

MAINSTREAM

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MAINSTREAM 13

We return from a coma and a lot of other stuff; no, that's a metaphor, but thanks for asking. We're Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Tompkins (aka Suzle) and we're still at 8738 1st Avenue NW, Seattle, Washington, 98117, USA; you can call us if you like, at 206-782-9272. (Our answering machine is kind and friendly.) You can get more issues of Mainstream in return for letters, trades, contributions, or Sincere Demonstrations of Interest. We also accept \$2 a copy. This is Pacific Fantod Press Publication #15, and today is September 23, 1990.

Here's what's in store for you:

Cover by Hugo-Winner Stu Shiffman.

"Tight Little Island" by Jerry Kaufman, starting on page 2.

"What I Did on My Thanksgiving Break" by Mark Manning, page 5.
Illos by Alexis Gilliland.

"Special When Lit" by David Emerson, page 11.
Illos by Jeanne Gomoll.

"Little Character" by Bruce Townley, page 16.
Illos by Craig Smith.

"From Soho Down to Brighton" by Andrew Hooper, page 22.
Heading by Suzle.

"Baghdad Journal" by Douglas Barbour, page 26.
Illos by Edd Vick.

"Crosscurrents" by the readers, page 33.

"Bewitched, Bothered and Bemildred" by Jerry Kaufman, page 46.
Illo by Alexis Gilliland.

Back Cover by Alexis Gilliland, Stu Shiffman, and Dan Steffan.

NOTE ON THE BACK COVER: This was one of a series of collaborations done at Discon in 1976. Gary Farber obtained the cartoons with permission, electro-stencilled them, and eventually passed them on to us for publication.

All contributions c 1990 by the authors and artists.

Thanks to those who helped collate the previous issue, but I can't find the list I made of your names! Thanks also may be due to Mark Manning, if he lets us use his bulk mailing permit.

THE SPECIAL "STRANGE TRIPS" ISSUE

TIGHT LITTLE ISLAND

Jerry Kaufman

Today is the Autumn Equinox, the first day of fall, and I am thinking of the shortening days, the leaves that fall so suddenly in Seattle, of the last steps we need to take to finish Mainstream, when Suzle shows me the mail. With the bills and catalogs is a new issue of Folly from Arnie Katz. #1 came only a month ago, postmarked August 18th, but dated August 20th by Arnie himself. Arnie Katz has been gaffiated, gone utterly from fandom, for fifteen years.

Another gaffiate, Art Widner, used the metaphor of Robinson Crusoe to explore his feelings and experiences on returning to fandom. Old Robinson spent years alone on a deserted island save for Friday, who did not count for Robinson as a fully human character. Yet, I ponder, a gaffiate leaves the relatively isolated and insular world of fandom to go out into the wider world of the macrocosm: family, career, travel. Returning to fandom is rather like Crusoe returning to the island after many years: seeing if the same old cocoanut trees are there, if the local savages (like you and me) have learned any new tricks, developed any new traditions, initiated any new adults.

Arnie's a master of all the old traditions, as both Folly #1 and 2 demonstrate: he uses all the old fan argot, refers to all the old renowned fanwriters (even pastiches them), hails the great fanzines, and gives a thumbnail history of fandom in the form of an essay on Numbered Fandoms. The great world beyond our island only intrudes a few times: Arnie explains the intricacies of designing electronic and video games; in #2 Joyce Katz and Bill Kunkel (both of whom went into gafia with Arnie) contribute pieces on real estate and house-hunting by way of explaining their move to Las Vegas.

Arnie's philosophy of fandom, I believe, is that fandom, being a place with its own history, language and customs, is well-nigh entire unto itself. The greater world only intrudes as a source of further amusement (video games, television, wrestling). This creates a fanzine like Folly, a hot-house of self-referentiality in which ideas grow like orchids. Fandom is a tropical island in this kind of fannish writing. For those of us who've been in fandom long enough to experience earlier waves of fannishness, this is a nostalgic fanzine. For newer fans, it will either seem outlandish and narrow, or it will be a liberating expression of how far a shared-world fantasy can go.

My own fantasy is that Arnie, Crusoe-like, will continue to explore the new confines of this island Fandom. He'll see some familiar sights, doubtless, and will be surprised by a few gaffiates who have returned from their own long journeys. (He says in Folly #2 that he's already been surprised by Robert Lichtman and Art Widner. Has he run across Vinç Clarke yet?) He'll doubtless find traces of fans who rose to greatness or notoriety and declined or disappeared in his absence. So I pull a few fanzines from my stacks, and putting words in Arnie's mouth, I try to guess what he will think of them. (In the process I will let slip a few of my own opinions; you won't mind.)

Speaking generally, I assume that Arnie will notice that there aren't as many genzines as there used to be. Arnie will get more club-sponsored zines, with club notes, short book reviews, angry or confusing denunciations of club members who have mis-organized, mis-appropriated or mis-edited those important publica-

tions. He'll also get more sf-oriented fanzines, ones stuffed with endless reviews and short articles, like Lan's Lantern, Fosfax, OtherRealms, and the various "semi-pro" zines that cover the same territory.

If he's lucky, he'll get SF Eye, my own favorite of the bunch. With color covers and jazzy interior spreads, it looks like something trying not to be a fanzine. The attitude, though, is entirely fan, not professional, not academic. SF Eye is never pedantic, never worshipful, seldom respectful (except in the interviews). I think the team of Dan Steffan and Steve Brown (now Steve Brown alone) is responsible for this: two less reverent people I've seldom seen, and they got their training in fannish publishing. The most recent issue, #7, includes an interview with Connie Willis followed by a demolishing study of "All My Darling Daughters," pieces on Kathy Acker and ReSearch (two frontiers of surrealist sf) and a round robin discussion of feminism in sf today.

Arnie may not know it, but a case could be made that Tenth Fandom centered on feminist activity and discussion in fanzines from 1976-80, and that Janus, edited by Jeanne Comoll and Janice Bogstad, was its focal point. If he gets Aurora 26 (as Janus was renamed), he'll see the last issue of that delightful, serious, funny, committed zine, as edited by Diane Martin. He'll see excellent repro, heavy cover stock, good art, inventive MacIntosh graphics; but he'll read what is plainly the last gasp, an effort to fulfill obligations and clear the files. It's an imposing and forlorn monument to another era.

Another monument, and much sadder, is Innuendo 12, edited by Terry Carr, with posthumous assistance from Robert Lichtman and publishing by Jerry Kaufman. Arnie, I hope, has already seen this, since he was a contributor only a few years before he gafiated. I hope I'm safe in saying that the material is good, but I feel I only read it in snatches as they tumbled from the mimeo. I wonder how Arnie feels about this? Innuendo matches Arnie's idea of fannishness in places, especially in the Susan Wood piece. Something of the outer world keeps breaking in, though, especially in Carol Carr and Sid Coleman's contributions.

Most of the rest of what he'll see will be from people new to Arnie, for despite our impression that fandom has only changed through attrition, there have been quite a few people who've become active publishers since Arnie's departure. Some do fanzines in a direct line of descent from the zines of the mid-70s, while others do zines influenced by the dozens of other types of publishing that have gone on in art, in punkdom, in paganism, etc.

One of the "mainstream" fanzines around right now is Mimosa, from Dick and Nicki Lynch. #8 includes Sharon Farber on medical slang, Richard Brandt on strange court cases, John Berry--inventor of the Goon Defective Agency--with a highly exaggerated tale of Molybdenum Disulphide, and Dave Kyle on his epic journey to the 1940 Chicon. All of this is decently mimeod and illustrated by Sheryl Birkhead, Teddy Harvia, and others. It's neither ambitious nor slipshod, but it is consistently entertaining, and in today's fanzine field, Arnie will find it possibly the best American genzine.

Arnie won't find Bento #2 quite so mainstream, at least in format. David Levine and Kate Yule have produced a fanzine about the size of an index card, embellished it with a charming collage by Kate and filled it with writing much of which is also charming. The writing seems unforced and from the heart, not intentionally cute or ingratiating. (Only the piece on the future of George Jetson is other; it's mean to chill.) Nearly all the pieces have a common theme: how slippery and subject to change the future can be.

How would Arnie feel about Tand? Mark Manning fills this fanzine with such a range of material that it's sometimes hard to see an editorial hand at work, though Mark's distinctive voice in editorials and lettercols helps offset the difficulty. In issue #3 he includes material on Lobjan (an artificial language), on politics in Eastern Europe, on traveling through India, on living with Elfquest fans, and on and on, in styles ranging from briefing to anecdote. Throw in poetry, art only the most ambitious of mimeographers would try to reproduce, and thirty pages of letters, and you get 92-page fanzines like this one, with something for everyone, which means that I didn't like it all, at all.

If Arnie were patient enough, he would find something quite good in Jeux Sans Frontieres #3/3½, from Harry Bond. First he would have to wade through mailing comments printed with (apparently) defective mimeo stencils, for Jeux is primarily a FAPAazine. But in its back pages Harry has placed a meditation called "Fannish Fancies," on certain seemingly fannish writers who have seemingly wrongheaded prejudices against fans. It's got a real stinger in its tail, and I think Arnie would appreciate it as much as I did.

It's hard to think how much Arnie has missed: Dave Langford's entire output; Avedon Carol at her best; most of the work of Brad Foster, Stu Shiffman and Teresa Nielsen Hayden; Teresa's writing, and most of Patrick's; Rob Hansen, Joseph Nicholas, Malcolm Edwards, Lillian Edwards, D. West. The list, indeed, goes on, but I won't. Some of these people are still doing good work, and, with luck and some people to play lending library, Arnie will get a chance to catch up. (Just as I still lend Arnie Katz, Joyce Katz, and Bill Kunkel fanzines to newer fans.)

And of course he is even now being sent current fanzines, like the maturely fannish Trapdoor, the politically aware and sometimes selfconscious FTT (last entitled Free Twenty Toads or something like that), the schizoid and sometimes exciting Pulp, the ultimately serious-and-proud-of-it New York Review of Science Fiction, even Mainstream, risen from its coma. All of them are zines I read as soon as they get in the house; none of them have quite the intensity about fandom that Folly has.

This will be the first time that Arnie has been a trufaunish voice crying in our wilderness. He was in much the same position when he published Quip in the 60s. Will he change us? Will we change him? Or will we stare at one another in mutual incomprehension until he returns to the greater world again? Actually, I hope not. This is a small island, for all the connections we seem to have built to that greater world, and I think we need someone who remembers how close we can come to being self-sufficient. And Arnie Katz, you know, can be fun.

FANZINES DISCUSSED:

Folly #1 & 2: Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107. Available for letters, contributions or arranged all-for-all trades.

SF Eye #7: P.O. Box 43244, Washington, DC 20010. \$10 for 3 issues.

Aurora #26: SF-3, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701. This issue available to subscribers and others on their mailing list.

Innuendo #12: Jerry Kaufman, 8738 1st Avenue NW, Seattle, WA 98117. \$6 each; proceeds to be donated to the Down Under Fan Fund.

Mimosa #8: Dick and Nicki Lynch, P.O. Box 1270, Germantown, MD 20875. Available for \$2, trades, locs, contributions or "twenty different used Canadian and/or Australian stamps."

Bento #2: David Levine and Kate Yule, 117 NW Trinity Place, #37, Portland, OR 97209. Available for trades or locs.

Jeux Sans Frontieres 3/3½: Harry Bond, 64 Paramount Court, University St., Euston, London WC1E 6JP, UK. No availability shown.

---#10---



WHAT I DID ON MY THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mark Manning

In 1972, I lived with the Hare Krishnas for Thanksgiving. That's right, the ones you see at the airports or huddling next to downtown buildings, wearing ochre robes and playing tablas, singing in Sanskrit while trying to sell you incense or books with bright covers and outlandish titles like Easy Travel to Other Planets or Sri Bhagavatam: Canto XV. Them.

I'd first read about them in Abbie Hoffman's Revolution for the Hell of It. He said their communes were low key places to crash when you were on the run. An antiwar radical, I figured they were folks to know about, like the local Movement lawyer or the cheapest place in town to have picket signs made up.

Then, late in 1970, they actually came to town. I was walking between a noon German class and a 2:00 o'clock chem lab, when this bedraggled fellow jumped out from nowhere and thrust a book and a poster into my face. "Hare Krishna! Like, George Harrison wants Americans to learn about Lord Krishna and stuff, so we're selling these nice books and these nice posters, man."

"Right on," I replied. "How much for the both?" Grammar, this will demonstrate, didn't mean as much then as did Commitment.

"Seven dollars, y'know?"

I'd read Alan Watts and Hermann Hesse, and knew that I should say something to make this a Cosmically Meaningful Conversation, fraught with more than mere Literal Meaning and stuff. Man. So, fishing for correct change, I remarked, "I'm reminded of two proverbs. One says, 'A fool and his money are soon parted.' The other says, 'The Lord works in mysterious ways.' Which one covers this scene?"

He took my money and handed me the loot, a huge hardback coffeetable book entitled simply Krsna and a slick poster of Krishna attacking various monstroids. And said, "Oh, wow. Maybe both proverbs pertain, dig?"

That was the last I saw of them for two years. In 1972, for some anthro class or other, I decided to do a "participant-observer" study of life at the biggest Hare Krishna hang-out, New Vrindavana, West Virginia, a farm commune just outside Wheeling.

Time was a cinch, thanks to a long Thanksgiving break at my school. Transportation the few hundred miles east came courtesy of some guy with a Mustang who'd advertised on a campus bulletin board for a rider.

He drove ok, I bought the gas ok. We only made one stop except those at expressway gas stations: Mr. Mustang had to pick up his sweetie in Wheeling so they could spend the weekend in Pittsburgh.

If you look at the West Virginia map, you'll see that the state has a comparatively tiny panhandle that extends ten miles east or west, and maybe twenty miles north or south, of Wheeling. Thanks to the peculiarly bovine civil engineering that typifies rural right-of-way decisions, it took an hour to get from the city to the otherwise nearby Panhandle farm, driving from this winding cattle track to that.

(Hmm, Panhandle. I wonder if this name made the ever-panhandling Hare Krishnas like the area....)

Around nine-thirty in the evening, we arrived. I slopped up the half-frozen mud driveway and was ushered into the snore-filled room where I unrolled my bag to sleep. This space had formerly been a bunch of bedrooms, actually the whole upstairs (except for the private room of the deputy guru). They'd knocked out the walls, unrolled sleeping bags, set out cardboard boxes containing their shaving kits and other private possessions, and called it a communal sleeping area.

The big room smelled of cow shit, decomposing yogurt, and rancid butter. I'd estimate the temperature in the room at around forty-five unheated degrees.

At three am, the loud moo of a conch shell being blown woke me up. The conch-blower, alias the deputy guru (who'd been awakened by a clock-radio) shook my shoulder.

"Since you're our guest, we'd like to extend to you the honor of first trip to the bath house."

"Bath house? What? Where?"

"It's about twenty yards from the front door, the small concrete building between driveway and barn. There, all the boys bathe communally, so remember not to use the basin as a tub. Instead, use the bucket, which should be near at hand."

I grabbed a pink blanket from my pack (suddenly understanding why I'd been told beforehand that such an item was necessary), a towel and some clogs. Then I ran, otherwise naked, into the night.

In some alternate time-line, I might have noticed the grand sprinkles of stars where they poked through thinning clouds. But in this Universe, all I cared about was the sub-freezing air and the mud that gooshed through a thin layer of ice, right over the soles of the clogs.

The bathhouse looked about the same size as your standard suburban garden shed. When I flipped on the light, the same switch fired up an oil-burning heater next to the door. Along one wall sat the basin, a bathtub-sized construction of the same concrete blocks that composed the walls. A little brass pipe trickled clear water from some kind of pond up the hill.

There was a layer of ice on the basin water. When I cracked it with the bucket (originally a kid's sandbox toy, this), the water inside the basin showed itself to be green from algae.

A drain grate, mostly clogged with mud and hair, lay in the center of the bath-house. I stood over it and poured a bucket of water over my head.

When my heart began to beat again, I dried off, then ran back inside. Did you know that icicles can form in seconds?

After getting dressed and recording initial impressions in a journal, I went downstairs to see what was up. Ten or so devotees (Hare Krishnas pronounce this word with a perverse accent on the second syllable), all young men, were sitting around an empty room. This room, probably the former living room and dining room, had whitewashed walls, with a few pictures of the Hare Krishna guru, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svami Prabhupada, and a few paintings of Krishna doing various heroic or mundane things in basic blue.

The young men, who always referred to each other as "nice boys" and addressed each other as "Prabhu," were telling beads and chanting. Each devotee gets a rosary of 108 beads, and has to tell the rosary 108 times each day. This comes out to a grand total of 11,664 mumbled repetitions of "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare" every day. Needless to say, they kind of nodded at me without interrupting their chanting.

Once all devotees had returned from the bath house, it was time for the first religious service of the day. Time has blurred the count of how many services took place daily, and of exactly which one took place when, so I'll just say there were four or five of them, each as distinct as the various daily observances (Matins, Vespers, etc.) staged by catechical-Christian clerics.

All the rituals took place in what must have been the back porch of the farmhouse, now tiled in blue marble and fretted with gold lamé and silk. We'd stand around this huge temple room, or sit on big floor-pillows like actors in casbah movies. Most of the day, a curtain covered the altar niche.

One ceremony worshipped a potted plant. According to the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna told his sidekick Arjuna something like: "Like, wow, Arjuna. This tulasi plant is pretty groovy, and stuff."

And so it is that the nice boys would daily hover, like a bleary-eyed and ochre fog, round a potted tulasi (which might have been a gardenia or a bindweed or an avocado tree or a milfoil, for all I know). We'd chant the above-quoted Gita verse, too, which in Sanskrit goes something like: "Tulasi tulais ganesha Arjuna dasa! Tulasi tulasi o calcutta rataplana!"

In another ceremony, perhaps the main event of the Hare Krishna day, the room set-up and atmosphere resembled those of a Baptist service, except that the communicants were standing, clean-shaven, and wearing orange saris. Instead of an organist, the New Vrindavana men's house used the musical accompaniment of a harmonium-pumper, a couple of guys on the finger cymbals, and a bouncer-type who wailed away on both

WHY DOES
ARJUNA WEAR
RED SUSPENDERS
?



KRISHNA KOMEDY

ends of a huge, conga-like drum.

All the nice boys stood expectantly around the room, facing the now-open altar niche. Inside, surrounded by smouldering incense punk and fresh flowers, were the statues of Krishna and his consort, Radha, collectively referred to as Shri-Shri Radha-Krishna. I've called them "statues," but "Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy dolls" might hit closer to the truth.

An aside on Krishna's consort: it seems that young Krishna's favorite teenage pastime was dirty dancing with local cow-herding girls, an activity called "rasalila" by devotees (and "making out after the prom" by up-to-date cynics). Apparently, the late guru A.C. Bhakivedanta Swami Prabhupada's Bengali competitors regularly swive female devotees in the name of rasalila. The puritanical (to mix religious metaphors) Prabhupada heartily disapproved.

Back in the marble-lined farmhouse, the devotees swayed back and forth in ecstasy, singing Sanskrit chants that meant things like, "Hey, Swami Bhaktivedanta, you're cool because you turned us on to Krishna (who really gets us off)." The chants got louder and faster, then transmuted into your basic Hare Krishna chant. Then the deputy guru blew on a conch shell, and the singing suddenly died. Folks stood around, wiping sweat from their brows, breathing hard, occasionally saying things like, "Wow. That was a good one."

