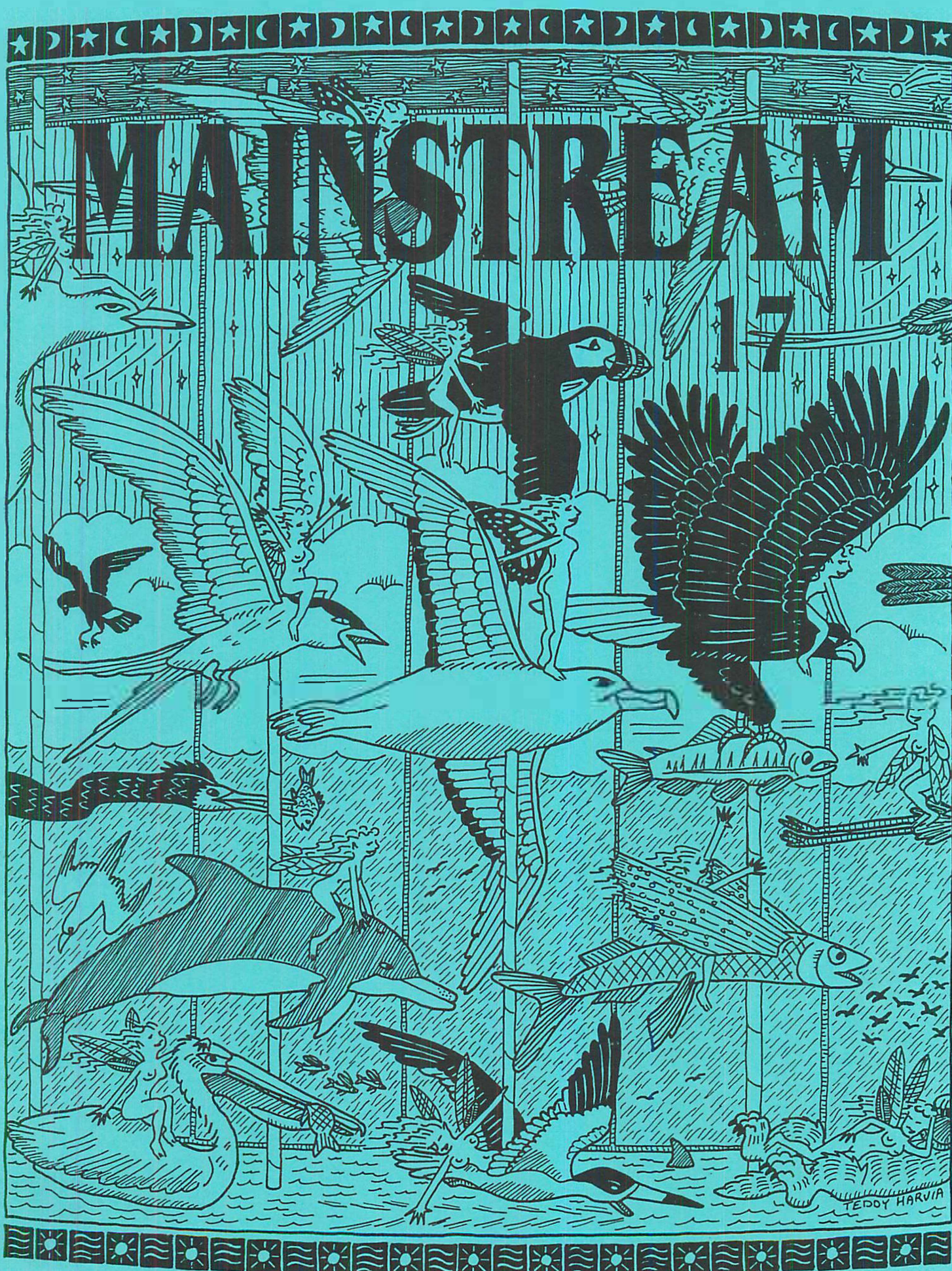


MAINSTREAM

17





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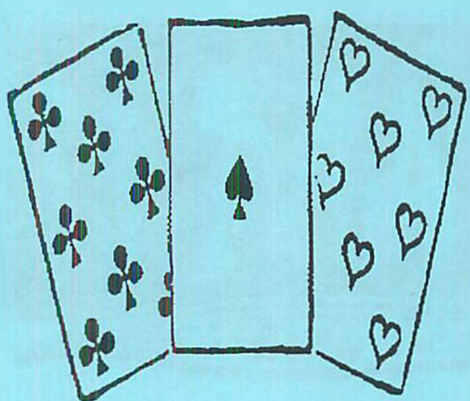
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- ✦ Cross Currents, Page 40, is all letters and responses. Heading by Craig Smith, all other art by Steve Stiles.
- ✦ Suzlecol, by Suzanne Tompkins, starts on Page 53, finishes with clip art.

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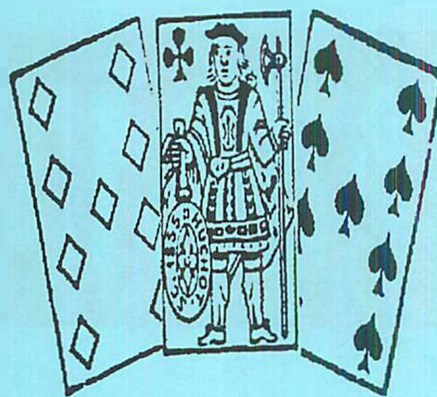
If this issue is mailed bulk, it will be thanks to Mark Manning. However, with newer, more stringent bulk mailing rules and requirements, we may not do that.

SPECIAL REQUEST: If you have a copy of *Mainstream 16* that's just cluttering up your house, why not send it to us? We don't have any, not even a file copy. We'll pay a bounty.



Bewitched, Bothered & Bemildred

Jetzy's Editorial



It's funny what will drive you to the brink of nostalgia, and what will push you completely over the edge. For me it was poetry and a con game.

It all happened at Bumbershoot (September 1995). Velma Bowen had flown to Seattle, running away from home, as she called it, to spend Labor Day weekend here. Quiet conversation, hanging out at Vanguard (our monthly party and fannish networking event), driving around the Sound, and attending the Bumbershoot Arts Festival were on the agenda.

The high point of Bumbershoot, for me, was going to be seeing Patti Smith on-stage for the first time in fifteen years or so. Those of you with extremely keen memories will recall that I wrote about Patti in *The Spanish Inquisition* in a vain attempt to explain her appeal. I recounted a story about going to her first concert with a full band, and finding myself (along with Paul Williams and several others) in a booth next to Bob Dylan's.

Patti's appeal to me was based in equal parts on her music, her poetry (often transformed into song lyrics), and her "image." She seemed excitingly beautiful in an entirely unconventional way (see any of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of her), and her life seemed lived on the edge of many romantic and mysterious boundaries between what we know and what we might be able to know if we could find the key to unlock the guardian gates between worlds. This may seem to be a bit muzzy and unfocused, but that's the way I understand such mysteries as her apparent experiments with sex and drugs, and her poetry that owes much to Arthur Rimbaud, the Symbolists, the Beats (although not, I think, to their interest in Zen) and such rock poets as Morrison and Dylan.

I was able to see her perform in New York about half-a-dozen times in many different venues: the Bitter End, CBGB's, the Kitchen (I think), and perhaps a loft or two. New York's dives, dumps, bars, and crustier neighborhoods pervade and color my memories of Patti singing, reciting, ranting and rolling on the floor as Lenny Kaye played wild guitar, his hair flying, and Ivan and J.D. played drums and keyboard. (I was never really sure which was which.)

And now Patti was returning from a long retirement (punctuated by the release of an album a few years ago that I'd never warmed to: too overproduced and homogenous, not enough of the fire I remembered; but then, none of the albums had what the concerts had, and only became acceptable substitutes when memories of the live Patti had faded). But. But. The "return" was as poet (and seer), not as singer. Patti Smith was headlining an evening of poetry readings, also to include Jim Carroll and a number of others.

Still, it was quite enough to draw me in, and Velma is a poetry lover. So we made it a date. At the last minute, Velma added Eddie Jacobowitz, a New York friend studying in Portland and visiting Seattle, to the group.

We had dinner out with Suzle, who dropped us near the Opera House at the Seattle Center. The Center was the location in 1962 of the Seattle World's Fair, and some of the structures from that fair still exist. The Space Needle is probably the best known. How-

ever, the Opera House, I think, is much newer, and is large and comfortable. (It has to be, to host Wagner's complete Ring Cycle, as it does every few years.)

Velma and I found the long line that started in the Exhibition Hall next to the Opera House and folded back on itself like an origami snake through the underground halls connecting the two. Eventually, Eddie, tall, dark and slender, found us. I enjoyed watching the crowds for their variety and flair: clothing was either colorful or inventively black, and pierced noses and ears were plentiful.

Eventually the line moved, and we found good seats off to the right of the auditorium. The readings began, and a series of poets did their best to galvanize and shock us. Willie Smith managed it best with his horrific tale of sex with a giant spider. Was this hallucination of a particularly high and disgusting order? We laughed and groaned in disbelief. In the end the "giant spider" turned out to be a mechanical construction, but the grotesquerie lived on in appalled memory.

Jim Carroll followed Smith, nervous, almost hesitant. The only item I recall now is a slab of narrative in which he tried to explain to a robbery victim why he wanted to touch her breasts. (I remember it clearly because I had also seen him read it in a film called *Poetry in Motion*.) I have no idea if Carroll was writing from pure imagination or memory.

Patti followed Carroll. Even from where we sat, I could see that she was not too different: still whip-sharp, whip-thin. Lots grayer, not surprisingly, but the hair was still a mane. She wore simple clothing, glasses, no shoes (or am I fantasizing that?).

She surprised us when she spat on the stage and we laughed, a little nervously. But she explained that she need to clear her mouth of excess spit, and wasn't trying to make some statement or show some rebellion against stage manners. So we settled down and listened to her read.

I didn't make notes, keep any kind of "set list," so I can't tell you what she read. I recognized a few items, enjoyed pieces about deserts and absent friends. Good stuff, honest.

Then she surprised us, and we were grateful. She invited from the wings a friend of hers named Tony Shanahan, who brought out a guitar. Patti sang! (Smith is back and Seattle's got her!) Shanahan accompanied her. I remember that she did "Dancing Barefoot." Did she also sing "Ghost Dance?" Wasn't there a simple-but-moving tune about her husband, Fred "Sonic" Smith, who died only last year? Yes, I think so.

The important thing, I thought, was that she was singing and performing again, and that perhaps this meant more performances and more records in the near future. The more important thing that I didn't have to think was, "Doesn't this take me back?" The whole performance took me back to those evenings at CBGB's or to reunions of the Beats at Columbia University, a time in my life when I felt both free and rootless.

Afterward, Velma, Eddie and I walked along Mercer to Fifth Avenue to catch a bus. Eddie stopped to admire a street musician. He caught up with us a moment later. "Strange," he said. "That guy seemed really insulted that I only left him a penny." Eddie was baffled by this response to his tribute. "It was all the loose change I had, except for bus fare." I kept my own bafflement to myself, still caught up in the way 1975 seemed to be bubbling up through 1995.

We caught the Number Six, which travels straight up Aurora with only minor detours, and strode to the back of the bus. It's the favorite haunt of restless youth and troublemakers. I guess we were feeling that way ourselves, though only Eddie could fairly claim the "restless youth" title. We settled ourselves along the back bench. There were two young guys, loners, already back there.

A stop or two later, a man and a woman came down the aisle. They were middle-aged black people who looked like they'd seen some rough times. I thought they were together, but the woman sat several seats away, while the man sat in one of the sidewise

seats, facing the aisle. He looked at us (two Jewish men, one light-skinned black woman) and the other guys, pulled some cards from a pocket somewhere, and started to move them around.

I looked closer, gasped, and said, louder than I meant to, "Three-card monte!" They were bent and worn playing cards, and he was slipping them around, flipping them around, moving them back and forth in a row, turning them face up, face down.

"You know this game?" he asked me. "Yep," I said. Eddie and Velma nodded. We knew how it worked. Two of the cards were the same, both tens or jacks or twos; the third would be a queen or ace. The card handler would bet someone that he could move the cards, face-down, in such a way that the mark couldn't guess which was the odd card. The trick was to make it look easy to guess...too easy to pass up. The monte man paid no further attention to us. We, on the other hand, watched closely.

1975 all over again, again. This was like being on the streets and subways of New York, except that here we could watch a couple of guys get taken who'd never seen or heard of such things. The man running the game was great. He wore his cap sideways, talked kind of dumb, and hooked one of the suckers thoroughly. The boy really believed he could predict where that ace was going to be. It was so easy. The ace was that card with the bent corner. The boy won a buck, maybe two.

