer can a NatCon be held outside the Commonwealth of Australia. Then Jeff Harris, the chair of the Adelaide convention, rose to point out a new contradiction. Under Section 4, Changes to This Constitution, rule 4.03 says, "Changes to the Constitution take effect on the first day of office of the Incoming Committee." And when is the first day of office? It's "the close of the previous Convention," according to rule 1.04.

Yes, folks, the moment Cliff and I took office, we became an impossibility, an illegality, a confusion of rules. Jack Herman ruled that we could not run a flatCon, and awarded the NatCon to Adelaide, who announced the AdventCon.

Jack says that, so far, we are the first NatCon to run into this problem of instant accountability to rule changes. The Worldcon's constitution protects already-elected concommittees from rule changes in the midst of their on-going preparations, and I think



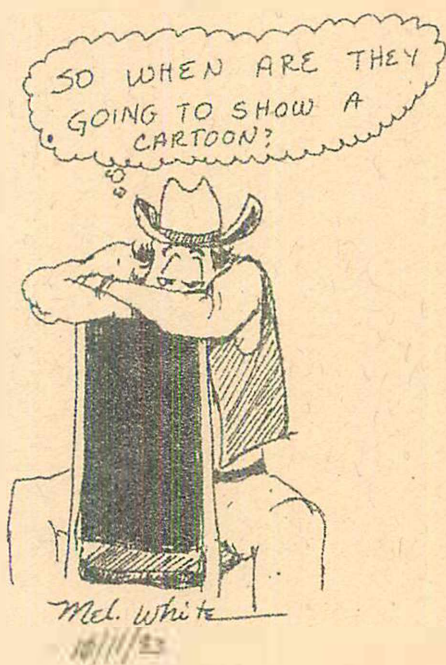
the Aussie SmoFs should consider changing their constitution in the same way. What if some humorist like Terry Frost decides that NatCons should pay people to attend? Some con committee is going to find itself stuck until the next meeting and leveler heads prevail, if ever they do.

Local reaction was disappointment. The Norwescon committee looked forward to hosting a truly international convention. My first reaction was relief; one less thing to keep track of. My second was annoyance. Why didn't someone tell us? We had a letter from Jeff Harris before Eurekacon to warn us of the possibility, but afterward no letter came. We really won, didn't we? We deserved the courtesy of a friendly, courteous, informative kiss-off letter on somebody's letterhead stationery.

For some reason, someone has attempted to mollify us with half-a-gavel, the base of the official NatCon convention opener. We intend to make this the exhibit of honor (or dishonor) at a Spawncon party at Norwescon, no matter what. You Aussies want to be there, that's your lookout. No more Spawn of Prophecy from us. We'll have pictures of koalas on the walls, maybe a stuffed salmon or two, and Cliff and I might even wear Digger hats. We'll snap our braces, hoist our Foster's high (with the aid of derrickks), and singing "Advance Orstrilia Fair" at the tippytop of our lungs, wish you all a fine time and a guilty conscience at Advention 85, the only convention in history that had to be constitutionally hi-jacked from a joke bid.

JUST AS AN anti-climax, I'll explain the numerous weak jokes and correspondences that led to the name "Spawncon." Please remember that I thought this up late at night, during a silly party, while drinking beer in the middle of a science fiction convention. These circumstances should excuse anything, including my initial insight that the state bird of Washington is, or ought to be, the salmon. (As Gertrude Stein used to say, "If not why not?") It almost flies upstream, see? To spawn, see? I built a little substructure of correspondences to support this slight gag: I remembered that there is an annual convention in Perth, Western Australia, called "Swancon" because the black swan is the state bird of Western Australia. If W.A. equals WA (official postal abbreviation of US states are all two letters, Australian readers), then swan equals spawn. With this tortured explanation the subject breathes its last, and dies.

LAST ISSUE also saw Marc Ortlieb complaining about "the obligatory kowtowing to Willis" in my editorial of the previous issue. It made me want to mention Walt as often as possible, or at least once an issue. Fortunately, Walt has made this easy by sending us a postcard too late to make the lettercol or Wahfs. In it, he says that Marc's letter is "a little worrying from my point of view: however it does happily remind me of a remark by



Chuck Harris when Ken Potter made a mock bow to me at a British Convention. "Pay no attention," said Chuck, "it's a false salaam." Quick, Suzle, make sure this Harris fellow is on the mailing list.

I'VE BEEN TRYING to decide what to say about LACon II that Locus won't say, or File 770 for that matter. "Fanzines and fanzine fans" is the topic most likely to be overlooked. One of the few items of programming I attended, and the only panel discussion, "The Year in Science Fiction: Fandom" barely discussed it, preferring to worry the subjects of fanfunds and conventions instead.

The Mimeo Room was always active, with five mimeos, four typers, three electrostencillers, two fans at every piece of equipment, and one question to answer: how many were going to St. Ives? Mike Glycer was everpresent, overseeing issues of Thought Police Gazette. Dick Smith must have been in charge of something, too, but I never found out what; he handed me a copy of Uncle Dick's Little Thing, and Leah Zeldes gave me an invitation to a party she and Dick were hosting, but I never parlayed these into an opportunity to talk.

WOOF (the annual apa collated at Worldcons) and APA-L had collations over the weekend, so a lot of those fans must have been working on their contributions, but at least two were doing something more substantial. Alina Chu typed and mimeoed the newest issue of Nothing Left to the Imagination. I'd never met her before, but she was everything I had expected. "Nice to see you doing something constructive with your time," I said to her on Sunday, when she appeared in the Fanzine Sales room. "Shut up and take a fanzine," she answered.

Amy Thomson was the other fan publishing her ish. She'd previously done a small printing of her first Corruption of the Innocent in photocopy. At LACon II she electrostencilled and mimeoed a much larger print run. "I love mimeo," she chortled. Wait, I thought, until you try to run something on our mimeo. (Since we seem to have the only working mimeo in Wallingford, this would seem inevitable.)

The Fanzine Sales and the Fanzine Display (in one long room) with the N3F Hospitality Table at one end were also fairly active, though seldom jammed. I believe plenty of stuff sold. I know I sold nineteen of twenty copies of The Best of Susan Wood (still plenty of copies left, by the way) and over a hundred dollars worth of fanzines for DUFF. Even Fanzines in Theory and in Practice, D. West's gigantic self-collection of musings, sold four copies--at twenty-five bucks each. Neil Kaden ruled the room, looking very much a businessman, with help from tall women in Corflu dresses. (Okay, only Allyn Cadogan and Jeanne Bowman wore the dresses.)

Gary Farber and JoeD Siclari worked for hours--twelve straight--on the fanzine display, which was handsome but largely useless as an educational device. I dislike tables full of interesting zines but covered with plastic sheets, even though I know the necessity of protecting these irreplaceable and crumbling relics. That's the problem, though: the plastic turns them into relics, religious objects rather than enjoyable reading and gazing. But at least I got to see some of the incredible covers of the forties: beautifully drawn and printed Timebinders, spray-painted Chanticleers.



I talked to a number of fan artists at LACon II, but I was disappointed that they didn't do any jamming--or at least nothing I could see. Marc Schirmeister and Taral Wayne had fun fooling around with a pair of rubber manacles, and Rob Hansen and Stu Shiffman enjoyed trading remarks about British fans. Mel White was around, too, as were Bill Rotsler, Alexis Gilliland, Lucy Huntzinger, and others, but the pens didn't appear. ("I don't work that way," said Rob, as I suggested a jam to him.)

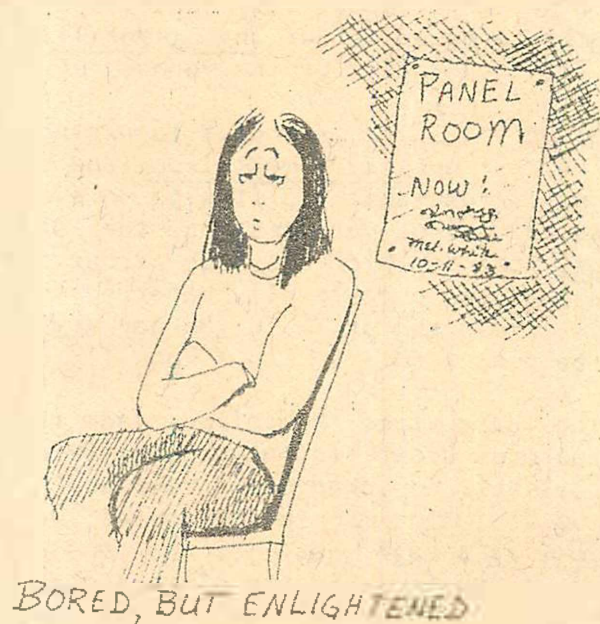
Rob suggested to us that we cut Mainstream to twenty pages and publish quarterly. We don't work that way, Rob. The sorts of things that delay our measly forty-plus page issues by six months would also delay shorter ones. Neither does anyone else seem to work that way, at least in the States. Ted White does Egoscan monthly, but since he doesn't mail it monthly, it doesn't have that sort of impact. (I suppose he does mail it more often than quarterly, however.) Killing Time (Teresa Nielsen Hayden and Tom Weber, Jr., and whomever happens to be living with them--generally Patrick, I assume) may be intended as a frequent fanzine, but had difficulty meeting the announced date of its first appearance. (Very nice appearance it has, too, guys.) (Victor Gonzalez, publisher of the undistributed Totally Wired, wants to do a frequent fanzine, but until he overcomes financial problems and the reluctance of his proposed co-editor, won't be much of a threat.)

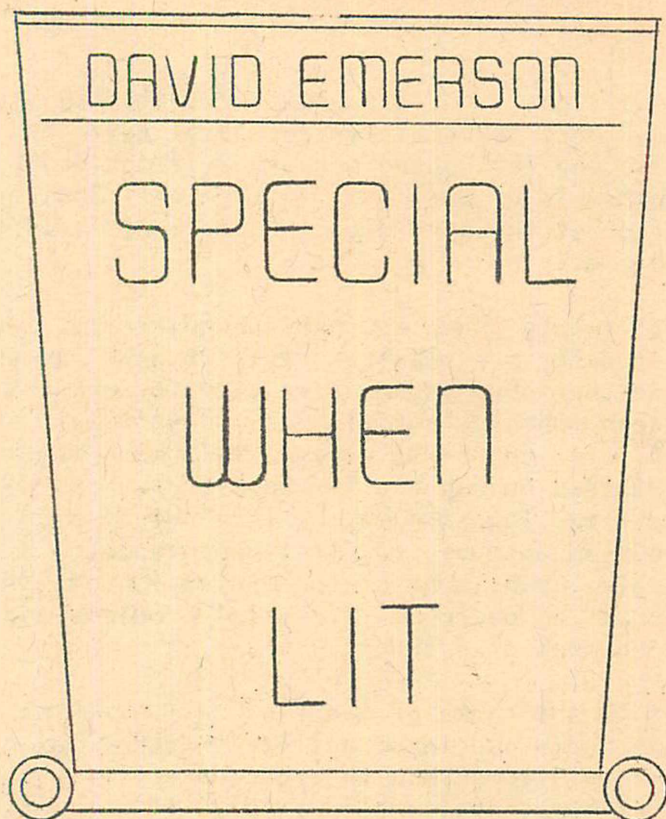
Victor and Amy are our most recent additions to the ranks of Seattle Fan Publishing. Corruption of the Innocent shows Amy at her most perky and incorruptibly innocent, even when she is telling her wickedest story, about her relationship with the rooster (it was in an animal husbandry class). Victor, on the other hand, projects a worldly, if not world-weary, persona in Totally Wired, aided by a great portrait cover by Ole Kvern. (You readers will surely see these zines soon: both Amy and Victor are using our mailing list.) At Worldcon Victor spent most of the weekend hanging around with Ted White; Amy bounced around a lot, so I'm not sure where she was. I'm sure they were both entertaining.

I met some people new to me, and new to fandom (relatively speaking). Cathy Crockett and Alan Rosenthal, editors of Carefully Sedated, were in the Mimeo Room once or twice. I'm sorry, but I really expected them to look like punks. Must have been something they published. On the other hand, I expected Spike of Madison, Wisconsin, to look a lot like Jeanne Gomoll--and she does. Quick, Suzle, let's get her on the mailing list, too...what do you mean? Oh. I guess we do need her address. Or at least her last name.

Yes, there must have been things going on that had nothing to do with fanzine fandom. But I don't really want to talk about the Hugoes yet again, except to mention the very moving tribute to Larry Shaw delivered by Harland Ellison and Robert Silverberg, during the presentations. We dined with old friends from New York, Pittsburgh, Australia; we roomed with Sandra Miesel but hardly ever saw her; we hung out with Bertie MacAvoy and Ron Cain; we never saw Gordon Dickson, the art show, any Serious Panels, any movies, the Japanese fans, or Disneyland. It was, despite or because of these lacunae, an interesting Time. The post-con fallout has not yet ceased: Justin Ackroyd will put in an appearance in November.

So anyway, who did you hang out with in LA? You didn't go? I could have sworn I sat next to you at dinner.





I was not playing any pinball the second week of October. No, I was in bed with the flu. All alone in my bachelor apartment with just my cat to keep me company. Even the stereo was on the blink. Oh well, I thought, gazing at my bookshelves, at least I have enough to read.

In fact, I mused, hadn't I been just waiting for a chance to do some heavy-duty reading? Gotta get in training for those long Minnesota winter nights, eh? And say, here's that hardback copy of Tolkien's Unfinished Tales that I found remaindered for \$1.98 at B. Dalton a few weeks ago. I'll just...hey! Most of this stuff is about the First Age--I can't remember a thing out of The Silmarillion. Guess I'll have to dig it out.... Ah. Chapter One. The beginning of the cosmos. Good place to start.

Three months later, although long since recovered from the flu, I am still in Middle-Earth. Having re-read The Silmarillion (and appreciated it a hundred times more, this second time around), cross-checking it with some of the "unfinished" tales and Christopher Tolkien's notes on variant versions, and then diving straight into The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, both of which are much richer for my being familiar with the legends of the Elder Days that are occasionally referred to by the characters therein, I am now racing desperately across the plains of Mordor trying to drop that damned ring into the Crack of Doom and be done with it. And I know I'm going to cry when Sam finally says, "Well, I'm back."

In the years since the trilogy made it into paperback and became a campus craze, we've seen an enormous growth in the popularity of pure fantasy: Lin Carter's "Adult Fantasy" line for Ballantine; Conan books reissued with Frazetta covers; Conan in the comics; Conan in the movies; Superman in the movies; Dragonslayer and Dark Crystal; the rise of Dungeons and Dragons as a major pastime; and tons and tons of new fantasy novels. Some of the new authors manage to avoid the clichés of medieval S&S and set their fantasy in the more-or-less modern world (John Crowley's Little, Big and Steve Englehart's The Point Man come to mind;





and I guess someone should at least mention Stephen King, although I'd rather not), but the vast majority of all recent fantasy owes its existence either to the Burroughs/Howard pulp tradition--or to J.R.R. Tolkien.

Tolkien, on the other hand, didn't have either of those traditions to mold his fantasy. If anything, he had Beowulf, The Faerie Queen, and the Nibelungenlied. Mostly, though, he had his philological studies and his own imagination. He started some of the earliest parts of the epic ("Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin") during the First World War, and was already using Elvish names and phrases with impeccably correct syntax and etymology. The combination of his meticulously complete world and his rigorous British literary education resulted in a body of work which is unparalleled in its rich originality and its value to the genre.

Well, that's pretty high-falutin' language, as Samwise would say. What I really mean is that when I read the scene where Ulmo, Lord of Waters, appears to Tuor by rising out of the sea like a living waterspout, all the hair on my arms stood on end. And when Beren sliced open the belly of the great werewolf and retrieved his own bitten-off hand that was still grasping the silmaril he had hewn from Morgoth's iron crown, I put down the book and jumped around the room, whooping and hollering. And when Elrond looked at the sword Bilbo found in the troll-hoard and said, "This is a very old blade. It was made in Gondolin long ago for the goblin-wars," my eyes bugged out because I now knew that it was like being told that I was carrying around an artifact that had been made in Atlantis or Lemuria. And when Frodo met Galadriel, I realized that this was the same Galadriel who had survived the brutal trek across the ice bridge between Valinor and Middle-Earth that the Houses of Fingolfin and Finarfin had to make because their brother Feanor had burned the ships they were to sail in; and I remembered that that journey was made under the stars, because the sun and the moon had not yet been created--it was THAT long ago. And when Sam returns from seeing the Bagginses off at the Grey Havens and sits in his favorite chair in front of the fire with

his daughter in his lap and says, "Well, I'm back," I'm going to--jeez, I've got tears in my eyes already, just thinking about it.

The Middle-Earth saga is that powerful. You don't get that kind of response from The Sword of Shannara.

The sad thing about it, though--well, the REALLY sad thing is that J.R.R. Tolkien died far too soon and never got a chance to tell the stories of Thingol and Melian, Beren and Luthien, Idril and Tuor, Turin Turambar, Earendil the Mariner, the overthrow of Morgoth, or the sinking of Numenor, to the full extent and scope that they deserved. There easily could have been another half-dozen novels matching the quality of The Lord of the Rings, if not its impact.