At some point in the day, the time came 'round for religious instruction. A group of nice boys sat on the temple's casbah pillows, Bhagavad-Gitas on their laps, while the deputy guru worked through a verse.

Do you know the plot of the Bhagavad-Gita? It begins with Krishna and his faithful Indian companion Arjuna facing battle. Arjuna expresses his fear of death. To which Krishna replies, "Hey, it's cool. Just flow with it, dig? And besides, even if you die--ok?--it'll be with me, which is like a very high thing to do." The two then discuss the meaning of the Universe and Reality and the Void, at length.

Now, Prabhupada's translation of the Gita, unlike any other I've seen, begins with the Sanskrit text, then gives a transliteration. Below that comes a literal, word-for-word translation, then Prabhupada's more-or-less idiomatic English rendering. Bringing up the rear (rhetorical machine guns at the ready to capture spiritual stragglers) is Prabhupada's so-called "purport," a free essay supposedly inspired by the text.

Hare Krishna religious instruction follows the scheme laid down by Prabhupada, very tightly. Let's say the verse consists of Arjuna saying, "Oh, man. You know, I'm scared shitless and stuff!"

First the deputy guru sang each word, using what must be some traditional melody: "Aarjuna." Then the nice boys, 80% asleep at the best of times, moaned the word in repetition, a very half-hearted chorus: "Arjna." The word got repeated until everyone got it right. Then the deputy guru announced the literal meaning of the word: "This word means, 'Arjuna.'"

After fifteen minutes or so of this, the nine words of Sanskrit were sung together,

then translated: "Oh, Lord. Surely it is known to you that my fright has grown quite indecent." Then the deputy guru read the purport, which for a passage like this one might discuss how gross Prabupada considers garlic as a foodstuff, or how Prabupada believes it impossible and blasphemous to say that astronauts ever walked on the Moon.

To wind the class up, devotees, with typical decisiveness, discussed how the passage has inspired them: "Like, once I was just learning about Krishna? You know? And I used to worry about planes crashing? And now I chant 'Hare Krishna' all day? You know? And I don't worry about it? Nobody can fall off the Moon? And hit me?"

After one of the ceremonies--I forget which one--each nice boy stopped at the door to the temple room, where there's a little silver bowl, full of watered-down yogurt.

The Thing To Do was to spill a gob of yogurt onto your right palm, slurp most of it up, then rub the rest into the skin of your pate. This practice kind of sets you apart, once you try it: I laundered the clothes from that visit many times, but still had to toss the stinking things into the trash.

On a related subject, dining with the Hare Krishnas came easy, once I got used to the idea of eating food salvaged from Wheeling-area supermarket garbage dumpsters. Meals sometimes featured sour milk, and always seemed way too heavily into sweets of all kinds, but were otherwise more than adequate. Memories of their lentil stew (dahl) and flatbread (chapatis) linger with me still.

Some years afterwards, I saw a Hare Krishna cookbook in a used bookstore, and snapped it up. Unfortunately, most of the recipes described delicacies whipped up to serve 25 or more.

The last full day of my stay, I asked to visit the married couples' house. This proved to be two or three miles away, along a well-rutted country backroad. And the "price" of my visit was to take a couple kids, a girl about four and a boy about two, back there to preschool and their mother.

A mile or so down the pike, the little boy began to say he wanted to "pazhurn." I ignored him, rather successfully I thought, until his sister informed me that he had to "pass urine," a peculiarly Hare Krishna euphemism.

About the time I got his little ochre robe re-tucked, a pickup truckload of Good Old Boys pulled up. I mean muddy guys who smelled of axle grease and beer, with shotguns on their gunrack.

"Y'all need a rod?" one asked. In West Virginia, "rod" means "ride," so I said yes. I did my best to act like a fellow hillbilly (which my grandparents, in fact, were), just a-checkin' things out. They seemed to accept my story, but then, they didn't mind the Hare Krishnas, either.

The driver said, "They's crazier'n a damn snappin' turtle with its haid a-cut off, but we don't pay 'em



MAKE ONE GURU HAPPY,
SHAVE HEAD, DISENGAGE
BRAIN. PLEASE?

no nevermind. Hit's jest fahn, ever-whut they do, long's they don't come pokin' into our business."

D'rectly after a spell, which is to say "soon" in West Virginia dialect, we arrived at another farmhouse, where the locals dropped us off. Inside, I watched doings at the preschool for a while. Most notable was the Krishna-conscious edition of that typical kid's book, The Gingerbread Man. Someone had censored the text for religious incorrectness, using a black felt-tip pen. The book now became The Chapati Boy.

I learned from preschool staffers that Swami Prabhupada's way to deal with kids involves letting them do whatever they want until they're seven years old. After that, they're packed off to a special school in Texas, where the slogan is for the teachers to treat the kids as tigers treat their prey.

I have visions of this Texas school resembling an ochre boot camp: "TM is a blasphemous scam---You're right! Your fake Maharishi's a sham--You're right! Sound off! Ha-re! Soung off! Krish-na! Sound off! Hare Krishna, Hare Rama!"

Truth to tell, it's somewhat surprising that there are any Kare Krishna married couples: one of their texts forbids sex except during the exact time of the month most likely to result in procreation, and even then, only after the prospective parents sit up for forty-eight hours of solid chanting. Gotta make sure they don't fuck for fun, I guess.

The day after my trip to preschool, time came to catch my ride back to school. As Escape came near, I dropped by the deputy guru's room.

"Sure you won't stay--shave up and please guru?" he asked.

"No." I handed him a cash contribution for the ashram, which disappeared into his rosary bag. He didn't thank me, or even smile.

Climbing into the Mustang, I took stock: I stank of yogurt in my hair and several days of skimpy ice water baths, limped from a cut which became infected after the Hare Krishnas insisted on treating it with nothing but Golden Seal powder, and had virtually no cash in my wallet.

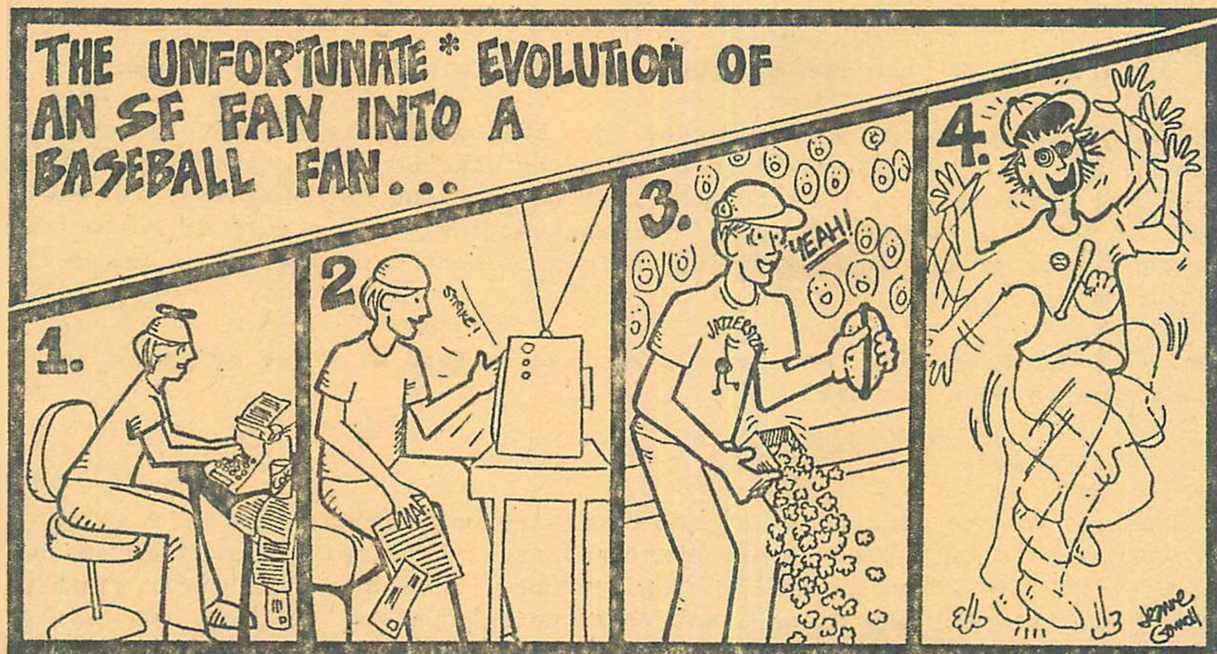
In the semesters that followed, I wrote term papers on the Hare Krishnas for almost every social science course. There was "Child Rearing Practices Among the Hare Krishnas" and "New Light on Clinical Chaplaincy: Health Care Orientations of the Hare Krishnas." After "Hare Krishna Family Structure" came "Historical Culture and Personality in the Hare Krishna Sect: A Jungian Marxist Schema."

These papers were always good for an "A." I guess you could say that the Hare Krishnas put me through college.

A couple of days after writing the above, I found a copy of Hubner & Gruson's new Monkey on a Stick: Murder, Madness and the Hare Krishnas, which I read in a matter of hours. In this book, I learned that the West Virginia deputy guru, Kirtanananda, has since been implicated in murder, child molesting, grand theft, drug running and fraud. I found this quite shocking. But what shocked me even more was the revelation that the "watered-down yogurt" was really a mixture of milk, rose water and cow's urine. I feel lucky to have survived.

Special When Lit

-or-



David Emerson

At the ripe old age of forty, I am finally discovering an age-old joy that I never experienced as a kid.

Baseball.

Perhaps it was because my cosmic mind was much more interested in magic spells and interstellar rocketships; or perhaps it was because my puny body couldn't handle sports too well and my sensitive proto-fannish personality couldn't handle the taunts of my peers too well. Whatever the reason, I grew up disdaining any kind of physical activity. I wouldn't even watch other people do it.

Consequently, I missed out on the pleasures of a summer afternoon at the ballpark: the cheers from the bleachers, the following of the score, the fans' discussions of players' statistics and managers' strategies, the anticipation of a strikeout or a base hit or a double play or a grand slam home run.

My conversion began simply enough a few years ago. I went to the movies one night and saw Robert Redford in The Natural, a wonderful movie which, among other things, did a great job of portraying the lyrical and mythic aspects of the game of baseball. It drew broad parallels with Arthurian legend, which tied in with my interest in fantasy; it also showed that there can be a great deal of grace and beauty in the game when it's played by people who really love what they're doing, and do it well. This movie changed my perception of the game, peeling back part of my hardened attitude against sports to expose a more receptive state beneath. It also taught me to root for the

* ...the inevitable result of assigning an illustration to an artist who didn't share the author's sense of values... Note that my artistic comment was a subtle one: I could have used the term "tragic" instead of merely "unfortunate." JGomoli

home team and hang breathlessly on a 3-2 pitch with the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth.

The following spring, I was sitting at home with nothing special to do, and tuned in to a Twins game on tv, on the chance that some of that special mythic quality might come across in the electronic 1980s.

Well, it might not have been mythic, but it sure was a hell of a lot of fun.

The next day, when people at work launched into that eternally favorite coffee-break topic, The Ball Game, I was able to join the discussion for the first time in my life. "Did you see Kirby Puckett make that outstanding catch against the center-field wall in the 5th inning?" I said. "It was amazing. I was sure it was a home run, but he leaped up and snagged it just before it went over the wall. Saved the day for the Twins, you bet."

"Gee, Dave," (people at work tend to call me Dave instead of using my name) "we didn't know you watched baseball."

"I do now," I replied.

So, for the rest of the season, I watched the Twins on tv every once in a while, often enough to be able to tell the players apart and start developing favorites on the team. I didn't follow them extremely closely, but I kept abreast of their standings in the league. I found out why Minnesotans referred to them as "the Twinkies," in that peculiar combination of derision and affection that baseball fans have for a favorite home team that loses all the time.

The following year, I found myself following the team more closely. As I biked around the lakes, I would tune my walkman to the cheesy AM station that carried the game instead of an FM music station. I learned about the structure of the major leagues (the two leagues, each with an Eastern and Western division) and the structure of the season--the 162-game regular season punctuated by the All-Star game in the middle, the division playoffs toward the end, and finally the grand finale of the World Series.

Then came the 1987 season.

In 1987, the Twins repeated the miracle of the New York Mets in 1969: they started the season with a reputation as a team of hopeless losers, and finished it by winning their first World Series. This took a lot of people by surprise, to say the least. (They say that the odds in Las Vegas at the beginning of the season had been 200 to 1 against this happening.)



While I was surprised myself, not to mention thoroughly delighted, I wasn't totally astonished. From watching them over the past couple of years, I knew that they were a much better team than their league standings had indicated. They had several decent hitters; home runs were not uncommon. Their fielding was excellent. They played well as a team--good coordination, no prima donnas, everybody doing his own job and supporting the others in theirs. The problem was a lack of staying power: they always seemed to fall apart in the last 2 or 3 innings and

let their opponents walk all over them. They also had a relatively weak pitching staff, so that no matter how well they played, the other team had an easier time getting on base and scoring.

The difference in the 1987 season was in the pitching. The starting pitchers included Bert Blyleven, at the peak of his career, and Frank Viola, who was getting hotter and hotter. The relief pitchers were stronger than they had ever been before, with the bearded Jeff Reardon and Juan ("Senor Smoke") Berenguer holding the line. Finally, the Twins were getting the number of wins they deserved.

The mood of the Twin Cities in September and October was electric. Recovering from the initial surprise of the Twins taking the division lead, we saw them off to the playoffs with typical Minnesota-style high spirits: that is, we were excited and hopeful, but not too much in case things didn't work out. (Oh ya, d'crops are doin' pretty good, I guess, but y'know an early frost could ruin everyt'ing.) After winning the first two games at home (where we seemed to have an advantage), we expected to lose the three games in Detroit and probably the pennant series as well. But the boys somehow managed to pull it off, winning the fourth and fifth games in Tiger Stadium. Then the town went nuts. People poured downtown and into the otherwise empty Metrodome, just to be there in celebration. When the team got off the plane that night, they came down to the stadium and walked onto the field into an overwhelming roar of applause. Over 55,000 people had gathered to cheer the returning heroes, many of whom were visibly moved by this spontaneous demonstration.

World Series tickets, of course, became the hottest item around. Everyone was even more excited now. People who had never seen a baseball game in their lives were getting into the spirit. My friends and I had a round-robin series of game-watching parties, gathering the gang together at a different person's house each night and following the games on network tv. We got inventive with the refreshments: one host provided bratwurst, beer, peanuts, and Crackerjack. At other parties there were cookies decorated to look like baseballs, and pizzas that spelled out "WIN TWINS" in pepperoni.

The night of the climactic seventh game of the World Series, I finally allowed myself to believe that they could really do it. I could barely contain myself. When Viola's very first pitch was a called strike, I stood up and shouted, "YEAH!" Soon I was jumping up and down at every Twins score and every Cardinals out. Along about the eighth inning, I started saying to myself, "This is fantastic. Not only are the Twins playing in the World Series, they're WINNING the World Series." And at the final out, as players were jumping all over each other on the field, I could no longer hold it in. I went to the front door, stuck my head out and yelled as loud as I could. No sooner had I stopped, thinking I might be disturbing the neighbors, than I heard similar yelling from all over the neighborhood. Everybody in town felt the same way!

Several of us made our way downtown. I thought the town had gone nuts before, but that was just a warmup. This was total bonkers. The streets were packed. A delirious mob was hooting and hollering continuously. Champagne was flowing. Everyone was giving high-fives to everyone else. People were pounding on anything that would make noise. Several fans climbed onto a hapless newspaper van that was trying to crawl through the most crowded intersection, stood on its roof, and danced. It was a sort of benevolent riot. The energy continued at fever pitch until about 3:00 in the morning.





The Twin Cities had never seen anything like it, and probably won't for a very long time to come.

The 1988 season saw record attendance at Twins games, but they didn't manage to do it again. Ironically enough, the team actually played better than they had in 1987. A lot of players were among the top in the league for various statistics such as hits, batting average, winning pitching, and earned-run average. But we had started the season with a slump that we recovered from but never managed to compensate for, and the Oakland A's just had an even better season than we did.

On the other hand, I attended more games in '88 than ever before. Most of them were spent in the cheap upper-deck seats, but there was one that was a fabulous freebie, courtesy of Geri Sullivan. Her company has a private box at the Dome, and free tickets are allotted to the various departments. One day it was her department's turn, and she invited me along (as her "insignificant other"). It was rather plush, what with upholstered seats, two

tv's for instant replays and running commentary, plates of munchies, and a full bar. But it was also fun to go down into the seats and be surrounded by all the energy of the fans.

One of the people in the box had brought their kid along, a boy of about ten or twelve. He knew all the players on both teams, along with their relevant statistics; he called the plays, he second-guessed the manager, he talked baseball like a sportswriter. It reminded me that this really is a sport for all ages. In some ways, it's even better when you're a kid.

One thing that, as an adult, I appreciate about baseball is the rich cultural resonance of the game. It goes back a long way, and has its own history and legends. There really are mythic qualities to it, as I had perceived in The Natural. Where almost all other team sports are modelled on tribal warfare (convey an object behind enemy lines and propel it toward a vulnerable spot in their home territory), baseball is constructed along completely different lines. It's more like an adaptation of the classic quest story: a lone adventurer goes on a voyage fraught with danger, moving from place to place, coming home again at the end, hailed as a hero.

It's also more democratic: no matter what their position in the field, everybody on the team gets their chance to bat (designated-hitter rule notwithstanding); even though the pitcher gets credited with a win or loss, it's the entire team who actually score the points. Baseball celebrates the triumph of the common man.

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So what do I do in the winter months, when there's no baseball? Why, I read baseball fiction, of course.

Not that there's actually such a genre, but I've found enough books of baseball stories to have started a separate section on my bookshelf. My favorites so far are by William P. Kinsella: Shoeless Joe, which has a semi-fantasy Twilight Zoneish feel to it (and from which the movie Field of Dreams was made), and The Iowa Baseball Confederacy, which is definitely fantasy, mixing time travel, alternate history, and Indian magic. The

writing is wonderful, and Kinsella not only loves baseball but manages to convey that feeling by imbuing the game with magical properties. He also has a couple of collections of short stories with baseball themes: The Thrill of the Grass and The Further Adventures of Slugger McBatt.

A book that Eli Cohen turned me onto some time ago is Robert Coover's The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Waugh, Prop. This is about a guy who invents a sort of baseball role-playing game and becomes so involved with it that the game becomes more real than his life. Note that this was written years before the popularity of Dungeons & Dragons.

Another oldie--much older--is You Know Me, Al by Ring Lardner, which Luke McGuff loaned me a hardback copy of a while ago. Purporting to be letters from a barely-literate pro ballplayer in the 1920s to his pal back home, these are written in dialect and suffused with Lardner's wry humor throughout.

More recently, I picked up The Curious Case of Sidd Finch by George Plimpton, which tells the story of a young Englishman who becomes a major-league pitcher by virtue of his Zen training in the Himalayas. He gets into a meditative state in which space and time have no meaning, including the space between his hand and the catcher's mitt, and the time it takes to throw the ball. Perfect strikes every time, at the incredible speed of 168 miles per hour. Needless to say, this turns the baseball world upside down. The story has a pleasantly light tone, and alternates between good characterization and satire of the baseball business.