But when the bet became a fin, suddenly the bent corner wasn't bent anymore, and the ace wasn't where it was supposed to be. It was an education for all of us, especially the guy losing the money.

We got off at 85th. I told the driver as we left from the front door, "You've got a little three-card monte action in the back of the bus." I didn't think it should really be allowed to go on past the educational point. But when we walked to the corner, there was the monte man and the woman I had seen, talking and laughing together, evidently at home in the neighborhood just as we were.

It's funny what makes you feel nostalgic: for me it was a small dark-haired hipster angel, and a con game; one embodied a dream of freedom and the other the tough streets of a great city. Experiencing them one after the other in the company of New Yorkers was like dropping through a hole of time into the grace of eternity.

I first noticed the slaughtered trees a few months ago. I was walking along a downtown block of Third Avenue on my way to the bus tunnel entrance when I passed them: a series of four tree trunks behind some mesh fencing. Too big to be called saplings, but hardly full grown, the trunks were at least two inches thick. One had a few brave leaves growing from an edge.

Since the building was covered in scaffolding, probably the trees had been cut in preparation for removal prior to remodeling, and indeed, when I passed by a few weeks later, even the trunks were gone. I presumed that there was a good reason for them to be gone. They interfered with some great plan. And I had never consciously noticed them before.

Yet I found myself angry that they had been cut down and killed instead of being dug up and replanted elsewhere. The touch of greenery on the maimed trunk spoke to me of the urge to survive and grow that all life demonstrates, no matter how inconvenient for people. Why, I thought, hadn't they simply been moved?

This led to yet another of my fantasies about spending the proceeds of the lottery I will never win. (I never buy the tickets, you know.) I could start a Home for Wayward Trees. I could buy a few acres, or a few hundred. The ground would have to be friendly to trees but not overburdened with them. (No crowding; please; we wouldn't want another nursing home scandal.) Then I could buy (or rent) a good-sized flatbed truck and crane,

hire a few people to evaluate, dig, transport, plant and hug the trees. (Don Fitch could be in charge.)

Then I would have to advertise to cities, parks, private folks with unwanted trees. We'd move them free of charge, of course. Are your trees old and in the way? Young and tall and unruly? Attracting the wrong sort of ivy? We'll take them away, give them a nice home and plenty of love and pasturage. Are your trees sick? We'd nurse them back to health or, worse comes to worse, plant them in our Tree Hospice. (I thought at first that cremations would be the preferred burial rite, but then realized that donating the wood to the poor and composting the leaves would be better.)

If anyone out there has ever done such a thing, let me know. I'd like to shake their hand for such a good idea. Better yet, I'd like to help them out.

I believe, along with Freudians, Jungians, and screenwriters, that dreams mean something. Of course, each system contends that they mean something else. The Jungians contend that each element of a dream represents some part of our submerged psyche; the Freudians analyze dreams to see what they say, in a code worthy of Sherlock Holmes, about the dreamer's childhood sexual traumas; screenwriters believe that dreams exist to telegraph elements of plot.

My dreams represent some argument between different parts of my mind, or some deep urge trying to surface. So when I have a dream that's more than usually vivid, I try to understand it in terms of whatever conflicts or desires that currently have hold of me.

For example (you saw it coming, didn't you), here's one from not so long ago: I'm in London, where one of my favorite rock bands is engaged in furious activity in a suite of offices. (Which band? I'm not sure.) They summoned me for my unique abilities, and I'm to aid in one part of a vast creative endeavor. And what is my part? Apparently it's to run a mimeo, for one of the band's assistants hands me a large stack of mimeo stencils.

I look them over. They aren't electronic stencils, but the old-fashioned type: mint-green wax stencils, all freshly cut, with hand-stenciled artwork. I can even smell them. As I start to look through them, a young British woman introduces herself as Jarin and points out, on one stencil, a piece she has written.

Someone hands me a key and tells me it's for #45. #45 *what*, I wonder, as I straighten out the pile of stencils. Perhaps another office, I think, as I lurch out the door. I find myself in the street, and begin looking for the cryptic number. To my confusion, there are doors marked 45 on both sides of the street, and I don't know where to go. I wake up.

What does all this mean to me? I don't attach much meaning to the rock band, but somehow those stencils seem full of significance. Of course, they mean I'm an old fashioned boy, actually in love with the process of mimeography, which has a lot in common with memory. Mimeo imitate; they also remember. Printing was, as repeatable writing, one of our first cheap and easy external memory banks.

But it also suggests that I'm better at, and better known as, a printer (publisher, editor) of other people's projects or material than my own. More than once I've carried out someone else's fanzine dream or published the collected works of others.

But there's that woman pointing out her work in my stencils. Her name is suspiciously like my own: Jarin/Jerry. Although she didn't look like me, I suspect her of being me in some dreamlike fashion. Perhaps she's my *anima*, as Carl Jung termed it.

Then there's old #45. I still wonder what it is, or represents. Perhaps it's the "place" I need to find to be ready to carry out my life's work. (Yes, at nearly 49 years old, I'm still trying to find out what I'm supposed to be doing.) It seems, from the ambiguous ending of the dream, that even my subconscious has no idea.

Mainstream is one of the ways in which I've published the work of others while giving myself an excuse to avoid doing any work of my own. I've often told myself and others, "If I write something for you, what will I have left for my editorial?" This dream crystallized the feeling that I could do more than I have, didn't need to stick with the "mimeography." But I still don't know what my destination is.

This is not the only reason that we've decided to fold *Mainstream*, of course. Both Suzle and I have always enjoyed the give and take of assembling and publishing an issue, but the enormous amount of time between the last three or four issues has been a drag on our energies. We've devoted too much guilt over holding back good writing and artwork, too much thought to explanations of why we couldn't have moved any faster or really made the issues any smaller. *Mainstream's* size was seldom the reason for the delays. Then there's the always growing expense of publishing and mailing a genzine; buying a house has given us something that demands cash more insistently than a zine (albeit not so much as a baby).

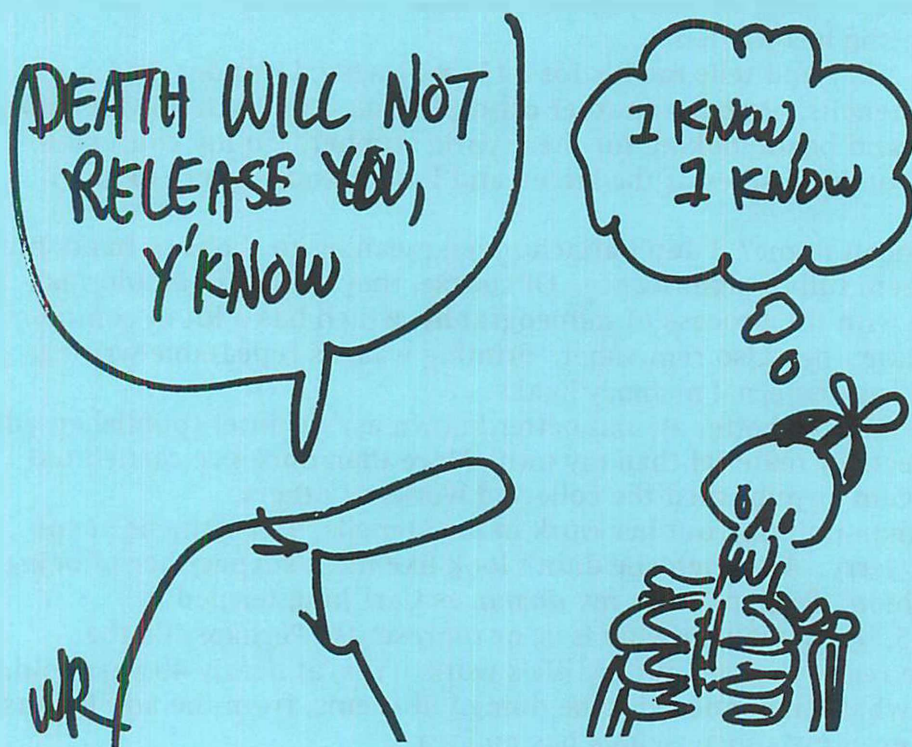
We've assembled a stellar lineup for this final outing. We've never published a truly fannish fanzine in the sense of being about fans and fandom; if we had a mission, it was to publish pieces by and about people who happen to be fans, with the occasional Andy Hooper or Dave Langford convention report or fannish satire thrown in to remind everyone who we (collectively) are.

This issue is no exception: nearly all the items are about, or based on, personal experiences. Stu Shiffman's play about Sherlock Holmes mixing it up with the Goon Show characters may appear to have nothing to do with real life, but two pieces of context will erase that appearance. Stu (and others) performed the play at a Sherlockian gathering several years ago, and the play accurately represents Stu's mental landscape. As for Eileen Gunn's jape, it's a fictionalized version of something that happened to her. (Besides, *Asi-mov's* wouldn't buy it.)

Our thanks to the other writers and artists this issue, and all the past contributors, especially our long-time columnists past and present like Terry Garey, Jon Singer and

David Emerson. We also appreciate all the Greater Seattle Collators, and Mark Manning and the Northwest Science Fiction Society, who have at various times allowed us the use of their bulk mail permits.

Say good night, Suzle. ☾



Adventure of the Danzig Mien a tale of Holmes & Watson A radio play by Stu Schiffman

for the Sound of the Baskervilles
Performed at the International
Holmesian Games
in Vancouver, B.C. on September 16,
1995

ANNOUNCER: (FX: Three tones) This is
the Baskerville Broadcasting
System

OPENING: (FX: clip-clop of horse
hooves on cobblestones or
macadam², and the creak of
harness)

RECORDING: Violin sequence from
"Stairway to Heaven" on the
Hampton String Quartet's CD
"What If Mozart had Composed
Born To Be Wild?"

ANNOUNCER: (Hushed important tones)
And now, another tale of
mystery and intrigue from the
foggy streets of London, with
Sherlock Holmes and Dr.
Watson in the Adventure of the
Danzig Mien — sponsored by
the C. A. Milverton¹ Companies:
the Corporate Monolith that
includes Baskerville Puppy
Chow⁴; Vamberry Wine Coolers (try our new singular sensation, Ineffable Twaddle!);
the fine line of Matilda Briggs seafood soups and bisques including yummy
Friesland Flounder; and the energy-efficient fuels of Stormy Petroleum (ah, what
fuels these petrels³ bel):

RECORDING: Itzhak Perlman & Andre Previn, "The Easy Winners"

DR. WATSON: (Narrating) — it was a lovely day in our Baker Street rooms, sometime after
our return from the Far Northwest of the Americas and the investigation by Holmes
of the singular sinister circumstances surrounding the death of Dangerous Dan Mc-
Grew⁶ (the details of which the world is not yet ready) — and somewhat before the
case of the Floyd Pattersons and the Isle of Coney⁷, that I have recorded as the
"Round of the Ferris Wheels". I was contemplating taking my notebooks, a bottle of



ale, and a selection of cold meats from Mrs. Hudson's larder, and going to Regent Park to take advantage of the weather. I removed one of my mufflers and debated whether to extinguish the fire in the grate.

Holmes was conducting a series of experiments with some of the small packets of desiccated foods and soft drinks that he had acquired while our ship had touched into one of the many port cities of the North American Pacific coast.

HOLMES: (FX: bubbling of liquid and clink of glass) Amazing, Watson! This packet purports to contain a desiccated powdered *cafe au lait* in the Viennese manner, but my experiments reveal little if any chemical similarity to what might be procured at the Cafe Linzer or, indeed, anywhere on the Continent. And I can't detect what might be so Hibernian in this supposed packet of "Irish Creme" Cosmopolitan Coffee... I tested for residue of peat in the bean roasting process, as well as for presence of Irish Whiskey — Watson, what's become of that bottle of Jameson's that I was using for comparison?

DR. WATSON: (FX: medical bag snapping shut) Dashed if I know, old man, your space for the chemical equipment is a regular mare's nest —

HOLMES: Hmmm. Wherever it might be, that question will have to be put aside, for I detect the sound of Mrs. Hudson's steps upon the stair, accompanied by... either a African Bull Elephant or my *brother* in company of some other government lackey!

(FX: two knocks upon the door, and the sound of hinges)

MRS. HUDSON: Gentlemen, it's Mr. Holmes own brother and a Teutonic personage. Will you see them, sir? Otherwise they'll just loiter down in the lower hall and bring down the tone of the place...

MYCROFT: (entering) Ah, Sherlock and the good Doctor Watson: a most homey and domestic scene.