But within the stories themselves, there's a sadness that eventually comes through everything. In The Silmarillion, Fëanor, the maker of the silmarils, vows that the Elves will never rest until the jewels are recovered from Morgoth; but because of his ruthlessness in this quest, he and his followers are cursed by the Valar. Since neither vow nor curse may be withdrawn, the rest of the story, though rich with great deeds and daring heroics, winds inexorably to a tragic climax with all the inevitability of the classic Greek dramas. After the Valar overthrow Morgoth, the very shape of Middle-Earth is changed through cataclysmic upheavals, and the immortal Elves pine ever after for the lands of the Elder Days that now lie under the waves. The Second Age sees the establishment of a golden age for the Men of Numenor, but their decline and fall is, once again, inevitable and cataclysmic. Throughout the Third Age, everyone keeps sighing over the grandness and glory of earlier ages, long gone by now. There are very few Elves left, and all that keeps them going are the three elven-rings, which are fated to lose all their power when the One Ring is destroyed. Both The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings take place near the end of the Third Age, when most old things are fading, dying, leaving. At the very end, the kingdom of Gondor enjoys a rebirth, and the Shire ends up better off than ever, but all other signs of the Great Days--Elves, wizards, ring-bearers, rings--pass over the sea and leave Middle-Earth forever.

Naturally, immersing myself in an epic like this for such an extended period was bound to have some effect on my state of mind in the here-and-now. So you can now understand how I felt the next time I walked into an arcade and saw yet more video games and even fewer pinball table than ever before....

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Frodo's heart sank as he gazed across the ruined landscape. In the distance, impossibly far away, lay the mountain Orodruin, its fiery peak aglow with an ominous reddish light. A foul black smoke poured out of its crater and rose in a tall column, eventually merging with the great darkness that covered the sky and blotted out the sun.

And if the fire and distance were not enough, what lay between him and his goal was even worse: a host of orcs camped on the plain just below. Their horrible forms were everywhere, as far as the eye could see. The blades of their wickedly curved swords glinted feebly in the dim twilight.

Frodo sighed. "Well, Sam, I suppose we had best be getting on with it." He hitched up his trousers, shook out his limbs, grasped the joystick, and with an expression of resigned determination, hit the "2 PLAYER START" button.

The orcs on the video screen in front of him leapt into action. Frodo and Sam took turns at the controls, and each of them slew their fair share of the hideous creatures; but in the end, of course, each of them died. Three times.





"I can't take any more, Sam. I must rest."

"We can rest for a bit, Mr. Frodo," Sam agreed. He helped his master trudge over to a secluded corner behind a Coke machine, where they plopped themselves down heavily.

"This is terrible, Sam," said Frodo. "We're not getting anywhere with these accursed video games. We might as well be throwing our quarters into the gutter for all the good we're getting out of them. This is surely an evil business we've gotten ourselves into."

"Now don't you go talking like that, Mr. Frodo. There's no good that comes out of despair, as my old Gaffer always says. Why, he's probably down at the Green Dragon at this very moment, still trying to beat Bandoabras Took's high score on that old 'Eight Ball' table."

"I know you're trying to cheer me up, Sam, but I can't even remember what a pinball table is like any more. All I can see when I close my eyes is a swarm of video critters marching across a screen. Sometimes it's Pac-Men or Centipedes; sometimes it's those angular things from Tempest or the pterodactyls from Joust. Sometimes it's that horrible explosion at the end of Missile Command. Ugh!"

"Oh, but don't you remember all the pinball games in that arcade in Bywater? We used to have to sneak off down there, 'cause Hobbiton folk didn't think it proper. But we'd go there just the same, and we'd play all afternoon on a quarter if we were good enough. Remember winning free games, Mr. Frodo? That wonderful knocking sound when you won a 'special'? And remember all those targets and rollovers and bumpers? '10 POINTS--100 WHEN LIT' they said. Remember trying to get the ball through just the right lane at the top by pulling back the shooter to just exactly the right distance?"

A little light started coming back to Frodo's eyes. "Yes, Sam, and bumping the machine! Putting English on the ball. And slapping both flippers at once so as not to tilt. You can't tilt these infernal electron tubes, no matter how hard you try. Oh, what I would give just to lay my eyes on an old-fashioned machine again! The kind we used to play before they started talking and making electronic noises."

Just then Sam gave a little cry and smacked his forehead. "What a fool I am! Why didn't I think of it sooner?" He dug around a bit in their packs and finally brought out the little crystal vial that the Lady Galadriel had given them. In it, she had told them, was reflected the light of earlier days, when the world was young and such things as microchips and CRTs had not yet been conceived.

As he held it up, the light around them changed. The sickly phosphorescence of the video displays gradually gave way to the cheery incandescence of a myriad tiny light bulbs. They pressed their ears close to the crystal and listened with uplifted hearts to the ringing of bells and the clicking of mechanical counters. They could hear drop targets falling, spinners whirring, and--best of all--the thunk of flippers flipping away.

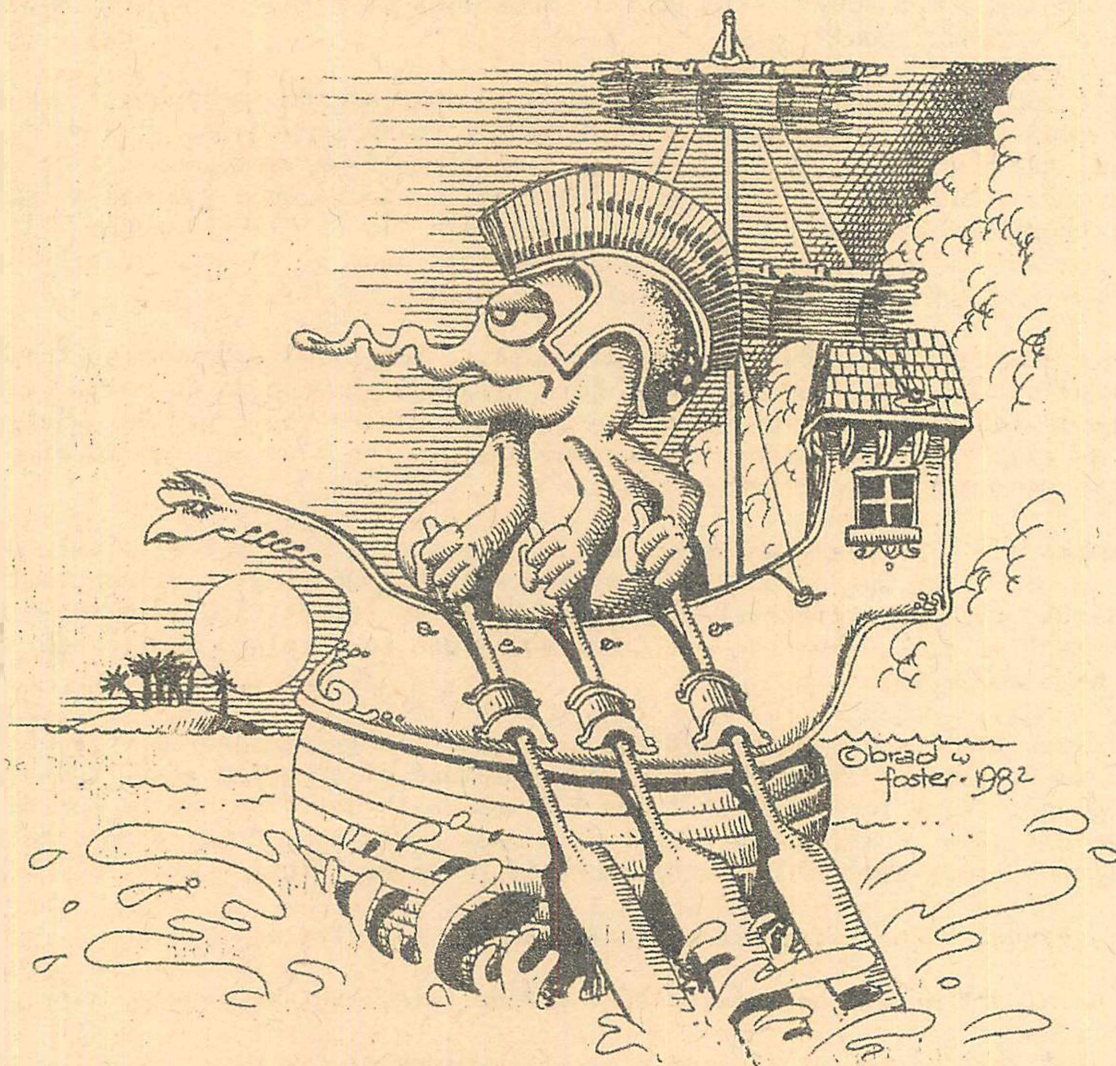
"You see, Mr. Frodo? There is still magic in the world, after all."

"Yes, Sam. Maybe not here," he said, glancing about him, "but somewhere, surely."

And they thought they heard, as if from afar, the voices of the Elves, singing the praises of the Pinball Goddess who reigned in the uttermost West that is now beyond the circles of the world:

A, Elbereth Gilthoniel!  
We still remember, we who dwell  
With eerie light in shadowed halls,  
Thy tables with the silver balls.  
We hail thee with undying breath,  
Gilthoniel! A, Elbereth!

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BOB SHAW

# A WORD IN YOUR BEER

My favourite kind of horror story is one in which everything at first seems perfectly normal and humdrum, and then--in the space of a sentence or two--there appears an unexpected element of dread. I'm used to that kind of thing in fiction, but I'd hardly expect it in real life. I'd be even less prepared for it to happen twice within a few minutes, and certainly not on the way to a convention....

Picture the scene. I was enroute for the Easter '82 convention in Brighton with my wife, Sadie. We had stayed overnight in Reading with fans Martin and Katie Hoare, breakfasted late and well, and the four of us were tootling down towards the coast at a leisurely pace in Martin's car. The weather was glorious and the soft Sussex countryside was looking at its best. It was Friday lunchtime--about 1:45--so we had lots of time in hand and were luxuriating in the prospect of stopping for an hour or so at a quiet rustic tavern and dallying over a few pints of real ale, getting ourselves into an appropriately cheery mood for the start of the convention. The heat within the car had made us really thirsty, which was all to the good--it would enhance the pleasures of the first pint of the day. We could almost feel the comforting bulk of the 20-ounce glasses in our hands, almost smell the aroma of hops and malt, almost hear the gentle welcoming whisper of the froth. Life was good at that moment.

And then--quite casually--Sadie said, "This is Good Friday--Sunday hours."

To anybody but a British boozier the remark might have been cryptic to the point of incomprehensibility, but its effect on those who heard it was dramatic. We had been reminded that the pubs would close for the afternoon an hour earlier than usual, at 2:00 PM instead of 3:00 PM.

There were only fifteen minutes in hand and we were stuck out in the middle of the bloody boring countryside with not a human habitation in sight!

That was shock No. 1, and it certainly transformed our idyllic little scene. Gone was the mood of leisurely bliss, gone was all the relaxed contemplation. Martin, who was at the wheel, accelerated so hard that the rest of us nearly got whiplash. I remember sitting there, racked with tension as we roared down the A23 at dangerous speed, wondering how Sadie had remained so calm and unmoved when announcing that we were at risk of missing our lunchtime pints. Sometimes I suspect that, in spite of all my training, she'll never be a proper boozier.

I have the same trouble with her over her cooking, especially of chips (US French fries). She has been brainwashed by women's magazine food experts into believing that chips should be crisp, dry, golden brown, and hot. For years I have tried in vain to teach her better--that the perfect chip should be so limp that it hangs down in an inverted U-shape from the fork, for ease of mastication; that it should be liberally coated with fat, for lubrication; that it should be a pleasant glistening greenish yellow in colour; and that it should be just slightly about body heat, so that it can be crammed into the mouth with a dozen or so of its fellows without causing any scorching of the tongue. Perhaps she simply hasn't got much talent for cooking. To this day, when she makes chips they still come out crisp, dry, golden brown, and hot--and yet when I make them they come out perfect every time.

Anyway, there we were on the Brighton road, hurtling along in our own version of Deathrace

2000, too keyed up to speak, our mouths parched from fear as well as natural thirst. A couple of nerve-racking minutes went by, and then--oh joyous moment!--an inn sign appeared in the distance. I scarcely dared to relax until there was no doubt that it wasn't a service station sign, then sank back in the seat with a beatific smile.

The little scare we had had suddenly seemed amusing--it was going to add even more enjoyment to our pints. My fingers were automatically crooking themselves into my much admired, classic pint mug grip--three fingers firmly through the handle, the little finger tucked underneath the glass to prevent any possible slippage--when I became aware that the car was not slowing down!

Unable to credit my senses I watched in horror as, with Martin crouched grimly over the wheel, the car reached and passed the pub with undiminished speed and went scorching onwards into the quiet countryside. My brain numbly sought an explanation. Had Martin developed a severe case of tunnel vision? Had the strain of the last few minutes unhinged his mind?

"Martin," I croaked, tapping him on the shoulder, "why didn't you stop at that pub?"

His reply was terse. One word. "Watney's."

I slumped back filled with a chilling realisation of the true extent of my predicament. I'm something of a connoisseur of good ale, but am prepared to drink almost any sort when cornered. But Martin, I had just discovered, was an uncompromising real ale purist--one who will not touch Watney's under any circumstances. Apparently his convictions were so strong that, rather than pull up at the sign of the infamous Red Barrel, he was prepared--my facial muscles began to twitch at the thought--to go without!

That was shock N. 2, and by now a mood of despair was settling over me. When another pub sign became visible a moment later I knew that cruel Fate would arrange for it to be another Watney's and that we would thunder past it at top speed. It was and we did.

There remained one faint ray of hope in that the A23 was the main road to Brighton and likely to be well endowed with updated coaching inns, but even that feeble glimmer was extinguished when Martin--taking a unilateral decision--turned off into a secondary road heading due west.

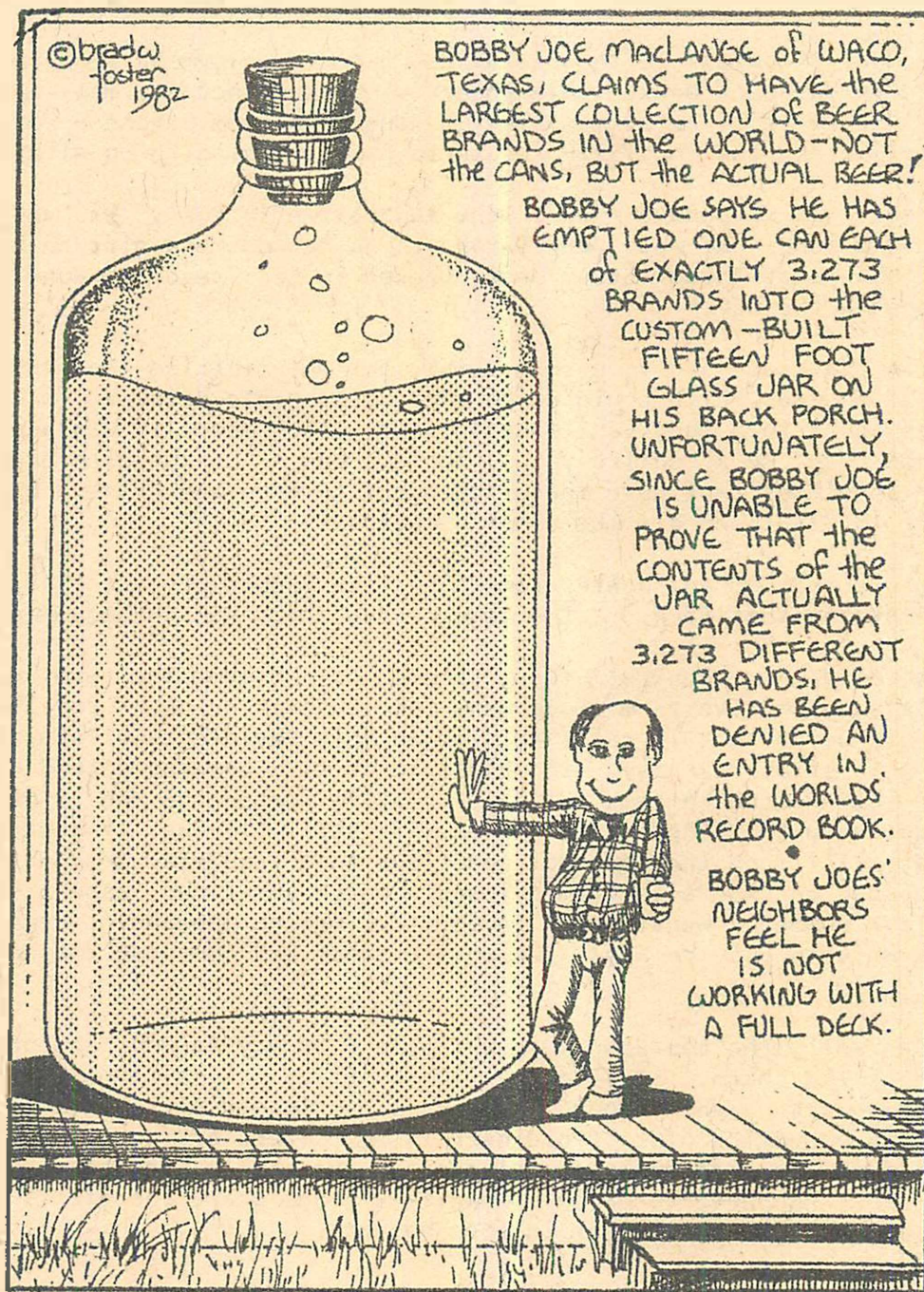
"This," he announced, spectacles gleaming with manic fervour, "looks like the sort of quiet unspoiled byway where you'd find a decent country pub selling the real stuff."

I was unconvinced. It looked to me like the sort of quiet unspoiled byway along which you find nothing but cowpats. I could visualise a line of cowpats stretching hundreds of miles to Land's End, with us condemned to hurtle over them for ever, red-rimmed eyes searching in vain for a non-Watney's pub....