When I finally read the original novel version of The Natural, I was surprised at how different it was from the movie. Even though almost the exact same events happen in both versions, their meanings are totally different. Where the movie reeked of symbolism and deeper meaning, the book is just a story about a mug who wants to be a great baseball player but doesn't quite make it. The ending is completely different. The book has a dark tone to it, and ultimately turns out to be somewhat depressing.

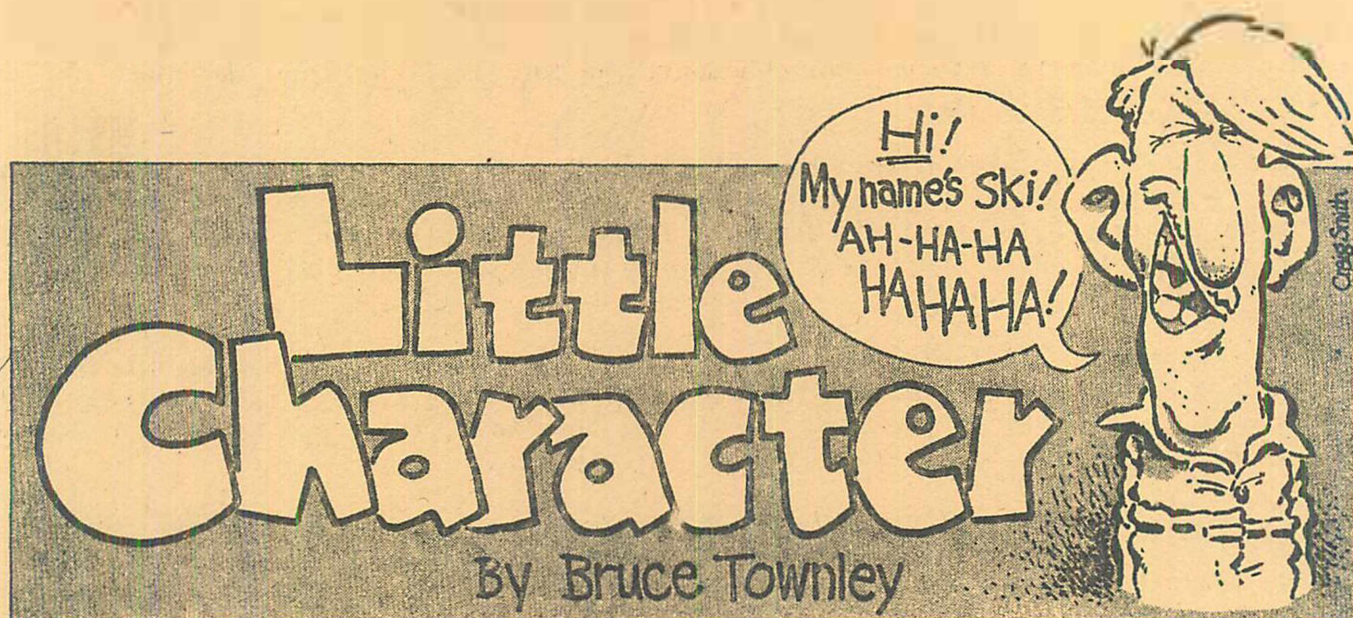
Lately I've discovered a couple of mysteries with a baseball background. One is Strike Three, You're Dead by R.D. Rosen; the other is called Beanball and is supposedly written by Tom Seaver, although I see that he has a co-author who is an established mystery writer, so maybe this is more like one of those "as told to" books.

I should mention The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant, a deal-with-the-Devil story upon which the musical Damn Yankees was based. I read it a long time ago and have forgotten the author. (A bit of research left to the reader as an exercise.) On the home front, there is an informal-looking quarterly of the "little magazine" variety called The Minneapolis Review of Baseball, which contains a lot of the kind of writings we're used to seeing in fannish fanzines. Some are personal essays, some purport to be fiction; there are a couple of editorials and a poem or two. Good illos, too.

Last year one of the local theaters was presenting a one-man show called Calvinisms, based on the life of Calvin Griffiths, former owner of the Minnesota Twins and local controversial character. I went to a special showing of this play that was held the evening of the All-Star game.

[continued on page 21]





"Some people live life in the fast lane; some people are in the oncoming lane. Ski was stuck somewhere on an off-ramp--probably with vapor lock."---B.L., after Rich Cond

Let me tell you about the first time I met Ski. Walking down the hallway I could hear him talking, just around the bend. Sounded like he was answering somebody. That is, the speech sounded like he was responding, one half of a give and take. Maybe he was responding to somebody I hadn't met yet, somebody I couldn't see.

"...Yeah and then I told them! Oh! There they are!

Just then Ski himself appeared around the corner in the hallway (around the bend) chattering away and waving his arms in the air, glancing over his shoulder into the passage we couldn't quite see yet. Just like I'd seen him do before, the few times I had encountered him at the bacon bits plant where I worked. We were on different shifts, Ski and I. So I'd just heard talk about him, just talk. Never'd had to work with him (or, more to the point, around him). Feeling a small moment of anticipation I sorta looked forward to meeting one of Ski's little chums. I should have known better. But, as I said, I didn't know him, just yet.

In the next minute not that much happened. But it was enough. Expectation evaporated and quickly and profoundly shifted to something wholly other. Ski was all by himself, he was talking perfectly clearly (more clearly than I am here) to thin, thinner, thinnest air. I wasn't alone but it made me feel like I was.

I'd heard about Ski before I actually physically met him. Naturally this meant that I'd indulged in unfounded preconception without the luxury of even realizing it. Rather like when the first explorers of Australia returned home with what were first dismissed as a mixed-up mish-mash of traveller's tales but what in time were revealed to be accurate descriptions of the duck-billed platypus and other mammals

just as bizarre in the veritable flesh.

Well, it was more like a joke, the distance from reality I calculated to be present in these humorous personal anecdotes or traveller's tales, take your pick. Descriptions of encounters gleaned from friends and co-workers usually started a little like this: "Ho-ho, Ski was doing this crazy THING, a ha-ha..." Lulled by laughter that I thought was all fun instead of a means of allaying the fidgets, nervous tit-tering. Lunacy can be joked about (anything can be joked about, thank GOD) but the naked face of dementia is not to be made the butt of jokes when it is staring you, likewise, in the face.

Hadn't really had the chance to work this out 'til Ski was placed on my shift. Physically the little gink wasn't very big. His height was about six inches less than mine which would put him at about five foot six inches tall. Weighed a little over one hundred pounds and was powerful enough in a wiry sort of way. Top it all off with a thatch of prematurely grey hair. Ski's only about maybe three years older'n me, which would make him on the way to forty years old now--old enough to know better, you'd think. His face was screwed up in a perpetual and involuntary squint, punctuated by a healthy mustache, encapsulated by regular enough facial features. Initially and outwardly not all that startling, he was actually rather well put together for a fucking little weirdo.

Ski had this funny little walk. It really looked comical. He kept his legs just as rigid as possible to permit locomotion. Add to this somewhat jerky mode of progress the irregular counterpoint of similarly stiffened swinging arms, a wobbly butt, and eyesight clamped in a straight-ahead bearing, and you got a sight that would make total strangers stop and laugh and point at him out on the streets. What did they care, they didn't have to work with him.

His mouth was the fairly dirty one you would expect to hear from a former Navy man. As Clarence Darrow has recommended, it only strengthens a vocabulary to use all the words one knows. Ski, for what it was worth, was fairly knowledgable and even articulate if given the chance. Usually he was willing to take a break from his avowed areas of concentration (fishing, stock car racing, interspersed with Navy tales and the various slings, arrows and slights he'd been on the receiving end of throughout his lifespan) and analyze topics others had brought up like plate tectonics or what a pud-brain our shift supervisor was. Even though trapped in his own personal vision as he inexorably was (he could and did walk right by without recognizing me on his way into work most afternoons) he would always offer a cheery, "Take it easy!" on his way out. I am still amazed that I was able to converse at all with a man who was liable to forget your name mid-way through a chat and have to be reminded just who you were (I'm really not making this up).

We both worked on Swing Shift (3PM--11PM) for the longest term of our mutual employment at the bacon bits plant. This meant that we were on what was known as the "Clean-up Crew." Stick that on the old resumé and watch Caucasians recoil in horror. What "Clean-up" meant, mostly, was preparing the Processing and Packaging Rooms so that they could be used for another 21 hours, or thereabouts. This included stripping all the equipment that could be gotten at with some dispatch and spraying the whole mess with industrial grade detergent (something like Janitor in a Drum but with more skulls and cross-bones in the drum) and then hosing it all down the drain with high-pressure hoses charged with water in the neighborhood of 150 degrees Farenheit (or hotter). Pretty intense stuff as you might guess.

After Clean-up was done in the two main production rooms, it was time to settle down to the process of changing raw product (yes, real bacon, spun soy beans aren't that greasy, usually the odds and ends left over from putting together the sliced bacon packages you buy in the supermarket--these left-overs from pork bellies are known to the trade as "ends and pieces") to cooked product. This was done by running some 3000 pounds of fresh bacon per 8-hour shift through a 40-foot-long stainless steel microwave oven (powered by a 25-kilowatt generator) with an endless fibreglass belt running through it. This yielded several hundred pounds of cooked product throughout the day's three shifts which in turn had to be diced and packed in cans or sealed in plastic bags. All of this depended upon what orders we had on hand from various restaurant suppliers, outfits that were our main source of sales.

As you might guess this all entailed some fairly heavy-duty effort. The job demanded both fairly close-tolerance attention to the operation of costly machinery and detailed production processes as well as not a little bit of brute force. Imagine, if you will, the barrels of fun that could be yours if one-quarter of the shift you were on was comprised of a little chump who quite literally argued with parts of his body out loud.

In our minds there is a constant hub-bub and back-chat of sub-vocal conversation. In Ski's case he just generally dispensed with the "sub" part of sub-vocal. He was the next best thing to a derelict on a big city street hollering out a schizoid farrago of obscene and baseless vituperation, just barely. He did his line of unhinged yakking inside, on the job, and in a somewhat softer tone. Ski was able to keep his job, such as it was, largely because his younger and somewhat more on the ball brother was the plant quality control officer (and nobody wanted to go to the trouble of getting him mad). Also management just didn't give a rusty fuck so long as quotas were met. As long as somebody else was around to haul in Ski's omnipresent slack.

One evening I happened to be sitting by the oven, shoving raw product in the front end ("cooking" was the term for this). This was one of the nights Ski was actually in the plant when he was supposed to be (he was quite prone to illness, took a lot of sick leave for causes both real and imagined; usually these bouts were just described as "dizziness" if described at all), and even doing productive work as opposed to something more typical like his 5-6 hour jaunts sweeping the parking lot. Ski was inspecting the cooked product as it travelled out of the far end of the oven on a stainless steel mesh conveyor belt and plopped into a gondola. Since it was more cost-effective (read: "cheaper") to buy various brands of bacon from certain distributors regardless of the amount of inedible rind it might be encumbered with, it was necessary sometimes to scrutinize the stuff constantly. Such inspection was an even duller than usual task considering how non-demanding sitting on a stool for about 90 minutes and flicking away the odd bit of discolored protein into a bin was.

As my spell of cooking wore on I gradually became aware of a sursurus of slowly increasing chatter. When all of the equipment in the Processing Room, where the oven was, was operating properly it generated a randomly modulated din not unlike aural snow from an empty tv channel, white noise. Soothing in its own special way. What was intruding on my mechanical reverie was Ski talking to himself, as usual. Uh, but he was getting pretty loud, wasn't he? I mean all of the fans and motors and such in a well-tempered Processing Room are pretty loud themselves, y'know? So I snuck a look over at old Ski and what I saw was even more peculiar than usual. Sure enough, there he was talking pretty blatantly even though he wasn't speaking

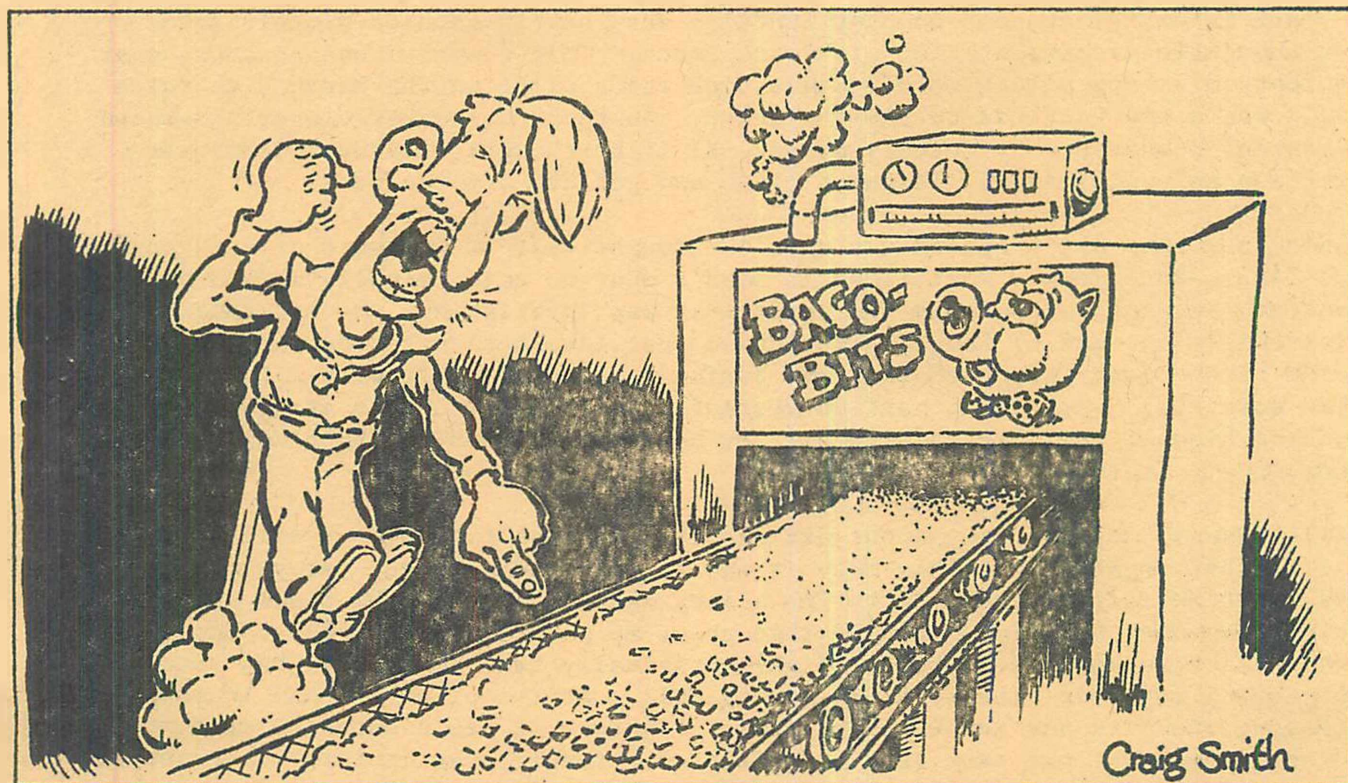
to me, the only other one in sight. The really bizarre part were his gestures (never, even at the best of times, under close control). He was, um, shaking his finger at the bacon as it went by on the conveyor belt. It had gotten to the point where I could plainly hear him, even though he was about ten yards or more away and it was sorta noisy in there, anyway.

"Goddamn it, you fucking shit! Why don't you co-operate! Listen to me, damn it!" and so on, said Ski.

Then he got REALLY abusive as the bacon further conspired against him more and more and more 'til he blurted out, "Aw Jeee-zuz! I just can't take it anymore!" (Haven't we all felt just like that?) and bolted straight out the door. Moments later the shift supervisor entered through the self-same door and wanted to know what was with Ski. What indeed.

It was a given belief around the plant that Ski's condition was due mainly to the simple fact that he was an acid casualty. This commonly accepted set-piece explanation was tied to Ski's service in the Navy during the Viet Nam War very handily. Maybe Agent Orange had something to do with it. However, since Ski never got any closer to Indo-China than some forty miles off the coast (he told me so himself-- he was stationed on, get this, one of the last boats with wooden decking in the U.S. Navy, makes sense, huh?) it's not like he was really in the war, now was it? Sure enough, Ski had taken way too many drugs in his time but that is by no means the whole story. I have it from Ski's little brother that he and Ski used to share a bedroom when they were children. With alarming frequency Ski's brother had to get up late at night and slug Ski a couple of times just to make him shut up. Unless Ski was slurping down hallucinogens when he was pre-teen he was always crazy as a bed-bug.

I was always hearing from co-workers that I should be more tolerant of Ski and his



little quirks. You know, Ski is one of God's creatures and all that. Of course such gab caused me no end of irritation. The most telling observation of the structural hollowness of local human behavior was the sort of unwritten law enforced by the self-same co-workers that Ski would never never NEVER be allowed to transfer to their shift. Most folks poo-pooed any grievances about Ski (when they didn't have their own cute little Ski story to tell). But, hell, keep him away from ME seemed to be the cogent sub-text informing the general attitude. Anyhow, it was real hard to work up any sympathy for old Ski (Just how much of this lunacy was an act?) particularly if he was one of "God's creatures," whatever that means.

You just never knew what Ski was going to say or do next. Probably this was because Ski himself didn't have too clear an idea. One of the most involving aspects of working at the bacon bits plant was the relaxed relationship between management and the rest of us. Since the president and vp of the company very nearly built it with the work of their own four hands about fifteen years ago this created close, family-like homogeneity. First names and like that. Even in the period that I worked there it wasn't all that unusual to see Dick, the vp and former mayor of a very up-scale nearby community, getting his hands dirty with some bit of basic plant operation. There was the time Dick was helping unload a delivery by operating a fork-lift and Ski was standing around, filling in some time before he had to clock-in by supervising the action. Ski was nattering on and on while Dick sweated out the demanding task of getting thousands of pounds of bacon off the back end of a truck and into our freezer. Ski's chosen topic was just what human scum politicians are. Dick, who at this time was a city councilor and a major force in local politics, is a tolerant, soft-spoken gentleman--just the kind of fellow you'd want for your favorite uncle. And here we had him for one of our big bosses. It was a particularly hot summer day and the goods on the truck weren't, uh, co-operating very much. After enduring his full measure of Ski's ill-considered hot air (and then some, knowing Dick) he turned to Ski, and announced in the sternest tone he had left over from his days in the Marines: "SKI! FUCK--OFF!!"

A few years later Ski at some company function very nearly gabbled himself into another thoughtless confrontation with management. This time Ski was on about what incompetents military pilots were. Since Dick was a pilot in the Marines in Korea such talk was a tad tactless to say the least. An alert co-worker cleverly defused the potential powder-keg by quickly asking Ski if he thought military pilots were as worthless as politicians. It got a laugh and got Ski off the hook.

It wasn't just that Ski's speech was usually thoughtless, it was more or less involuntary--like a knee-jerk. Most times it wasn't what he said, either, it was what came out of his mouth along with the words that was infuriating. He had this habitual (virtually automatic) laugh. It sounded just like the crazed cackle at the beginning of the song "Wipeout" that the Surfaris had such a hit with. Or maybe it was like something a screwball cartoon character would emit. Ski's standard way of introducing himself was like this: "Hi! My name's Ski!! AH--HAHAHAHA!!" What's so funny, guy? It sure got him remembered.