DR. WATSON: (as Narrator) Mycroft Holmes filled some post in Whitehall of such strategic importance that it was often said that, on occasion, he was Her Majesty's Government, moving usually only from rooms to office to the Diogenes Club and back again. A large fleshy man with flipper-like hands, the elder Holmes brother was a marked physical contrast to the Jack Sprat of his sibling.

The elder Holmes was accompanied by a middle-aged man in Imperial German army uniform, glittering with medals and honors. He had removed his ceremonial spiked helmet to reveal a shining dome and a devil-may-care expression.

HOLMES: Yes, quite. Sit, gentlemen, and have no fear of speaking confidentially in front of the Doctor. He has been a stout companion in often alarming circumstances, and you may also be confident in his discretion.

Can I offer you anything, perhaps a fine Vamberry Wine Cooler —

ANNOUNCER: (Hushed important tones) Vamberry⁸ Wine Coolers! They're the greatest! The most refreshing! Now with new "smart" chemicals to make you even more intelligent and more attractive to the gender of your favor! Vamberry Wine Coolers!

They're the hippest! With 25% Recycled Materials! Try them all, at the beach, at home, or at the office! Try Watsonian Watermelon! Baker Street Berry! Imperial Tokay⁹ 'n Lemonade! Carfax¹⁰ Kola-Kiwi! Sherbet in Bohemia! Lestrade Loganberry! And new Ineffable Twaddle!

MYCROFT: May I present Herr Major Ernst Freiherr von Bilko¹¹ of the Imperial German High Command. He's a bit unsure that you can assist him —

HOLMES: I see that you have been in Leicester Square, Freiherr, and that you are a devotee of the music hall chanteuse Miss Genevieve Hogan¹², you have a weakness for gambling (though you reckon it is not a game of chance when *you* are involved), and that you have recently travelled far.

VON BILKO: (Swiftly, mit ein h'accent h'Alemanic) Good Gott! In the old dark times, you would have been burnt for a witch! But how did you know?

HOLMES: I observed that your military boots had been splashed by a passing vehicle, and then cleaned and polished in the distinctive strokes of a Leicester Square boot-black. Each is distinctive, and yours look to have been done by Wee Barry Birnbaum of Whitechapel.

As to your enthusiasm for Miss Genny Hogan of the Serpentine Empire music hall in Leicester Square: two ticket stubs fell to the floor when you removed your helmet, both imprinted for the Serpentine, while a popular photographic display card featuring Miss Genny and sold in many photography studios in the Capital is to be glimpsed peeking out of your tunic pocket. Miss Genny is renowned for her spirited presentations, with scandalous amounts of revealed ankle, of such songs with a military theme as "I Love A Man With A Rat-a-tat Maxim Gun" and "My Kenneth Doesn't Give the Khyber A Pass". Your weakness for the gaming table is obvious, what with the tell-tale abrasions of the pads of your fingers and the rattling of dice in your other tunic pocket as you entered.

As to your having travelled far, you are a German Imperial officer of the Oberkommand, not an attache here in London. Your spirit of urgency seemed to indicate a rapid journey from the continent to consult me.

VON BILKO: Help us, Meister Holmes, you are our only hope. I beg you, come to Prussia, and help avert an international incident that could plunge all of Europe in a generation of war! (*sotto voce*: And besides, that is not scheduled by the Kaiser until 1914). Y'know, this reminds me very little of that time in Darjeeling —

DR. WATSON: (as Narrator) DARJEELING! Not just a source of fine teas for the Empire, but a place of sensuous mysteries and ancient wonders. Some twenty years before, while the Franco-Prussian War raged, a young Leutnant von Bilko had traveled to the Jewel in the Crown disguised as a baseball scout under the name of Kennesaw Ernie Freud¹³. It was at Darjeeling that he encountered the European charlatan and illusionist Ozymandias the Great¹⁴ and —

RECORDING: "Tiger Rag" from "Thar They Blow" by the Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra.

ANNOUNCER: (Hushed important tones) Tigers! There are lots of tigers in India: grr grr, grr

grr! Now Backgammon Equilateral¹⁵, the makers of *Baskerville Puppy Chow*: "The Choice of a New Canine Generation" and the right choice for your mastiff or bull-pup, is proud to announce new *Colonel Moran's Tiger Chow*!¹⁶ Yes, it's formulated by the Old Shikari Himself for your growing tiger cub or other big cat. Pick some up today!

HOLMES: (to announcers) Now cease that *infernal* interruption!

(to Watson) And *Watson*, we'll have no more of these historical digressions that take up a full third of the story! We have work to do here!

DR. WATSON: (quietly) Sorry, old man. I got carried away.

(To von Bilko) Tell us more, Freiherr von Bilko.

VON BILKO: Ja, Herr Doctor. There has been a killing at an Imperial Wehrmacht encampment outside Danzig, Kampf-Bachster. We are conducting the war-simulations there under Feldmarshal von Hal¹⁷. There were many foreign observers present for the simulations, and the wife of the British observer is accused of the murder —

HOLMES: — hence the involvement of my dear brother. While not yet crystal, it does become clearer. Continue, please.

VON BILKO: Ja, Herr Holmes. The Italian representative, Count Rocco Barbella¹⁸, was found dead in the catering tent.

DR. WATSON: Presumably not a case of indigestion?

VON BILKO: Not even the sauerbraten produces a bullet wound in the chest. And Count Barbella was often seen in pursuit of the lovely Lady Ragshaw, and he was found clutching her Ladyship's own monogrammed gloves... Colonel Ragshaw¹⁹ of your Blankshire Fusiliers was in company of officers of the Imperial German High Command at the time, so is outside suspicion. Lady Ragshaw was found in the act of attempting to dispose of a small pistol of the proper caliber which showed signs of recently having been discharged. She is under house arrest, yet still maintains her innocence.

Please come and solve this problem, Herr Holmes.

HOLMES: Fascinating! I recall a parallel case at Fort Courage in the American West at the end of their Civil War, the Hekawi Treaty Murder Case²⁰. I'll do it! Ah, the game is afoot, Watson! Let us be off to the Continent!

VON BILKO: I will send up my batman, Sgt. Dobermann²¹, to help you in the packing. I am lost without my batman.

RECORDING: Excerpt from *Batman* television theme, taken from "Freberg Underground" segment "Shaft Theater: The Flackman & Reagan."

ANNOUNCER: (Hushed important tones) Well, while they are traveling across Europe, we can bring you another message from the sponsor!

(FX: generalized sounds of the sea, skee skee skee of the gulls)

The Matilda Briggs is in port again, bringing a cargo of delicious soups of the sea. New "Lion's Mane" Chowder is a particular favorite at our house (particularly if followed by "Devil's Foot" Cake)! And everyone has time on a cool autumn evening for San Pedro Tiger Prawn Creole Bisque²²!

RECORDING: Train sequence from the Klezmerim: "Jazz-Babies of the Ukraine"

DR. WATSON: (as Narrator) We arrived in the port of Danzig in West Prussia, that the Poles now call Gdansk, in the company of Freiherr von Bilko and his batman Dobermann. We were to be met by the field marshal's aide de camp, Hauptmann Rupert von Ritzik²³.

VON BILKO: — so I told him that he couldn't make of me a chimpanzee, that no Orient Express casanova could put one over on Old Erni in a game of whist. As in the old days, when I was in charge of the cavalry pool at Schloss Freberg, the other subalterns and I would get up a game of whist or pinochle or five-handed fizbin and take in the marks —

VON RITZIK: Over here, Herr Major! We have the Feldmarshal's coach waiting for your party and off to Kampf-Bachster!

VON BILKO: Ach, von Ritzik, howarya doing? Still chasing those madchen?

VON RITZIK: The old Erni sense of humor? You will not be laughing if this incident provokes a war — it would surely interfere with your graft and lounging. (FX: Closing doors and clip-clop of hooves continuing under dialog)

(FX: Knocking on ceiling) You there! Meyer! to the Kommandant's office at Kampf-Bachster!

DR. WATSON: I suspect, Hauptmann, that Mr. Holmes and I need to see the accused first. Eh, Holmes?

HOLMES: You do improve, Watson. I would very much like to meet Lady Ragshaw and the Colonel and take their measure.

VON BILKO: (to self) Oy Vey!

VON RITZIK: (FX: Knocking on ceiling) Very well! Meyer! to the British Observers' quarters at Seagoonhaus²⁴! *Schnell!* (*soto voce: razza frazza verdammt angländers...*)

DR. WATSON: (as Narrator) A swift journey across the city took us to an elegant townhouse of the local brick.

(FX: Horse whinny and snort, hoofbeats ending, Door opening and footsteps receding)

HOLMES: This shouldn't be long, gentlemen. I'm sure that you'll be quite comfortable while the doctor and I meet the accused.

(FX: footsteps to front door, and a door knocker)

RECORDING: "Rule Britannia" from "Pass in Review."

ECCLES: (through door) Oi! Who's dat, then? (FX: door opens) Hullo dere! Can I help you? If you're collecting for the Jehovah Witlesses, I'm right out of pocket, not a sausage. Dis is the Aitch Cue for Her Majesty the Queen-Empress's military observers, and we don't take solicitations 'ere, mate!

DR. WATSON: (as Narrator) We were confronted by a uninspiring speciman with a large nose and low cranium, suited out in the uniform of a lance-corporal of the East Finchley Sappers & Scouts. In one hand was a copy of the Strand magazine.

BLOODNOK: (from other room) Oooaeiough, who is it, Eccles? Another of those demmed police constables? I never touched the gel, I swear it!

DR. WATSON: (as Narrator) An officer stumbled in, hastily buttoning up his tunic. He was in the uniform of a major in the Indian Army, of Roy Roger's Horse. This then was the man we were soon to discover was Major Denis Nayland Bloodnok, late of the Indian Army, and the man thrown out of the Simla Parcheesi Club for the unpardonable act of cheating at the tables.

BLOODNOK: Oooaeiough — a dastardly lie, you narrating doctor you! I never cheated at the tables — only in Mrs. Fitzsimmon's boudoir — Watch out, I'm a dangerous man! I knew Sebastian Moran, and I owed him 50 pounds —

ECCLES: Ohhh de di dum deee di dummm... Major Bloodnok, dese fellers are collecting fer de Jehovah Witlesses —

BLOODNOK: What, never! I already gave! Ooaeiough! I was inoculated as a small child!

HOLMES: No, Major! We are not collecting for any church or charity. This is my colleague Doctor Watson and I am —

ECCLES: — Sexton Blake²⁵?! No — must be Martin Hewitt or —

HOLMES: Stop that blathering, Corporal Eccles! I am Mr. Sherlock Holmes and I am here to investigate the murder of il Conte Rocco Barbella. I wish to see Colonel and Lady Ragshaw. I have letters here from Sir Henry Crun and Mycroft Holmes in Whitehall —

ECCLES: Ooooo. I seen pictures of Sherlock 'Olmes in dis 'ere Strand magazine and he dinnit look like you. Where's your deerstalker 'at den, and your fiddle?

BLOODNOK: Shut up, Eccles!! Bring up that slack jaw! Inform Colonel Ragshaw that these investigators are here from London, and bring in some tea from the NAAFI!

(To Holmes & Watson) And perhaps the Seagoon's Four Noses, a really fine old Canadian whisky from Redmondton?

WATSON: Oho, Major! I haven't had Seagoon's Four Noses since my Afghanistan days — an excellent disinfectant, although it tended to dissolve the tissues when used

undiluted... and remove paint!

HOLMES: None for me, Major Bloodnok!

ANNOUNCER: (Hushed important tones) The Corporate Monolith with a humane face, the **C. A. Milverton Companies**, wishes to make it clear that Seagoon's Four Noses is *not* one of their products — though the Strategic Business Unit of VernetSM Paint Supplies makes a very nice benzene-based paint thinner that goes quite well with French *haute cuisine* —

RAGSHAW: (FX: Footsteps approaching) Good day, gentlemen, I'm Hercules Gervase Ragshaw. (Ragshaw's voice should be very posh upper-class George Sanders-ish with that undefinable Grytpype-Thynne quality) Get out of here, Major Bloodnok. I'm sure that you have someone that you should be doing? Hmmm?

BLOODNOK: Oooaeiough! Indeed, Colonel Ragshaw! Upon me halidom, I have some, eh, research and do the hokey pokey and you turn.... (fading out) Zounds, where's my OBE? I put back the regimental funds —

RAGSHAW: (FX: squeaky cart wheels approaching) And here's Lance-Corporal Eccles with the tea tray! We even have some of the little jammy teacakes and chocolate gateau left.

ECCLES: Duhh, shall I be Mudder, Colonel my Colonel?

RAGSHAW: You silly twisted boy, Eccles...