And then--like a mirage, like a blessed vision, like faerie pavilions magically materialising from another dimension--there appeared ahead of us, shimmering in sunlight, the gables and spires of a drowsy English village. The first corner we came to had two pubs on it, and one of them was festooned with real ale signs. We got in there with five minutes to go before closing time, which meant that Martin, Katie, and I were able to down three pints each before they took our tankards away. Sadie only had a half pint, but as I said earlier, sometimes I suspect she'll never be a proper boozier.

Now, this article was written primarily for an American and Canadian readership, and if I have done it right so far most AmCan fans should be asking questions like: Why all the fuss over brands of beer? How can one ale be "real" and another not? Why do Brit fans go





on about beer so much?

I'm glad you asked those things, because for some time I'm been perplexed by my own questions about the difference between UK and AmCan tastes in beer. In my travels I've found that fans are the same kind of people everywhere. Assuming that fannish nature was a universal constant, in a class with the speed of light, I went on in an Einstein-like manner to derive a fundamental law. (As I have mentioned before, it was not a huge IQ which made Einstein a great scientist. It was his simple and childlike approach--and, for all I know, I might be even more simple and childlike than he was.)

My explanation for AmCan fans being happy to drink the malt fizz they get in place of genuine beer was that, never having been introduced to the real thing, they simply didn't know any better. The same thing happens here with, say, hamburgers--only those Brits who



have never had a quality burger in the States can get any enjoyment from the supposed equivalent served in UK snack bars. This theory also explained why many AmCan fans don't drink beer at all--they have racial memories, handed down from European forebears, of what beer ought to be like and instinctively refuse to have anything to do with substitutes.

But the great theory was torpedoed when I went to Seattle in early 1982 and, after a lapse of many years, had a long chat with John D Berry. He handed me a gift he had thoughtfully brought along--a bottle of Anchor Steam beer, brewed in San Francisco--and said, "This is the best beer made in the USA."

I accepted it with gratitude and some scepticism, but when I tried the stuff it was good. It was a lager, of course--which would cause some British ale drinkers to turn up their noses--but it was equal to a good Continental lager, which means it was very good indeed. And the experience posed me an entirely new problem, one I haven't been able to solve satisfactorily: if some Americans have the discernment to brew and drink a beer like Anchor Steam, why hasn't it displaced all the other US beers?

A possible answer is that AmCans prefer something like Budweiser--but that sabotages my First Law, which states that fans are the same everywhere. Has anybody any other theories?

Before you think too deeply about all this, take a look at what the term "real ale" means to a Britfan. It's an emotive term among many fannish beer drinkers for a number of reasons, not the least being that it calls to mind an epic David-and-Goliath struggle of the type so important in sf and fantasy. The historic British brewing method culminates in putting the beer into wooden barrels while it is still fermenting and allowing it to reach maturity after delivery to the pub. As the beer is still "living" it has to be handled and stored with great skill, and the chemical reactions that take place during maturation are so delicate that even an expert cellarman loses a batch sometimes, especially in hot weather. One day last summer I went into a favourite Lakeland pub and ordered a pint of ale--and they weren't able to provide any! The entire stock had gone bad and had been returned to the brewery.

Even when all goes well, the beer can vary a little from day to day, and batch to batch, but that is part of the charm. It is only slightly fizzy and may even be flat; it is served at room temperature; and in good examples is so loaded with flavour that one mouthful has more taste than an entire pint of ordinary lager. There are more than 1,500 different beers made in Britain with characters as diverse as the same number of people. With luck, you may even find--as happened to me in Cornwall--a place where the ale is actually brewed on the premises and brought to the bar in open buckets.

The system was messy and primitive, and I had some doubts about the hygiene, but the taste was part of a thousand-year-old heritage. When you see ale mentioned in The Lord of the Rings--that is the kind of stuff they are talking about. A person who learns to appreciate it can never again be content with any other.

I mustn't get too lyrical here, because the subject of beer is intensely boring to many people, but let me mention the terrible thing which befell our little ale-drinker's paradise about the end of the 1950s. A dark figure cast its shadow across the land, and the name of that figure was Big Business--sworn enemy to so much that is good in life.

Half-a-dozen major breweries began a race to see how many of their smaller competitors they could swallow up, and in the struggle for improved efficiency real ale was a natural target for the accountants. Most of the characteristics which gave real ale its essential nature, also made it undesirable in the eyes of the efficiency expert, and in a very short time it almost disappeared. In its place came standard, pasteurised, filtered, bland, characterless, "dead" beers which never varied or went bad and which demanded no skill or care from the



innkeeper. The breweries who are the villains in this story are referred to by real ale fans as the Big Six, and they are always spoken of with the utmost loathing and contempt, especially Watney's, whose efforts to make their Red Barrel the only drink available in the galaxy even brought them under fire from the Monty Python team.

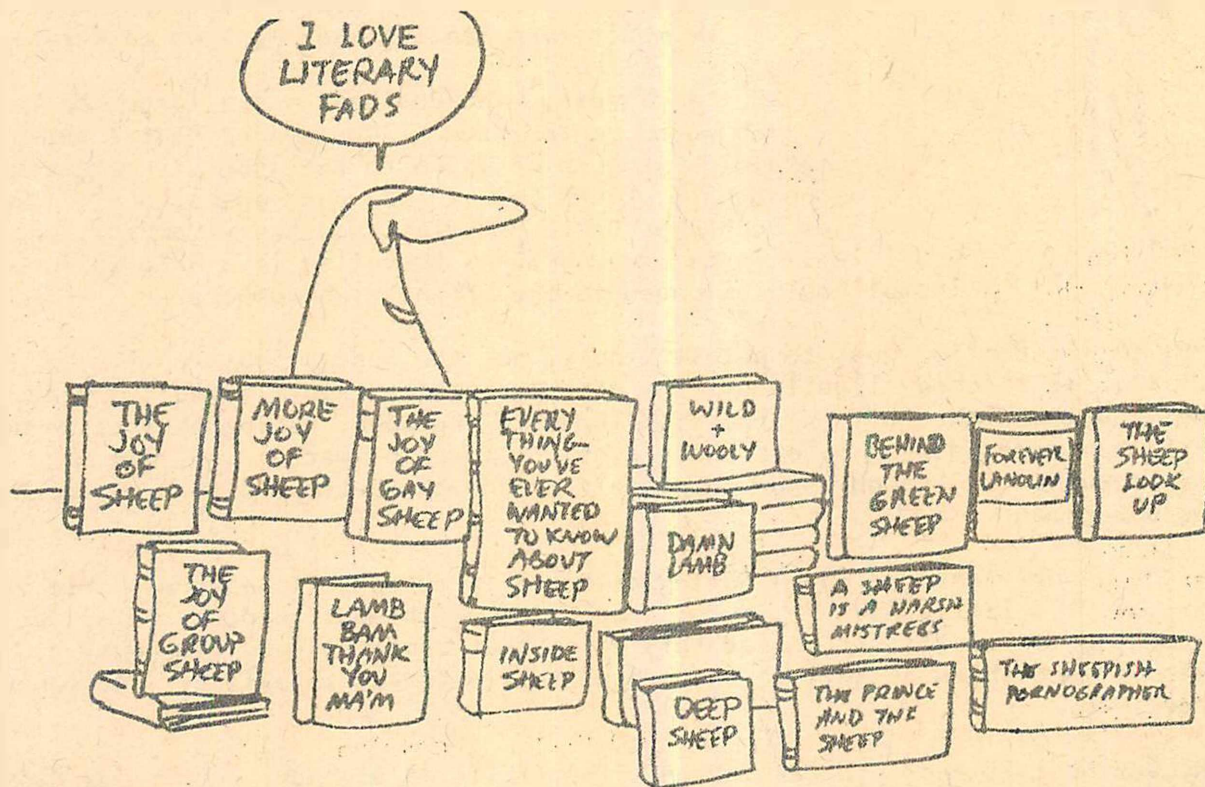
The bright side of the story is that there eventually came a successful revolt against the dictatorship of the Big Six, spearheaded by a dedicated pressure group called CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale), and today more and more breweries are offering traditional ales in addition to their national fizzy pops. It was a close-run thing, though, and I shudder to think how close the Big Six came to achieving their aims. But here we come to a really intriguing point for the student of human nature.

One of the reasons British fans talk and argue so much about beer is that a few of them don't like real ale and actually claim to prefer the modern beers. These misguided wretches, perhaps having been exposed to Red Barrel or Bud at a vulnerable stage of their development, usually refer to the likes of me and Martin Hoare as "beer bores" or "beer snobs". It gives me a peculiar pang of dismay when I contemplate this fact, but then the most blood-chilling aspect of alien possession yarns like The Puppet Masters and Invasion of the Body Snatchers is that the victims are always happier than they were before being taken over.

There are pod people among us. Or should I say Bud people?

(This has been the first in a series of articles--The Sociology of the Britfan--intended to promote international understanding among sf readers. Next time I hope to explain why Britfans prefer to eat their pork pies stone cold.)

###



ELI COHEN

# THE W.P.S.F.A. CURSE

Let me first of all state that I am not now, nor have I ever been, an inhabitant of Pittsburgh. Nevertheless, through long and close contact with the Western Pennsylvania Science Fiction Association, I have gained a terrible familiarity with the phenomenon known as... The WPSFA Curse!

It was born, I suppose, with the Deathcar (or perhaps it had been lying dormant for aeons, waiting for a suitable vehicle to bring it to full life): it was May, 1968, on the way to the convention at which WPSFA first burst forth on the fannish world. (Perhaps I'm being overdramatic--after all, what was so unusual about 14 new fans, two-thirds of them women, all dressed in black and wearing numbered medallions? We won't even mention what went on in the saunas.)

But I digress. The Deathcar was a large Pontiac station wagon rented from El Cheapo Car Rental Service to take nine members of WPSFA to the 1968 Disclave--including, among others, Linda Eyster (now Bushyager), Suzle Tompkins, Ginjer Buchanan, Genie DiModica, and Nancy Lambert, who was driving. Three other WPSFans travelled in a British Ford that inexplicably belonged to one of the club members.

The steering on the Pontiac was, to put it kindly, not the best. Shortly after the exit to Breezewood, the car lurched slightly off the road; witnesses report Suzle shouting "Nancy, don't brake!" just as Nancy hit the brakes. Those in the back, facing the rear window, were surprised to see trees passing before their eyes, followed by cars, road, and more trees--a cycle that repeated as the car spun completely around three times before coming to a stop against the embankment.

The shaken but unhurt fans got out. Suzle was heard to mutter, "I never saw skid marks on grass before...." A little way off, a car stopped to watch--not to offer help, just to watch. According to reports, it was at this point that Linda yelled, "You want blood? I'll give you blood!" and threw herself to the ground to lie there, sprawling. The voyeurs quickly drove off.

Somehow the Deathcar limped into Washington without killing anybody, but it was close. Meanwhile, the British Ford broke down in Bedford, Pennsylvania (just before Breezewood),



and at 15 minute intervals thereafter all the way to D.C.

WPSFA had entered fandom, and the Curse had entered the world.

The origin of the term "WPSFA Curse" is lost in the mists of history, but legend attributes the phrase to Topher Cooper, on the famous five-day drive home from Philcon to Pittsburgh (a distance of some 300 miles); the phrase reportedly came to him just outside of Breezewood, where the car finally died (this tale, the epic "Goat Story", is a hallowed part of the WPSFA Oral Tradition, but has unfortunately never been written down). As WPSFA members spread out across the continent, founding colonies from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to San Francisco, California, the Curse became a unifying thread in uncountable stories of travel disasters.

I was first drawn into the WPSFA orbit during 1969, and for quite a while afterwards my only experiences with the Curse were vicarious, as I sat listening to the tales told around the fire in the sacred Ehrlenmeyer Peace Flask.

Gradually, however, Things started to happen to me. (The transition process was somewhat obscured by a number of trips in Elliot Shorter's notoriously bad cars.)

For instance, there was PghLANGE 3, when Jerry Kaufman (another adopted WPSFAn) and I got into Bruce and Flo Newrock's brand new station wagon; it died, with 312 miles on the odometer, just outside the Kittatinny Tunnel on the Pennsylvania Turnpike (it turned out to be a loose wire, easily fixed by the highway crew). PghLANGE was great, but then Jerry and I, along with Nancy Lambert, Genie DiModica, and Ted Greenstone, drove back to New York in Engelbert, Ted's 1961 Falcon. At 11:20 PM Sunday night, on the corner of Route 22 and Nowhere, Engelbert's transmission decided to stop transmitting. Fortunately, a call to the Newrocks, who lived not too far away, produced rescue. However, as a result, anytime I see Bruce Newrock he screams, "Jonah! Get away from my car!"

And then there was the PghLANGEoween when we conned Alan, an innocent member of FSFSCU (Gesundheit! Actually, it stands for the Fantasy and Science Fiction Society of Columbia University) into driving from New York to Pittsburgh for a Halloween party. The flat tire we got shouldn't have been serious, because there were two spares in the trunk; unfortunately, one of the spares turned out to be flat, and the other one had the wrong hub, and the gas station we found didn't have the machine to switch tires and hubs, and.... It was a huge hassle. Somehow the privilege of shaking hands with Mark Leinonen--all four hands--wasn't enough compensation, and poor Alan was never heard from again.

I spent a number of years in Canada, and the Curse seems to have been stopped by the ever-efficient Canadian immigration authorities (well, there was the clutch falling out of Susan Wood's car while I was driving Lesleigh Luttrell around Vancouver...). Genie DiModica claimed that the Curse had lost track of me, which is why she blamed me for the blizzard that paralyzed the entire East Coast on one of my trips home (her theory was that the Curse had to make sure it zapped me by covering everywhere I might be).

I personally feel that it will be up to the epidemiologists and transportation experts of the future to accurately assign causes to all the various disasters that have been attributed to the Curse. Could the Curse have burst the water main that knocked out the whole west side of the New York subway system, the time that WPSFA East was meeting in the Chuan Hong restaurant? Did the Curse destroy the engine in the Amtrak train one Philcon, when it took us four hours to get to Philadelphia from New York (normally a 90-minute trip)? If so, was it also responsible for the five-hour return trip, blamed by the conductor on a "garble static malfunction in the damn garble garble"?

(Surely some of that responsibility must be Amtrak's, which is quite capable of manufacturing its own delays. Ask the trainload of California fans, travelling to the Vancouver

Westercon, whose train hit a truck outside of Portland and missed its Seattle connection.)

Whatever history's final verdict, however, it is clear that the WPSFA Curse has grown from a local force attacking in the vicinity of Breezewood, Pennsylvania, to a power able to strike anywhere in the world. I offer Seacon as evidence.

Admittedly, we were tempting fate to start with. Suzle (living in Seattle) and I (living in Vancouver) arranged to meet Ginjer Buchanan, John Douglas, and Genie DiModica (all living in New York) in Glastonbury, England. Note that we were all WPSFA people, original or adopted. To get to Glastonbury is not easy. Suzle got a ride in a van to the bus which took her to Vancouver, where I drove her home by car; we then took a cab to the airport, and a Wardair Charter flight to Gatwick Airport. From Gatwick we took a train to Victoria Station, where we caught the tube to Paddington. To get to Glastonbury from Paddington station you take a high-speed train to Bristol, a ride of some 90 minutes, then an hour bus ride to Glastonbury. The catch is that the bus station is six miles from the train station, but this is no cause for concern--it gives you a chance to take a taxi!

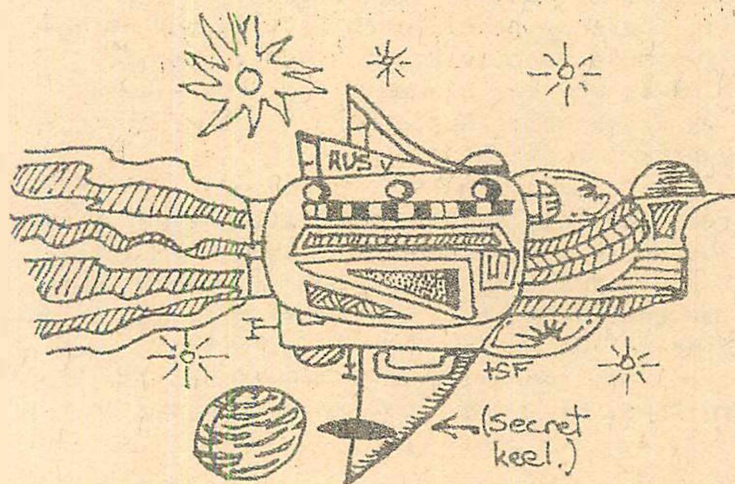
Fortunately, we persuaded the New York contingent (who were renting a car) to meet us in Bristol, so that we did not quite have to take every mode of transportation in the British Isles.

With all this, I suppose Suzle and I were quite lucky that all that happened to us was the engine falling out of the train halfway to Bristol (actually, I don't know that the engine fell out of the train; the precise problem, according to the conductor, was a "garble static malfunction in the bloody garble garble").

Oh--there was also the small matter of our New York friends, who were caught in the worst storm to have hit Britain in the last 30 years....

Despite all this, we did manage our rendezvous, and had a wonderful time from then on. No transportation problems (unless you want to count some slight trouble at Seacon, in Brighton, finding an entrance to the Metropole Hotel during a torrential downpour). No problems, that is, until the time came for us to leave Merrie Olde Englande. At Gatwick we were informed by Wardair that our flight would be somewhat delayed...like, about 24 hours. But not to worry--the airline would feed us and put us up in a hotel that night.