The really funny, unique thing about Ski was that he wasn't stupid or evil or anything like that regardless of how easy it was to view him as such. At yet another company function, a retirement party for a lady who had been at the plant pretty much since day one, Ski did something that shows my point rather nicely. Edna, the lady who was retiring, was a tough old gal, originally from Texas, and had been a welder putting together Liberty Ships during WWII. At the plant she was in charge of packaging the bits and hence was a pivotal figure. It was a surprise party that we had set up and she was surprised and affected strongly, particularly when she was handed the gift that we had all chipped in for. Struggling mightily to keep from

weeping, she had a lot of trouble getting the wrapping off the piece of jewelry we had gotten her. Finally she ground to a complete halt and pinched the bridge of her nose, hiding some tears as she did so. At this point Ski said very deliberately, "Don't cry until you see what's in there!"

It was exactly the right thing to say at that moment. It made Edna and all of her friends around her share the same laugh and vastly improved a delicate situation. I was there and I really believe that Ski thought it out before he said this. He didn't just get lucky with something he blurted out. It was such a nice (read: "proper") thing to say. It is difficult to think otherwise.

So the thing to remember is that even guys like Ski can make their own way in this world. It is not much of a life to depend so completely on the somewhat less incompetent fellow creatures that surround you, but it can be a living. The punchline here is that Ski is living with some woman up in some little hideaway in romantic Stockton, California. Love is where you find it, I guess.

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SPECIAL WHEN LIT /continued from page 15/

After the play, the theater people set up a giant-screen tv on stage, tuned it to the game, and went up and down the theater aisles selling hot dogs, ice cream, and other ballpark snacks. A fine time was had by all.

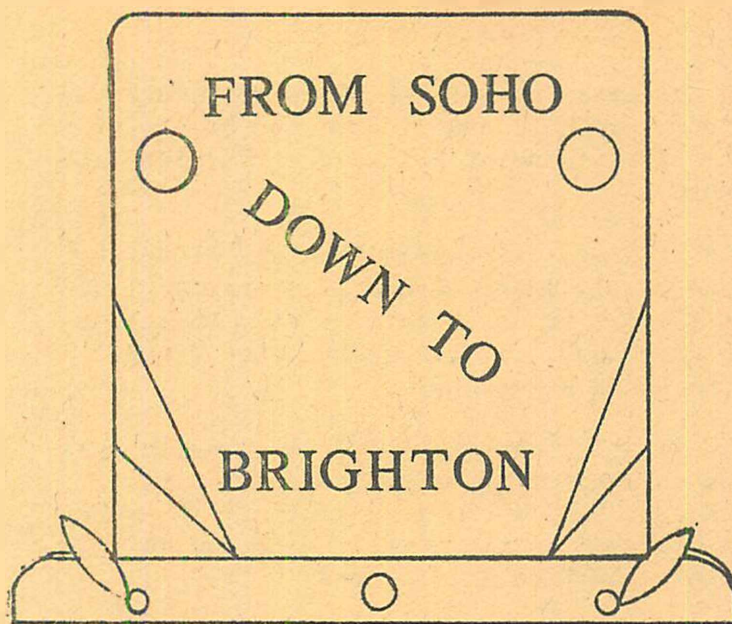
It seems baseball is becoming fannish, too--or is it that fandom is becoming baseballish? At Corflu 5 in Seattle, I found myself having one of those intense discussions with Don Keller that we used to have about music, only this time it was about baseball. And the past year has seen a few delightful issues of Andy Hooper's excellent solo fanzine Nine Innings plop into my mailbox. Hooper uses descriptions of baseball games as springboards into all manner of digressions, including sf reviews and TAFF politics, and blends the writing so smoothly that it all hangs together and makes sense. I'm told there's even a baseball apa.

Could it be that we'll see more baseball zines? Will we have baseball programming at conventions? Will baseball fandom be shunned as a fringe fandom and Steps Taken to prevent baseball fans from block-voting Hugo awards for baseball stories and baseball fanzines? Will we end up spending so much time on baseball fanac that we don't have time to watch any games? Will there be faaanish baseball and sercon baseball?

Naaaaah.

So. Seen any good games lately?

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Andrew Hooper

Scotland was lovely in August, splendid in heather, sunshine and rain; we longed to hang about for two or three weeks, and get the proper feel of the place. Unfortunately, we had an appointment in the south, one we didn't plan to miss. Already, there was a rumour of fans upon the land: a Scandia reticulated tour bus full of people extolling the wonders of the Milwaukee in '94 worldcon bid was supposedly at large in the Highlands, and Carrie brought back a report of having sighted Ross Pavlac in an Inverness laundromat. This northern idyll was over.

Time to return to London, to equalize pressure before the deepwater plunge of Conspiracy in Brighton that lay less than a week away. Best get used to people again. To arguing and laughing the night away. To drinking heavily and laying waste to Indian restaurants.

Time to find a good pinball machine.

When I was a young lad of 18 or so, I lavished an enormous amount of my time on perfecting my command of proper pinball technique. Now, you either understand this, or you don't, but with the help of some friends that worked in an arcade and were willing to set me up with all the free credits I could use, I attained about the highest level of pinball expertise possible on the machines that were available to me. I hammered easy machines like the Williams Meteor and Firepower, the Gottlieb Flash Gordon, a whole raft of hopelessly inadequate Bally cupcakes; I played intermediate games that introduced multi-balls, rotating special features, buttons that moved lit features from side to side, rising and falling gates; and then the really hard machines, things with playfields that seemed to slope at 45-degree angles, endless racks of pop-up targets that rebounded the ball straight into out-holes, machines that required at least 2,000,000 before they would pay off...but eventually, I had taken them all on. Good old games like Goldstrike and Lucky Card, too, things that were usually more of a challenge because of their advanced state of disrepair than their innate design features.

So, on my first trip to Britain, in 1978, one of the unexpected benefits of the journey was exposure to a universe of pinball machines that were at least subtly different from any that I had seen in America. Many of the machines had been manufactured in France or Belgium, and had virtually no writing on them at all, in English or French. Half of the challenge in playing the game was just figuring out what you were supposed to do with it.

Most people when returning from a trip to England make some commentary on the "fruit machines" that are a feature of almost all pubs, fairly base gambling devices that are mostly thought of as "one-armed bandits without the arm." When I returned from my first trip over, I regaled my friends with tales of the strange six-ball French pinball machines, the Belgian bootlegs based on classic Gottlieb designs, and English machines that paid extra off extra balls if you just looked at them hard enough.

I was hoping against hope that many of these would still be extant, that pinball would still provide a major chunk of the coin-operated amusement world, in contrast with America where video games have long since supplanted them for the lion's share of the wasted silver of youth.

If this were the kind of story people like to read, I suppose I'd have had trouble enough, tough going for pages, until at last I would have found a Montenegren bootleg of Flying Aces in the back of fly-blown chip shop in Brixton or Notting Hill. I'd have a lot of chances to see colorful Londoners in their native element, have amusing difficulties in communicating with them, get on the wrong bus or train a few times, and maybe by the end of things, fall in love with the right girl. But it's been done, to death if the truth be told. Happy little memoirs of travel in London have been endemic in fanzines over the past year, although there were a few disquieting tones; George Laskowski commented in Lan's Lantern #26, with some distress, that unlike the view that Time/Life and Lionheart Television have given us of Britain, the streets of London are as apt to be dangerous and full of garbage and misery as they are in this country. Shocking...and I've fallen in love with the right girl often enough at this point.

Soho was crammed with arcades the last time I was in London, both of the adult variety and the more prosaic sort. I remember I once spent an entire afternoon there, wrestling with a very difficult machine that would light a special during multi-ball play: you tripped this by running down the left-hand out-hole; then a kicker would fling the ball back into play, awarding a de facto extra ball in the process. The problem was that when the ball was returned, it had a tendency to leap out of its track straight up into the glass, and where it landed, usually, was back in the now deactivated out-slot. I worked on that thing for at least four hours, trying to turn 1,000,000. I missed the evening meal with my parents and my father's cousins, and faced summary execution afterwards; I rather thought it was worth it, having scrawled "1,766,500--8--25--78--APH" in black marker on the side of the score panel.

But this time, Soho had been gutted and left for dead. The City of Westminster had decided to crack down on some of the more saucy entertainments offered by the denizens of Soho, and in doing so, had neatly removed much of the money that the district took in as well. I found myself at something of a loss to decide on which side of the issue the path of political correctness lay; but what I can say is that the pinball distributors of the city had decided to take their business to Bognor Regis, or someplace equally remote and wholesome, and the bright green machine with the splintering slot kicker had left, as well as had all the businesses on the little street where I had found it.

Cities change, of course, and standing to one side weeping about it does little good. There were certainly more diverting places to visit in London, and neighborhoods where things were going better. Up on Tottenham Court Road, a few blocks from our hotel, call girls were still doing a brisk business, stepping in and out of minicabs every ten seconds, and giving the area the look of Victoria Station on a bank holiday. Every phone booth in the area was festooned with stickers advertising services that ranged up and down the scale of human behavior. I remember wondering who prints all the damn things.

Anyway, just a block from the hotel, I found an engagingly dank little hole full of light and noise, where I managed to while away a few happy hours. Video games have proliferated in London as much as they have anywhere else in the world (a friend wrote from Senegal a few months ago, and said that he had played Galaxians much of the night before). I ended up dropping quite a piece of change into a Japanese flight simulator, which set one the supposedly unremarkable task of bringing in a 747 for a safe landing. This is not, whatever you may think, an easy thing to do. I pancaked the thing quite a few times, spreading torn steel and scorched flesh all over the runways at Hong Kong, Sydney, Paris and Los Angeles, leading the machine to exhort me to "get a grip on myself." Cheeky thing, I thought, and not at all the sort of pastime one ought to be engaged in a week before taking a transatlantic flight.

A more pleasant discovery was a garish purple and yellow pinball machine, which proclaimed "CASBAH" in 10-inch red letters. The backglass featured a proper sort of North African scene, complete with fezes and ceiling fans, and contained a bell which rang loud enough to announce the end of a boxing match, whenever it paid off an extra ball. There was a lovely series of slides and spinners to be shot through, and only a few problems, like a very sick bumper solenoid, which would suffer the impact of the speeding ball, deflect it weakly into space, and then begin kicking and buzzing like a galvanized frog's leg. But the best thing about it was the Tilt switch, which was either non-existent, or had been set to be activated only by a V-1 detonating in the next room.

I shamelessly hammered this poor machine into submission, first by transmitting the heaviest english I could into the curved descent of the ball, and later, when my blood was up, by shivering and cross-checking it across the floor, to keep that silver ball in play. At first, the attendant set to watch the place gave me some dirty looks and seemed nearly ready to leave her little cage to chastise me. But when it became clear that the higher functions of the machine were entirely insensate, and that I Knew What I Was Doing, she subsided back into a grim trance. She had that "I'll write a book someday" kind of look on her face, as though she regarded her presence there as one of the more egregious strokes of idiocy that the employment agency had yet inflicted on her. For her sake, I hope she isn't still there, but I'd gladly go back; I nearly achieved pinball nirvana, playing for three and a half hours on 80p.

Eventually, we did make our way further south to Brighton. We had a good time at Worldcon, despite the best efforts of the Metropole hotel staff, the questionable competence of the Brighton tourist authority, food very greasy here, not at all like they do at home, and on and on, ad nauseum. If you were there, you're only reading this bit because you might see your name, and if you weren't, you must be sick to death by now of reading about what a good time the more affluent fans had there, so why bother? Yes, it's all true; Greg Pickersgill publicly asked Jeanne Gomoll to flog him with a rubber hose; Rob Holdstock keeps a couple of pebbles in his pocket at all times, just in case; Dave Langford did spill his beer on Richard Harris through some ghastly cross-discipline miscalculation, and the crowd callously hailed this as fandom's revenge for Orca. All true, every word of it. The next time they have one, you ought to go.

But maybe not to Brighton. To me, the city seems unable to decide just what it wants to do, either descend into genteel poverty and accelerating disrepair, or tear everything down and start over again. I suppose there are a lot of parallels between Brighton and, say, Atlantic City; alas, there seems little chance that large casinos will spring up overnight alongside the beach at Brighton.

Yet, without question, Brighton still remains about the closest thing to Mecca for

the serious arcade aficionado. Only one of the major piers is still in use, but this alone must have over a thousand games in operation. Pinball Wizards can still make the trip from Soho down to Brighton with some hope of satisfaction, although the best slots have been claimed by Nintendo, Atari and various gambling machines.

Before I proceed, I ought to mention the most reprehensible of the latter category of amusements. These are what are referred to as "penny-falls," a kind of hybrid pachinko/claw machine/shell game that appeals to the weak-minded and under-skilled pier goer, and conceals within its simple principle a rapacious disregard for the primary function of amusement machines: that is, to entertain.

The penny-fall is a large table-bodied device, constructed with offset levels upon which a slowly-tarnishing array of change and other trinkets are displayed. A heavy bar sweeps back and forth against this heap of coins, almost, but not quite, pushing the mass into the open tray below. Above the whole assembly are two sheets of lucite, pressed together and studded with brads that serve to deflect the flight of any inserted coin. The theory is that the coin can be made to fall in front of the bar while it is at its furthest point from the main heap, and thus displace a wad of coins into the tray below.

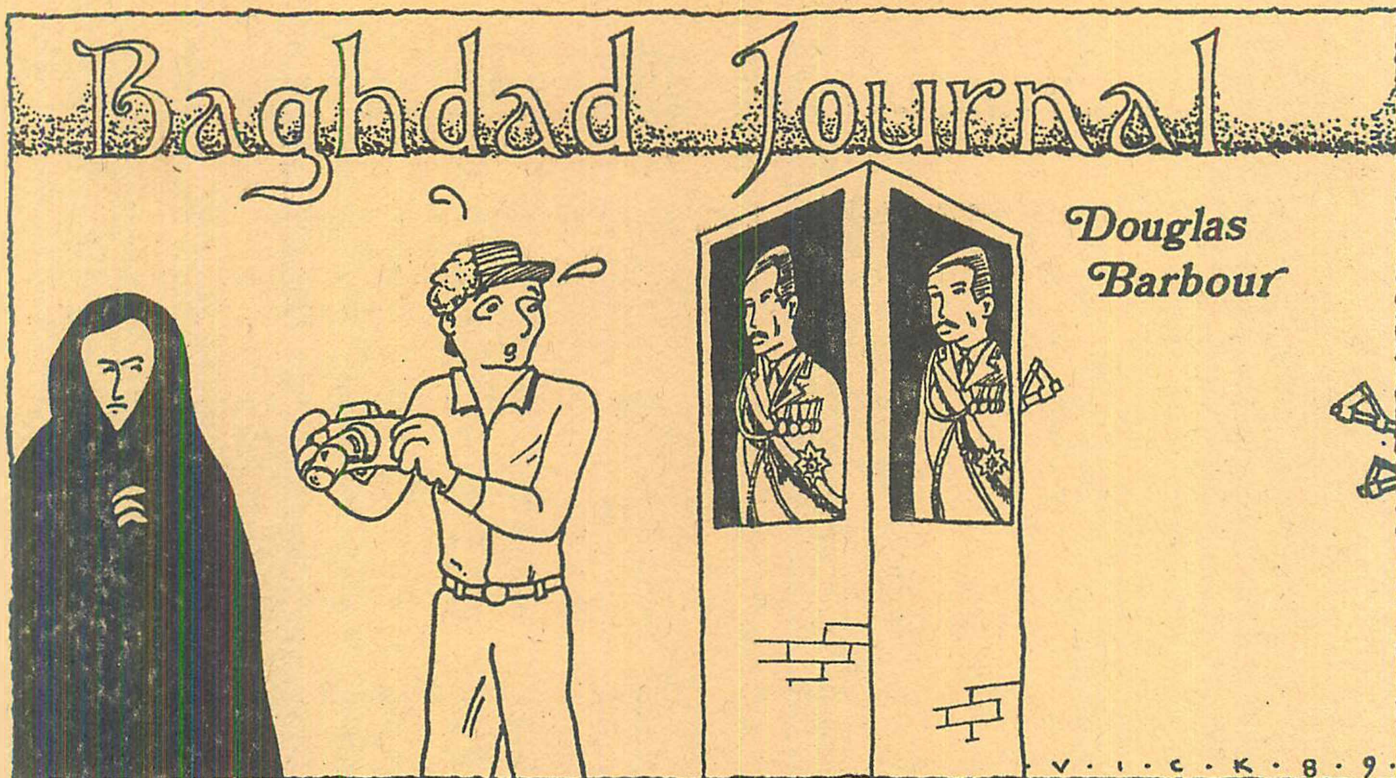
Of course, in practice, this seldom happens. The coin falls with a forlorn thud to the heap of coins, untouched by the bar, unlikely to ever be dislodged again, barring sudden and violent glaciation of southern Britain. Money dropped in this machine is usually lost. But--and this is the point--there isn't any bloody point to it! Even if you get the thing to pay off, what are you going to do with a pocket full of fiddling bits of small change except drop them back into the machine? And the whole mess is about as entertaining as watching cats shed. Really the nadir of Imperial culture.

For myself, I was content to find a really fast, hot pinball machine, a Williams I had never seen in the states, even though it was constructed less than 200 miles away from home.

It had a serious problem with sub-playfield magnetism, strong enough to snatch a slowly rolling pinball and hold it rock solid to the spot where the glitch was centered, movable only by force that would trip the sensitive tilt plumb-switch, thus obviating the need for the ball. I had to keep the ball really flying, therefore, and couldn't be too cute about catching the ball on either flipper, or trying to make slow passes from side to side. There were a hundred little pop-up targets to deal with, and an all-important bonus multiplier that disappeared with each lost ball.

A fast track, to be sure, but I made it play; it turned two million on the fourth ball of my fifth game, and I just walked away and left it with one ball and three credits to go. Let 'em eat cake, I thought, and went back to the Metropole bar for more beer and antipathy. Later that evening, I spied Dave Wingrove's Hugo award sitting untended on a table in the bar, and wondered: what sort of ransom does that kind of thing command these days? Enough to buy your own Goldstrike game? Alas, I sat too long in my reverie, and Leroy Kettle came up and stole the thing before I could stop him. As always, the key to the game is concentration; and perhaps Roy now has a vintage 8-Ball blinking away in his drawing room.

If so, Roy, remember: this is an ugly game we're playing here. Even a good player is always just a breath away from Drain City, and no game goes on forever. A fine metaphor for life, don't you think? All of us are but seconds away from the outhole of nothingness, and it helps to have extra balls if you want your special lit.



I'm still not quite sure how it happened, but last year I found myself on a trip to Baghdad to attend the Eighth Annual Mirdad Poetry Festival. It was a most "interesting" trip (especially in terms of the famous Chinese proverb). The Iraqi government has been flying poets in from around the world for eight years to attend this Festival of Peace and Poetry. Most of the poets and scholars attending were from other Arab countries, South America & Africa, with a smattering from Europe, both East & West, plus the small number from North America.