I don't think so, Eccles, kindly scam back to your post.

(To Holmes & Watson) My sister's adopted step-nephew, I'm afraid.

HOLMES: Colonel, I have been consulted in the matter of the murder of Count Barbella, in the hope that the true murderer may be unveiled and we can prevent all of Europe being plunged into a generation of war.

WATSON: (as Narrator) ... or at least until 1914 and those damned inconvenient Balkan powder-kegs.

RAGSHAW: Sooo, you don't suspect my wife of the crime? How jolly jolly British and fair-play of you!

WATSON: Surely, sir, you don't think your own wife —

RAGSHAW: Perhaps you have a naive and Victorian image of proper wedded bliss, doctor. Caesar's wife is above suspicion, two people and one heart, bells and music and flowers?

WATSON: Colonel!??

HOLMES: You suspect Lady Ragshaw of what, Colonel? Of mere murder, or adultery?

RAGSHAW: I would not be surprised at either. She has deceived me before, used to visit

with a former suitor — not an Army man, a *lawyer* — while I was stationed in the Malay States, but he fled to Winnipeg in Canada and was never again seen in this world.

And then there was that Welsh actor, Archie Leek, the *rapscallion* — he emigrated to the United States and took the moving-picture name of Gary Crant after their affair to remember²⁷.

So how can I not believe that she had deceived me again with the Count and slew him when he tried to toss her aside?

LADY RAGSHAW: (entering) Lies, Hercules, terrible evil rumors that you were too willing to believe!

WATSON: (as Narrator) Lady Ragshaw entered the room, a comely young woman with auburn hair and a delicate step. She had been Miss Violet Bannister — of that noted family that had given Britain two prime ministers, a poet-lariat (of cowboy sonnets), and a stand-up comic. She herself had been a famous beauty and a favorite of the society columns and photography galleries.

LADY RAGSHAW: Hercules — Mr. Holmes — Dr. Watson — you must believe me when I tell you that there was nothing between Count Barbella and myself!

RAGSHAW: (aside, said to put the worst spin on the words) I should say not —

WATSON: (hushed and urgent) I believe her, Holmes! Surely it could not have been this lovely lady who pleads so passionately for her marriage. Couldn't it have been some other from among those attending the event, or even the infamous Ivan Dragomiloff of the Assassination Bureau²⁸???

LADY RAGSHAW: I did see him with the observers from the American Republic, Captain Spalding and Julius Marks²⁹. And the Count paid a lot of attention to the wife of the Argentine observer, Señora Susanna Carmelita Pepita de Manajan y Donajue³⁰ (pronounced Mahn-a-han Don-ah-hoo).

HOLMES: Ah, the noted Latin from Manhattan! Her husband, Coronel Francisco Xavier de Manajan-Donajue, was once the Argentine military attache in London and is well-known to be wildly jealous of his lovely wife. Too simple a solution, perhaps? Yet, a simple crime of passion may plunge nations into the horror of world-wide war. We must forestall that hideous outcome!

LADY RAGSHAW: (as an aside) ... or at least until 1914, or so it's rumored around the Baden-Baden Pool & Tennis Club.

RAGSHAW: When you apply Ockham's Razor, Mr. Holmes, sometimes you just get a close shave.

HOLMES: I need more data. I can't make bricks without straw. I think the trip to Kampf-Bachster is definitely on.

WATSON: (as Narrator) We took our leave of the Ragshaws and the other inhabitants of Seagoonhaus, and rejoined von Bilko and company outside.

FX: (door closing, footsteps on walk, coach door opening and closing)

WATSON: What what what! Who is this woman, von Bilko? Where is the field marshall's aide?

HOLMES: It is quite, well, elementary, Watson. The young person's outer clothing shows signs of wear and yet is of sturdy and costly manufacture. She herself is flushed, perhaps from the attentions of Herr Major von Bilko, but more likely from having spent several hours on the street in cold weather while keeping Seagoonhaus under observation. I theorise that she is an agent of the police or of the German Imperial military intelligence branch.

WATSON: Now that you've present this scenario, it seems so simple —

VON BILKO: (applauding) Very good, Holmes. This is indeed one of our agents, Fraulein Melisanda Jelle, who often performs under the *nom de ecdysiaste* of "Mela Jello"³¹. Mela, this is The Great British consulting detective Sherlock Holmes and his faithful biographer, Dr. Watson.

WATSON: Enchanted, miss.

MELA: (huskily) *Guten aben*, Herr Detectiv Holmes, Herr Doktor Watson. It is a great pleasure to meet you both. Perhaps you remember my uncle, that great Danzig criminologist Fritz von Waldbaum³²? He has often told me of working with you in the Adventure of the Second Stein —

ANNOUNCER: (Hushed important tones) So ends Episode One of the exciting Adventure of the Danzig Mien — sponsored by the C. A. Milverton Companies. Join us again next time when the our duo meet the alluring Senora Susanna Carmelita Pepita de Manajan y Donajue (formerly Miss Susie Donahue of New York), the murderer will be revealed and Watson says:

WATSON: Oh, STEIN!! I thought Holmes said STAIN!

RECORDING: "Hoedown in the Straw" from Hollis Taylor: "Twisted Fiddle."

ANNOUNCER: (Hushed important tones) It takes millions and millions of years to make a proper tank of gasoline, because you have to squish down the dinosaurs so tightly.

So, try *Stormy Petroleum*, because there's no fuel like an old fuel!

Cast List (in order of appearance) were:

THE ANNOUNCER — sponsor's corporate spokesmodel — played by Terry Haugen

DOCTOR JOHN H. WATSON — stalwart friend and boswell to the Great Detective — played by Bill Seil

SHERLOCK HOLMES — the Immortal Sleuth, the Big Kahuna of Baker Street — played by David Haugen

MRS. HUDSON — Long-suffering landlady, and inventor of the Xmas banger-and-mash —

played by Sharon Johnson.

MYCROFT HOLMES — Elder Brother to the Great Detective — played by Judy Lyen

MAJOR ERNST FREIHERR VON BILKO — officer of the *Deutscher Kaiserreich Oberkommand*, card-shark and flim-flam artist, and occasional agent of the *Abwehr* — played by Stu Shiffman

HAUPTMANN RUPERT VON RITZIK — Aide de Camp to Feldmarschall von Hal — played by David Haugen

ECCLES — Lance-Corporal, a ragged Goon and door-troll at Seagoonhaus — played by Jacquelyn DeWitt

MAJOR DENIS BLOODNOK — Anglo-Indian Colonel Bogie type. Late of the 5th Bombay Gins — played by Raymond De Groat

COLONEL HERCULES GERVASE RAGSHAW — HM Govt Observer — played by Michael Phillips

VIOLET, LADY RAGSHAW — The Prime Suspect (oh, that's a different show?) — played by Beryl Kolafa

FRAULEN MELISANDE JELLE (AKA "MELA JELLO") — German Imperial agent and exotic dancer — played by Jacquelyn DeWitt

SPECIAL EFFECTS — by Judy Lyen

MUSIC RECORDING — by Stu Shiffman

¹ "...Danzig Mien": a reference to the story "Adventure of the Dancing Men." "Mien" is defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as "air or bearing, esp. as expressive of mood or personality."

² A compacted roadway of broken stone on a convex well-drained roadbed, with a bituminous binder. Developed by John L. McAdam, 1836, and no relation to macadamia nuts or to the noted Gilbert & Sullivan gypsy traveler opera, *The Macadam*.

³ "Charles Augustus Milverton," the eponymous blackmailer of that Canonical tale.

⁴ "Arf, arf," said the Hound.

⁵ The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia were the hosts of the Games.

⁶ ...at your Robert Service.

⁷ The sideways reference here is to one of the untold tales, that of the Grice Pattersons in the Isle of Uffa.

⁸ Vamberry the wine merchant, with whom Holmes had some professional contact before his partnership with Dr. Watson (as mentioned in "The Musgrave Ritual").

⁹ A sweet usually golden dessert wine made near Tokaj, Hungary; and a favored tippie of German spy-master Von Bork foiled by Holmes in "His Last Bow".

¹⁰ "Lady Frances Carfax," who probably needed such a perky pick-me-up after being chloroformed and smuggled in a coffin.

¹¹ The first of the "Sergeant Bilko" TV series references: Phil Silvers played the character of flim-flam artist Master Sergeant Ernie Bilko of the motor pool at Camps Fremont and Baxter.

¹² Bilko's innamorata WAC Sgt. Jenny Hogan.

¹³ A multiple reference to: a) Tennessee Ernie Ford, the singer/entertainer; b) Kennesaw Mountain Landis, first commissioner of baseball; and c) the now somewhat debunked founder of modern psy-

chiatry (Bilko is a master of psychology).

¹⁴ A barfly character in Anthony Boucher's "Compleat Werewolf," always threatening to begin a long story "...about that time in Darjeeling." Named for "Ozymandias," a sonnet by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

¹⁵ Ralston Purina or Checkerboard Square line of animal (and human) feeds.

¹⁶ Colonel Sebastian Moran, the second most dangerous man in London and the lieutenant of Professor Moriarty. Moran was a noted tiger-hunter in India.

¹⁷ Colonel Hall of Camp Baxter was Bilko's commanding officer and nemesis. His official staff car was always "in the shop" at the motor pool and never available for use by him.

¹⁸ Cpl. Rocco Barbella, played by Harvey Lembeck, was one of Bilko's henchmen.

¹⁹ The Ragged Shaw was the name of a wood in "The Adventure of the Priory School." It is also the title of a noted volume of Sherlockian quizzes by the late collector and scholar John Bennett Shaw.

²⁰ My only *F-Troop* reference. I imagine this solved by Sergeant O'Rourke and Corporal Agarn in a manner foreshadowing the methods of Holmes and Watson. Meanwhile, Captain Parmenter is probably lost in the woods (turn right by the rock that looks like a bear, then left by the bear that looks like a rock...)

²¹ Private Duane Doberman, a member of the motor pool contingent.

²² References to various told and untold tales. A "lion's mane" is a type of stinging jellyfish.

²³ Master Sergeant Rupert Ritzik was one of Bilko's poker chums and adversaries.

²⁴ Yes, time for a host of references to the 1950's BBC radio series *The Goon Show*, featuring Harry Secombe, Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan.

²⁵ Another old-time fictional British detective, he also lived in Baker Street.

²⁶ Holmes claims descent from the Vernet family of French artists. "Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms."

²⁷ I hope that I don't have to explain that Cary Grant was born "Archibald Leach."

²⁸ ...from the unfinished novel *The Assassination Bureau* by Jack London, completed by mystery author Robert L. Fish (creator of the Schlock Holmes series of parodies). Loosely adapted for a film starring Diana Rigg, Oliver Reed and Telly Savalas. Lots of fun!

²⁹ Groucho Marx — hurray, hurray, hurray!