So they loaded us all on buses and carted us off to...the Metropole Hotel, in Brighton!



The Curse has certainly grown since its humble beginnings in Breezewood. It no longer confines itself to cars, striking trains and airplanes as well. And sometimes I wonder: if you consider the hallmarks of the WPSFA Curse--delays and mechanical malfunctions in a fannish context--well, do you think that...

I mean, what could be more fannish than a Space Shuttle named the Enterprise?



# TRICKLE TERRY GARREY

The Another Fine Mess You've Gotten Us Into School of Accounting  
Snorkling and Dressage

or

Think of It as an Adventure

Years ago, when I still lived in El Cerrito, Wendy Rose and I went to a lot of poetry readings together. It was usually Wendy who was asked to read, and I tagged along, sometimes to perform, and other times just to provide immoral support. With the readings in the Bay Area being what they were (and are), especially for Third World poets, Wendy needed a lot of immoral support. There aren't many half Hopi poets in the Bay Area.

One day she called and said there was to be a reading for the radio in San Francisco, and she had been asked to recruit. Would I like to come along? "Sure," I said.

On the appointed day, after rushing around madly all morning, we hopped on BART to go to the reading. Halfway under the Bay I remembered to ask if Wendy knew where we were going, what we were supposed to talk about or read, and did she have the address of the studio.

"He said it was KP00 at this number on Natomas."

"Kaypph? Surely you jest?" I asked in a hopeful manner.

"Nope, all I know is that the guy said that Alta told him to call me. I think it's a community station."

"Oh, well, if Alta told him to call (Alta is the founder of Shameless Hussy Press)...but what's the theme?"

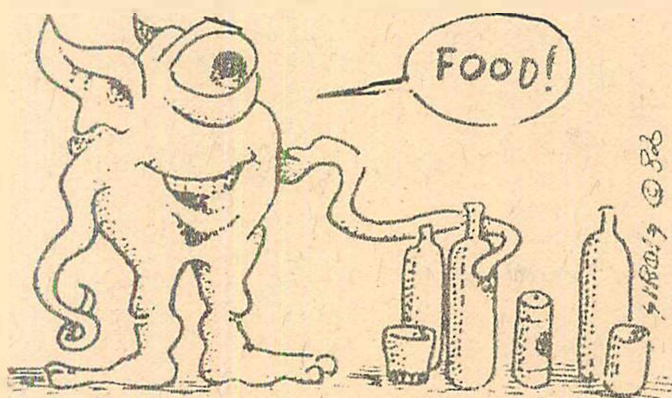
"I don't know, something about women, I suppose. Maybe they'll tell us when we get there. How fast is this thing going?" Wendy hadn't been in the tunnel under the Bay before and was nervous. I dropped my estimate of our speed by 25%.

"Oh, 45 to 50 mph. Wendy, why are we doing this?"

"Why not?" she said with Bohemian North Beach abandon, and subsided glumly into her seat, trying not to see how fast the walls were going by outside. My stomach growled. I had forgotten to eat breakfast. But I tried to rise above bodily discomfort.

"Sure, why not?" I answered, trying to be gay and confident.

At the other end we got off the BART approximately where I thought Natomas might be. I used to pass it on my way to work south of Market when I worked for the engraving company. I wasn't too far off, and we only had to walk five blocks back before striking south. Wendy wanted to go north. Wendy has a lousy sense of direction.



We found Matomas. It was just an alley, small and dirty. We checked the sign several times to make sure, and then the piece of paper with the address. Too bad; they matched. Gingerly, we made our way down the alley, stepping over unconscious winos, pools of things you'd rather not know about, and empty port bottles.

About half way down, we found a small door with "KP00" painted on it in peculiar colors. We stared at it. I said, as I always say when we are in a possibly unpleasant situation, "Think of it as an adventure, Wendy." She hit me in the arm, which is what she always does when I say that, and not, I think, to get me

to buck up. Wendy was singing in coffee houses in North Beach when she was fourteen. I've been through my own set of horizon-expanding experiences. Nonetheless, we both have a healthy respect for the phrase, "Discretion is the better part of valor."

We gently tried the door. Unfortunately, it opened with no trouble at all.

We entered a dark, long, barnlike building. It looked pre-Earthquake, and it might have been a warehouse at one time. It was decorated in early 60s trashpile.

"Ghod," I muttered.

"Jeez," Wendy grunted. Except for some ratty old couches, some steep stairs to a loft, and a couple of rickety-looking doors, there was nothing on the first floor except a small glassed-in studio, lined with egg cartons. Someone was inside, talking earnestly into a microphone.

I had to use the bathroom. That was where I saw the only bottle of petrified Coke I have ever seen. When I came out, Wendy was looking at the shaggy notices on the walls. None of them gave any hint about today's activities.

We sat down to wait. There was a scrabbling noise in the wall behind us.

"What was that?" asked Wendy. In our relationship, I am in charge of identifying unknown sounds.

"Rats," I said as cheerfully as I could.

"RATS!!!"

"Ha, ha, only kidding," I said hastily. Things were getting quite surreal, and my blood sugar level was dropping audibly. Thud, it went. Thud.

Some men came down the stairs to the loft. They were large and looked mean. They stared at us. We looked as innocuous as possible, which wasn't easy. They went out the door. Thud. I could hear Wendy's blood sugar hit the floor. We waited. No one came.

Then there was another noise at the top of the loft stairs. A small, dark-haired man came dancing down the stairs.

"Bop bop a ree bop, deedly deedly doo wah wah doo," he sang to himself, snapping his fingers and dancing around the room a couple of times. He didn't seem to see us at all, at



first, then mumbled something at us.

"Pardon?" I said, as politely as I could. I thought perhaps he had a speech impediment. He danced around us, mumbling and waving his arms, and waltzed back up the stairs.

"Poor guy," said Wendy. We decided to await further enlightenment. Soon, Alta came in, bearing a banana and a quart of milk.

"Hi, glad you could make it. Any idea of what we're doing?" It was nice to see a familiar face. It was even nicer to see the banana and milk. However, the poor guy came skipping down the stairs again and went through his choreography, and we felt obliged to watch, in case it was a performance of some kind. We hadn't been through the 60s for nothing. By the time he went back up to his bell tower, Alta had eaten the banana and drunk the milk.

"Who is that?" I whispered, pointing up the stairs.

"Him? Oh, he's the guy who is running the show." Wendy looked pale. I felt pale.

Three or four other women turned up, and the Creature came down and shooed us up the stairs. He introduced himself, and this time we could understand him. He said he was Max Schwartz. He told us not to say bad things over the air. He showed us how to use the mike. We women introduced ourselves around. None of us looked very chipper. All of a sudden, Schwartz announced that we were on the air, and this was the "Poetry in the Prisons" show.

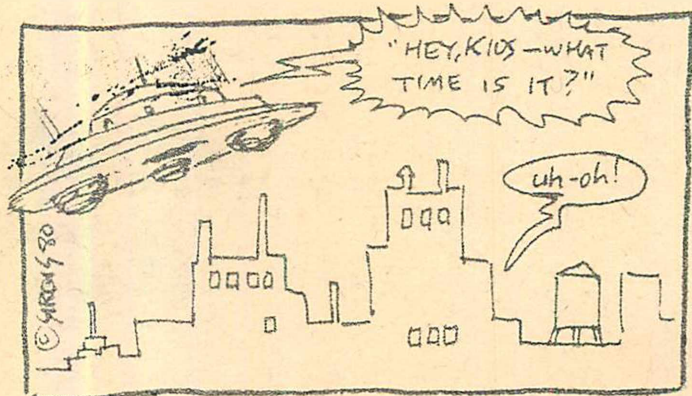
I looked at Wendy. She looked at Alta. Alta shrugged and looked resigned. I looked at the door. There were five bodies between me and it. Too late. Wendy passed me a small piece of paper. It read: "At least it's a captive audience." I would have groaned, but we were on the air. Max stopped talking and one of the other women started to read. She had a desperate, strained look on her face. I sympathized. What the hell kind of poetry were we supposed to read to people in prisons? The next woman read. And the next. It wasn't easy. Schwartz, or Quasi, as I had dubbed him, kept interrupting, and mumbling his own poetry, apparently improvised on the spot. Finally, one of the listeners, presumably not in prison, called up and told him to shut up and let the women read. So he did, for a while.

Wendy read, and then I read. Wendy did her usual professional job of it, and she said later that I did just fine, but I don't remember what I read. I figured anyone desperate enough to listen to KP00 wasn't going to be fussy, but I still wanted to do my best. I was afraid I would catch the mumbles from Schwartz, and start dancing. Wendy firmly announced that we had an appointment. We fought our way over the cables and booms and people in that tiny upstairs room. The boom wouldn't move and I said firmly that it was either the boom or me, and it wasn't going to be me. The mike moved. Sensible of it. We shook hands with everyone and left. We didn't think the audience would mind. The street noises from the open window probably covered it.

On the way out a few of the station people appeared as if by magic, and said how much they had enjoyed our reading. We smiled and shook hands and left. On the way out there was a scrabbling in the walls.

"Rats," said Wendy, and looked narrowly at me.

"You're not that hungry," I said, and grabbed her arm. We tumbled out into



the alley, which looked friendly and normal and welcoming.

"McDonald's," I said.

"McDonald's," agreed Wendy. I shuddered. "Think of it as an adventure, Terry," she said kindly, and we retraced our steps over the winos towards Market.

###

It's time to assemble all the persuasive skill we possess to tell you about the virtues of Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, our candidates for TAFF in 1985. (You're supposed to know that the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund is a fannish foreign exchange service, sending a deserving fan from North America to a major European convention one year, and a European fan to North America the next.) If we are brilliant enough, we may sway four or five of you. It's worth the effort.

Patrick has conducted a career of quick, strategic moves from city to city, starting or inspiring fan activity everywhere he's gone. He's founded or participated in clubs, cons, or apas in Phoenix, East Lansing, Toronto, San Francisco, Seattle, and New York, and, with Teresa, published a string of intelligent, serious, funny, and fannish fanzines: Telos, Zed, Izzard. He's an especially good analytical writer and raconteur, interested in fandom, history, single malts, politics, magic, music, and a range of other subjects.

Teresa grew up in Phoenix, and entered fandom through the Society for Creative Anachronism. Her anecdotes in ANZAPA became legendary, but it was her writing in Telos, Zed, and Izzard that won her the respect of dozens and a Hugo nomination. She also developed a slight artistic inclination into a major talent for skilled and witty drawing (unfortunately, only to be seen in the pages of...Telos, Zed, and Izzard). Her favorite subjects of discourse include most of what Patrick likes, plus food, clothing, medieval culture and literature, and narcolepsy.

Together they form an entity sometimes called "Patricia Nielsen Hayden": a powerful thinking, talking, fanzine-producing being that is almost frightening in its speed, grace, beauty, and sheer nerviness.

So use the enclosed ballot (send it to Avedon Carol or Rob Hansen). Use the DUFF ballot, too, while you're up, but don't ask us who to vote for. We don't care who wins as long as we can send them all these boxes of DUFF material cluttering the basement.

jak & svt





STU SHIFFMAN

# TRACER OF LOST ILLOS

CHARLIE: ...take a gander at the fan, at the modren fan, at the present day fan, at the present day, modren semi-professional fanzine fan.

FIRSTFAN #4: Whadyatalk, whadyatalk, whadyatalk, whadyatalk, whadyatalk.

FIRSTFAN #5: Wheredayagetit. \*

FIRSTFAN #4: Whadyatalk, whadyatalk, whadyatalk.

FIRSTFAN #5: Whereyagetit.

FIRSTFAN #1: You can type, you can stencil, you can type, you can stencil, you can type, type, type, type, stencil, stencil, stencil, you can stencil all your artwork, but it's different than it was.

CHARLIE: No it ain't, but ya gotta know your duplicator.

FIRSTFAN #3: Why it's the E-lectric stencil made the trouble. Gestetner, Gestetner, put the illos on the plastic, on the plastic. The zipatone illo on a fine-line grey-scale E-lectric stencil made the tracing table obsolete, obsolete.

CHARLIE: Obsolete, obsolete, obsolete.

FIRSTFAN #4: Tracing table went out the window with the hand-traced, hand-cut illo on the stencil. Changed the approach of the layout-wise fanned, made it pretty hard.

CHARLIE: No it didn't, no it didn't, but ya gotta know your duplicator.

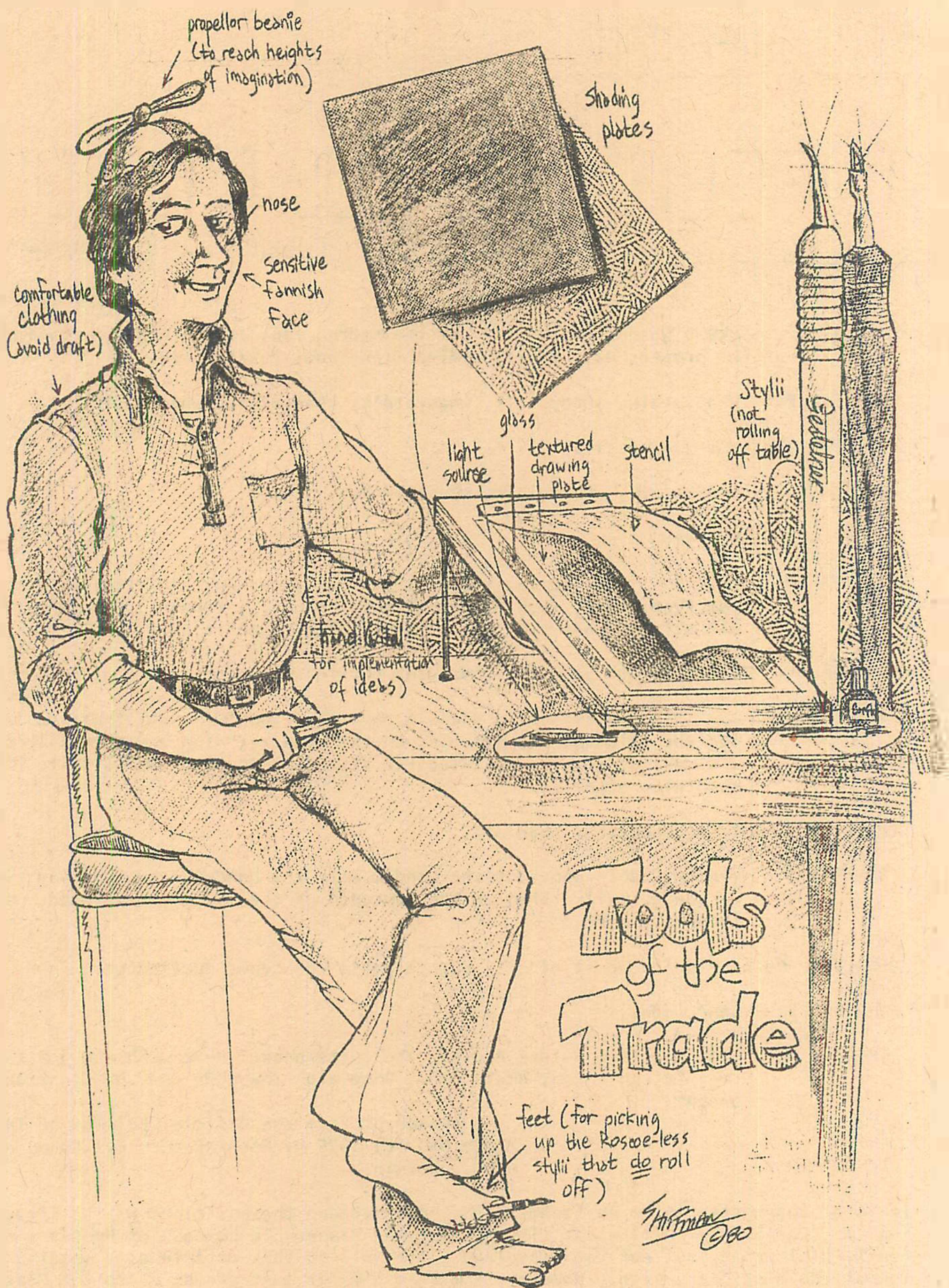
FIRSTFAN #1: Gone, gone.

FIRSTFAN #3: Gone with the Golden Age and the letterhacks, gone with the quiet con, friendly con, small con. Gone with the BEMs and the Slans and the League.

--excerpt from the Official Edition of The Mimeo Man (c) 1975 by Moshe Feder, Eli Cohen and Debbie Notkin.

The truth of the matter is to be found in the area between the positions of the Firstfen and that of Charlie the multi-apan. The Ancient and Honourable Company of Hand-Stencilers is greatly diminished, but not yet dissolved. I'm writing this article as a special service of the missionary wing. However, I'm sure I'm not just preaching to the Heathen.





propellor beanie  
(to reach heights  
of imagination)

nose

sensitive  
Finnish  
face

comfortable  
clothing  
(avoid draft)

shading  
plates

stylus  
(not  
rolling  
off table)

light  
source  
gloss  
textured  
drawing  
plate  
stencil

feet (for  
picking  
up the  
Roscoe-less  
stylus that  
do roll  
off)

# Tools of the Trade

H. H. H. H. H.  
© 2000



I hope...

In the Beginning, there was printing. As Kai Lung would tell you, if you put some cash in his bowl, printing was invented by a porcelain painter who discovered that you could reproduce a pattern by sitting on a freshly-painted plate and then on a virgin one.

Obviously the invention of the silk-screen process in its primordial state, 0 Wonders of the Age.

It is an invention discovered again and again. Witness its more recent rediscovery by the primitive tribesmen of Bingley.