How did I get invited? As far as I can tell, it was because my last book of poetry was reviewed (positively) by a (marvelously perceptive) critic who had studied for her PhD at Dalhousie University at the same time as Dr. Muhsin el Musawi, the organizer of the festival, did. The scholar under whom they both studied must like to keep up with his ex-students' publications, & having seen the review, had given my name to the good Dr. when he was seeking some new people from Canada for the Festival. By such indirections etc. On the other hand, why did I go? As Sharon kept telling me, there was a war on over there, did I want to get myself killed? Still, presented with the invitation, what can only be called the temptation, & with Sharon calling me a silly fool but letting me do it, I accepted. As usual on my trips, I kept a pretty thorough journal, far too long (& boring) to present whole here. So what follows is a précis, trying to leave in the good parts.

It all began wonderfully, as far as I was concerned. Because Iraq was paying for the trip, & had booked me full tourist class, I was able to arrange to stop off in Paris for two days on my way to Frankfurt. Thus I could renew my love affair with the Braques & Matisses in the Pompidou & take a day to investigate the new 19th century gallery, Le Musée d'Orsay, which is something else, to be sure: architectural hypertrophy in the post-modernist mode, but containing some of the best (& worst) of late 19th & early 20th century art. I won't bore you with all my gallery gazing, but I saw a lot, & I enjoyed it all, in various ways. (I do, however, feel dutybound to inform everyone of one of the world's great examples of truly awful painting, on display in the d'Orsay: a huge allegorical/realistic work from the turn of the century, which probably sold then for an immense amount compared to

what Cezanne and the others could command at the time. Titled "L'École de Platon," it shows Plato, looking like a 19th century Jesus, sitting--clothed (now this is important)--in a lotus position in the centre & obviously lecturing. Lecturing whom, you ask? Well, I'm glad you did. Life size, & I mean absolutely gorgeous, My dears, scattered around the 8 by 12 foot canvas a number of stunning young men, naked, svelte, and I mean, *Beautiful*, loll, rest, & lean on one another, in various poses, all of which display their very best sides. I wasn't sure about some of them, very curvaceous & cute, you know, but yes they all had cocks, of course they were young men, & serious too, dont you know, after all they were students of the great philosopher, so one should pay no attention to the way they lean into one another, or their lovely curly hair tossed down their backs; their faces are absolutely earnest & intent upon philosophy as they listen to the great man speak. Appalling as it was this wet dream of a painting has stuck with me. Such grandeur in bad taste can not easily be forgotten.) The other nice thing about Paris was that I arrived during the three-day celebration of Beaujolais Nouveaux, & so drank both well & cheaply while eating nice meals in small bistros just off the main drag. Despite the dull skies & cold rain, this was Paris as she is so often painted; I loved it.

I flew into Frankfurt where various other guests of Iraq were gathering at the Air Iraqi counter. I met some American poets & scholars, & discovered that many of the expected Canadians had had to drop out, so there were only a couple of us. Iraq is a country at war, & it shows. We walked out onto the tarmac & handpicked our luggage: any not chosen was left behind--bombs, you know. I had my camera in my carry-on, & the soldiers manning the 747's door, coolly & mostly by gestures, took it out, looked at it from all angles & then sent me back out on the steps & took a photo of me--just to make sure it wasn't a weapon! The 747 had seen better days, for Air Iraqi is the only airline flying into Baghdad these days & its planes are continually flying workers from other Arab nations in to replace the Iraqi youth who are being sent to the front. A nation at war is a nation in a permanent state of paranoia, as I soon came to know.

The weather in Baghdad was warm & sunny & most of us were put up in a very American hotel (which led to a mistake on my part for which my stomach paid dearly), with a name I couldn't help but love: The *Ishtar* Sheraton (but though I am a devotee of the goddess, I never heard her speak: there). The good weather meant we could walk around the city a lot, seeing a strange mix of new Western & ancient Eastern architecture, but even the newest office buildings showed a respect for the environmental conditions: necessary shutters to keep out the sun, & the half-round windows of the mosque. Always, we were walking beside or across *the Tigris River*. I never quite got over the thrill of that.

Among the Americans was Omar Pound, Ezra's son, & a noted translator of early Arabian & Persian poetry. I got to meet him at the first morning of lectures, & he's a really interesting fellow. It must be hard to have to live in a shadow as large as his father's, but he has become a student and translator of merit, and his own poetry is intriguing in its lyric play. At first I just said hello, how are you, but as the week progressed, I got to talk to him about poetry & especially about the traditional poetry of Arabia & Persia, & learned a lot. In fact, although some friends in Canada had told me that I should try to get to know some of the Iraqis, I ended up hanging out with Philip Hackett (he organizes poetry readings at the Press Club in San Francisco & is one of the greatest examples of a poetic Barnum I have ever seen, with a very perverse sense of humour to boot), Pablo Medina (born in Cuba, a teacher & poet in New Jersey) & Gary Holthaus, a poet from Alaska, partly because we were all in the same hotel.

Since all our meals were to be taken in the hotel, we pretty well had to get involved with those who were there, which included poets & scholars from all over, but many from the Arab world knew each other & appeared to want to catch up on old friendships rather than spend the effort & time meeting new people. Which is not to say that anything other than my own shyness in these matters stayed me from getting to know some of them. We (the 3 Americans & I) did get to meet & talk with some of the local people, but there were all kinds of intriguing little censorship games going in every direction & besides as most of us were new we didnt have any local contacts yet. Over the week I did talk to some people from Iraq & other Arab nations but mostly it was local newspeople (this poetry conference was front page news & readings were televised every evening!) &, in my case, a professor of English at Baghdad University, who invited me to come & give a lecture on Canadian Literature. I also met some European students of Arabic, a fine scholar from Poland & some East & West Germans, who often were able to give me some sense of the poetry I occasionally got to hear in the huge tv studio.

The food was ok at the hotel, & more or less middle-eastern, although the Polish scholar told me it was not really authentic. Certainly, the meal Dr el Musawi took the Americans & Canadians to at a local restaurant was far more varied & 'hot.' Notwithstanding which, midway through the week I was took by what Pablo called Nebuchadnezzar's Revenge, & it was one of the worst nights of my life. I finally got the hotel doctor & he gave me some pills. I ate very little interesting after that, mostly yogurt & rice, plus drinking lots of Sprite. My mistake, partly because that American-like hotel fooled me, was to have eaten salad stuff, which is fertilized in the old-fashioned way & simply not washed as thoroughly as would make it safe for those, like me, not acclimatized to it (as an American doctor who had spent most of his life in the Far & Middle East told me on Sunday at the US Consulate). But I was only the first to fall, & by the end of the week a number of the Americans had come down with it, too.

We had all been told we would get to read our poems & we sought translators to read them in Arabic for us, but in the end only Gary & Omar (who had been there the previous year) got to read. Actually, one cant blame the organizers too much for this: the conference brought together about 2,000 people from around the world, many of whom called themselves poets, most of whom were from the Arab world. When we asked about our readings, those in charge always said they were taking care of the problem, & I have no doubt their intentions were of the best. Who can blame them if they didnt always make the transition from intention to action? In the end, it was mostly the various Arab & other third-world poets who read, a poetry which was, even to ears which couldn't understand it, mostly hortatory & didactic, often slavishly pandering to the military leadership of Iraq.

Iraq is, in fact, a perfect example of a dictatorship in which the cult of personality reigns supreme. Ah yes. Saddam Hussein is everywhere to be seen. Photos or paintings of him hang over the entrances to every shop & store, to almost every building; at traffic circles and plazas huge monuments with paintings of him in various poses of power & glory rise above the careening traffic. I guess the very best of these was the photo in the bunker under the monument to the Unknown Soldier, which is in fact a monument to war & to what victories the Iraqis have had over their enemies, including the Israelis (victories over the Israelis? well, some soldiers managed to capture a few weapons once). The 'building' itself is a grandiose monument to grandiosity, which looks as if it must have been designed by Hitler's architect, but such nasty comparisons would never occur to a fair-minded guest of

the Iraqi government, & certainly didnt to me. But the photo, yes the photo: a sad & grieving Hussein in civilian clothes stands bowing his head & holding a Koran to his forehead, while behind him a little girl all in white weeps, & before him, in the photo, to which his own head bows, is a photograph of Saddam Hussein in full dress uniform: by Allah a perfect postmodern self-referential photograph! But there wasnt enough light for me to take my own photo of it & I will always regret that.

We were taken to the Tomb after the opening ceremonies, held in a magnificent hall which had been built for an Arab League meeting which had not taken place due to the start of the Iraq/Iran war. They began with an older poet reading a long series of poems, on a single rhyme, based on a famous early poet's work. According to my Polish scholar-acquaintance, the best possible title for it would be "The Defense of Baghdad." The Minister of Information and Culture (read: "propaganda") then gave a stirring speech in which he made it clear that poets too had their place in the war against the evil enemy in Iran (may I say here that I find the kind of fundamentalist Shiite Muslim faith Iran wishes to export (or any kind of fundamentalist faith) very frightening indeed, & therefore was willing to concede a lot to Iraq, but basically I ended up rather frightened of what any military dictatorship can mean to the ordinary people of a country). An interesting note about the cult of personality: above & beyond the pictures everywhere, it turned out that every time someone mentioned Hussein's name the response from the audience was rapturous applause. It was of course both spontaneous & unforced. The minister named him a lot, because He of course had invited us to this great festival of peace & poetry in Baghdad the City of (pick one) Peace, Poetry, Culture, History, etc. The minister was dressed in army fatigues, as were all his fellow officers. Because of his presence at the Opening Ceremonies, there were lots of army types around to check us going in: thus do I also have a photo of my feet & the marble floor of the foyer. The dangers of photography; & I hadnt had the worst lesson about that yet.

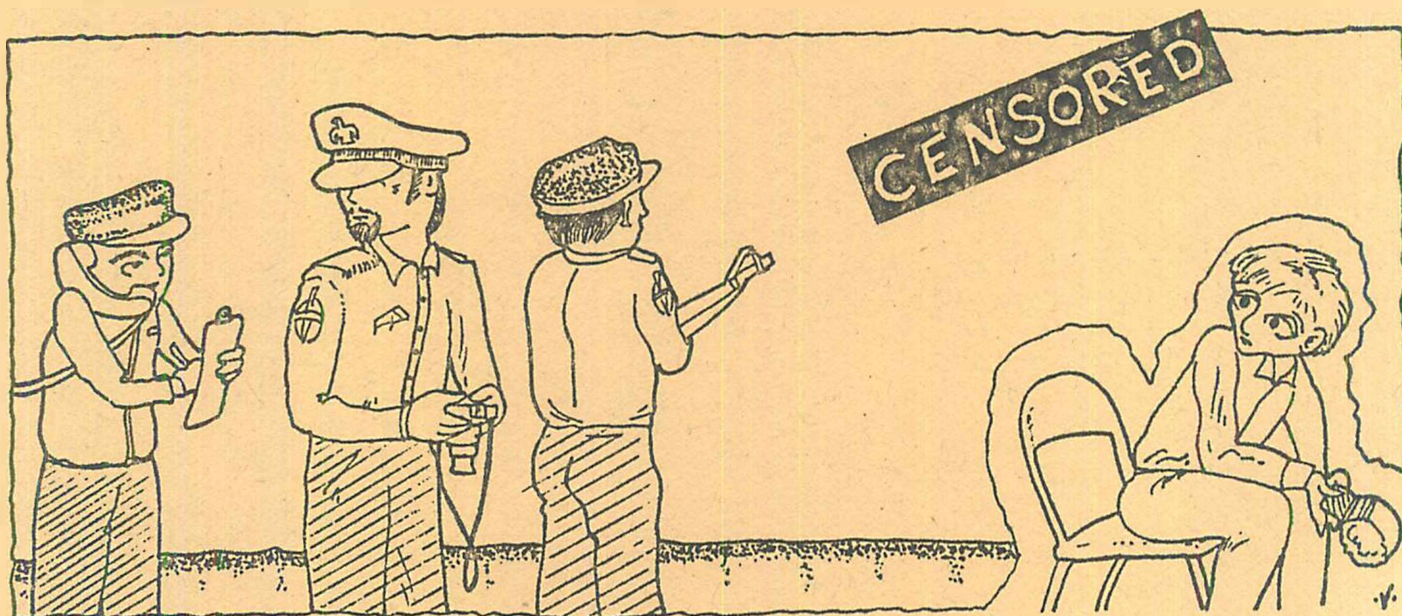
One of the big events was the day trip to Babylon, & despite it being only one day after my awful night, I was not going to miss it. Everything about it was interesting. We went by bus, which meant a goodly number of buses, given the conference's size. We also had the Minister of Information and Culture with us, which meant that we had a full military escort. The army/police cars, their lights flashing, their sirens screaming, got us through the many roadblocks along the way with barely a pause: an illuminating example of just what the exercise of power can be in such a state (another illuminating example occurred when Dr el Musawi had the Canadians & Americans to lunch at the central hotel: the dining room was full of large tables where various people sat to eat, & all had at least a few people at them; Musawi spoke quietly to a waiter & one table was suddenly emptied for us (one could easily get to enjoy such power--that is surely one of its greatest dangers)). On the way to Babylon we passed a lot of army convoys, the young men waving & smiling at us; & after Gary pointed out some gun-emplacements in the distance we started seeing them everywhere. There were palms & eucalyptus, & what could only be Cedars of Lebanon. Drivers in Iraq love to honk; & our driver constantly used his horn to warn he was passing, to tell others to stay in their lanes, & sometimes, I think, just to say hello. Pablo, in response to my remark that there could be semiotic studies of horn-blowing, told me that in Mexico City drivers can swear on their horns, even using them to address craven insults to another driver's mother. Theyd be right at home in Baghdad.

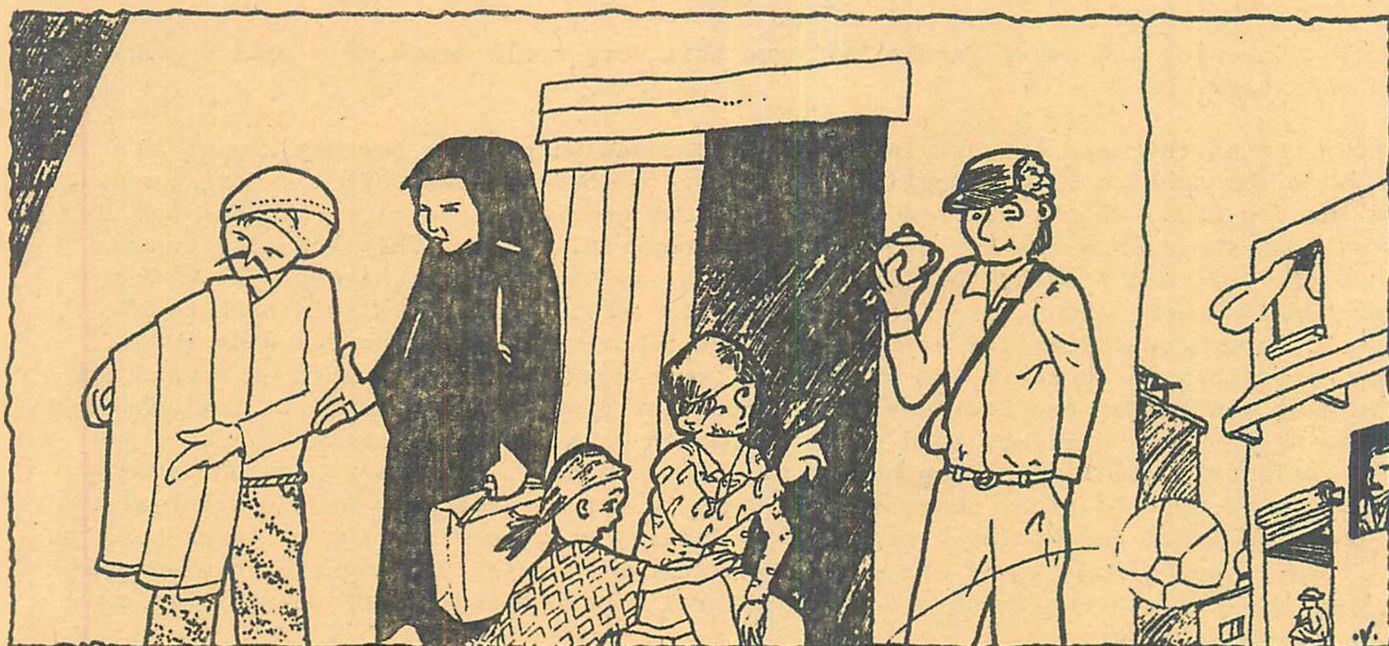
When we finally got to Babylon, a huge procession of Faisi, peasant men, boys & girls, awaited us, holding huge banners welcoming the poets of the Mirbad Festival to Babylon, & applauding us all. The old men had fascinating faces, giving the

occasional quizzical smile to one another. The boys were in blue camouflage uniforms, the girls in white dresses with flowers in their hair. They all preceded us into the restored amphitheatre, then as we came in they climbed to the top & out. Finally, the minister entered with his entourage, all in heavy green fatigues, & went to sit in the sun for the readings which would follow. The sun beat down, the poets yelled & screamed, & finally a box lunch was served & we were free to explore the ruins.

Walking to the famous replica of the original gates (which are still in a German museum), we stepped into a small museum & saw in the foyer, a huge painting of Han-nurabi towering over the ancient city's walls &, facing him, towering over present-day Iraq, guess who? Why, that great law-giver & leader of today: Hussein. Like the other paintings, it was overblown, sentimental in its formal qualities (in much the same manner as "L'École de Platon"), and monumental in the worst sense. Inside, along with the reproductions of medieval visions of The Tower of Babel, we found some cases full of tiny ancient statues, of animals & goddesses. These latter were as close as I got to any touch of the Goddess that day. We then trudged on to the actual digs themselves. A mixed situation: workers have dug & exposed original walls of the city, covered with marvelous carvings of animals. These are restored & have a dignity & grace that simply cannot be denied. But the workers are also building up the city anew, with fresh bricks & new (& precisely copied) carvings: this will be both impressive when finished & no more "authentic" than Disneyland. As well, because the government believes a mere historical site won't attract many tourists, it has set up a gambling casino just outside the blue gates (at least they had enough sense of shame or honour or whatever not to set it up inside). Although I was still weak from my illness, I walked the whole site, if very slowly, & there was a kind of ancient presence to it which I'm glad I had the chance to encounter.

During the trip back I took notice of the many women who still wore traditional garb. The next day, when a group of us visited the suk, we had ample opportunity to see how wide a range of dress there was. A mother in black robes walking along beside her teenage daughter in tight sweater & bluejeans; some men wearing robes over old suits, others in the latest business fashion or in t-shirts & jeans. You see, as one of our hosts told us, we are trying to haul ourselves from the fourteenth into





the twentieth century, & the late twentieth at that, in one generation. Not an easy thing to do, yet the signs of the effort are everywhere. And of course, they have to get it done before they run out of oil; & they know that. The suk was a wondrous place & I wish I had my photographs of it. All these little streets full of craftsmen & women, & of shops of all kinds. Old & young men hammering metal, even making metal washtubs. Gold & silver jewelry far too ornate for my western taste, but incredibly rich. Carts with freshly caught carp from the river, gleaming silver in the sun, men throwing raw red spareribs from a truck onto the wooden stalls of a butcher, the vast array of colours & intoxicating smells of the many different spices in each spice merchant's window. We were sometimes on the open streets, then suddenly walking crooked pathways through huge warehouse-like buildings: it was all just the suk: the marketplace as it has been since time immemorial.