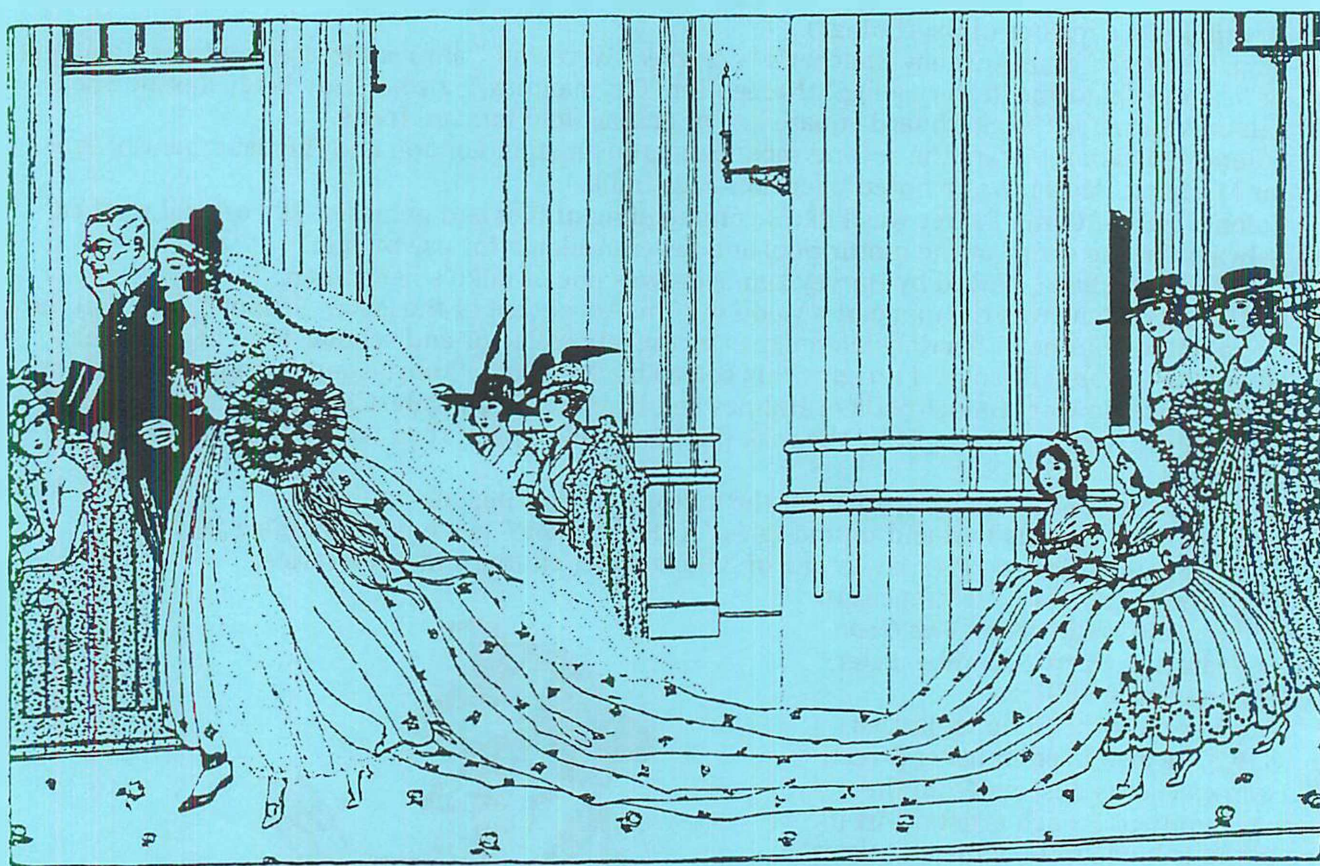
³⁰ Combination of a Danny Kaye routine and that song about the Latin from Manhattan, Susie Donohue.

³¹ Dutch-Indonesian exotic dancer and spy Mata Hari was born Margaretha Geertruida Zelle.

³² From "The Naval Treaty," von Waldbaum was said to be a criminal specialist of Dantzic (sic) who was associated with the case of the Second Stain, not yet recorded.☞



SHIFFMAN (C) 93



*A Funeral, Some Anniversaries,
and a Wedding
or: Digressions into the Genetic Basis
of Polyquaintance*

Allen Baum

Polyquaintance is the condition of knowing everyone, somehow. Probably the best known sufferer in fannish circles is Jon Singer. What is not well known is that this condition is inheritable. How we discovered this and another property of polyquaintance is best told as a series of digressions, starting several years ago.

After my father's funeral, my father's family (aunts Natalie, Enid, and Bonnie) and some close friends (including Gordon Garb and Cynthia Cohen Garb) were watching old family films from the 30's and 40's. The aunts were recording their comments for posterity, explaining events, describing places, and naming names. At one point, Bonnie said "...and that looks like Beth Cohen-- no, that can't be. I didn't meet her until I went off to the University of Wisconsin in Madison."

Cynthia Cohen Garb perked up at this use of her maiden name.

"Hang on a minute."

"Jon Singer's mother was originally Beth Cohen."¹

"Jon Singer's mother went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison."

"Jon Singer's mother is about your age."

"Naw, it couldn't be...."

(Coincidence? Possibly)

Now, this is the same Cynthia Cohen Garb who was my brother's former girlfriend. The same Cynthia Cohen Garb who, it turned out, knows my mother's few surviving cousins better than we. The same Cynthia Cohen Garb whose husband was introduced to me by Jon Singer. The same Cynthia Cohen Garb who my wife Donya and I introduced to her husband. The same Cynthia Cohen Garb whose mother-in-law, Heldrith?? Garb, grew up in the same neighborhood as the aforesaid aunt Bonnie and had many friends in common with her. (Coincidence? Unlikely.)

We investigated further, and word came back from Jon that it was indeed the same Beth, and that her reaction was something to the effect of "Holy shit; I haven't seen Bonnie in nearly 50 years!"

So, there does appear to be a genetic basis for polyquaintance. But, more intriguing is that there is also evidence that genetically based polyquaintance is strongly connected.² This was demonstrated immediately following my brother's recent wedding....

Donya and I offered our house as a gathering place for family following the wedding reception. Almost all the aunts and uncles from both sides of the family, a few close family friends, and Jon and his mother were there.

Jon and Beth weren't there because they are close family friends (as opposed to personal friends) but because aunt Bonnie had invited Beth to our annual anniversary and solstice party that was held the previous day.

The invitation is understandable if you know something of our anniversary parties. We've been holding them since year zero (our wedding, performed by Cedric Clute on the solstice, high in the Berkeley hills on the back deck of aunt Bonnie's communal house). We enjoyed that one enough that we've had repeat parties with 200 of our closest friends every year since, on the weekend closest to the solstice.³

Several (long, hard, miserable) years ago, as we contemplated the upcoming affair, Donya opined that we should somehow tie the summer solstice a bit more strongly into the celebration by doing something like, oh, erecting a model Stonehenge in our front yard. A few days later, our good friend Jay (who had NOT been talking to Donya) opined that we should somehow tie the summer solstice a bit more strongly into the celebration by doing something like, oh, erecting a model Stonehenge in our front yard. (Coincidence? I think not.)

Coming from two directions, this was determined to be an omen, which we succumbed to.

Jay is a house painter and contractor, and no stranger to construction, improvisation, painting and texturing. What he built was only a part of Stonehenge- four uprights and three crosspieces, but they didn't look like models. Each upright was over 10 feet high, three feet wide, and looked as if they were made of stone- enough so that passing cars screeched to a stop and backed up to stare. Many party guests were unsure if they were actually made of stone until they touched them and discovered what can be done with refrigerator boxes and sand applied over wet paint.

What was an occasion became a tradition. The following year, Jay led us in building a full scale Easter Island head. Then a sphinx with my face (which identified guests by name and wouldn't let them enter without answering a riddle). There was a short break while we were in England, but on our return, Jay and crew (including Seattlite Bob Doyle) managed to erect a pyramid 24 feet on edge that covered the front of the house, accompanied by the sphinx, hieroglyphics painted on walls and carved into "stone", a crypt complete with mummy, palm trees, and even a burning bush.

The year after that, a Japanese theme led us to build a set of red and black torii

(Japanese ceremonial arches) up to our front door, to dump 5000 pounds of gravel into the driveway in order to fashion a raked Zen rock and sand garden, and to build a sushi bar in the back yard, from which Jay and his son Ian made sushi nearly all day long.

Our party themes drifted further and further from the solstice connection. This year my brother announced that he'd get married the day after our party so that the relatives could be there as well. So, we picked a science fiction theme, believing that science fiction was more believable than my brother getting married. We ended up constructing a "portal" in the driveway worthy of the film *StarGate*, and a glowing, 13 foot in diameter flying saucer on the front lawn.

Bonnie and Beth had been catching up quite a bit since the connection was re-established, and this year Beth was going to be on the west coast during the solstice. So, it wasn't a great surprise when Bonnie invited her along to our party. We're no strangers to second-hand guests (a vice president of Apple showed up as a third-hand guest once, and he is the one that eventually sent us to England). Beth demurred, since she felt she wouldn't know anyone, but mentioned the invitation to Jon. Jon encouraged her strongly to come, but she wouldn't go-- unless, of course, Jon came along. Jon decided that this would make an excellent surprise, so he accepted. To keep the surprise, he didn't tell anyone in advance except us, so he ended up staying with us, which is how he and Beth ended up at our family gathering after the wedding.

I was in our back room telling my aunt Adele (married to my mother's only brother) about this strange connection between Jon and the family, and had just gotten to the bit where Bonnie had said "and that looks like Beth Cohen--no, that can't be...." when Adele interrupted.

"Hang on a minute. Who is Beth Cohen?"

"She's Jon Singer's mother. That's Jon over there." (pointing).

"Then, the woman I was talking to yesterday at the party was Beth *Singer*."

"Yes....."

"Well, I used to work with her. I haven't seen her in about 45 years!"

(Clunk.) "Well, she's in the front room right now, so you can say hello properly."

(Coincidence? No way.)

Beth's reaction when Adele came in and (re)introduced herself was, appropriately, "Holy Shit!"

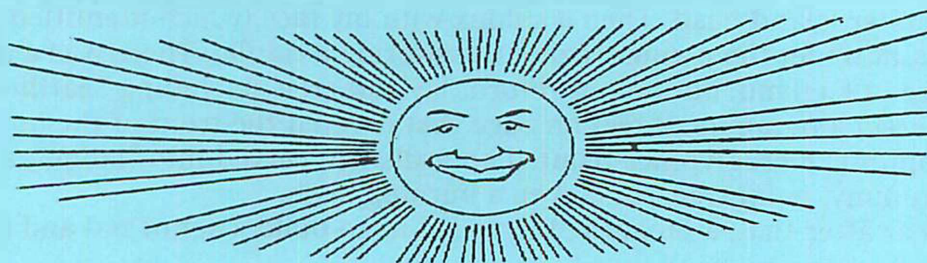
So, that's the empirical evidence. Polyquaintance seems to be strongly genetic. The connections seem to be strongly connected.

But one thing still puzzles me. I have connections to Gordon through one side of the family, connections to Cynthia through the other, and connections to Jon from both sides of my family. If Jon has the polyquaintance trait, what is it that I have?⌘

1 No relation.

2 Actually has a passing relevance here. "Strongly connected" is a mathematical term which basically means that everything in a graph is connected to everything else. [This footnote was added at the editors' insistence.]

3 Except the two years we were in England.





Terry Garey

With apologies to my friends who know I am not talking about them.

Many years ago, I was taken out to dim sum in San Francisco by a gentleman of my acquaintance. He ate rapidly and with gusto. I had trouble keeping up with him.

"Hmm," I said, "it's a rice wrapper with pork and crab, flavored with broth and cilantro, or is it...."

"What do you care what's in it?" he asked.

"I don't know, I just do, and I might want to try to make it at home."

"Why bother, when you can just come here and buy it?"

I felt shabby, even grubby. It was then I realized that no matter how fond I was of this person, our life styles would never mesh.

It turned out a lot of people are that way: why do it yourself if you can pay someone else to do it? What's wrong with you?

Gosh, I don't know. I certainly feel that way about tuning the car, although I have tuned many a car in the past. I feel that way about road repair, and brain surgery and book binding. I will cheerfully pay someone else to spay the cat, paint the trim on the house, or read X-rays.

I don't earn much money, never have and never will, which might account for part of it. People these days tend to earn more and don't need to learn how to take care of

insignificant details like cooking, carpentry, or mending socks.

Hey, I hate housecleaning, but I can't afford a housekeeper and so we simply try to keep things reasonably sanitary and let it go at that. But I know how to do it.

I like good food. So I learned how to cook well. I like to wear clothes that fit me, so I learned how to sew. I like fruit wines, so I learned how to make them. I like big bookcases, so I learned how to build them.

For some, though, the notion that it might be interesting and fun to know how to make dim sum pales besides the joy of throwing money at bigger and better speakers for the CD player which they never have time to listen to because they are working late at the Holy Code Crunching Place.

Not only does it pale; it becomes faintly disgusting.

This attitude towards Loving Hands at Home is not confined to men. Women, I have discovered, have it as well.

It's bad enough when some guy at a con decides I must be Brainless Suzy Home-maker because he's overheard me giving my recipe for Mooseberry Surprise to someone; it's even more frustrating when I'm getting that crap from a woman.

A few years ago I needed a small hostess gift for a dinner party and ran down to the cellar to pick out a jar of jelly. At the dinner party my hostess received it happily, but one of the other guests looked at me oddly.

"You made that?" she asked.

"Yes. It's crabapple jelly."

"I don't have TIME to make jelly," she said with a surly sneer. Her clear implication was that if I had time to make jelly I must be some kind of underachieving kept woman and she ignored me the rest of the evening.

Just last year I was at an opening for the book *Women en Large, A Book of Fat Nudes*, by Debbie Notkin and Laurie Edison.

We were all elated, because the reading had gone well, and people seemed happy with the book. Several people came up to me to talk, including one woman who liked the vest I was wearing. To our delight, we discovered we were both into quilting. As we chatted with one another, two other women standing near listened us in disbelief and walked off. I heard one of them mutter "Jesus, SEWING!!!"

There went my radical image.

I wanted to shout after them, "Well, yeah, and I can use a wrench and a drill and I used to could pull a VW engine when my back wasn't so bad, so there!"

Sheesh.