To continue our lesson in technological history, once upon a time...there was a likely charlie named David Gestetner. Our young Horatio-Alger-type hero, back in the Dreamtime, sold Japanese waxpaper kites in the streets of London in the days of Empire. So goes the legend, anyway. David discovered that, by carefully scraping away portions of the waxy layer so as not to endanger its structural integrity, he could pass ink through his kite's incised portions onto a desired surface. From this innovation came others like the Gestetner "Cyclostylus," a wheeled tool for incising a stencil, and the modern rotary mimeographs.

The art of hand-stencilling bears some resemblance to traditional etching, in that the printing original is produced by the scratching away of a wax layer. However, with a mimeograph stencil you can't simply put on a new layer of wax and begin again. It is true, of course, that the advantage of mimeography is the absence of etching plate acid baths prior to printing.

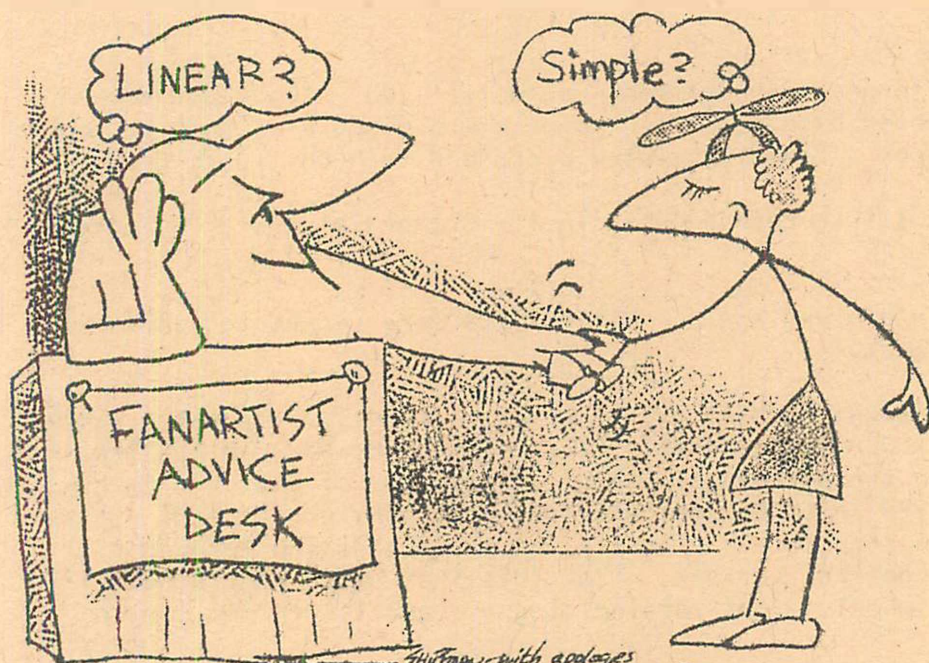
OK, Mister Wizard, what's the story? At the most primitive level, all one needs is a solid smooth surface, a fresh stencil (older ones may get brittle), and a dry ball-point pen. What one must do is draw onto the stencil in such a way as to cut deeply enough to let ink pass through but without tearing through the fragile paper fibers. This is a skill that can only come after careful practice. The deeper and/or thicker you cut your lines, the more ink will pass through to print on the paper. To keep from through the stencil and to produce a more uniform line, I'd recommend getting a textured plastic drawing/writing plate.

For greater ease in tracing an illustration, and determining how effectively cut your lines are, I strongly recommend the use of some form of lightboard. Any graphic artist's lightboard with a large enough surface area would be acceptable, or alternately one could acquire one of those manufactured specifically for mimeo work. Most of the major companies (Gestetner, A.B. Dick, Roneo, etc.) make or did make their own models, usually set up to hook up to the stencil header (the paper strip on top where the holes are) of their own type of stencil. This should be no problem, however, since an alligator clip or a strip of scotch tape will compensate for any header variation.

I received mine as a present approximately seven years ago from Moshe Feder and Lise Eisenberg. It is an elderly Heyer lightboard with a sturdy wooden frame reinforced by metal, with its own adjustable lamp and plate of frosted glass. Auctions of used office supplies are good places to check for this kind of item. That's where Lise picked up her own lightboard and a good deal of other mimeo equipment. Check your local newspaper classifieds and Buylines

For those of you too impecunious or too adventuresome to use such a commercially-produced device, I will assume my Master of Popular Mechanics persona. All you need is a plate of thick frosted glass (diffusing and minimizing glare and heat), a 25-watt appliance light-bulb in a desk or Tensor lamp or even a cheap porcelain fixture from the hardware store,





*Shuffman with apologies  
to Bill Rotsler + Lee Huffman  
Artists with simple linear styles were favorites  
of editors in the time before wide-spread use  
of electrostencilling and offset.*

and some sort of structure to hold the glass steady and way from the light source. I'd suggest a heavy corrugated cardboard box cut on the angle to provide a comfortable position to work on the stencil, unless you feel secure in your carpentry skills. The stencil may be taped down firmly so that it won't shift while you are drawing.

Once you've acquired the necessary skills (practice, main kind) to transfer line drawings or trace out titles from a lettering guide, then it's time to get more ambitious. Editorial incursion: in case you don't know, a lettering guide is a piece of plastic with an alphabet and the numerals from one to zero

cut into it. You use a fine stylus to follow the cut-outs and produce your headings and page numbers (as we do). A variety of styles exist.<sup>7</sup> Textured plastic shading plates can provide more vitality and interest to a simple line drawing. Very often they will more than compensate for the impossibility of rendering large black areas. There are simple dot patterns (like zipatone screens), special textures like wood grain or weaving patterns (herringbone, etc.), and my favorite: the special cross-hatching plate. The last made quite an impression (so to speak) on Steve Stiles, as can be seen in his present underground comix work. Steve had gotten used to its visual effect when used in on-stencil work, and carried it over into his regular drawing.

I tend to use a sweeping stroke with my shading tool. Dan Steffan, in a recent letter to me, suggests a circular or oval motion that gradually expands for a smoother and more uniform effect. (It's a very good recommendation, one that I will try with my work for the next Raffles.) There is incredible potential in these plates. A light stroke on the plate will produce more delicate shades, while a heavy hand with a burnisher will give you a darker-valued grey-tone. It may also put you in peril of shredding an older and/or more brittle stencil. You can also achieve an amazing variety of effect by overlapping different patterns. You may be interested in trying something else that is also highly effective: shade a selected area...rotate the shading plate 90 degrees...and then shade over the same area. This produces a starfield-like effect similar to a diffraction grating.

Of course, that's not all you can do for shading and textural effects. Common household objects can also be commandeered in the interest of Art. In the past, I've used stippled-surfaced turntable covers, cloth-bound books with interesting surfaces, wire window screens, pennies, raised lettering on tins and various other items. Once again, I recommend doing a test stencil or two to get these techniques under control. For shading you can use one of the special burnishing tools or a smooth-bottomed spoon or wood-working tool. In addition, there are shading "wheels", tools with a textured wheel on one end



that produces a repeating pattern as you roll along on the stencil. These can be used in conjunction with a patterned shading plate to your pleasure.

Well, I like it...

For drawing, you will find yourself confronted by a variety of tools. The most common resemble an elongated cone with a knob at the end. This comes in a selection of ~~popular~~ ~~standard~~ sizes, and is the best for standard work and lettering guide tracing. I personally prefer a tool with a wire-loop on the end for drawing, because it is very adaptable in that it allows a mutability of line.

There is also a tool with a pointed end. This is excellent for very delicate and fine lines. A caveat, friends: it is rather more dangerous to use unless you have developed a degree of control of the medium, since it more likely to tear the stencil. OK?

Any type of drawing may be rendered on-stencil. These stretch from the simple, linear work of Bill Rotsler, Ray Nelson, or Lee Hoffman (in fact, their styles evolved to cope with being traced by others) to more complicated work--always when enough time and care are given to the project. There has been some very fine (and often sophisticated) work done by people like Arthur Thomson (ATom), Bjo Trimble, Terry Jeeves, Juanita Coulson, Ted White, Jay Kinney, and Steve Stiles. Among those people presently working in the medium are my heroes Ross Chamberlain, Ken Fletcher, and Reed Waller. Their expertise is a challenge to me.

Dan Steffan and Taral have also been doing some exceptionally fine work on stencil, which I'm glad to see. About a year or so ago, Marc Schirmelster wrote me to ask about shading plates, having picked up a load of mimeo equipment. I haven't, as of this writing, seen anything that he's done with the plates I obtained for him.

Ray Nelson said, in a letter to Loren MacGregor's Quota, that Terry Carr's tracing of his work always made it look better. With other editors this was not always the case. Other editor-artist problems involve extraneous word balloons and atrocious layout. Ted White doesn't seem to have had this failing. He did some superb mimeography in Stellar and his other zines. All of his publications, fan and pro, have reflected his own artistic abilities in layout and other technical matters.

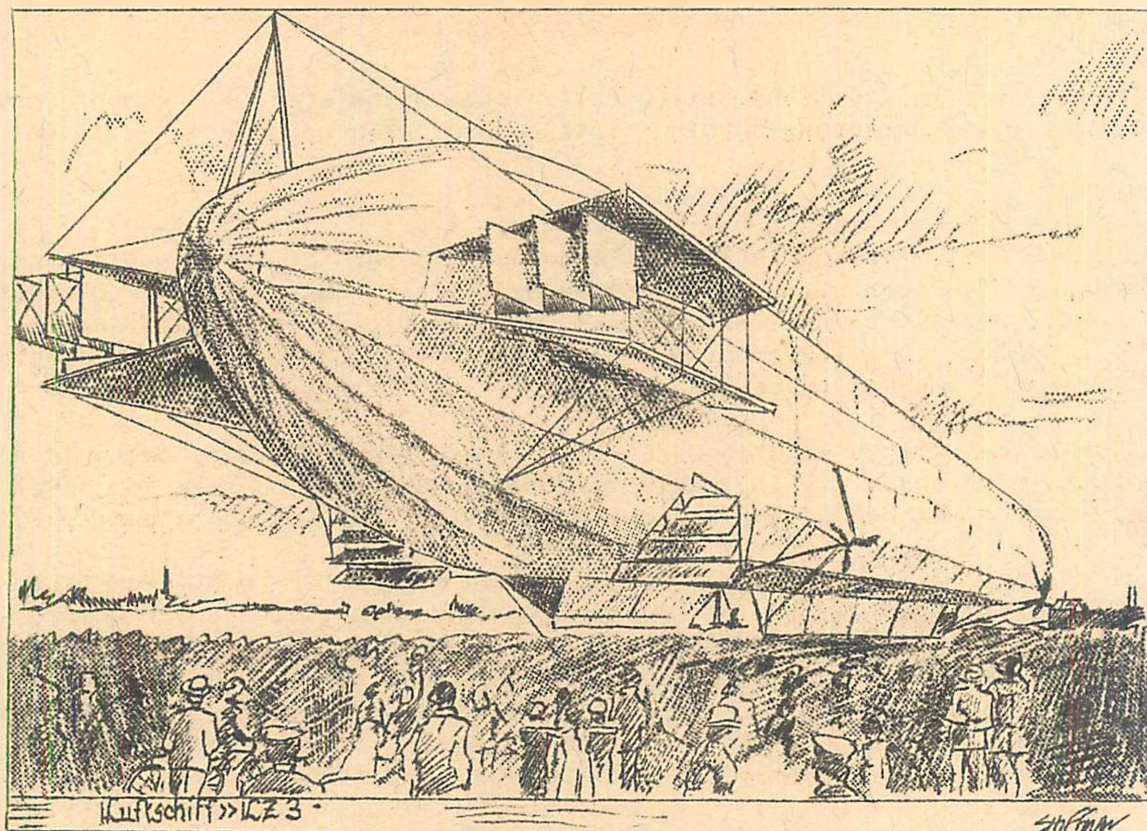
Look ye and learn. See what may be done, and go and do likewise.

Strangely, I really took up hand-stencilled illustration because of personal laziness. I was too lazy to do paste-ups of electrostencilled illos, and with hand-cut stuff I could leave all that until the last minute after everything had been typed. No rigid layout problems.

Y'know, that doesn't make too much sense, after logical analysis. Shiffmans is de craziest Pippul. Too bad, by now I enjoy it too much.

Hand-stencilled illustrations lend a special look to the page and a charm that a stark persian-kinged (xerxes) crudzine can never attain. Twiltone is best, though most perishable, since it absorbs the ink nicely and has a warm, woody feel...most bond and xerox paper has an eldritch unnatural feel.

And remember, Radar Rangers, every etched mimeograph stencil is a valued original, producing a limited edition of an art print. It can never be the same, as re-use will decay the original and a xerox of a page never really captures the primal wonder of the work.



*Complicated illustrations can be rendered given a sure touch, care, and time.*

Time now for the supplies party: a wide variety of stencilling tools and equipment is still available from the manufacturers (the ever-popular Gestetner, A.B. Dick, Heyer, Roneo, etc.) and some few office supply services. However, the spread of the simple office copier beyond the dominion of mighty Xerox and of quickie offset services (one of my uncles has a PIP franchise) has decreased the demand for this material. Recently, I checked midtown Manhattan office stationery stores for shading plates. I discovered only one out of ten that even knew what I was talking about. I eventually followed up Moshe Feder's suggestion of a company called "Mister Mimeo." This firm deals, naturally enough, with mimeographic equipment and supply sales. They carry approximately nine or ten different shading patterns priced at a few dollars each, in addition to styli, paper, stencils, etc. Their New York office is located in glorious stone-throwing distance of the Flatiron Building, down among the Indian import companies at 1140 Broadway, New York, New York. The manager has been very nice, and is used to dealing with fans.

The Art shall not die, but live. Although I walk in the Valley of Xerox, I shall fear no offset, for Ghu art with me.

Remember that.

Either follow Roscoe, who kept the stylus from rolling off the table, or invest in Xerox or Savin stock.

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CANADA

The MacAvoy article rings a bell. One learns, I think, that discussing one's own work in an ordinary fannish context simply isn't done. The sort of response MacAvoy notes has led me to assume that it's somehow rude to talk about that stuff, and I try to avoid doing so. But I'm not sure why. What I've assumed, though, is that there's a certain hideous potential for boring listeners, rather like a combination of a serial recitation of the plot of a film and the awkward urge that leads some people to recount their dreams to friends. And other people's dreams are, face it, totally uninteresting...

Writing fiction, as we've all heard by now, is a very lonely thing. One thing that makes it lonely is that nobody, really, wants to listen to you talk about it. This is why one sometimes sees a couple of writers pair-bond with an abruptness and intensity that even exceeds the mean fannish standard; these guys have each just found someone who will listen to them talk about writing. Up to a point, anyway.

Anyway. Good issue. "Your usual high standards," etc. Ms. Cline's inspired post-modernism, hooray. Likewise Mr. Fletcher's cover...

Nothing to do with any of the above, but I ran across the following a couple days ago and thought it was, like, kinda groovy. Brian Eno quoting W.B. Yeats: "All empty souls tend toward extreme opinions. It is only in those who have built up a rich world of memories and habits of thought that extreme opinions affront the sense of probability."

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I really like fanzines with front and back covers printed on one side only. These can be torn off and used to write letters on the blank side.

The second best thing in the issue was Langford's article, which here and there had witty observations about the exotic American culture, an exoticism Americans rarely note unless a number of Herzog films have been relished. I did think the flashes of humor were rather too buried in an essay that could have been half the length; and then to realize this is only about one-tenth of the whole report, well, one can't say fans never do a thing in a big way, can they?

And third most interesting, though not as well written as Langford's, was MacAvoy's observation on how fanzine fans change their attitudes about someone in their midst when a novel is sold to a real publisher. One must look at the whole "culture" of fanzine fans, at its average

NO PRESENTS  
OUR

being terrible writing, reproduced cheaply, on high-acid paper...here is this community of people wasting trees and too often trying to convince themselves they are the lifeblood of fandom (and yet wondering why nobody ever heard of their feeble writings outside a circle of ten). Here are people with gigantic egos kept inflated by a very fragile gas. Someone who up to a point has seemed as dorky and pitiful as the rest of 'em suddenly sells a novel. Imagine the hate, envy, and anger this can arouse deep down inside. Imagine the horror of realizing fandom is vaguely defined by the published writers (bad and good) from major houses, and not by some nurd with a mimeograph machine. Is it any consolation to MacAvoy, this treatment she's experiencing is, I believe, a transient attitude. And once it sinks in that, yes, she's a real writer while the rest aren't, it is accepted in stride, and she won't be hated or given the silent treatment. She may learn not to expect this breed of fans to be curious about what she's working on outside of another dippy fanzine article. But she'll win love (of a sort) from all these people if she really wants it, as soon as she gets used to the idea that she really is different, and they convince themselves she's not.

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AUSTRALIA

Dave Langford's "Transatlantic Hearing Aid" was most strange. Yes, "old fruit" probably means something quite vulgar in American slang.

Plymouth? Plimoth? Plantation sounds a bit like our Old Sydney Town, which is a similar historical reconstruction for tourists. A "weevilling-iron" and "scrotum-tongs" sound like essential equipment to take on a dungeon crawl.

Watergate--as well as the historical film All the President's Men, there has been a Watergate-based comedy called Nasty Habits. All the characters are nuns and it is a send-up of the whole thing. Based on a book by Muriel Spark which I haven't yet read but which is apparently very good. I don't think a musical has been made yet, but seeing that Evita and Juan Peron had one based on their lives, it is quite likely that one would be. It should be quite popular!