On the final day, I gave the first lecture ever on Canadian Literature at the University of Baghdad & read a few of my poems to the rather large audience the staff rounded up on what seemed like a moment's notice (here a space for the necessary long lecture on differing forms of time & politeness in the Middle-East--which luckily for you I must refuse to give) &, after, visiting my host's apartment, I had him drop me off at the central hotel across from the tv studio where I thought I'd meet the others. But it was well after one, & they'd been taken back to our hotel for lunch & no one was around. So I decided to walk back to the Ishtar Sheraton, taking some photos from one of the bridges. Apparently I pointed my camera in the wrong direction, for as I walked on I was suddenly grabbed by three young soldiers, submachine-guns in their hands, none of whom could speak English & I certainly at a loss for any Iraqi. I could hear the tone of their demands all too clearly, however, as they hauled me back across the bridge, & down beneath to a guardhouse. Like all the other Mirbad participants, I had a card with my name & the name of the conference written on it in Arabic, but during the lecture or afterward the pin had come loose & it was gone; thus though I kept saying "Mirbad" to them, I could not prove anything to them. They took away my camera & my passport & sat me down in the sun, standing about with their semi-automatics in their hands laughing & joking. They did find an Iraqi man with a baby in his arms who spoke a little English, & he told me there was a problem with the film but that everything would be all right eventually. Then he went away. The soldiers let me move my chair into the shade, & we waited while their report of me went very slowly through whatever series of higher-ups it had to. I sat & tried to act calm & even be calm: they would eventually take the film, I supposed, & let me go. Wouldn't they? All I can say is: I am no hero, &

I did not enjoy the least little bit even this very small taste of a police state in operation.

After one of the most frightening hours this Canadian prairie boy has known, an officer who spoke a little English came & gave me back my passport & camera & asked me for the film, which, you can guess, I handed over with alacrity, despite the loss of all my shots from the day before of the wonderful bazaar. They actually treated me very well, considering, but it was still scary, &, both frightened & starving (I had missed lunch, eaten very little breakfast, etc.), I walked slowly back to the hotel, once more across the bridge, not even glancing back to the far side (what I had apparently included in the shot I had taken down the river & sort of toward the far bank was either the Presidential compound or a major army base; the English-speaking officer, smiling, told me as he handed back my empty camera & pointed to the definitely off-limits area behind me, "Fort Knock"). And then I couldn't even find anyone to tell right away, so I went up to the mezzanine to have a drink where I found an Iraqi now living & teaching in Calgary who, upon hearing my tale, told me that had I been from one of the other Arab states I probably wouldn't have been seen again, at least for a few days & until after I'd been tortured. Of course that made me feel much better.

The other poets were quite appalled when I finally found & told them, but they also thought it gave me quite the story to tell back home. Or even that evening, over a deliciously North American supper at the US Consul's home, where we--Gary, Omar, Philip & I (Pablo was too sick to come)--then gave a poetry reading for invited guests, most of whom I'm willing to bet had never heard one before. It went off very well, & everyone seemed to have a good time, asking interesting questions afterward & thanking us all for providing them with such an intriguing night out. The next morning we had to get up at about 0400 to catch a plane at 0830, & so we had one more experience of the military control in a state at war. We were frisked several times on our way through the nearly empty terminal to our flight, &--what pissed me off more than anything else--the soldiers took away all the little batteries for my Walkman! without which I practically die when I'm travelling. They took the others' too, but I couldn't figure out why, since we were now leaving the country. None of the various portraits of Hussein scattered about the terminal could give me an answer.

A long flight to Frankfurt, & an even longer flight to Minneapolis, followed by a shorter one to Edmonton, followed. I was so tired I hardly noticed. Images of the past week floated through my consciousness: older men, peasants we passed on the way to Babylon, holding over their shoulders the corners of large sheets of cloth filled with branches & brush, most likely collected in long weary walks--straight out of medieval woodcuts of "the woodman"; the occasional woman carrying some huge parcel balanced on her head; the man, wearing traditional headgear, bearing a huge tray of buns down the streets of the bazaar, sidestepping people with perfect equanimity so that the tray never hit any heads though it slid swiftly over many shoulders; the men with their carts with one small tire in the centre, a pair of ancient scales, & any number of possible goods--oranges, fish, meat, rutabagas, eggplants--shoving them down the narrow streets & stopping suddenly to make a sale at any point, no matter what the traffic on either side of them; what look like hotdog vendors, with their wheeled salescarts, with hotplates, etc., selling deep-fried rutabagas; the people serving tea or goatsmilk, with their three glasses in a halter to be used over & over again--definitely not sanitary as we understand the term, but no one in the market seemed to mind. These are the images of a tourist, an outsider who could never really get "in." I know that, & only hope my inscription of them doesn't betray too profound a cultural gap. I reveled in them all. When I was making journal notes some evenings, on towards five, the haunting & peremptory cries to worship rang out from the mosque across the traffic circle from the hotel, over loudspeakers now, to

(continued on page 45)

CROSSCURRENTS

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Sometimes the odd time-frame within which fanzine fans work can really mess your mind. In the last nine months I've done almost no fanac while Doris and I were working through the details of separating. During that time more than a hundred fanzines have accumulated and sat on the floor waiting for me to have the time and inclination to first read them and then respond. And they've been making me feel more or less guilty for the amount of time I've delayed, depending on the fanzine and the faneds. When I unearthed Mainstream 12 this afternoon I suffered a near fatal attack of fannish guilt. "Good grief," I thought, "it must have been years since I wrote to Jerry & Suzle and they've kept me on the mailing list all this time, just because of the old days and Pittsburgh fandom and Torcon and of that fannishly ephemeral memorabilia." And I was right: it has been years since I loosed your fanzine. I was also wrong; while I've been sitting here amidst my crumbling personal life suffering from angst over what you must have thought of my prolonged silence you haven't published anything and haven't even been aware I've been fannished. All that worrying for nothing! Hell, I've even got a loc in this issue (albeit one I don't remember writing) so there's a good chance I wouldn't have been cut from the mailing list even if I hadn't responded to #12. A really first class Bowers-like guilt trip totally wasted! What's the matter with you guys?

((First, we're really sorry to hear you were having such shakeups in your life. We hope things have smoothed out since you wrote this letter (a year ago). So to the matter with us: we've been slowing down. It just seems to take us longer and longer to decide to do an issue, to gather the material, to type it and mimeo it. We also find more other things to do, even in the fan publishing sphere. I published my DUFF report last fall, and a 39th Anniversary Issue of Cry in March (edited by the Busbys). If you send me \$6US for the DUFF report, or \$3US for Cry, I'll prove it to you). In all probability, the intervals between Mainstreams will continue to increase until the interval between #15 and #16, which will probably be infinity. jak))

A Langford (or Langofrd, as he's known in the Pacific Northwest) conreport is just as much fun when read the second time as when perused initially. David (or Daidv as true-fen in Seattle probably call him) has an unerring way of encapsulating the high- and low-lights of a convention (his sense of dialogue is so accurate that those of us familiar with his protagonists can almost hear them uttering the immortal lines Dave graces them with) in such a way as to make one wish one could hop a plane to Gatwick tonight and participate in British fannish revelry tomorrow. I strongly suspect that the actuality is nowhere near as amusing as David makes it seem which is all that keeps my Gold Card in my wallet and my body in Toronto.

It is good to know that in this world of less-than-pleasant events there are some good things that seem to go on forever. It's been a while since I crossed paths with Jon Singer but obviously he remains more or less unchanged and his column provides a continuity to a time when fandom seemed an easier, happier place to be. Long may Jon enjoy his floppy dicks, or whatever it is those computer types seem to enjoy so much....

((Jon has been translated bodily into one of the computer heavens: he lives in Sunnyvale, California and works for Apple Computers. jak))

I guess it's a matter of different strokes but I've always been puzzled as to why someone who worked exclusively on conventions would qualify as a Fan GoH. I know Tom Whitmore (marginally) and I like what I know, but to me the fact that Tom loves working ops at cons doesn't qualify him as a Fan GoH. A sample of where we diverge in attitudes would be his line, "If there were no science fiction conventions I think the fanzine world might well die..." This is so incredibly off-base that it really isn't even worth refuting but the mere fact that Tom knows so little about what I consider to be the essential part of fandom indicates that we simply exist on different planes. I appreciate what the Tom Whitmores of fandom do to enhance my enjoyment of interacting with fellow fans but as I find myself more and more cutting back on conventions (mortgages the size of the national debt of San Marino will do this to you) I realize that while I could survive very well without cons, fandom would lose its meaning for me without fanzines. It may be Canute-like to try to retain some sense of the significance of the fanzine and the place of the fannish fan in fandom but I'm willing to appear foolish and make that claim. Fanzine fandom may have become a relatively small backwater of modern-day fandom but I like to think it remains one of the most active, creative and interesting of the bayous.

((I don't intend to defend Tom's mistaken notions about the fanzine world, but I do intend to defend his knowledge of fanzines (pretty large, as I've discovered in conversation) and his claim to Guesthood (as the con was a Westercon, dedicated to honoring West Coast people who've made their mark on fandom-in-general out here, and as Tom has done that not only by working on cons, but also by influencing people with his wit and his sharp good sense, it seems quite firm enough). jak)))

Benford's thoughts/descriptions of his brush with death are as powerful a piece of fanzine writing as you're likely to see. I've been lucky: in thirty-one years in Canada I've never been hospitalised, never been seriously ill. I've known death (when my mother died) but I've never come even close to knowing the sense of mortality that Greg describes. This is fanzine writing at its best and how good it is to know Greg will be around for a long time to come to raise the standards of fanzine writing with his contributions.

The quotation from Robertson Davies struck a very resonant chord with me. When I renegotiated the mortgage on this house to buy Doris's half I told myself it would mean having to cut back on some of the more expensive books I've been buying of late. And to be honest when the Dark Harvest flyer announcing the collection of Charles Beaumont short stories, numbered and boxed and signed by the likes of Bloch, Bradbury, Matheson and Ellison et al, arrived I didn't immediately order. But after a week or so of agonising over it I finally succumbed and sent off my check: I can always extend the mortgage another five years if necessary. The way I look at it is that owning these books provides me with a vast amount of pleasure; and when I die, whoever gets my estate will be provided with a vast amount of money. So why not go for it?

I find it a tad difficult to reconcile Joseph's harshly negative criticisms of fanzine lettercols with the enormous stream of inflated superficial locs he was wont to turn out for so many years. He may well have a valid point to make but he's in large part responsible for creating the very situation he now finds so appalling. Typically fannish, eh wot?

((But I don't think Joseph forced anybody to publish those letters. Editors make these decisions. (And this issue we may decide to run a looong loccol. jak)))

You should know whose wallet was returned intact at Torcon so I'd never argue with you. All I recall is that it was Suzle who was sobbing when I brought her the news that "the" wallet had been returned intact so for all these years I'd assumed it was her billfold. Of such fallible memories is fanhistory made, I guess. (Hell, we can't all

be Sam Moskowitz!) (July 16, 1988)

((You're quite right, Mike, it was my wallet! I wrote this whole incident up in SpanInq ages ago, I recall, but I think it shows a certain something about fandom (at least fandom up to that time, and, I hope, up 'til now) so I'll remind you of what happened. One late afternoon at Torcon, I had just had a very upsetting phone conversation on one of the pay phones on the mezzanine of the Royal York (a close friend had gotten very angry with me out of context and I was both hurt and confused), so I was sitting on one of the dimly lit couches crying and trying not to be seen when you walked past me, stopped, turned back, and said, "It's okay, Suzle, they've found your wallet!" I looked at you in a somewhat snuffling, confused way because I hadn't lost my wallet and didn't know what you were talking about! As it turned out, I had been so rattled by my phone conversation that I'd walked away from the phone booth, leaving my wallet (which contained all my money for the con and our week-long trip afterward) at the booth. I told you all this, of course, as you escorted me to the hotel's office, but I'm not the least bit surprised that you don't remember, since you were in the middle of running a worldcon. I've always been grateful to you for taking the time to come with me. Anyway, as things turned out, my wallet had been turned in almost immediately and not one thing was missing from it, including about \$200 in cash (1973 \$\$)! I suppose that things like this happen every day, but it made me feel rather pleased with fandom as a whole right at that moment.

((As to Jerry's saying it was his wallet, I just don't know. I thought he was joking when I read it during proofreading, but he did think it was his wallet. Definitely another case of False Fannish Memory--when you think you were at a con you didn't attend or had an experience someone else actually had because you've heard the story so many times or whatever. There are fans who remember Jerry and Eli Cohen being at Baycon ('68 Worldcon)--they weren't, and a year or so ago, Jerry asked me if he'd been there. Maybe we should do a piece sometime on our readers' experiences with False Fannish Memory.... svt)))

Lucy Bartelt, Faculty Wife

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I liked Dave Langford's "Mexicon Jigsaw." I laughed a lot, and everything, but I wasn't there. Frankly, it sounded safer to stay away, what with everyone running around ringing plague bells and out of plumb from run-ins to Ted's room.

Everyone was so well behaved at Brighton. I didn't see Joseph Nicholas turned upside down even once. I was so bored that I went out to lunch with these obscure fans I'd never met before. I think one of them was called Willis, he was an older chap, from Ireland I think. The other claimed he was a fanartist of some sort. I think he said he liked to draw Atoms, or something like that. He even spelled his last name correctly, Thomson, which is the way it's supposed to be spelled. The other guy was a real degenerate named Chuch. The other two kept passing him notes. Probably telling him it wasn't polite to talk about goats to a young lady. They didn't need to do that, I do have a degree in Agriculture, after all. I told this Chuch guy a few real-life animal breeding stories and he quieted right down.

That lunch was the high point of my convention. Those fellows were really nice chaps, and funny, too. Why I bet they could get to be pretty well known if they ever decided to go into publishing fanzines.

I disagree with Joseph Nicholas. Your letter column is not too long. It doesn't even reach the end of the fanzine. You had to go and get married and move to you could have something to fill up the rest. I can't understand why he's complaining. You managed to include his letter, and you didn't even have to turn it upside down to fit it in. *sigh* Nobody seems to be inverting Joseph these days. Perhaps it's because he starts telling everybody how wonderful Maggie Thatcher is when you invert him. I like him better left side up, he makes much more sense that way. (February 3, 1988)

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Many thanks for Mainstream 12, which arrived in good shape (rectangular to be exact) the day before yesterday. Congratulations on the wedding, but you should have let me know. Now what am I going to do with all the money I saved these last 20 years for a wedding present? I have almost decided to donate it to the Federal Government for the construction of a national fannish monument in Seattle in commemoration of Corflu 1988, to balance the one in New York Harbour. I have in mind a figure rather like the Colossus of Rhodes, straddling Puget Sound, and representing Harry Warner offering aid and comfort to the distressed faneds of the world. Perhaps the N3F could run a competition for a suitably inspirational verse.

((But Harry's never been here! How about a heroic group of Seattle fans placing the final beer can on the Tower to the Moon? jak)))

Taral's cover was delightful.

Jerry's editorial was thought-provoking. My subconscious is now working overtime on this concept of tainted egoboo. Hmmm. I suppose there can be all kinds of it...compliments from people whose opinion you do not respect...praise for something you were not trying to do...praise so extravagant you just cannot believe it. (This last is very rare.)

Taral's reviews were conscientious, fair and interesting in themselves. Who could ask for anything more? His description of Patrick Nielsen Hayden's writing as usually "perky, analytical and outgoing" is perceptive, but when Patrick really gets going he can be far more impressive than that implies. Then he puts me in mind of an aircraft carrier cleaving the water towards some important objective, with jump jets taking off and landing every second, the whole scene illuminated by flares. I don't know anyone else capable of such coruscating prose.

((How about Teresa Nielsen Hayden? But I don't mean to pick a favorite between them; I just want to say that I miss them both, and fanzines are much poorer without them. jak)))

I read Tom Whitmore's piece with admiration and respect. Some fanzine fans have in the past I know tended to regard the convention organiser as a boring busybody, a sort of necessary weevil, and though I have myself always been grateful to people who put on cons, I never really understood them, so limited was my experience in this field. Until I met Nancy Atherton at Brighton and she explained the mythos of conrunning to me, much as Tom does here. I've come to think that Tom may be perfectly right that without conventions the fanzine world might die out. I had always tended to think the converse, since fanzines preceded conventions, but I see that the situation may well have changed.

Dick Ellington was evocative. I had almost forgotten the introduction to Starmaker, a book which I once admired so much that I'm afraid to read it again.

Greg Benford's piece gave me a feeling of delayed relief such as one might have on being awakened in the morning with the news that one had been sentenced to death last night and unexpectedly reprieved by dawn. It is extraordinarily well written, as one might expect. (February 6, 1988)

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While Jon Singer didn't mention this specifically, any animal with a pancreas can have diabetes. Many people find it rather unbelievable that both dogs and cats are so diagnosed and routinely treated (although quite a few are put to sleep when the owner understands that insulin is to become a constant part of their worlds)--and I know of one ferret so treated. And yes--they have been implanting normal Iselt cells into affected dogs and getting good results--the side benefit is that quite a few animals can be "treated"/cured using only one good pancreas. I wonder (since I am not certain about

human embryology and development) if fetal cells could be used in humans to cure diabetes? If so, I'm sure that will add even more fuel to the ethicists' arguments over fetal usage (don't get me wrong--I'm staying OUT of this argument/discussion).

It is also interesting to note that fetal mouse cells can be introduced into other species' fetuses (in the one case I know of--feline) and at maturation they will not reject mouse tissue implants. I'm not certain if cross species implants has much in the way of advantages going for it--but it is interesting. (February 20, 1988)

((And ironic, in this case. jak)))

Kim Huett Your comments re: discos after Dave Langford's piece made me start
PO. Box 649 with surprise as I had addressed this very topic in a letter to
Woden, ACT 2606 Dave not more than a few weeks ago. The inspiration for bringing up
AUSTRALIA this topic in that letter is quoted below:

"Researchers at the Aegean University in Ankara, Turkey, in 1984 reported that disco music causes homosexuality in mice and may have the same effect on humans. They report that 'high-level noise, such as that frequently found in discos, causes homosexuality in mice and deafness among pigs.'

"Oddly, they offer no explanation of why the mice were resistant to deafness or how the pigs managed to maintain their sexual identities."

Considering all the talk over the years in British fanzines about discos at conventions I thought Dave might be interested in investigating this phenomenon from the viewpoint of British fandom. Being deaf already he is quite safe from the potential dangers described above. With any luck we may see a preliminary report in the next Cloud Chamber. In the meantime, I thought you might like to be aware yourself since you mention the existence of local fannish discos.

The book, by the way, in which I found the above, is called The Drunken Goldfish and is by William Hartston, from Unwin Hyman in the U.K. (June 6, 1988)

David Palter Dick Ellington's article "Slouching Through Metaphysics" is
137 Howland Ave. another piece in the overall mosaic composing my picture of
Toronto, Ont. M5R 3B4 out-of-body experiences. This subject is inevitably of a
Canada certain special interest to me because of my previous association with Scientology. One of the most vital objectives of all Scientologists is the development of the ability to leave their bodies (and return) at will, and interestingly, most will sooner or later come at least to believe that they have gained this ability. The conclusion is inescapable that either the ability to leave one's body (or, as it is termed in Scn, to "exteriorize") is an authentic human capability, given the necessary mental exercise to bring it about, or alternatively, it is a form of delusion which can very readily be cultivated by those exercises. Just about anybody can at least develop some sensation of leaving their body, if they really work at it; whether they actually do so is another question.