Well, pardon my existence. Please excuse my dough-covered hands, the threads all over my sewing room, my circular saw and the canning pot. Sorry about my tomato crop, my homemade bookshelves, the mended back porch mud rug, and my inelegant desk made of two filing cabinets and a 3'x 8' 3/4 inch piece of plywood which I really do mean to finish the raw edge on one day but which only cost me about \$40 and works just fine, thank you.

I would hereby like to apologize for making many of my clothes and thus avoiding the encouragement of sweatshops. I would also like to abase myself and hang my head for working part time, driving a old, paid-for car, owning a pathetic 386 with a 20 meg hard drive and no CD ROM.

I buy most of my books used, own four pairs of shoes, have never bought a new piece of furniture in my life, and make my own tamales. I write "useless" stuff like poetry and fanzine articles for my friends, as well as novels which don't sell.

Why? Several reasons.

Because I like to. I hate working full time in airless, garishly lit offices for blithering idiots, so I do as little of it as I can get away with and still make the house payments.

I like making things. Well, really, I like to *have made* things, which is slightly different. I'm cheap, it's true, but I like to know how things work, what makes them tick, rise, clank, buzz and brown, then I like to do some of it myself.

I'm a writer. There are only 24 hours in a day. Some people seem to feel that writers get more time ("Oh, I'd write if only I had the time, like you do."¹), but this is not so. We get the same allotment everyone else gets. We just make different choices about how we use it.

I've chosen to work part time and to write part time. I've chosen not to have children, to skip most parties, to spend time with my computer rather than the TV. We don't go out to dinner or movies much. I only make it to a few conventions a year. Denny buys his clothes in thrift stores. We do not collect Elvis plates from the Franklin Mint.

Therefore I have time to think, time to go to lunch with other writers, time to write like hecky-darn when I've got a deadline. Writing takes a lot of time during which one stares into space in a trance, figuring out what happens next. My current boss hates it when I do that on company time.

I used to get some of my best story ideas when I was a simple file clerk and could let my brain coast in neutral while I filed; now I get some of the best ones while washing used wine bottles.

I live in the sure and certain hope of selling a screamingly successful trilogy. It's what makes me a fantasy writer.

I'm not advocating this way of life for everyone; I don't really care how other people carry on. Everyone has their own way of doing things.

It's just that this is *my* way of life and I'm sick of getting the long look down the pointy nose for it; the moue³ of distaste, the dismissive shrug.

And guess what?

I'm profiting from it.

Thanks to one of my silly "hobbies" and a very kind fantasy writer who likes my blueberry wine, I've written and sold a book on home wine making. To a big house, with an editor and everything. With an advance and everything.

Disgusting, isn't it?

Well, gotta go tie dye my underwear; it's looking a bit shabby. Good thing I saved all those onion skins and bibbleberry hulls. Wonder if I can fit this into a story?

1 For me this surpasses the irritation of the infamous "Where Do You Get Your Ideas From?" question. I simply answer "Mail order.," or change the subject.

It's a toss-up between the "Time" statement and the "I Only Write Poetry When I'm Depressed" statement. The only thing that keeps me sane when someone starts in like that is the knowledge that surely I have made similar asinine announcements and lived to tell the tale, so I must repay the Karma Fairy by not screaming or slashing out with the nearest sharp implement but bear it with fortitude and a fixed grin. It would also be unprofessional. Like this article.

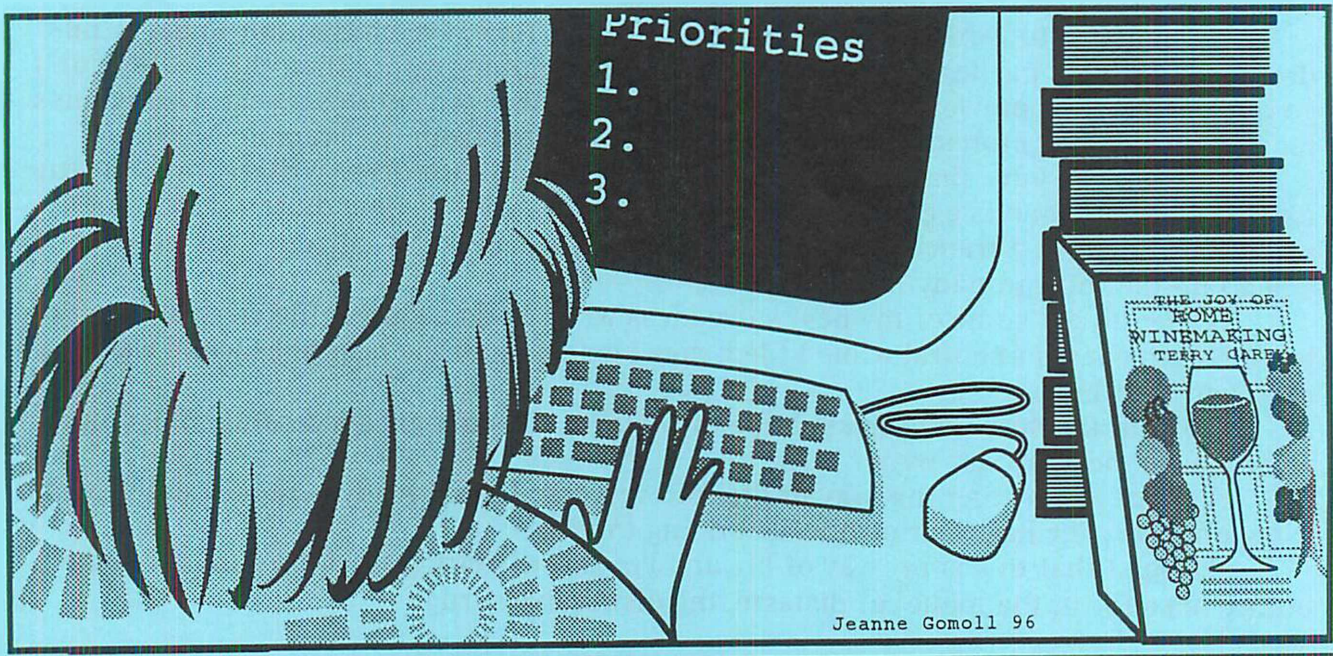
2 If one more person expresses shock and says "Oh Terry, you HAVE to go see such and such a movie" I WILL start screaming and throwing things.

No, I don't have to. Furthermore, I don't WANT to. I don't like most movies. I'd rather read a book. I'd rather take a walk. I'd rather listen to Boiled in Lead. I'd rather scrub the stupid kitchen floor.

Recently I offered to go to the damned movie if the person was willing to read Wendy Rose's latest poetry collection, which I would loan to them free of charge and which would take about the

same amount of time and guess what? They refused. But I was still an un-American creep for not wanting to see *Pulp Fiction*, and a nut besides. Go figure.

3 I realized French would not be my cup of tisane when I discovered that in order to pronounce *moue* properly you had to moo like a cow and make...you guessed it, a moue of distaste. For some reason it just put me off.☞



Annals of Conjuring: For hundreds of years anomalies of nature have evoked paradoxical feelings of fear and fascination. Writers, scientists, and medical men have explored the psychologies and physiologies of these prodigies; they and the public alike are intrigued by the relationship between the horrific and miraculous. That relationship is explored in the following story, perhaps the most bizarre tale in the annals of conjuring.

During the performance of a stage illusion show, a magician requested the help of a volunteer from the audience. An unassuming fellow stood up and climbed onstage. The man was placed in a wooden box and the familiar sawing-in-half illusion commenced. The box was severed and each half separated to the delight of the audience. The halves were then pushed together and the volunteer restored. The volunteer walked back to his seat amidst resounding applause. Suddenly, in full view of the audience, he toppled over and split apart at the waist. His legs walked off to the left, and his torso crawled to the right. Gasps and screams were heard in the audience. Many people fainted. Others fled the theater. The disturbance it created was so disruptive, the effect was never repeated.

The illusion was based on a devious switch of the original volunteer for two men. One was well known, Johnny Eck, who without thighs or legs was a star of the Tod Browning film *Freaks*. The other was a midget who was covered from the top of his head to the tips of his toes in a pair of trousers. Eck mounted the shoulders of his midget friend and "fell off" at the appropriate moment. But the crowning touch, the element that gave the proceedings such credibility, was that the "volunteer" from the audience was Johnny Eck's full-size, perfectly normal, twin brother!

Ricky Jay, *Learned Pigs & Fireproof Women*

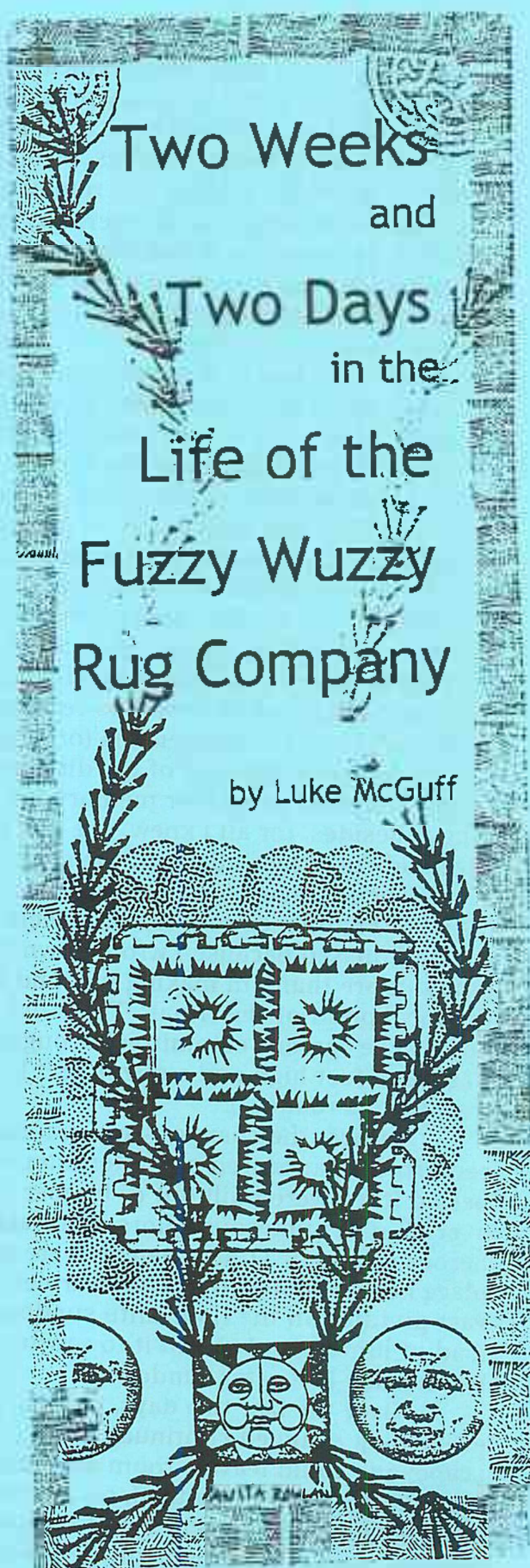
Perhaps not quite as transformative as I thought it would be, but still an incredible experience all the way through, I worked with the Fremont Arts Council on their Feast of the Winter Solstice.

What remains with me is the improvisational nature of the entire event. This was the sixth time they had done a feast, but the size of the event had forced them out of the planned-on space at the last minute. They only got access to the site on December 6, fifteen days before the feast itself, their second largest event of the year (one of the coordinators guessed 500 people attended).

The site was the abandoned warehouse of Fuzzy Wuzzy Rug Co., a bankrupt rug cleaning company. Flooded, leaky-roofed, filled with the detritus of a commercial haunted house (how scripted and safe the tingling of fear is allowed to be!), cold, electricityless, graffitied, spiritless. There would be a room for the ritual and drum circles; an entryway; a room for the feasting tables; a room for eating; a sanctuary for private meditation. All these rooms were emptier than the air in them the first time a workcrew entered the building on December 10th. An hour and a half later, ten of us had swept and cleared all the rooms. Some demolition work had been done, and one area that wouldn't be used for the feast had been filled with naily lumber.

As the first group was standing around, eating gingerbread persons and saying hey, it looks better already, a guy showed up who said, let's paint it. He's a professional painter and had the right equipment, including 30 gallons of a flat brown paint. A cinch, he said, just a couple of hours. Mind you, he was looking at a room on the order of 25 x 100 feet, at least. Hah! (Later, at the party, he went into exultant detail about the pump he had used, a Graeco 650, I think.) Quickly enough, the windows and some woodwork were covered, and the next time I saw it, thousands of square feet of wall had been painted a flat brown. Believe me, it was an improvement.

There was also an electrician and his assistant who spent between 40 and 50 hours working on the power, getting the heaters



going, rewiring the lights, bringing in baseboard heaters and ductwork as necessary.