Ray Nelson  
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Andi Shechter wonders what to say to folks who say "sci-fi." When in France, speak French, when in Germany, speak German. When someone says "sci-fi," you say "sci-fi" right back. To do otherwise is simply to go on living in a science-fiction ghetto long after such exclusiveness has any meaning. The world accepts us at last, though perhaps not in exactly the right words. We should return the favor. I think "skiffy" is a stupid rootless snobbish affectation, but I use it when talking to those who use it. Skiffy, skiffy, skiffy, skiffy.

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SCOTLAND

Glad to catch up with another Langford segment though one thing puzzled me about the Washington visit. He didn't mention meeting Dick Eney and here all these fannish years I have had Eney and Washington firmly fixed in my mind. I guess Eney just wasn't there, unless he has changed dramatically they could

hardly miss seeing him.

((I suspect that Eney is no longer part of active Washington, D.C., fandom. Anyone care to confirm this impression? jak))

One of the things that fascinates me about America is the way that words evolve. Tad... for instance. Possibly from tadpole in the first place, and then "He's just a little tad," and now it is used -"a tad surprised"-as in the letter by Mike O'Brien. I must admit I



think that is rather cute.

((Your comment on this surprised me, as I have always thought that "tad" was an older British expression and am now confused. The whole question of language and its evolution is wonderful and complex, and "British" English/"American" English shifts and changes have always interested me. I commiserated with a Hungarian co-worker a year or so ago when she was explaining her difficulty in coming to America after having lived in and become fluent in English in London. She was rather taken by surprise to discover that although it is the same language, it isn't really the same as far as idioms and expressions are concerned. She told me she could understand what she was hearing, but having arrived in a somewhat provincial part of the States, was having some trouble making herself understood. (Or perhaps "queueing up" in a Hungarian accent really isn't comprehensible...) (Then again, I refused to believe the New York expression "on line" was real the first few times I heard it.) svt))

Role players are a bit of a puzzle to me also. The first time I spotted this was at a convention where there were two girls dressed in Star Trek costumes which they wore all weekend. I kept meeting them either going up in the elevator or coming down and as far as I could see they did not speak to a single soul at the con. They are now growing in numbers, at the three Scottish cons I have attended there is a man who wears a Chevalier costume the whole time and he has me really puzzled. As the costume is earlier he would be out of place at a Heyer con, never mind an sf one.

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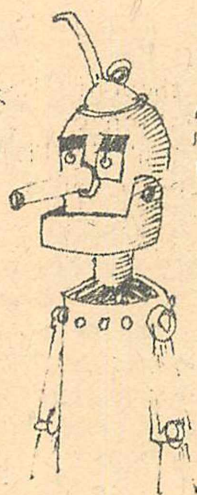
Curiously enough, considering how infrequently I take part in fannish activities (and thus in fannish political discussions), what I found most interesting in this issue was the lettercol, especially those letters dealing with the make-up of fandom. (I'll resist the urge to make a pun on the latter phrase.) Part of my interest arose, I suppose, from the fact that I had just read some arguments on the same subject in Linda Blanchard's Egoboodle, and so I came to realise that this was a matter of importance in the minds of certain fans.

I think the point that struck me as most relevant was the one made by Jerry about the intensity of the role-playing that goes on at conventions (and even in "normal life"). It's almost a cliché to say that all of us play a variety of roles in our day to day existence. Most of us have probably felt a little alienated from ourselves at one point or another when we realise that some role we've adopted unconsciously is one that is sending out signals about an "I" which we ourselves find strange, unlikeable, or incomprehensible. We then dissociate ourselves from that role (as best we can) and take on another that seems more expressive of the "real" me." Which makes me wonder if these role-players who adopt the persona of a fictional character understand the kind of signal they're sending out about themselves, which is "I'd rather be somebody other than who I am." This isn't just discomfort with some role they've been playing; it's more like a complete negation of self.

After talking this over with Denys Howard, I see how complex this question quickly becomes. He mentioned that most of the people at cons who are involved in single-minded role-playing are kids caught in the usual "pubescent ego-crisis" that has been immortalized by S.E. Hinton as the role conflict between soc and greaser. Rather than negation of self, it's a search for self. (As in the Who's Quadrophenia?) He also raised the point that role-playing involves the question of self-consciousness. Most (tolerant) people find it acceptable for someone to act out a role as long as that someone is conscious of the fact that they are acting. It becomes a problem when the person is unaware of how the role affects others (including that "other" part of them which is not playing the role) (to stretch a "philosophical" point). This becomes a problem of clear thinking.

And that leads me to another idea, which has probably already been expressed elsewhere. My

YOU CALL IT A  
GLITCH! FREE  
WILL BY ANY OTHER  
NAME...



A GLITCH  
IS A GLITCH  
IS A GLITCH  
IS A GLITCH

impression of fanzine fandom is that its members embrace a belief in the idea that language and thought are closely related and that clear writing reflects clear thinking. (I believe this myself, whether my writing reflects it or not. Or something like that.) Perhaps some of the distrust fanzine fans seem to feel for media fans grows out of a distrust of their ability to think well (though this is obviously not the whole of it). Certainly the word "mediot" is a denigration of intelligence as much as anything else it might be.

John W. Taylor's letter is interesting in this context. He speaks of a possible shift of paradigms from "logos to videocy." If this does happen, well...I can't see anything inherently wrong with it. If, that is, the video paradigm allows for a clear formulation and communication of ideas and feelings. Right now, video is a phenomenon we more or less passively observe rather than a medium through which we as individuals communicate to each other. Then again, I somehow doubt that we'll ever abandon words entirely.

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I start reading Roberta R. A. MacAvoy's piece, holding the zine up before me in both hands and as soon as she hits the bit about turning people off with her remarks about being an sf-writer my eyes gravitate across and down to my left elbow. That's one hell of an effect she's got there! I would suggest she tries to copyright it if only I could think of a use for it--perhaps played half-a-dozen times on the trot it would turn somebody right around, but what benefits this would have,

other than sending the offending listener off in the opposite direction, I cannot speculate upon.

Might I suggest that Roberta's revelation simply hits us listeners in our weak spot? I mean, I can relate to anyone I'm talking to on the basis of what's going down between us--with one exception. "Hello, I'm an \*A\*U\*T\*H\*O\*R\*" immediately makes me feel inadequate...because I haven't read their latest novel. I'm a fan, right? I know that people write and publish for response. People tell me about their latest fanzine and I expect to have to react to it in some way. I don't have to like it, but I've bloody well read it, haven't I? Course I have.

Now ask the average fan about the last book he read. He'll mutter something about Dick chasing Jane...and there was a ball in it, too, and a dog. Lousy on characterization, but plenty of action...bloody hell, despite many good reviews I still haven't come across a second-hand copy of Langford's Space Eater, so what chance have I got with this R.A. MacAvoy bloke? So suddenly I feel I can't respond to Roberta in the way she wants ("Wow, what a coincidence! I just read your book and I think it was great/stinks and I've developed a forty-thousand word personal reaction to it that goes like this..."). It doesn't matter that Roberta doesn't expect me to have read her book. I expect her TO EXPECT ME TO HAVE READ IT! Take my advice, Roberta, tell them you clear out blocked toilets. It worked for Bill Breiding, why should you need to go down market?

((Sorry to make an example of you, Skel, but you and many others have given an answer that it pretty far off the mark. When Bertie wrote "Plaint," she had just sold her first novel,



which had not yet been published. In her case, she could not have been the cause of unread embarrassment. Further, she wanted to talk about current projects, not old ones. I think it's safe to say that Bertie doesn't look back. When the book's done, it's done. Of course, it isn't safe for me to try to be the Voice of MacAvoy. jak))

Terry Carr's remarks about fandom not being a good spectator sport are very apropos. Generally in Mainstream, I feel like a spectator. This despite the fact that I think of the big 3 US zines as being Telos, Boonfark, and Mainstream. Somehow, I don't feel 'part' of Mainstream. I read it and I feel like a klutz. Everybody seems so much smarter than me, so much better-read. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy it, but I get the feeling that I am eavesdropping on the private conversations of my betters, and that if you guys saw me you'd send me away with a flea in my ear. I mean, swelp me, for nearly half of her editorial I thought Suzle was going to tell us about her abortion or something...and all she's going on about it getting paid. Jeezus, I don't even know about getting paid. To me, getting paid is what they call 'User-transparent' in the trade. We just keep on eating. In fact the only way I know I've been paid is because of the booklet of Luncheon Vouchers that appears in my desk drawer once-a-month. Come to that, I only know about the changes in the seasons because ever three months I perform 'The LV Run' at the local supermarket, converting a season's perks into a week's groceries with scarcely a hernia worth mentioning.

((But, but...Telos folded ages ago. You must mean Izzard. As for the rest, you must have us mixed up with Patrick and Teresa. They're much better read than us klutzes. jak))

Congratulations! You win this year's star prize. You have published a Harry Warner loc in which he makes no mention of his impending blindness/decrepitude/imminent death/rotting-bits-dropping off/whatever. It's almost reached the point where I daren't send him my next issue for fear of getting a loc from some famous medium by return.

Said next issue being very imminent, by the way. I spoke to ATom today and he informs me that the last three stencils are cut and will be on their way back to me in tomorrow's post. Everything else is run off, but it won't be collated until mid-January when Mike and Pat Meara are coming around to visit us. (I've decided it's time we had an olde-time collating session again, just to remind them what they've been missing by being gafiated all these years (from fanzine fandom, that it, though they've been attending conventions all the while). Come to that, they've been publishing fanzines all the while too, though it's been for an alternate fandom. Mike's the President of his local branch of the Campaign for Real Ale and publishes their monthly newsletter. Gets better repro than I do too.

Whoops! Bleeding Hell, it happened, didn't it? Got a set of glasses for Christmas, didn't I? Gaelic Coffee glasses, weren't they? Not to worry, I poured myself a glass of Scotch in them, didn't I? In one of them anyway. Came in here to carry on this loc and put the glass down by the typer, didn't I? Comes to "Gets better repro..." up there, presses the carriage return, and ends up with bits of glass, eight-year-old 'Old Pulteny', and a soggy carpet on the bleeding floor, don't I, on account of I put the fucking glass down on the table right where the bleeding carriage will \*zonk\* it onto the sodding floor. It's not the Effing glass that bothers me, after all, who needs six gaelic coffee glasses? What really bugs me is the wasted triple of single malt! What also bothers me is that I've done something so klutzy it only happens in

HERE'S YOUR PROBLEM,  
WIZENBEAK... IMPOSSIBLE  
ASSUMPTION #5 IS A RESTATEMENT  
OF THE SECOND LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS!



old Laurel and Hardy movies. I told you Mainstream made me feel like a klutz...why'd you have to rub it in, eh? Just think how embarrassing it's going to be when friends come calling and I have to explain why I'm sucking the carpet!

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I've been thinking about R.A. MacAvoy's article, "Plaint," for weeks. It baffled and upset me.

Ms. MacAvoy's discussion of her professional life is what disturbed me. She describes her reaction to selling her first book: "I remember the low buzzing, like a jet engine in my head, and the slight taste of sour metal in my mouth. I remember the blankness, and later incredible nausea and the panicked inability to wake up." She compares this experience with her knee surgery.

But in the December Locus I note a full-page ad from Ms. MacAvoy's publisher, Bantam, announcing her second book, Damiano, and heralding the 1984 release of her third and fourth books.

Ms. MacAvoy claims in "Plaint" that she doesn't understand Ursula Le Guin's despair, early in the latter's career, at not being able to sell her books. What's to understand? Le Guin had set goals for herself and was not achieving them; she quite naturally despaired. It was five years before I sold my first story, and I despaired plenty, too. I am willing to bet that when Ms. Le Guin sold her first book, she was happy. I remember selling my first story; I was happy. There were no jet engines in my head, I didn't throw up, and the experience did not remind me of any surgery I have ever undergone.

That Ms. MacAvoy had these reactions I find incredible, first because she does not explain anywhere in "Plaint" why she experienced happiness as nausea, second because she has now sold four books! Knowing what a trauma selling one book was, why continue through numbers two, three, and four? Does Ms. MacAvoy find the panicked inability to wake up refreshing? I cannot relate her experience to anything I have ever undergone, nor does she help my understanding anywhere in her article.

Ms. MacAvoy mentions a male sf writer who declared that "if you don't write for money you're a fool." This line, she writes, "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 respectfully suggest that Ms. MacAvoy is making a mountain out of a sand pile. In whatever form this quote appears (Samuel Johnson is on record with the original: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money"), it implies nothing more than a huge dose of cynicism on the part of the speaker. I do not agree with it, but I would withhold my judgement of its user until I knew if that cynicism were caused by personal misfortune or character trait. I am disturbed at her interpretation, which jumps to a weighty conclusion about another human being, and wonder why she points out that the speaker in this instance was male.

"Just give me a couple of incisive locs and I'm sure I'll be wounded all over again." Why then was this piece written and submitted for publication? Did Ms. MacAvoy want to be wounded? She states her intention to write something "fannish," something readers can comment on; she has succeeded with this reader. But just as she cannot believe Ms. Le Guin, I cannot believe Ms. MacAvoy. The writer she describes in "Plaint" is not the person who would submit three more manuscripts to a publisher, unless that person enjoys emotional discomfort.

((Bertie did have second thoughts about seeing the article in print, but we talked her out of them. As for the rest, I think there's some exaggeration and self-mocking irony that you're missing. jak))



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Rochester, NY 14622

I was most taken by R.A. MacAvoy's article. Imagine--a professional author who doesn't know or care anything about marketing strategies and business deals. She's sold me her book right there.

To hear most pros go on, you have to wonder why they bothered to be writers and didn't just go to Wharton instead. I have my own theory about why no one wants to talk to her about writing now. Much as we try to ignore it, there is a large dichotomy between fans who are also pros and fans who are not. Most pros, in print, will "pull rank" on amateur fans. Some do it incessantly, like Ted White who can never type up a page without pointing out his superior professional status, and others in a pinch if their judgement is questioned. I have little experience with the in-person conversation R.A. (is that what I should call her? Or is R.A. just a writing name?) is concerned about. In fact, the only pro I ever met was Linda Bushyager, and I hesitate to recount the anecdote again, seeing as I told it to Marc Ortlieb last year. Well, at any rate, Linda was holding forth on her problems in writing her first novel, which I found interesting, and I naively attempted to engage her in conversation by mentioning some similar problems I've had with my writing, to which Linda the Pro quickly replied, "Maybe you can't write." End of discussion about writing with pro. Now, for us amateurs, there is no real retort to that sort of thing, and it hurts because our writing is at least as important to us as the professional's is to him or her, just as R.A. MacAvoy's writing was important to her for 15 years before she ever sold that novel.

I think that kind of condescending attitude is prevalent and probably fans, being aware of it, prefer to avoid the subject for that reason. I'm sure there are other reasons, but I think that's one of them. At any rate I enjoyed the article a lot. A very honest, fascinating job.

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

I was very impressed by the covers, which left me wondering if you'd planned the combination of two different ways of putting lots of little pictures onto one large sheet of paper.

((No, it was just bizarre luck. svt))

Some of the interior material confuses me. For instance, the R.A. MacAvoy article: I could have sworn that she was a well-established pro with lots of stories and books to her credit, and now I'm baffled to know why her name is so familiar, after reading "Plaint." (To complicate things even more, at least two-thirds of all those Big Names Terry Carr drops in every loc and other fanzine contribution are apparently key figures in the world of writing and editing and agenting science fiction of whom I've never heard.) R.A.'s compulsion to write seems like a first or second cousin of my reason for the small amount of non-loc writing I do: in my case, it's the packrat instinct that both causes me to accumulate books and magazines and records faster than I can enjoy them and also makes me unwilling to see go to waste my memories and thoughts with my death, so I hoard some of them up on paper where they'll probably be preserved for some years longer than I will.

The latest section of the Langford travelog is probably the best thing in this issue, a statement which would be obvious if it had appeared in most fanzines but a particular compliment when it surfaced in Mainstream. I sense a kinship between Langford and Charles Dickens stretching across a century and a half, more or less, since publication of American Notes. And it's surprising, how often I learn something from an overseas visitor about American fandom I hadn't known before; it happens several times in these Langford pages. North American fans just don't bother to mention in print various matters which impress visitors from afar strongly enough to chronicle. It's something like the first time I flew, about twenty years ago: the biggest surprise I experienced was the elastic string that the baggage clerk put on my claim check, the only aspect of the round trip

by air which I hadn't heard about or read about or seen on film.

Why not reply to the person who asks if you read sci fi: "Oh, I never talk MadAve"?

Arthur Thomson  
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Brockham Drive  
London, S.W. 2 3RU  
United Kingdom

After all the portents like signs in the sky and mentions in other fanzines Mainstream 9 came ambling in to Brockham shortly after Christmas 83. I immediately turned to the appropriate page and read my letter of comment sixteen times, then I turned to the appropriate pages and looked at my illos six times. Then I wondered why you'd printed such a lousy letter from me, and why I'd sent such badly done illos and why you'd printed them. Ah me.

An interesting Suzlecol, eminently readable if it hadn't been for all those mentions of Terry Carr. Having always been gainfully employed in honest and upright occupations and places of work I can only sympathise with Suzle regarding her late employers. Mark you, with this recession existing in the British engineering industry the firm I'm at present working for is in a rocky way and it's a relief and happy moment when the monthly cheque envelope arrives on my desk.