In my own case I can report that under certain circumstances (not involving drugs) I can experience an odd sort of euphoric free-fall sensation, like being in orbit. Since my body is actually not in orbit at those times, I might conclude (and indeed, used to believe) that it was not my body, but rather a discorporeal, spiritual essence of me (or the real me, which can be conceived to be a ghost, or "thetan" in Scn parlance) which was in free-fall and hence, out of the body. This is not the most classical type of exteriorization perception, but it was the best I could come up with. (And I still do experience this on occasion, although I no longer perform Scientological exercises,

and no longer accept either the Scn brand of mysticism or any other brand, having become a hardened materialist.)

Obviously, if we accept that a human being can actually leave his/her body, and operate independently of it, this has enormous metaphysical implications, which would utterly alter the presently accepted view of reality. If we conclude that this is merely a sort of hallucination which people can induce in themselves, the implications are not as profound, although they are still of some significance.

Since many people (including the old bank robber interviewed by Dick Ellington) report that they can see things while outside their bodies--that is, the discorporeal presence (whatever it may be) can see independently, not using the body's eyes--this indicates a method to test the claim. If someone can travel spiritually to a location that his/her body has never visited, and see things that he/she could not otherwise have seen, and report on these things accurately, then voila! The phenomenon is real, and not hallucinatory. That is scientific proof.

In fact, many people claim to have produced exactly this sort of authentication of their exteriorization. However, no such claims have ever held up to close examination. As with all other mystical claims, the proof is simply not forthcoming. Hence, I favor the hypothesis that we are dealing with a species of hallucination, and in some cases, dishonesty. Mysticism is a salable product, and some are not above faking it. Others are sincere but deluded.

As delusions go, this one can be quite harmless, and indeed may even serve a useful purpose for some, such as prisoners, who, unable to physically escape, can console themselves with a spiritual escape. Out-of-body travels also constitute the cheapest way to tour foreign countries. (March 10, 1988)

Barnaby Rapoport I agree with Jerry's editorial on the need for Fanthologies. Of
P.O. Box 565 course, since that was written, we've had the Glycer-Mueller-Virzi
Storrs, CT 06268 Fanthology, and we can all see how much nicer it is than some
 stark ballot results. For me, it opened a window on fandom in a
way the fan Hugos don't and can't.

Any 1987 Fanthology would have to include Greg Benford's "Mozart on Morphine." It was a good idea to save this for last. Anything following it would have been cast in a trivial light.

When Greg starts his article not with the beginning of his appendix emergency, but with previous examples of what he's really talking about--how one is changed by an encounter with death--he lets the reader know that he intends to explore the basic meaning of his experience, and the rest of the article does not fail to follow through on this promise. It was full of good writing, as in how Greg unobtrusively recreates the subjective, interior experience instead of reconstructing the external events, or in individual flourishes, as when he describes the dead body in the last paragraph without stating what it is, producing waves of chilling, ambivalent feeling. The flurry of "poetic" adjectives at the end did try too hard to be "literary," but what he was saying was meaningful enough that even this wasn't damaging.

((Nice critique; have you thought of reviewing fanzines? jak)))

Taral's "Random Access Memory" was of the most interest to me, not for Taral's judgements of individual fanzines, but for the historical background and general observations, which I eagerly soaked up. I haven't seen any of the fanzines he discussed, but his judgements sounded reasonable. His transparent reluctance to hurt anyone's feel-

ings warred with his critical candor, but without either doing the other any bodily harm.

It seems like every loc I write praises a Taral cover, but I can't help it; he does a lot of them, and I like almost everything he does. Penelope was up there with his best. Its funny, because if I had heard about someone doing Japanimation-influenced animals, my reaction would have been yecch.

I recently started going to conventions, and I expected the experience to be like stepping inside a conreport. If I had read David Langford's manic "Mexicon Jigsaw" beforehand, I'd have been standing around wondering why it wasn't one funny moment after another flickering by at intervals of thirty seconds. Then again, watching people pad around in costume for the giant Piers Anthony role-playing game at Lunacon was a little like that.

I shuddered at his vision of Chris Priest trying to sell word processors. Authors do tend to become aggressive salesmen at these things, but in my innocence I had imagined that the ultimate horror was hardcovers.

Jon Singer's "The Technocrat of the Breakfast Table": I loved the report of plants with light-producing genes. Here's another possibility: glowing venus flytraps for eliminating nocturnal insects. Maybe they'll start combining other plant and animal genes. You could combine poison ivy and spider monkeys for a non-violent alternative to attack dogs. (August 7, 1988)

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Reading Mainstream 12 so long after it was published gave me the opportunity to snicker just a bit at Jon Singer and his rumors about the Mac. Yet it bothers me how many fans tend to identify with the Mac, seeming to see it as some sort of altar of differentness. They position themselves with the Mac due to the attempt of Apple to market the Mac as tool to strike a blow against the sameness of IBM clones, just as many fen see themselves as striking a blow against the sameness of mundania. For both they pay a heavy price, while failing to realize that in many cases it is not the tool that matters but how you use it.

I noticed several pieces in Mainstream that basically had some theme related to history in them; this coupled with the fact that I had just finished reading the 39th anniversary issue of Cry AND the realization that among my to-read books is All Our Yesterdays, by Harry Warner, Jr., not to mention that I have recently gone back to school majoring in History, leaves me with a question. That question being: are there any reasonably current fannish histories available? And if there are, are they very specific or are they broad enough to have general appeal? Or is this a project long overdue that someone needs to tackle? (April 1, 1989)

(((There's not much out there, and even less available. The Immortal Storm by Sam Moskowitz covers the 30s, mainly in the US, I think. You'll have to check libraries and collections for it. Harry Warner also wrote A Wealth of Fable, published by Joe D Siclari in mimeo. It covers the 50s with an emphasis on fanzines. Write Joe at 4599 N.W. 5th Ave., Boca Raton, FL 33431 for details (like if it's still in print). Rob Hansen is currently writing an exhaustive history of British fandom called Then: Volume 1 covered the 30s and 40s; Volume 2 covered the 50s. He's at 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB. These are all pretty broad. Damon Knight's The Futurians covers one club in the late 30s/early 40s, but it produced a lot of famous sf writers. Otherwise, fanhistory is thin upon the ground. Any other suggestions, folks? jak)))

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This will be a short and single comment, on Taral's review of Fuck the Tories 2--a fanzine which may be over two years old now (and will be even older if and when this letter ever appears) but whose contents will I hope live a little longer. Particularly one of the articles therein, which is completely omitted from Taral's summary and which I suspect had to be in order to allow him to make the point about the fanzine that he wanted to. I'm referring to Judith Hanna's "The Politics of Textile Conservation," praised by Jeanne Gomoll in Whimsey 5 as "a wonderful example of blending personal anecdote with feminist analysis...in which a funny, at-home conversation between Joseph Nicholas and Judith is exploited for both laughs and political insights." An article, in other words, which rather shoots down Taral's claim that the schtick "at times takes the place of genuinely interesting writing."

So perhaps Judith's article was a piece of genuinely interesting writing which wasn't submerged by the schtick, and indeed he did say after listing the items he thought illustrated his point that "the list of material doesn't end there." But I just find it very surprising that he can have so overlooked the article which actually leads off the issue, and which has been commented upon by several other people to boot. (February 7, 1988)

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Madison, WI 53703

Yes, Mainstream 12. A strong collection of material, well-presented, a fine example of the worthwhile genzine to put before as impressionable a tad as myself, a-heh. It's a very impressive line-up of writers you have here, with work that inspires a certain amount of envy...do you really need all this talent collected in one place? I think genzines this good are one of the reasons there aren't very many of them around anymore, in that one article of the calibre you have here would have sustained many a fanzine of fifteen years past. How can the average midwestern boy geek aspire to doing this kind of work today? The layers of connection and friendship that run through a fanzine as chock full o' nuts as Mainstream are sufficiently advanced as to be indistinguishable from magic for the typical undersocialized fan larvae (found under any flat rock outside comic stores, game shops and Dr. Who shows in temperate regions), who might find Mainstream's content and format compelling in the extreme, but balk at the idea of attempting to create something as impressive themselves. Yes, that's right...what we need now is more crud-zines, things that reach out and tap Jophan on the shoulder and make him say, "Gosh-wow! I could do that well with both hands broken!" And, alas, Mainstream will never be able to fill that most important niche. Just another great fanzine, I'm afraid.

But I digress.

The Langford piece had a very familiar flavor to it, but this seemed to be the most physically attractive way in which it has been presented thus far...something about Langford's writing seems well suited to mimeo which is pretty ironic. His ability to make the most bitter madness comical is astounding, as is the way in which he makes even Greg Pickersgill seem fairly harmless and eccentric. The latter's technique in auctioning is just as Langford reports it, and there were times during the TAFF auction at Brighton where Pickersgill was actually berating and heckling a group of Swedish and Norwegian fans that were bidding on materials he felt inferior. At that time, however, he was in especially fine voice, as he was working with Rob Hansen as well, who was even more lavish in his application of criticism, particularly to his own early works.

Langford himself does a bit of true sabre work here and there. I thought his story about catching Bill Gibson in a logical error dripped with glee, notwithstanding

his protestations to the contrary. The sight of him blundering around the hotel, cupping his ear to passers-by and looking for a place to lose the "Poncho of Shame," is something I'd like to have seen.

((You might get such a chance at Orycon, November 10-12, in Portland, Oregon. Dave is to be Special Guest (Michael Bishop will be Guest of Honor) and Hazel will be with him, bravely. Write Orycon 11, Box 5703, Portland, OR 97228. jak))

The only work I have any real area of disagreement with in this issue was Taral's fanzine review column. To my mind, this is rather the sort of criticism we don't need at the moment, more like a sustained tiger hunt than a review column. It seems the reviewer knows there is something in the underbrush, and he'll have the beaters flush it sooner or later, then put a few slugs in and hang it over the fireplace. Not sure what's out there, but It'll Have To Be Shot nonetheless. I have never understood, with the profusion of fanzines in the world, why people find it worth their time to waste so much ink on zines they don't like. What is gained by comparing Duprass to Church, anyway? Church is a fine fanzine without being set next to anything, one of the best efforts of the era. Comparing Duprass to it seems terribly unfair; I'm certain the editors had substantially different objectives in mind, and Taral makes no address to this at all. If one plans on judging things on an absolute scale, not a real good idea in the first place, the scale ought to be a little more clearly illustrated.

But I take a great deal of satisfaction in noting that you illustrated the article with Rotsler drawings.

Your lettercol is most impressive, despite the rather sour utilitarianism of Joseph Nicholas' letter with which you choose to lead off. I agree fully with you on your theory of egoboo; having too long a column of WAHFs and not enough letters printed sends a pointed message to your gullible correspondents.

In regard to the appeal of the Dead, perhaps some people will have gained more insight into this after '87, which was their biggest year so far. I mean, wow! A hit record! It must seem like something of a non-sequitur to them, after so long without one. I like them on the grounds that they really are fine musicians when they have it together...but the devotion shown them by the Deadheads has nothing really to do with the music. Like a lot of "fan" societies in our culture, it's more about identity and purpose than artistic appreciation. And as for thinking of fans as uncritical devotees, try this one out on a rainy afternoon in Philadelphia with the Phillies or Eagles losing badly...you'll see how "uncritical" mainstream fans can be.

Having been forced to drink a few too many bottles of various varieties of stout, all of which have a specific gravity in excess of molybdenum, I think Church Harris and I should form a society to protect lager from extinction in fandom. I mean, Guinness is good toasted, but as a drink I don't care much for it. I hope this attitude will not lead to my immediate ostracism.

((Maybe not immediate. How do you feel about bitter? jak))

Finally, "Suzlecol" filled me with nameless horror at the thought that we too must get packed up a scant six months from now...I should be packing books into boxes, instead of writing these letters. And as for eloping, well, if we hadn't, we might never have been able to face the whole proposition. I know the presence of some of my relatives could have driven me out the bathroom window and into the street below, a few hours before the actual event. So, double congratulations, both on your marriage, and on surviving the wedding process. (Feb. 23, 1988) (June 29, 1989)

((((Andrew wrote two different letters on the same issue, almost a year and a half apart, with practically no overlap. We cleverly selected from them and combined the pieces with no violence to their sense, or so I hope. His reference to moving is from the older letter. jak)))

Paul Skelton What a pleasant change to see someone discuss my File 770 piece
25 Bowland Close on the basis of what I wrote rather than on the basis of what
Offerton they assumed my motives must have been (especially as those ap-
Stockport proaches have been ludicrously wide of the mark). In essence I
Cheshire SK2 5NW agree with you about the problems...the key word in the original
U.K. title was "proposal." I fully expected merely to get some dis-
 cussion going (at which I was an abject failure) and to raise
the awareness in respect to fanthologies (at which I appear to have been successful).
In essence my points were that fanthologies were more important to fanzine fandom
than awards, and if we could only summon up the enthusiasm for one or the other, it
ought to be for fanthologies, and if we couldn't live without giving ourselves awards
we should make a fanthology the vehicle for that award so that, as Jerry put it, "the
object of praise could be presented along with the praise itself."

Anyway, it looks like I may have had some success at getting the right people think-
ing about fanthologies. Dennis Virzi has already produced a retrospective 1986 vol-
ume, basically breathing life into Mike Glycer's selections from his original File 770
article, and I understand that ConFederation has agreed to fund the production of a
fanthology for 1987 based on some form of consensus, though much more sensible than
my own original musings...and if this fails to come out then here is Jerry offering
an alternative. I'd like to see a Fanthology from Jerry irrespective of whether or
not the other one makes it. Which means we've got the ball rolling again, and so far
I've not had to do a thing.

((((Your summary of your original article is rather more succinct (well, that's what
makes it a summary, eh?) and compelling than the File 770 piece. Now I think I'm
much more in agreement with you...but not to the extent that I'm going to pub a
Fanthology 1987. My rash announcement was not in accord with the facts of my life:
I don't have the time, what with Serconia Press, other fannish publishing, an intense
and lively social life, etc. And I also don't have the inclination to go back through
all the fanzines of 1987 to find the material. Too bad Atlanta never published their
projected volume. (The notes I had in New Orleans? Passed them on to Virzi and
Mueller.) jak)))

This installment of "The Technocrat..." was quintessential Singer. When he was over
in this country last year he stayed with our good friend Gerald Lawrence, where Cas
and I had the good fortune to meet him. If we'd done nothing else last year other
than meet Jon I'd have to say I'd still have judged it a good year. What a hell of a
guy he is. I can still picture him now, in the kitchen, over his whetstone, sharpen-
ing everything in sight...the knives, the spoons, the cat.

Not Gerald's cat, I hasten to add. Bloody hell, I wouldn't want to destroy his cred-
ibility like that. This was a neighbour's cat that wandered in hoping to scrounge a
meal or somesuch. In fact it was lucky to get away with simply being sharpened. If
Gerald had seen it first it would have been in the oven, covered in fennel, at regulo
5, long before Jon could even have gotten his whetstone whetted. Gerald has never
eaten a cat, an omission which I'm sure causes him many a sleepless night.
(March 13, 1988)

((((My addition to the Singer legend: I gave him the whetstone. jak)))

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

I think I expressed some opinions on the proposed fanthology referendum in a loc to Mike Glycer or someone. In theory it's a fine idea but I can foresee various practical complications. Assume that fifty fanzines are published during the year that

someone might consider to have published something worthy of anthologizing, that each of those fanzines published an average of three issues during the year, and that there were five articles or columns or stories or whatever in the average issue substantial enough to be nominated as best of the year. There are 750 possibilities from which to choose. The result would probably be that even the best items would not get more than five or six votes from the referendum. So a few members of a local fan club or an apa could easily get together eight or ten votes for something inferior simply because a favorite son had written it or it publicized something involving their group, and the inferior item would win inclusion. Then there's the difficulty the average fan would probably have in remembering what is eligible. Unless most fans are systematic about filing away their fanzines and willing to leaf through the entire year's fanzine output, many voters would simply forget favorite items they read months ago or wouldn't know for sure if they had appeared in the year involved or in the previous year. The FAAN awards suffered from slim participation; would the fanthology produce a respectable number of voters? Anyone who undertakes to publish an annual fanthology subjects himself to enormous amounts of work, suffers nasty criticism from reviewers who don't like his choices, and probably loses a large amount of money; shouldn't he enjoy at least one privilege, that of choosing the material he likes best for inclusion? Maybe a reasonable compromise would be use of a jury to select material or at least to advise the publisher: jury members would be chosen to represent all the major nations publishing fanzines in English, and those from the United States would live in widely separated spots to avoid favoritism for one particular region, they would receive most of the fanzines published during the year, and they would be selected to avoid having everyone favoring one particular type of fanzine material.

((Britain, at least, would also need to be represented by more than one jury member. Say, how about a combination of general "voting" by Jophan, selections by a jury, and final choice by the editor? So who should the editor(s) be? How about, oh, Dick & Nicky Lynch? jak)))

I'm not sure, after reading Jon's column, if those firefly genes transplanted into plants would glow constantly or just when the plant became horny, which is when fireflies light up. If it's the former, I'm surprised Jon didn't think of the obvious usefulness for this technique: implant the light-producing genes into trees, use the trees to manufacture mimeo paper, and create from the resulting paper fanzines that can be read by their own illumination, while making long night trips on buses or airplanes, during black masses, or under other special circumstances.

I can't agree with Tom Whitmore. If there were no science fiction conventions, fanzines would thrive mightily, I'm sure, just as they did during fandom's first fifteen years when there were only three or four conventions big enough to deserve that name. The fan who goes to a con devotes as a rule 48 to 96 hours to that purpose. Surely he would bestow a few hours on fanzine reading, writing and publishing if cons suddenly disappeared and he was deprived of the ability to communicate with fans en masse in an in-person manner. I also suspect that cons must share the blame for some of the bad things that have happened to professional science fiction. The very first Worldcon resulted in the creation of Captain Future, for instance, according to Sam Moskowitz' Seekers of Tomorrow. He tells how Leo Margulies and Mort Weisinger got together in the back of the convention hall and conceived the idea of that hackiest of all early prozines. Ever since, I'm sure, authors and agents and editors have button-holed one another at cons for the sake of writing stories to order, creating sequels

to stories that had been complete in themselves, and exchanging publishers' prejudices. When editors and authors never saw one another, the authors benefited by using their own imagination. (February 11, 1988)

((With legendary exceptions like John W. Campbell and every writer who worked with him in the "Golden Age." jak)))

Harry Bond
6 Elizabeth Ave.
Bagshot
Surrey GU19 5NX
U.K.