Every time I came back, radical changes had occurred. The sanctuary was different every day, as the giant luminary progressed. The luminary was to be a flame-shape, fourteen feet tall, large enough to sit inside and meditate. There was to be an unfired clay sculpture holding twelve candles. (People reworked the clay sculpture throughout the course of the night, adding and removing shapes, so that by the next day it no longer resembled the original at all—perhaps just the spiral of candles). The floor would be covered with cedar sprigs (hand trimmed) and there would be cushions for people to sit on. The luminary was ringed with nineteen different free-form clay vessels, containing the ashes from altars people had built to memories, and then burned. (I didn't participate in this ceremony, but the people who did were quite moved, and surprised at how moved they were; I apologize if my minimal description appears to minimize their experience.) In the center of each vessel was an oil votive lamp. During the event, I saw a person in the luminary wipe away a tear; I saw another woman with her hands in a memory fire altar, eyes closed, bent down over the vessel.

I glanced back at her—what did she think she was doing? At first I had a churlish reaction to her newagey image—I imagined she was imagining the ritual, that she was convinced she was receiving the transmission of the memories from that particular fire. How did she know? Whatever she was thinking, or feeling, or thinking she was feeling, probably had nothing at all to do with whatever memory fire she had her hands in, but she was receiving something big and important. And that was the whole point: the participants in the memory fire ritual had created a mirror in which memory resided, they had created the magic to empower people to receive their own memories. So whatever the woman “thought” she was experiencing (or whatever I thought she thought she was experiencing) was irrelevant in the face of the directness of her experience, what ever had caused her to focus in on that particular memory fire altar so intensely that she put her hands into the ashes. Besides, for all I knew, she was the best friend of the person whose altar she had her hands in, knew all about the ritual and knew exactly what she was doing.

The luminary took two weeks to build, and is the thing I know most about because it's what I happened to work on. There were also a couple of sessions of candle making (which I missed because I wrote down the wrong location). Two people worked several hours (more than I'm making it sound like) on a large, elaborate painting that was to be the focal point of the ritual. The effigy of King Winter was brought in Wednesday afternoon. The “greens committee” brought in a pile of evergreen, cedar and holly boughs that was three feet high and a dozen feet long. They also got several dozen small trees (for free, from a roadcut).

At first the changes were gradual, but noticeable on a daily basis. Four or five large centerpieces appeared one afternoon, looking very much like Louise Nevelson in a brown period (they were built out of lumber found in the space). Then they were painted overnight in numerous colors, as if Jackson Pollock had dropped in (these are both artistic heroes of mine). Other changes were noticeable over the course of a couple of days, as the place became better lit, dryer, warmer. “Dryer” was a relative term, though; there were vast puddles on the floor until sundown Wednesday. Someone had taken home a truckload of lumber and milled it to sawdust; several bags were dumped onto the floors Wednesday just after sundown.

Over the last two days, though, Monday night, Tuesday night, all day Wednesday, everything changed continually, and it was continually amazing, like an opening landscape; one could leave a room and come back a few minutes later and some large, significant fixture had been added, or several more people showed up, sawing and hammering. Tuesday night there were about twenty people in the warehouse. Some were decorating all the doorways with boughs of evergreen and cedar; climbing ladders and pounding away.

Others were finishing the sanctuary, preparing the ritual space, getting the feasting rooms and entryways decorated and set up. Now the space was busy and happy with many people doing many tasks. The energy was both focused, in that just about everybody had a good enough idea of what had to be done that no one needed to be "in charge," and open in that there was constant improvisation, grabbing and using and making good. Yeah!

The vast energy that went into transforming the space from an abandoned warehouse into a feasting hall was a large part of what created the potential for the spontaneous and the possible at the feast itself.

The Saturday before the event there had been a headdress decorating party, where more than a dozen people made about two hundred headdresses for everyone who came to the event. It was "craft jazz," no preconceived notions were possible. The basic chord structure was a fabric-wrapped foam tube, the notes were vast bags, boxes and tables filled with a humorous (downright hilarious at times) collection of gewgaws and gimcrackery. The riffs and jams came from the finger skill of the players.

People who had made headdresses for a couple of years running were able to step in and get going. This was my first experience, and it was surprisingly challenging. I worried about my headdresses being not "good" enough, compared my work to others, felt dissatisfied and anxious. But the point was not to pause and evaluate, but to step lively, find your rhythm and let the fingers move. Many of the headdresses were quite beautiful, many were quite humorous. But what was more important than beautiful or humorous was "done," and that the maker of the headdress enjoy making it. There were also waves of turbulence at the headdress party, as people rooted through the ever-more-disarrayed piles of frou-frou, then would take piles to the glue gun table. The glue gun table would be crowded for a while, two or three people sharing a gun, then people would go back to the frou-frou room. The pace was pretty quick, but the experience was cooperative.

To say that putting together the feast was the largest and best extended example of cooperation and autonomy I've yet seen does not mean that there were no conflicts, no friction. In fact, I came home one time and told Jane that I was relieved to find out the Fremont Arts Council was not the perfectly smiling happy family I had thought them to be after Trolloween. But still: if you have a community organized around freedom through creative play, it's generally going to be a dang happy bunch o' folks.

As music, it would have built in rising waves, like a tide coming in. Tension would have built and built to a frantic pitch, rolling ever higher; one low thrumming note, a pulse, a pause and transition, would have held the tension through the interlude of the sundown ritual and the candle-lighting; and then all would have crashed through to the chaos and joy of the feast.

By sundown Wednesday, everything was in place. All the tables and chairs had been set up, all the lights had been strung, all the doorways and halls decorated. We gathered together for a circle, placing four candles in the middle of the painting for the ritual. A couple of people said a few words, we held hands and walked around the circle and walked around the circle four times while singing a song (the only words I remember are "Rise up o flame").

For the last couple of hours of set-up, I was able to do some elegiac musing while running to and fro. I think it's an example of how intolerant of—well, what? Experiential diversity? Thought diversity? I don't know how to put it, and "diversity" is a little overused these days—but when one says something is "beyond good and evil," usually that just means it's evil. When we speak of the derangement of the senses we speak merely of drug use.

Yet we were creating a space beyond good and evil, a place where the senses were set on edge just enough that anything was possible, and there was a little hallucination in everything we saw. There was a magic to the shadows, such that I turned around at one

point and saw a giant in a red tunic, his face painted black and white. Santa Lucia, her candle-lit headdress, one of the brightest things in the room, walked through, dressed all in white (prosaically, one advantage of the headdress she said later was that she could see what she was eating). A beautiful woman was carried away by the ecstasy of the drums and the physical heat of the dance room to the point of possessed writhing on the floor. People talked without shyness to strangers. A conga line of at least fifty people snaked through all the rooms, all the people laughing and shouting. People dropped from the line or grabbed hold to the end as they wanted. A thirteen foot long challah bread was passed to each table, everyone who took a piece received blessings and everyone who gave a piece received thanks. Events happened that surprised and gratified even the people involved in it: kabuki dancers, Morris dancers; a male dancer joined the female dancer during the main ritual, sparking an intense collaboration of male and female energies.

Another thing I thought of while working was that we've lost the idea of the celebration, the gift exchange, the potlatch. Everything's politics and economics. The feast was a vast gift, from a community, to a community. Freely offered (no one could buy tickets; people were encouraged to bring food and invited to participate in work parties), freely accepted.

This was all we had created, all we had made possible. This was a way in which we had made the world plastic, created it, gave it form, and gave it freely to all who attended the feast. I sometimes think that in the 19th century I'd be a mountain man, ever walking, ever struck by wonder. This, now, I would say is the greatest adventure possible.

"When the energy felt right" (later we figured it had been the same time as a spectacular moonrise) a few of the core group gathered together to start the ritual for the burning of King Winter. This, too, was impressive, a destroyer of preconceptions, a creator of possibilities; it became the focus of everyone at the feast.

Everyone's life was touched in some way by that event, whether they came to a neat potluck, attended a genuine solstice feast and ritual, or saw it all as a pit-on spectacle. (Actually, later on I realized the fact that some people might see an action as part of the spectacle is no reason to hold back from action, just as feeling one cannot do a lot is no reason to hold back from doing a little.)

But still, there are some niggling questions. You (reading this) might think what about "real" politics? I think this was a "real" political act, more real than the envelope stuffing I've done for various campaigns and causes. As we cleaned up, someone remarked, "Everyone will remember this party for years." And it's true: they had been given something previously unimagined, unimaginable. Another dark voice says, maybe *you* can do it, but I never could.

But the point is, you can. Part of the reason I've gone on at such great length, in fact, is not to brag about what a great time I had, but to inspire you, whoever and wherever you are, to begin to create such experiences yourself, on whatever scale you can or think you can. A theme potluck, a picnic, whatever. What you might see from my description is the point of arrival. Who knows how the people involved in the Feast got started, what their first efforts were? It's a step worth taking.

It was exactly two weeks and two days from when the first workcrew entered the Fuzzy Wuzzy Rug Co. until the last workcrew cleaned out the sanctuary and took the last truckload of boughs to the city yard waste recycling dump. The rooms were again empty, cold, and wet. As we left, we said goodbye, goodbye, thank you.☞

[Originally appeared in *Project Z* #2]

Pit Stop

Eileen Gunn

Brightly lit restroom. Three stalls. Sign taped on door of one: Out of Order. Handbag hanging from door handle of another.

Well-bred woman's voice. "I think we'll just bring mommy's purse in."

Good move, lady. Why did you leave it outside in the first place?

Into the empty center stall, sit on the commode, pee.

The voice next door continues. "Now, who's going to go first?"

"Me." Young child of indeterminate sex.

Mommy again. "First you, then the firefighter."

Firefighter?

"I have to go potty, too." An even younger child.

"Yes," says mommy. "We *all* have to go because we've had a busy morning."

With two kids and a firefighter? I can imagine.

Mommy continues. "Now the squirt gun...."

The squirt gun has to pee? What's going on in there? *Gotta* stick around and see who comes out.

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Difficult being in pieces like this. Must pull ourself together. Where'd Bix go? Get in here, straggler. It's a *door*--you can't just ooze through it. I know, I know, but we don't have *time*.

Keep up the patter, guys, someone just came in. Determine protocol for elimination, according to rate of metabolism.

Proceed.

Prak and Auf, there is something the matter with your appearance. You're blurry. Adjust the faces, define the limbs. That's adequate, but perhaps we need a refresher course in basic form.

All waste products disposed of? Hold onto your partners. Replace personalities. Resume functioning as separate entities and let's get the hell out of here.

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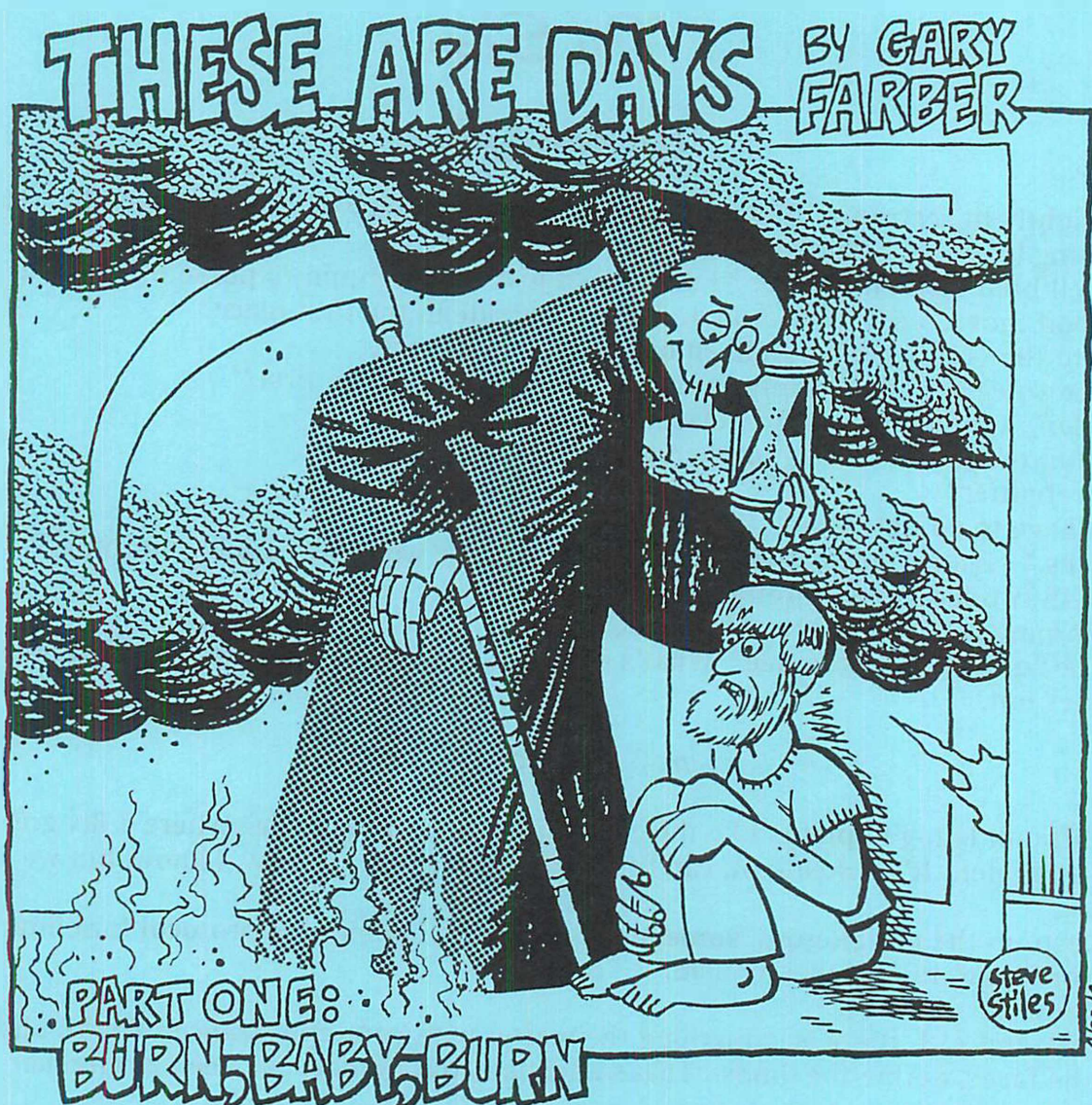
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I'm leaning against the sink, waiting to see what come out of the stall, when the door opens. A woman in her early thirties, cropped hair, well-dressed, ushers two small children out, a girl and a boy. No, it's two little girls. I think. The little one's kind of unfinished-looking. Maybe she'll be a girl when she grows up.