Chris Estey  
P.O. Box 1924  
Spokane, WA 99201

I agree with Mike O'Brien, that all of this "left-brain, right-brain noise" is nonsense. A friend of mine named Jo recently completed a privately-funded thesis on this very subject, setting up elaborate testing for about fifty people at a local college. Her results:

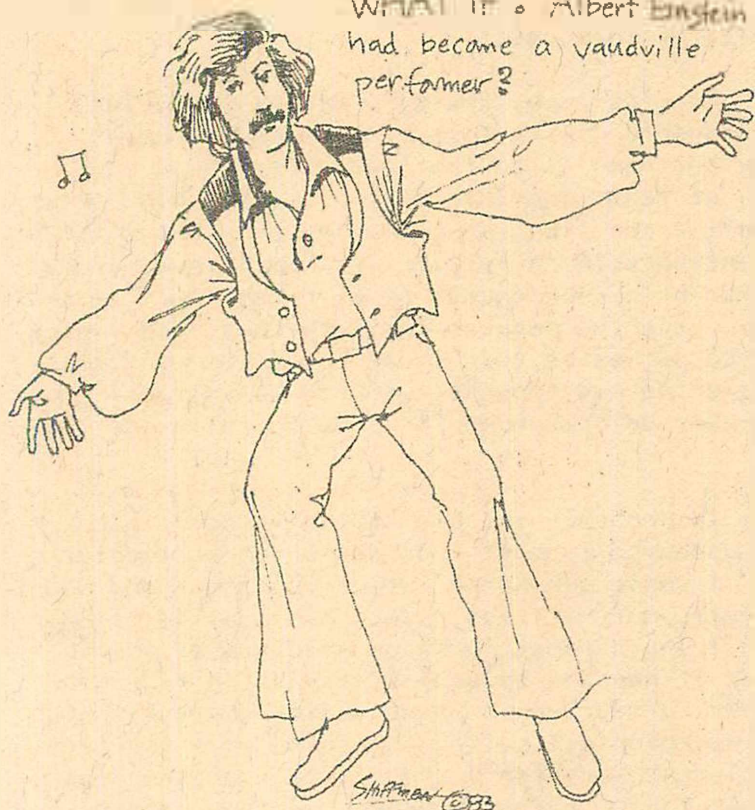
that, as Mike writes, the right side of the brain utilizes spatial "stuff" and the left side inductive reasoning--all well and good, but her interpretation of the conclusion to

the tests being that it doesn't really matter anyway, because it balances out. Be it the person is right-handed or left-handed, the brain functions accordingly, adapting to particular situations equally. There is difference; but not so much in the statistics to warrant any response more concerned than, "Hmm, veddy interesting."

I happen to have mild dyslexia, probably caused by the mix-up in signals between hemispheres up there in the nogging; does that suggest Jo's concept is mere theory? After all, my being ambidextrous no doubt plays a role in my ability to perceive things absurdly at first. Not too long, but just a few seconds of haziness when I start reading something. But other than that, I'm not deficient in any common rationalizing capability (though others may argue about that).

Of course, her report has not been accepted by her important colleagues,

WHAT IF: Albert Einstein  
had become a vaudeville  
performer?

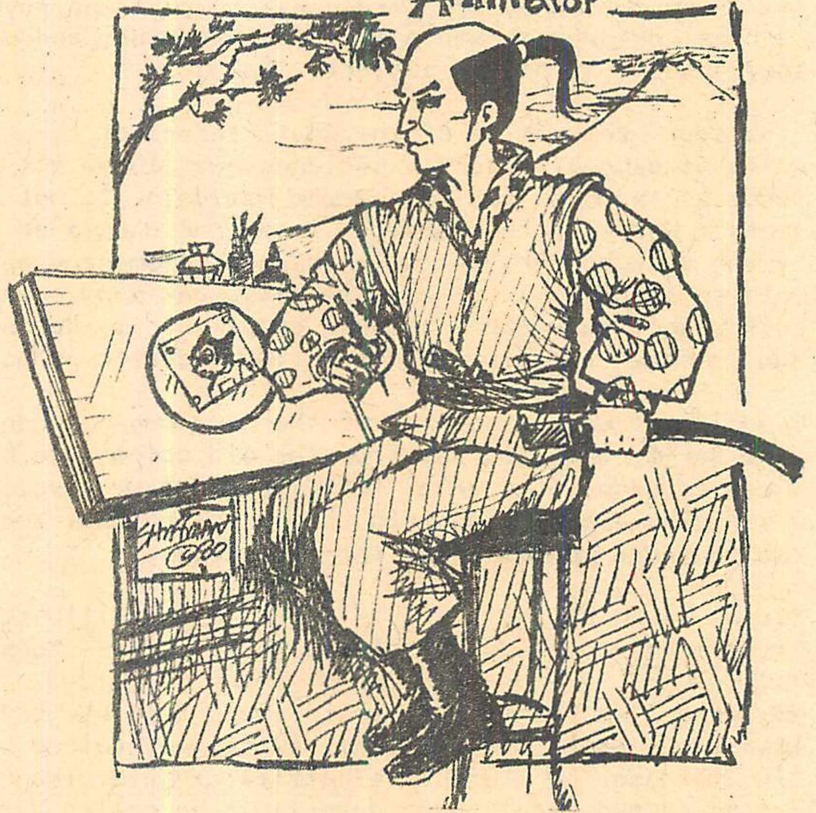




## Samurai Animator

whom she has to convince. Her findings are unpopular, because there is a good deal of money being made by some very unethical doctor-journalists who love to exploit rabid self-helpers by writing vague and "inspirational" books on the subject.

Perhaps Ted White has a point: it's rare fandom's best writers are appreciated these days. It's inevitable that new trufans will come and rekindle the fannish flame...so let us try to remember (by keeping in print, etc.) the great works gone by while some of us still have access to them or their work. I for one would love to read more of the classic stuff, having heard so much about it.



About Andi Shechter's query regarding informing people of a Politically Correct attitude after they've (God forbid) uttered "sci-fi." Yes, the term is annoying and condescending, but I certainly do not bother correcting anyone who spouts it whilst in conversation; I'd rather concentrate on what they're talking about than get petty about how crude they are in saying it. You cannot correct anyone spontaneously about such a matter; we don't use "sci-fi" because we've learned enough with respect for it. Fans tend to take the terminology of fiction much more seriously than your average reader. (When someone calls me a "punker" I may say, "That's punk," and leave it at that) (unless, of course, "punker" is being used caustically--say, by a redneck or angst-ridden officer of the law--then it's BLACK & DECKER TIIIMMEEE, and off goes their head(s).) Lots of things more important to worry about, don'tcha think? (Besides, I've got to get this done, my chainsaw needs cleaning.)

However, I do agree with Andi about being at a loss for words when asked to describe someone. Now, when I ask a friend how someone else "is," I'm not necessarily referring to their looks, or attitude, or perception of what this life is all about, comrade. What I'd like for an answer is whether or not they'd like me or think me an asshole. I use mutual acquaintances to assure me of commonality with someone else, be it a desirous or adversarial relationship with that Third Party. Of course, I also want to know how my friend really feels about this person, but that's just part of it.

Jerry, role-players scare me too. Tripping on speedat the Spokon we had here last summer, and damn near freaked out at some of the little displays of fascism some reasonably articulate gamers were enjoying involving themselves in. Dennis, a Tarot reader from Eugene, tried to explain some of it, but gave up, seeing how futile it was; dyslexia or no dyslexia, my mind can extrapolate intelligently to an extent, but what was going down was completely beyond me.

Tony Alscbrook-Renner  
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St. Louis, MO 63110

Who came first, Arthur Thomson or William Rotsler? I like them both--and you can tell an ATom from a Rotsler at 20 paces--but I'm just curious as there is a certain similarity.

((I think that they are very close to contemporary, both from the late 40s-early 50s. Perhaps one or both would like to inform us, and perhaps the new Fancyclopedia would shed some light on the subject. jak))

"Suzlecol" reminds me of the death throes of the company where I last worked. It wasn't quite as bad as Suzle's experience--we always got paid on time--but there was always some doubt as to where the management was going to get the money from. In the two and a half years I was with the company, I saw the owners declare bankruptcy; those owners ousted by the shareholders on the grounds of mismanagement, just as the company was about to be sold to a third party; and, finally, new management come in, decide that the company itself wasn't salvagable because of all of its debts, but that the idea was good, set up a new company in a different location and attempt to switch the old clients to the new firm.

I decided I wanted no part of the new company when they tried to convince me that I should consider my vacation pay from the old company to be my first week's wages at the new one. I was assured, of course, that I could take a vacation at a later date. Some time after I ended my association with them, I heard that the new company had gone out of business two or three months after they had begun.

Steven Bryan Bieler's "Gayle Force" was brilliant, being both a personal experience fannish article and a parody of television adventure shows. Yeh, say I, yeh, yeh!

Hey, stop, wait a minute, what is all this use of "skiffy" as an alternative to "sf"? Unless I'm totally off the beam, skiffy was coined by Brian Earl Brown in about '79 as a term to describe stuff like Battlestar Galactica novelizations that couldn't really be called sf and didn't even deserve to be called "sci-fi." "Skiffy" is supposed to be a sneer...

((Again, I turn to our board of experts, the readers...I think "skiffy" was invented by Dena Benatan back in the mid-70s. What do you think? jak))

Debbie Hotkin            I'm having a lot of trouble figuring out how to respond to Bertie.  
680 66th Street        There's so much conviction in fandom about "pros" (see Egoboodle for  
Oakland, CA 94604      another side of the same question). As a bone fide member (probably  
                                 one of only two or three) of Snobby East Bay Fandom (we only talk to  
pros), I feel like I have to add my 2¢, if I can dig far enough into my pocket to find  
them. Some fans actively resent pros for taking up the limelight, yes, but I have a  
feeling that many more are in the camp Bertie attributes to Jerry (or at least to Jerry's  
explanation). We've all been told a thousand times not to say, "Where did you get your  
ideas?" "Don't put me in it," or "I really didn't like your last book" (or any of a num-  
ber of other fuggheaded responses--I still love the fellow who asked Marta, "How come  
your fist story was the best thing you ever wrote?"). So there's this forest of pitfalls  
(mixed metaphor alert!). Then there is a class of writers, mostly successful ones, who  
treat all comments as fuggheaded and who don't want the honest interest that Bertie  
craves, except from people they have already accepted as part of their crowd (usually  
other pros). So between the Scylla of stupid comments and the Charybdis of jaded writers,  
lots of people get afraid of talking to writers about their writing, at all. And, since  
we're all fans and somewhat socially ungraceful, we change the subject with a galumph-  
ing silence, instead of something comforting. Me, I will listen with honest fascination  
to any writer I respect who seems even vaguely willing to talk about her craft. Did you  
hear that, Bertie? Does it help at all? It's not the whole answer, but I bet it's some  
of it.

How many Panshins does it take to transcend a lightbulb? I really want to know.



Charlie Brown, sf's professional pessimist, can't read fanzines, or science fiction, or reviews, and can always tell you why what you're doing (a) has been done before, (b) won't work, (c) is bad for you, or (d) isn't worth doing. The only rule of thumb when Charlie is being critical is, Don't listen. On the other hand, when Charlie's being funny, Listen!

((Debbie further informs me that the "FKB" of Andi Shechter's letter are the Flying Karamazov Brothers, "of course." jak))

Beth Finkbiner      Who was that Masked Steve Bieler? Now I know why everybody says, Oh, P.O. Box 8521      you know Steve Bieler, don't you?" I collapsed in a heap (well, actually in a beanbag) and laughed a lot while reading "Gayle Force." Now I Moscow, ID 83843      know why my brother always wanted to play Monopoly. One question, though. Why did the Ford Motor Company give cars to the bad guys? Couldn't their advertising budget spring for a couple of Chevys? They should demand that the Fords be driven by the good guys.

In response to the continuing discussion of special interest fan groups, I think that fanzines were mandatory as a fannish activity when conventions were few and far between. When you only saw other fans once a year or so you lusted for the opportunity to communicate with them more often. Now, when you can attend a con every other month or so you can communicate in person. Besides, who has time to publish with all those cons to attend? There are many potential fanziners who haven't felt the impulse to get involved because of greater personal contact and the low(ish) cost of telephoning. Of course they miss out on the opportunity to get acquainted with people from all over the world. If it weren't for fanzines, how would I find out what people like Buck Coulson and Andi Shechter think?

((We publish a fanzine and go to conventions because the forms of communication involved are so different. Fanzines, for instance, are somewhat permanent artifacts; conventions are experiences. I'm sure I could elaborate this, but I'm trying for terse. jak))

Bob Lee      Enjoyed the covers. Cheryl Cline's stamps on the front cover give it 1720 Burgundy Rd.      a Fifties look--I can't explain why, because I hadn't even started Leucadia, CA 92024      walking then (he lied, fluttering his eyelashes). Maybe it's that naive representation of an atom (but what happened to the nucleus?), or the old-fashioned phone, or the striped couch, or the mini-boomerang pattern on the blocks surrounding the pictorial squares. I remember a pattern like that on one of my Dad's shirts. In fact, a lot of the "New Wave" patterns on shirts and blouses these days reminds me of those in adult wardrobes in the Fifties. Especially those endearingly idiotic repeat patterns of geometric shapes and confetti flakes. The hilarious back cover by Ken Fletcher, too, would be a great pattern for a "New Wave" t-shirt or woman's pants. It could look at home at a Stray Cats' concert ("She's a good-looking ma-ma, and she's ruh-lee built for speed---").

Art Widner      I don't think it'll be much help to Andi Shechter, but when I get the 231 Courtney Lane      "sci-fi" bit, I plug into my avuncular mode. If that doesn't do it, I Orinda, CA 94563      can escalate to patriarchal and give them Lecture 17B, condensed: "DON'T Call it Sci-Fi--What I Read is Science Fiction!" I suppose it is putdownish in a sort of patronizing way, but then, white whiskers get away with a lot, so perhaps this is why nobody's taken offense at it (that I can detect). As for the "What's s/he like?" bit, I refer you to p. 15 of YHOS 26.

Dave Locke's "mediot-nigger" analogy is a faulty one. The latter part is something a person can do little about, whereas the first part is something one chooses--or at least

(after a decent interval) chooses to remain with. "Media fan" is ok as a neutral term to refer to a fan with a certain orientation, but what do you call the paranoid types who are certain that all other types are plotting to spoil their fun just for the fun of it?

Don D'Amassa  
323 Dodge Street  
E. Providence, RI 02914

Mainstream struck some resonant chords this time. John Taylor's remarks reminded me of my changing attitude toward the "openness" of fandom. Initially I found it to be very cliquish, but much of this resulted from my own youth, inexperience, and reluctance to insert myself into the discussions of others. This wore off pretty soon, and I started to see fandom as being much more open, but felt that a lot of potentially interesting fans were too reticent to enter fully into the "community of fans" without encouragement from those within.

Perceptions change. As the influx of various sub-fandoms became more evident, and as I became (I think) somewhat more sophisticated in recognizing interpersonal relationships, I began to notice the more subtle barriers that do in fact exist. Fandom is a very conservative group, in many, many ways. Presently I think I exaggerated the effect of these barriers. There are some; there's no question, but as John Taylor points out, the barriers are far more obvious and effective in most other subgroups. Fandom ain't perfect, friends; it's not a meeting of the most intelligent minds of our time, living today and into tomorrow, the cream of the cream. We're a pretty good bunch, though, and better than most of the subcultures I have had any experience with. There are indeed a small number of people who just can't seem to adapt themselves to fandom, don't quite fit in. But I no longer feel an obligation to go out and recruit.

Mel. White  
302 E. Purdue #29  
Lubbock, TX 79403

I wish Bertie MacAvoy would expound further on her idea of being offended at "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...." My initial reaction is that the division doesn't really stop anyone from WRITING but does limit what is published and that, in itself, is not necessarily bad. I've illoed for editors who had a poorer grasp of the rules of grammar and good writing than I do; some of the "stuff" that they eventually publish (with trite plots, leaden characterization, and atrocious style) should have been buried. Actually, nearly anyone can write something and get it published SOMEWHERE--but I'd rather read a piece that's been well-written by a writer who knows their craft and then polished by the hands of a good editor. Most people would.

She also states that she finds offensive the idea that one is foolish not to write for money (isn't Harland Ellison one of the ones who offers that advice?) Hmmm...I can see both sides of that issue. A lot of the works of the greatest artists of past centuries were not done for self-gratification, but for money. The Mona Lisa is a commission piece. So are all the statues Michalangelo carved and all the paintings of El Greco. So is all the music of Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Strauss (all of the Strausses, in fact), Schubert... the list is staggering. The pieces of music, literature, and art that we love most from past ages were done simply to provide the artist a living; pandering to public taste, if you will.

Is it really so bad to create for the masses; to draw or write the things that they would dream for themselves if they could? We are merchants of dreams; actors on a stage and our audience is part of our own dreams. We are a bit prejudiced about our own works, we artists. The works we love best often tend to have some very private meaning to ourselves but may actually be technically inferior. (As a classic example, I submit the enclosed photo of a piece which was done under the influence of Tea with the Black Dragon. I did it for myself and I love it--but it isn't commercially viable.) I have no doubt that, should



I ever gain lasting fame as an artist, the piece of mine that will be remembered and loved best unto the umpteenth generation will be some damned unicorn.

And it will probably be my technically best piece, too.

It is not evil to write or draw for money--or even a free fanzine. Rewards like these fuel the drive that keeps us "keepin' on"; producing not one thing per year, but producing our best at a higher pace--and all that practice makes us lots better (I could show you a set of sketchbooks showing how I drew in the years I drew only for myself and friends--and how much better I've gotten (and how much more I've done!) in the only two years I've been drawing for fan & pro markets.)