Mainstream is a little like an alternate universe to me; I'm not very well up on American fandom, and I'm currently so involved with trying to get British fandom back into doing something with its fanzines (instead of just vegetating as the majority of our good faneds over here seem to be doing--Greg Pickersgill is suffering from such a writer's block that he has difficulty signing his name on cheques anymore) that I doubt I've the time at present to get very much further into it. From the quality of Mainstream, though, I wish I did have the time. Someone should hurry up and invent a time machine, or at least a drug allowing you to indulge in fanac 24 hours a day without the need for sleep, food, or visible means of support. (March 19, 1988)

((When we met at Mexico, you seemed somewhat more up on American fanzines; did you discover that drug? jak)))

Bernie Phillips
2065 Latham St. #36
Mountain View, CA 94040

What I found most fascinating in Mainstream 12 was Dick Ellington's "Slouching Through Metaphysics." Pardon me if my aura is showing, but I've always been entranced by the notion of astral projection--perhaps because I believe it's happened to me. As a child, I woke up from a nap to find myself floating above the bed. When I had a wisdom tooth removed I was unconscious, yet when I awoke I was able to repeat the doctor's conversation to him. I know there are perfectly logical explanations for all this. Most people would say I was dreaming and not quite under the anesthesia. Maybe I was, but I don't think so. There have been so many people with the "near death" experience who report seeing a white light and loved ones who were already dead. People have "died" on operating tables and come back to life, frequently relating procedures that occurred after they "died" that they had no means of knowing. I'm sure many of your readers would debunk all of this stuff. It's true you can't believe everything you hear but it's just as true that you can't disbelieve everything you hear. This sort of thing may be as close as we ever get to the magic and fantasy we read and dream about. I feel sorry for those who refuse to believe it's possible. (May 24, 1988)

Don D'Amassa
323 Dodge Street
East Providence, RI 02914

Taral's kind words for Mythologies were obviously pleasant to read. It made me wish that it was still possible to publish a quarterly magazine of its size and ambition. Unfortunately, the recent revival netted much less response than had been true in its original manifestation, so Taral might well be right that it doesn't fare as well in these modern times. Most of my fanac has been confined to two apas of late, although I actually wrote two fanzine articles and a dozen or so of letters during the past couple of weeks. I had even thought about the possibility of reviving Myth as an annual, but recent developments make that less likely. The specific development, however, is that I sold a novel at long last, and obviously I'm going to devote what free time I can come up with to following up on that success, if possible. Nevertheless, I still insist that it is suspended and not dead, and it wouldn't surprise me at all if it came back to life in the not too dis-

tant future, although I suspect that it would look a lot different from what it has in the past.

I do take umbrage with one of Taral's comments. I don't think the topics discussed in Mythologies are dead issues, for the most part. They tended to be those universal problems that people talk about all the time and rarely are in a position to do anything about: racism, manners, feminism, foreign affairs, consorship, and the like. But they are hardly dead issues. (Undated)

Richard Brandt Joseph Nicholas has a point about the repetition of subject
4740 N. Mesa #111 matter in a lettercol. There's nothing wrong, really, about
El Paso, TX 79912 having different letters speak to the same topic--as long as
 each writer has a different view or insight that illuminates
the subject in a new way. I'm seeing a lot of lettercols with repetition of similar
points over and over again, as if I was leafing through some kind of condensed apa.
Of course, that's probably because I seem to be seeing so many barely-edited letter-
cols. When one realizes that a certain editor is bound to print even whatever idle
chitchat you open off a letter with, the pressure is really on to loc only if every-
thing you have to say is absolutely fucking brilliant.

As you can plainly see, I remain unmoved by this challenge. (Undated)

((We Also Heard From not a few others: C.S.F. BADEN, who publishes a zine for rail-
road fans; DOUG BARBOUR; T.L. BOHMAN; CUYLER W. BROOKS, JR., who mentions The 25th
Man by Ed Morrell, one of the convicts featured in London's Star Rover; BRIAN EARL
BROWN; RICH BROWN, whose 7-page loc we wanted to publish as an article (but he's bus-
ily turning it into a much longer piece); DAVE D'AMMASSA; GARTH DANIELSON (in one
part of a tiny notebook--flip it over, and someone else's loc starts on the other
side); MOG DECARNIN ("It is truly weird to me that someone can believe, against the
evidence of their own senses, that writing that's paid in money must be superior to
writing that isn't."); CATHY DOYLE; BETH FINKBINER; GEORGE FLYNN; MARTY KLUG ("Do
you ever think sometime we're all living in a Far Side cartoon?"); IRV KOCH; BOB LEE;
ROBERT LICHTMAN; DAVE LOCKE (who took Taral to task in detail for his review of Time
& Again, and offered to do fanzine reviews for us--no way, we're not running any more
reviews--anybody else interested?); LUKE MCGUFF (who is, like, totally cool, y'know?
and who should come back to Seattle); JEANNE MEALY; MURRAY MOORE (a very late letter
on #11 and a more timely one on #12 with some amusing remarks on the power of sloth
to reduce the size of lettercols); JACK PALMER; TOM PERRY; LINDA PICKERSGILL; MAE
STRELKOV; TARAL; DAVID THAYER (who liked Taral's loc on the creative process); PASCAL
THOMAS; PHIL TOTORICI (he liked Taral's cover and Stu Shiffman's Crusader Rabbit and
Rags cartoon); KAREN TREGO (the other half of the ACE Double Loc); ROBERT WHITAKER
SIRIGNANO. Did we lose your letter or postcard? I hope not. Watch for our next
issue, not a million years from now. jak & svt)))

=====

BAGHDAD JOURNAL /continued from page 32/

carry over traffic noise, I imagine. Wailing. Insistent. Strangely demanding & yet
with its own kind of melody, almost. Not a performance, yet an alien ear like mine
could only hear it as such. Such images & sounds haunted my sleep for many weeks
after I returned, a reminder that I had indeed been to an other place, & come back.

###

BEWITCHED

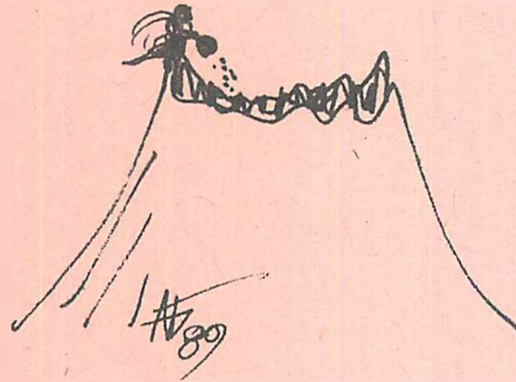
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and

BEMILDRED

Jerry Kaufman

SACRIFICE MY DAUGHTER,
WILL THEY? HERE, VOLCANOE!
EAT BEANS AND DIE!



We've been to England and Scotland and back again, having taken in a few castles, a few friendly homes, and a convention. This should give me pages of material to write: travelog, character sketches, anecdote, comparisons between the U.S. and U.K. versions of street life, music, fandom. But it takes me years to assimilate an experience, as my Down Under Fan Fund trip report, Kaufman Coast to Coast, makes clear. That took me five years to produce (copies still available at \$6 by mail, \$5 in person, proceeds to DUFF), and I still didn't spell most of the names right.

Perhaps I should try some of each, indiscriminately mixed? If nothing else, I should mention with gratitude our various hosts: John and Judith Clute, Charlie and Sue Harris, Dave and Hazel Langford, and Greg and Linda Pickersgill. (I know none of you have ever heard Chuck Harris called "Charlie," unless you've hung around with Sue, but he answers to it, or fails to, as readily as to "Chuck.") Thanks all for the tea, lamb, chicken, toast, good suggestions for touring, and every other kindness and consideration you gave us. Thanks also to Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna: between London and Nottingham, we saw them more than some of our hosts; I think you'd have more fun if you moved here than to Perth. (That's enlightened self-interest speaking.)

The Clutes shows us bits of London we'd probably never have seen on our own. John took me to a curbside book market, run on Saturday mornings by a grim-faced man in his sixties who'd taken over the business from his father. The books were laid out in rows on covered carts or right in the street, with tarps over them. Book collectors and dealers (all male, some gaunt and aged, others puffy and young) hovered over the section they expected to be next unveiled, awaiting a signal. At the signal they would pull away the tarp and grab frantically at the books, taking away great piles, tossing back discards. Sometimes the owner would uncover a cart twenty yards away, so all the eager collectors would run down the street to be first at the unseen treasures. I found it all entertaining, and grabbed piles like everyone else, for John's inspection. He said that most of the hundreds of books in his collection had come from this market or ones like it, and we both found bargains and gems.

Judith invited us to join one of her professional walking tours of the old City of London, on a quiet warm Sunday morning (London being in the sweaty grip of a heat spell). We started near the Tower of London, which I was surprised to see was not a single tower as I'd imagined, but an enormous fortress with a myriad of structures. Judith

pointed out churches, alleyways, parks, houses and so forth, some dating back to late Medieval times (the oldest structure was a bit of wall the Romans built). My clearest memories are of St. Olave's Church, Samuel Pepys' favorite: across the road from a park he frequented, it had skulls (sculpted ones) festooned over the gate, and horrible-looking spikes along the top of the fence; the hideous Lloyd's of London, all brightly shining metal panels and ductwork, right next to a Victorian covered market, all sweet charm and carved red dragons (the worst taste of the nineteenth century meets the worst of the twentieth and suddenly looks attractive); the Monument, a huge column tipped with a sunburst, commemorating the Great Fire of 1666. The later was burnt into our memories by the sudden appearance of what seemed like all London's Fire Brigade, called out to check on an alarm from the Underground. (We never heard anything more about it, which meant it was fortunately a false alarm.)

Church and Sue met us in Coventry for a tour of Coventry Cathedral (along with Moshe Feder and Lise Eisenberg); Dave and Hazel led us to a wonderful Italian restaurant in Reading (Hazel, wonderingly, "I usually get here only once a year, at Christmas, with my office"); Greg showed us how to get to Hampton Court by bus the day the London Underground was on strike, and from there (once the home of kings and queens and hundreds of servants and retainers) to the Wellington by train. I preferred Hampton Court.

The Wellington is a big, rambling pub just outside Waterloo Station. Once a month, every fan within fifty miles (except Owen Whiteoak) goes to the 'Ton, no matter what their interests or affiliations. It's rather like an American convention in miniature, but not that miniature. There were about 100 people there, despite the strike, which tried the limits of my endurance.

The swelter was intense, the smoke only just bearable (and distinctly beyond for Suzle, who spent most of the evening standing in the vestibule) and the cliques were as bad as any we have. Who-fans don't talk to sf fans don't talk to filk fans. Leeds (or former Leeds) fans don't talk to anybody except foreigners. Harry Bond talks to everybody (he kindly introduced me to several people). I talked briefly to a few people but never felt comfortable enough to talk long--I don't think anyone minded. Afterward we faced a long train ride, then found we'd missed the last bus that could take us all the way to South Ealing, and we had to walk a mile or two from the next best bus.

For weeks after I dreamed dreams: the Pickersgills and two very tall Norwegians, Egil and Kirsten, preceding us down long streets with highrises and brick walls looming out of the dark; Greg angrily haranguing us about the effects of Americans on British fandom. It was the last night before we returned, and somewhat colored memory.

But other memories shine thru brightly, like those earlier days I've already mentioned. Edinburgh is a beacon, dark city though it is. We loved it, frankly. It's a bustling city that shows every sign of the twentieth city, including shopping malls, yet has maintained a great deal of its history, from brooding Edinburgh Castle high on a hill intimidating and assuring the city, to the overstated monument to Sir Walter Scott (it resembles a cathedral spire and shades a twice-life-sized statue of the writer). The Old City (through which runs a street called the Royal Mile) has the narrow rutted lanes of the Middle Ages, but even here the ages jostle elbows, and a picture-perfect old restaurant turned out to cater to students and featured Schlitz as its imported American beer.

We drove from Edinburgh (and had a much easier drive than in 1986 in London-Dorset-Wiltshire) across Scotland, through glens, past lochs (including lovely Lomond): a castle here, a vegetarian restaurant there, and a lot of sheep. Our goal was Oban, a seaside resort in the British style: no swimming, no surfing, no fishing (that, apparently, was saved for the Highland glens); just promenading, eating, drinking, buying souvenirs, climbing or driving up the bluff to McCaig's Folly and looking down to the hotels and tour boats and across the bay at misty headlands and islands. (The Folly is a full-

scale replica of the Coliseum, built in the same bizarre spirit as the reproduction of Stonehenge that overlooks the Columbia River here in Washington.)

Our return to Edinburgh, punctuated by a visit to Aberfeldy Distillery, was the night before Mexican. We arranged a train trip with Keith Mitchell and found Iain Banks at the train station, so the four of us made a pleasant and hilarious journey to Nottingham. The city sometimes overwhelmed the convention, with Nottingham Castle just up a hill from our hotel, A Trip to Jerusalem (the oldest pub in England) just down, and a nest of skinheads around the corner. I didn't take notes; memories dim. I moderated a fairly tame discussion of book reviewing (A.J. Budrys and Paul McAuley were the discussors, and seemed to wait for questions without wanting to initiate anything), sold books and fanzines, tried to recruit material for the World Fantasy Con's Souvenir Book, danced at the disco (supplied, to my surprise, with actual '70s disco music; I'm not a fan of that flavor), flirted, talked, ate, explored. It was the usual good time.

Eventually we came back to Seattle. Lots happened to take our minds off the trip. Donald Keller and I struggled with the recalcitrance of objects (like paper, words, computers) and (with a great deal of help from Ron Drummond) finally succeeded in sending The Straits of Messina to the printer. Eventually the printer sent it back, and the book is at last in print. (It's a collection of essays by Samuel R. Delany, the fourth production of Serconia Press. If you'd like a copy, of course I'd be glad to take your \$21.20 (including postage).)

Meetings for the World Fantasy Convention committee (which includes us) doubled in frequency through the summer, and are doubling again. The Clarion West workshops began in July, and required our presence at weekly readings and parties. (There's an extensive subculture of writers, would-be writers, Clarion committee, booksellers and hangers-on that stands apart both from the local fans and the pre-established writing community, yet interpenetrates both. Someone with a fine hand for distinctions and a discerning eye will have to analyze it sometime.)

And while we typed up and mimeoed Mainstream bit by bit over the summer and into the fall, others began to discover the charm (and relative cheapness) of mimeo. The first definitely bitten by the bug (which squirts ink into your veins) was Mark Manning. Mark has been pubbing apazines for several years now, but Tand is his first genzine. #1 came out early this year; #2 was produced on the Pacific Fantod Press mid-summer. Mark's approach is refreshing, and his choice of material unlike that of any other editor's. Send him \$3, material for publication, trades, or a way of contacting Captain Beefheart and see what he's up to. (1400 E. Mercer, #19, Seattle, WA 98112.)

Maybe I exaggerate. Craig Smith, some of whose cartoons appear here, hasn't shown any interest in using the mimeo, but he does grab piles of fanzines to borrow and read everytime he comes over. He's looking for places to publish more of his art, for one thing. Andy Hooper, Bill Bowers, and others have used his stuff. If you send him your zine, it's likely you can get some superior cartooning. As stuff in Mainstream shows, he's adept at illustration. (14155 91st Court NE, Bothell, WA 98133)

As for Kristi Austin, I suspect she'll xerox Pandaimonium whenever she gets it out. Fresh from SAPS, where her Panpipes was one of the more entertaining zines, Kristi is the proprietor of Arkadian Books (there seems to be a theme here). Only thing holding up publication is a laxity of her contributors: get busy, Lichtman; my contribution is nearly done. Meanwhile, send her your 'zines in trade and get on her mailing list. (Mark Manning has reprinted some of her writing from SAPS and other places in both issues of Tand.) (Arkadian Bookshop, 5232 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105.)

So tell me: how's your summer been?

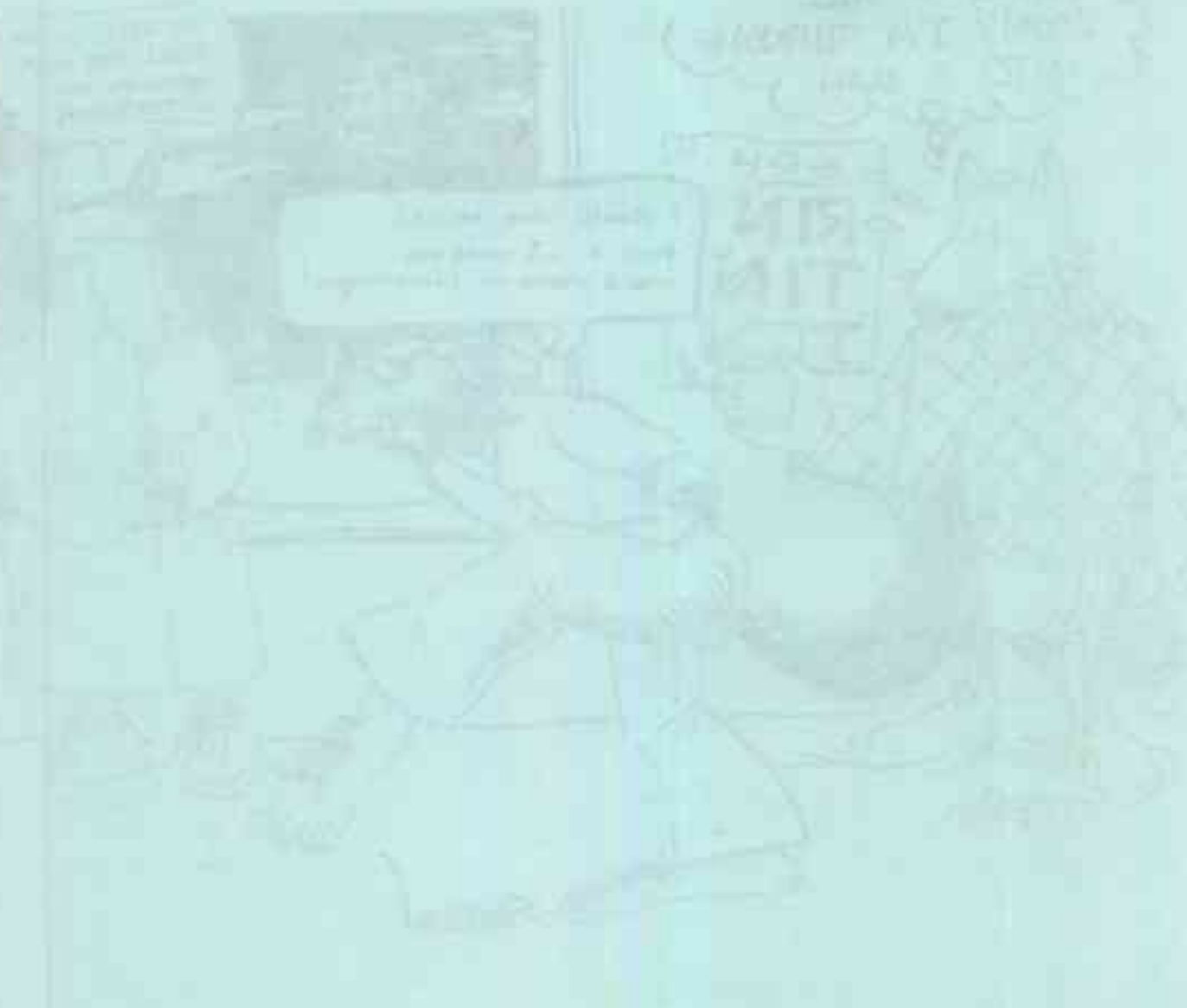
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OHNO! A FULL
MOON! I'M TURNING
INTO A MAN

GOH.
RIN
TIN
TIN

I should have realized
that a LI world con
would make us Liconthropes!

OH SHIT! I CAN
FEEL THE HAIR
GROWING ON
EVERYTHING!

STEFFAN

SHIFFAN

#7
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