((It isn't that writing or drawing for money is evil; it's that there are other motives for creating just as worthwhile. I can give you examples of artists and writers who did not create solely for money: in Van Gogh's case, we have an artist who wanted to sell his work, but didn't stop painting even though he sold perhaps one painting in his life. I also recall that many of those artists who worked for patrons, or created commissioned works, still had to argue and fight to make the works they thought they had to make; they didn't just do unicorns on demand. I'm sure that any work you are remembered for will show not only skill but inspiration. jak))

Gail Gillespie  
287 Minocqua  
Park Forest, IL 60466

Enjoyed Dave Langford's article, which evoked fond memories of WAY  
OUT signs, little old ladies on buses conversing in pure Monty  
Python accents, and the friend who asked if I was going to be  
Mother when what he really wanted to know was whether I was going

to pour the tea....

Is "to behind" really a verb these days? Is a behinding anything like a kneecapping?  
Enlighten me, please.

((I'm sure it was a simple case of a dropped word. jak))

Rick Sneary  
2962 Santa Ana St.  
South Gate, CA 90280

Somewhere in the back of my head, I thought there was something I  
had to say to you, Suzanne, about names...but on looking this over  
I haven't noticed what it was, and suspect it is something in another  
zine I was going to comment on to you. Somewhere you were  
writing about being called "Suzle." I was thinking of something along the lines of agreeing  
that everyone should be called whatever they wish to be. In fandom I'm "Rick," but  
not to family or business. Fannish names are part of the in-group fun of Fandom, but they  
do present a problem as you may understand if you are a some-time reader of early English  
history. One man may be referred to by his given name, his family name, or his title...  
and as titles are added on, the name changes within the volume. Most confusing for a  
some-times reader with bisquet batter for brains. The same is true in some fanzines. It  
is easy when writing to one's active peers, to use friendly nick-names--but as Harry Warner  
has been saying for years, fanzines last a long time and fall into strange hands.  
What may be perfectly obvious to the person writing a piece, may be very confusing to  
someone reading it ten-twenty years later. I've always enjoyed using fanlanguage, but the  
more I get out of the active circle, the harder it is for me to remember who is who, or  
what is what. It is not to suggest writing should be all formal, but it wouldn't hurt  
some writers to throw in a little hint as to who/what they were talking about.

((Jerry says he thinks "Suzle" will be remembered as long as "Morojo" and "Hoffwoman." Er,  
I think I know who Hoffwoman was, and still is, but I'm not at all sure about Morojo. I  
guess that wasn't a good example, Jerry, even if Rick understood it. svt))

Leslie David  
ACoFS, Services  
HQ 19th Support Command  
APO San Francisco, CA 96212

I'm finding it hard to be too motivated right now, since I've just come back from a three day skiing weekend at Dragon Valley, which translates as Yongpyeong, in Korean. It proved to be an interesting trip, since we drove up along the eastern coast, giving me my first glimpse of the ocean since I arrived four months ago. The trip took around nine hours, since Dragon Valley is near Mt. Sorak, a couple hours outside of Seoul, and we started from 175 miles southeast of Seoul. We ended up staying at a tourist hotel (tourist is synonymous with Western-style plumbing) right on the beach and about an hour from the slopes. Knowing from experience just how ghastly the Korean interpretation of American food is, I stayed clear of the American restaurant and ate only in the Korean one, where the food was very good and I was able to master the art of using metal chopsticks rather quickly. What I found disappointing was that the other people on the tour showed no enthusiasm for any sort of partying. I should mention that there were tours from other military bases staying at the hotel as well, and my roommate and I hooked up with some of the more adventurous types (in my case an optometrist in the Air Force who also turned out to be a marvelous dancer) and walked down to the closest bar, which had a band. We proceeded to drive off their clientele. At one point the singer was singing a Korean love song that sounded so Greek to us that we got up and started to do some Greek dancing, or at least something that looked close. Later we also tried to polka.

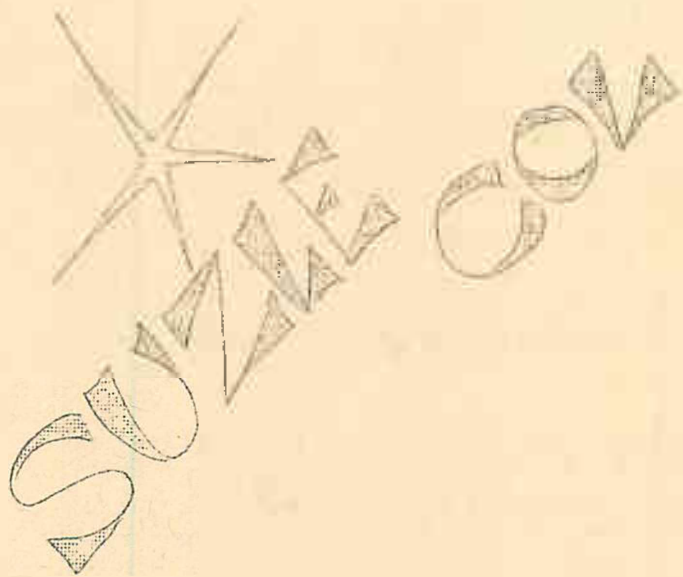
One thing I didn't master as well as metal chopsticks was Oriental Plumbing. It is most difficult to squat while wearing vast amounts of ski clothing, which means I practically had to undress just to use the bathroom. It's one of those things I know I'm going to have to bring back a picture of, since no one will believe me, otherwise. Just another Korea-unique situation, I guess. On the way back we stopped at a hot springs, even though we were unable to convince our tourguide that no one wanted to take a bath there. Before we left, a group of older Koreans started dancing around the courtyard while an old woman beat a drum, so we all joined in. I can't wait to see the pictures from that.

((You might want to send us a picture of that, too, along with the one of you nearly naked in the Oriental Euphemism. Or perhaps not. While you're thinking it over, you might want to skim the following list of We Also Heard Froms (WAHF's, which is not a branch of the Armed Services):

Andy Andruschak, Bruce D. Arthurs, Sally Beasley, Charlie Belov ("Why a small change in RA MacAvoy should produce a Jekyll-and-Hyde reaction in other fen I can only guess."), Allan Beatty, Linda Blanchard, Doug Booze, Brian Earl Brown ("I tend to feel that the relationship a reader has with a novel is too personal to include the author."), Bev Clark, Cathy Doyle, Leigh Edmonds, Dennis Fischer, Brad Foster, Diane Fox again (she pointed out that Jon Singer's sheet-drying monks live on tsampa, a high-energy food of barley meal and butter), Terry Frost, David George, Jeanne Gomoll, Roelof Goudriaan, Kim Huett, Terry Jeeves, Neil Kaden, M. Beth Komar, David Langford, Eric Lindsay, Kevin McCaw, Luke McGuff, J.R. Madden ("I am not going to mention Terry Carr."), Lynda Magee, Gary Mattingly, Jim Meadows III, Jeanne Mealy, Joseph Nicholas (Joseph says that his letter to John Owen, referred to by Owen in Mainstream 9, was actually DNO, and Joseph considers Owen's paraphrase of it a gross distortion of its contents), John Owen (who had nothing further to say on the matter, anyway), Lee Pelton (I could swear I've seen Bombo and Hudelman; stars Tony Danza and Arnold Stang, right?), David Rowe, Garth Spencer, Mae Strelkov, Pascal Thomas ("Stu Shiffman's artwork on the Langford report is a real delight."), Gene Van Troyer, Donya White, Mel. White again. Good letters all, of course. I'm sorry we didn't use more of your cogent remarks on Bertie MacAvoy, but many of you had very similar things to say.

Next issue will be out sometime this decade, featuring more good art from Stu Shiffman (a triffic front cover), and good writing from people like Jeanne Gomoll, Art Widner, Allan Baum, and Mike O'Brien (maybe not them, but certainly people like them). jak))





After years of writing "Suzlecol," I've been wondering why such columns are called "editorials," other than because they are written by the fanzine's editor. I mean, I don't expound political theories, or urge you to volunteer for the Red Cross, or question why the pot holes on Main Street haven't been fixed. I don't even do much in the way of

the personal writing that fannish editorials often consist of. I might write about where I've been and what I've been up to recently, but not how I feel when truly heavy-duty things take over my life. Perhaps this is because I think that I do my best work when I am being amusing; while I am able to find humor in stressful situations like not knowing whether or not I was going to be paid each payday for about a year (see "The Maltese Reservationist," Mainstream 9), there is nothing funny or entertaining about the situation, for example, of coming to terms with the fact that a person we trusted turned out to be lying to us and everyone else about practically everything on a day to day basis, so I am unable to write about it. Perhaps if I were a novelist, I could get some mileage out of it....

Unfortunately, this time around, there isn't anything of interest I can amusingly relate. The past few months have been the most traumatic for me since six months in 1981 when two-thirds of Seattle fandom's (as we knew it) lives seemed to be shattered by a confusing series of inter-related events and actions, and I was one of those badly hurt by the fallout. (Struck down by the fallout of shattered lives! Hum, perhaps I can be a novelist after all.....)

In late April, we found out that my father was terminally ill and it became apparent that if he lingered for a long time, it could wipe out all of my parents' income, that they could lose their house, etc. At the same time, as far as employment goes, I'd only had part-time work for about a year and my unemployment was running out. Things were beginning to look up, though, as I had signed up with an agency that had recruited me (fairly amazing in this job market) and they immediately placed me in a very good two-week temp job. The second day of that job, I was offered a permanent job in a company by which I had earlier been interviewed. After some negotiations (I didn't really want to take the job), I accepted the position and arranged to work the following week in the evenings because I then couldn't get out of the temp job.

The Saturday before all this was to take place (mid-May), my brother called to let me know that my father had died, and thus I was faced with the dilemma of leaving for home (Johnstown, Pennsylvania) immediately, without being able to inform either job of the situation, or staying for a while longer to plan what I should do.

As things worked out, I went back home in July, a time when my presence was needed, and visited for a week with my family. I've been at the "new" job for five months now, as office manager to a multi-faceted small partnership that does community development manage-

ment, housing renovation, property management, redevelopment studies, etc. Things have calmed down considerably.

Of course, when we got back from Worldcon, we found out that our house is being sold, but I suppose I'll write about that next issue.

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Now it's time for a new department--~~TRAVELS WITH WPSFA~~ Spaning Reprints!

By coincidence, I was perusing an old issue of Spaning last week, one of the several we'd brought out to show Victor Gonzalez (up and coming Seattle fanzine fan--watch for the appearance of Instant Gratification, his and Jerry's new short and frequent 'zine, Real Soon Now--things have progressed since Jerry's editorial in this issue), and I was caught up in one of my favorite things--re-reading my own stuff.

Wow! I thought, this isn't bad. Maybe sometime we should reprint a few of my old WPSFA trip stories. (See Eli Cohen's article, "The WPSFA Curse," this issue.) It only took a micro-second for me to put two and no-visible-signs-of-editorial together and realize that "sometime" is "now."

Since, as I've mentioned, I think I'm best at relating amusing stories (even if they didn't seem amusing at the time), here's my first "Travels with WPSFA" report, in its original form (except that I've re-edited some crappy writing).

Even Though These Two Are the Same Price, This One Costs As Much

(from The Spanish Inquisition 7/8, June, 1976)

During the eight years or so I've been in fandom, I've done quite a bit of traveling to to get to cons. Most of my long distance journeying was done during my first few years when my enthusiasm, as for all new experiences, I suppose, was strongest. As I was then a student at Carnegie-Mellon in Pittsburgh, my companions in ~~later~~ travel were fellow WPSFAns, and I was often one of the two or three steady drivers (not a reference to my "motor ability," but to my driving license and Opal). Any one of you who've gone en masse to a con knows things happen. Funny things, frightening things, ridiculous things. Most of the trips I've been involved in have never been written up, as far as my somewhat shaky memory reports. I've gotten good responses when I've told several of these stories to a group, so I thought that over the next few issues, I'd try to recount some of the "Travels With WPSFA," or as it's otherwise been called (ask Eli Cohen), "The WPSFA Curse." (This first one sprang full-blown into my mind the other day, which is why it's the first.)

Midwestcon is one of the great cons. That's why so many fen brave the often 100° (F, not C) weather of Cincinnati in June to go there. After I had made several trips there (including one by bus that was quite the equivalent of spending ten hours in a moving sauna), we were overjoyed that Mike O'Brien had secured his family's six-passenger, air-conditioned Oldsmobile for the journey in 1970. "We" were Mike, Ginjer Buchanan, Ron and Linda Bushyager, and me.

That Friday was one of massive, rolling thunderstorms when we left Pittsburgh for the five to six hour trip to Cincy. Clearing the tootsie-hills of far western Pennsylvania (well, that's what my brother and sister-in-law call them and they have to live there), we zoomed along through the rain into flat Ohio. Ginjer noticed Mike seemed somewhat nervous and



asked what was wrong. "Oh, nothing," he said, "we've been aquaplaning for about an hour" Now this property of skimming along above the water is admirable in vehicles like the hydrofoil between Dover and Calais, but on a superhighway it leaves much to be desired. Something to do with the design and weight of the car and the speed one is travelling and the amount of water on the road. Here I might mention that Mike's car came equipped with a trailer-hitch, but that really comes into its own on the trip back....

We were a tense but merry little group as we drove on watching the storm. Then Linda said, "Gee, I've never seen a tornado. I'd like to see a tornado. Boy, I hope we see a tornado! Hey! Look over there; is that a tornado?"

"No, Linda."

After a stop for dinner, we discovered that either the wheels had been so hot when we stopped that the weight of the car had made a flat place on one tire's bottom (believe it or not, a garage mechanic on the Pennsylvania Turnpike once told my father that was what was wrong with our tire just before it blew out), or something was wrong. The tire was definitely making odd noises and vibrations, but nothing looked wrong when we stopped to check. Traveling on, Mike suggested to Ginger, who was sitting nearest to the tire (left rear), that maybe she could tell what was wrong if she leaned out and tried to see it. So Ginger held onto her glasses and Linda held on to her, and she sort of leaned out the window, startled passing motorists, and couldn't see a thing. Two minutes (it seemed like two hours) later, the tire blew, eliminating the suspense of wondering if and when the tire was going to blow out.

We spent about an hour dodging passing trucks whilst stopping direct'y beside a road sign ("Exit for Cincinnati--1000Ft."), attempting to change the tire. I won't go into detail, but a great deal of time was spent trying to get the mud guard inset from in front of the tire so it could be changed. Mike had been using the empirical approach (pulling, yanking, and swearing) until Ron, a non-driver, who had been quietly thinking, walked over and said, "It should come off like this," reached under and pulled on the clasps. It came right off in his hands.

Poor Mike was a nervous, exhausted wreck when we pulled up to the Carrousel Motor Inn in the suburbs of Cincinnati, at about one in the morning. Ginger and I were sharing a room, as were Linda and Ron. Mike didn't have a reservation and was going to crash in one of our rooms, so he waited in the car while we went to register. It was really a lovely place, motel style, so the registration desk was the drive-up sort and you parked outside your room. After we registered (with shaking hands), the clerk pulled out a piece of paper which turned out to be a map to show us how to get to our building. "Now, you see, you go down this road, cross the bridge...."

We returned to Mike, handed him the map, and said, "Now, we go down this road, cross this bridge...."

"Map? MAP?--BRIDGE? BRIDGE!?"

Slapping him out of hysterics, we eventually found our rooms.

Midwestcon was great; there were fans from as far away as Minneapolis (Minneapolis in '73!) and Toronto; and the Carrousel, when we finally got to see it in the daylight, was interesting and had a stream (hence the bridge) running through the grounds.

After our marvellous journey there, what could possibly happen on the way back? Well, Mike Brandl, for one thing. Mike had come in from Ann Arbor, but was returning home to

Pittsburgh. Since we had a large car with an extra space, he hitched a ride. Also hitching a ride were his gear and a few boxes of books and fanzines we had collected at the con. About two blocks from the hotel we noticed a funny noise. Kind of like "KaChunk--KaChunk" at the rear of the car as we drove along. O'Brien decided not to take chances and stopped at a service station ("It's making a funny noise!"), but they found nothing wrong. Six blocks later at another service station, one of the Mikes looked and discovered that the drive shaft was hitting the axle (or vice versa). That meant one good bump and we'd most likely be stranded somewhere in the wilds of Ohio. Remember the trailer hitch? Somehow it was the cause of the problem; I don't know how or why, but with one extra person's added weight, we became a traveling time bomb.

Ron and Mike put their scientific, computer-type-person minds together and figured if we could somehow shift all the weight as far forward in the car as possible, it could eliminate the problem.

Now, how can I put this? Try to picture six people, six people's luggage; boxes of books (we left some strange things behind at that gas station), the spare tire, everything from the trunk, in the front and back seats. FOR THE WHOLE TRIP. IT TOOK TEN HOURS.

Ron Bushyager spent the whole time curled around the spare tire. Everyone but Mike O'Brien, who was driving, had stuff in their laps up to their chins. When we finally stopped for dinner near Columbus, Ohio, the tire iron I had been clutching had to be pried from my hand.

Near Washington, Pennsylvania, only a scant half-hour from our Pittsburgh goal, we stopped for gas. Ginjer and I braved getting out of the car (there was always the danger of not being able to get back in), and got sodas at a machine. On the way back to the car, exhausted and a little giddy (as we all were), I noticed that Ginjer's coke was a 12 ounce bottle, while my ginger ale was an 8 ounce bottle. I looked over to Ginjer, who had also noticed, and, to the bewilderment of those in the car who overheard, said, "Hey, even though these two are the same price, this one costs as much!"

Four people said as one, "WHAT?"

The twenty minutes of hysterics which followed certainly were a fitting end to our trip.

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