The older girl has a squirtgun, the funny-looking kid is carrying something squishy made of rubber. Must be the fireman. The woman's carrying the purse. She nods at me stiffly, as if she's never used a public restroom before and is a little wary of the sort of people she might find there. She pulls her kids toward her and shepherds them out. Takes all kinds, doesn't it?⌘

For Vonda McIntyre



Editorial note: We like the following article, but Gary Farber doesn't. In an ideal world, he would have found the time to rewrite it to his satisfaction. But this is not an ideal world, is it? In this world, we received "These Are Days" perhaps two years ago. We made some changes (reducing redundancies, eliminating infelicities...or so I claimed) and returned the results to Gary for his comments and further changes. That was at least a year and a half ago. After a year, he could no longer locate our version, so we sent it to him again. At last he read it, and decided he'd need to do a complete rewrite. That was last fall, about a month before his trip to Britain.

By then we'd received art from Steve Stiles, excellent stuff; we'd built the issue with Gary's piece as the capstone, and took to heart Gary's pleas that we not publish without him. Then we decided that this would be the final Mainstream.

So we're publishing our version of "These Are Days." If you find spots with odd diction, or feel some information has been left out (such as the Farber Fire Fund auction held at Janecon to benefit Gary) blame us, not him. jak

So I was lying in bed, half-dozing, in the early evening of Tuesday, February 26th, 1991. It happened to have been the day of the heaviest snowfall of the year--the snow and ice were feet high on the ground and surfaces outside. I dog-paddled closer to consciousness, incited by increasing noise of people, growing dimly aware of distant, insulated shouting, and then I smelled smoke.

I had lived through one fire in my building, started on the floor below my fifth floor apartment, on June 22nd of 1990 (see *Brooklyn #1*, a Fanoclast hand-out zine), so my reflexes had been indefinitely advanced to a standard of "Taut" on the theme. As I dived for my pants, masses of thick, pungent smoke were suddenly billowing up through the bottom of the bedroom wall behind me, and I could hear people screaming, along with generic cacophony. Heavy clouds of smoke swirled around me; coughing, I leapt to the policy that warp speed wasn't at all fast enough this time. I threw my wallet and keys into my pockets, and yanked open the bedroom door, clutching my sneakers in my left hand, racing for the apartment door. The living room was alive with smoke, everything barely visible. I flipped open the locks, ripped open my front door and confronted blackness.

Absolute overwhelming absence of any visual presence.

Utter nothingness, like what sf writers are prone to saying one would see in hyperspace.

It makes you confront the difference between a fire in real life and the movies. In the movies, there will be nice thready clouds of smoke, flame, and confusion, but it can't be anything like it is in real life. Movie creators resist showing long scenes of a blank screen, and so they show something that bears not the slightest resemblance to reality in this situation.

The reality was almost indescribable. I can only say that it was akin to opening a door to a textured wall of carbon paper, or suddenly wearing a partial blindfold, or feeling the momentary blindness from a sharp, sweet blow to the skull.

Feeling the heat of flames somewhere beyond that nothingness, hearing the popping noise of fire, along with that inspiring never-stopping clamor of panicking people, and already beginning to choke from the smoke, I swung the door shut for an instant to consider options. Deciding they were limited, after several extremely deep breaths close to the floor, I pulled my shirt over my face, crouched low as I could, and, opening the door again, scuttled blindly along the hallway floor, by feel, towards where I knew the stairs were, around the mattress and springboards lying abandoned against the wall for a month.

By the time I had groped three steps down the hallway stairs, I knew this wasn't going to work. I was still completely blind, was choking as well, but the controlling factor was the heat of flames on the floor below, far too powerful for any chance of getting through them. I could feel intolerable heat; hear the fire roaring as it fed rampantly through the floors below. I knew it wasn't going to be possible to get past the fire on the floor below, let alone down four further flights from there. Scared completely shitless at this point, I moved down several more steps anyway, panicked but dogged, before retreating and finally groping back to my apartment. I swung the door shut against some of the smoke, and collapsed on the floor, trying desperately to get some air, any amount of it, into my lungs.

Trying to ignore those niggling thoughts ("*You're going to die. This is where I'm going to die. Really. Nothingness. Suddenly. Now. Now. Now.*") that had been nagging since I first opened the door, I picked myself up and ran for the bedroom, slammed the door shut, catapulted myself over the printer-on-top-of-the-drawers, and started flipping the levers to open the emergency burglar-proof grating on the window to the fire escape. The view through the window was obscured with smoke and orange reflections. I threw open the grate, and yanked up the window. The smoke outside was about as thick as the smoke inside; sticking my head out, I could see yards-high sheets of flame erupting from the win-

dow of the apartment directly below. Waves of flame painted that fire escape landing and Jackson Pollack-dribbles of flame licked through mine. I would have to go through those flames to get to the ground. *Joy*. Your options are *less* than limited, I told myself.

My memories are blurred and semi-blank on all the details of the next few minutes, and they were that way by the time I made it to the ground (I assume I'm not diminishing the suspense here by letting you know that I lived.) I had grabbed a nearby jacket as I leapt for the window. I made it out onto the fire escape, the thin metal unbelievably slippery from the remnants of ice melting from the fire.

I threw the jacket over my head, and went down through the flame.

By the next landing, my hands and bare feet were numb from the freezing cold of the iron metal. On the third or second story landing, I slipped, fell, and barely caught myself by one hand from dropping to the ground. At the bottom landing, I was almost unable to lift the weight of the freezing iron ladder, necessary to unhook it so it could drop downward. I learned the meaning of hysterical strength. It fell; I clambered to its bottom, hung, and dropped fifteen feet, barefoot, into a pile of snow. Somewhere in all that, the pair of sneakers I had been carrying were gone. I made my way towards a crowd near the courtyard of my building.

Later a wonderful woman from the other, undamaged, wing of my building presented me with a pair of her son's sneakers and socks, which I gratefully accepted. Then I watched my apartment burn amidst the others.

Many fire trucks arrived, and a large crowd entertained themselves. The firefighters fought.

~~I made my~~ way back to my apartment while the firefighters were still trundling around, before I was supposed to. I admired the new skylight in what remained of the bedroom, four feet by five feet, and the lack of a wall between my former bedroom, and neighbor's kitchen. Only part of two walls, part of the ceiling and part of the floor remained. An entrance had been carved from the bedroom to the living room, and everything had been decorated with carbon, ash, water and wood. Much stirring had been done. What remained of the floor buckled upwards, the way a volcano grows. A large amount of alchemical transmutation had taken place. It was an impressive redecoration.

I was also impressed that someone had found the time to discard my binocular case in the bathroom and steal my binoculars; this was skillful considering how quickly I was back in the apartment.

I finished the evening at D. Potter's and Bill Wagner's, making some phone calls. ("Hi, Victor Raymond. About that profile of Jerry and Suzle for Minicon due the day after tomorrow? I have a good excuse....")

I spent a week on kindly Bill Wagner's couch before going back to my ruined partial apartment. I owe Bill a lot. I spent the next couple of months struggling with my lying, cheating landlord, his contractors, my long-term lack of electricity, heat, phone and sundry other wonderful complications.

The Red Cross said they would rule it uninhabitable, or habitable, as I liked, as it was borderline, though they tried to persuade me to forget living there. The alternative welfare hotel the city offered was less palatable to me.

For more than a month people complained of a smell of smoke when I was around. I continued to make discoveries over the next couple of months. For instance, although I thought that things in my closet had survived except for the impossible-to-remove smell, I eventually found that the edge of everything along the wall was scorched and, of course, ruined. I could have given six suits to a one-armed man, though.

I lost all my correspondence, fanzines, personal records, work records, LP-records, collected manuscripts, collection of hundreds of videotapes, etc., of the previous three years. I lost a lot of books, furniture, much of my computer software and most personal

kipple. I lost almost all of my clothing. Between this and circumstances described later, I then or subsequently lost almost *all* of my possessions: furniture, kitchenware, microwave, toaster-oven, iron&board, bookcases, vcr, stereo, telephones, tape recorders, tool chest, vacuum cleaner, typewriters, stationary supplies, bathroom stuffs and everything else you can imagine. Since I had no fire insurance, and was already in heavy debt to couple of people, I had no money to replace anything, no matter how necessary. This led to my living an Overly Simple Life for the next couple of years.

Although the ImageWriter II printer was rather melted (both computer and printer were within a foot of the wall that totally burned up), the one miracle is that the firefighters had ripped the Mac SE out of its socket (while it was running), tossed it across the room on the bed, where they had then thrown a fully loaded chest of drawers on top of it, more furniture on top of that, and then dumped part of the ceiling on it, after it had come through the fire, smoke and water, and...it started right up when I tried it. I almost had a heart attack of surprise, and am fully ready to do a commercial for Apple. (Oh yeah, the casing remains a bit smoky, and the "4" and "9" on the numeric keypad don't work; recently the Cap Lock expired. Golly.)

In retrospect, it was clear that if I hadn't gone the fire escape route, I would have been fine if I stayed in the bathtub, water running from the shower, with a wet towel over my face, until the firefighters arrived. Equally obvious is that it would have been insane to have tried that, not knowing what would happen.

By May I finally gave up on staying in the apartment. The bedroom was a complete loss, although its new entrances to the three apartments, next door and below, along with the skylight, were *tres charming*. The rest was partially destroyed, windows all smashed, etc.; I won't bore you with the remaining inventory. I stayed from March through June, slowly getting repairs, out of lack of options due to lack of funds. The circumstances did not aid in helping me do freelance copyediting, proofing, reading, etc., or obtaining other kinds of work. I was also very depressed.

People kept asking me if I were going to write this up. I didn't feel able to do it, and especially not to turn it into a funny piece. It was too rawly emotional, too real. I would have liked to have done something to catch up with friends, but this was too close to home. I can write this now, after 18 months, at the price of distance, through the fog of memory. It was not a fun experience.

On the other hand, it produced a great gratitude at the idea of being alive, and I was personally unhurt save for the most trivial of burns and bruises. (No one was seriously injured.) In the end, although it engendered a total disruption of my life, what was lost was just things. Some of the things had irreplaceable emotional attachments, and some are pretty necessary functional objects, but, hey, things are things. I also felt good about the fact that a family from the first floor escaped down the fire escape after I did, and proba-



bly wouldn't have been able to lower the ladder if I hadn't.

At the beginning of June I arranged to move into an apartment-share with Sam Helm, whom I knew slightly through mutual friends despite our coming from almost entirely separate New York fandoms. I paid him for June, but wasn't able to actually move until July 2nd, much to his confusion (added to by my lack of a phone). All I could move initially were the barest minimal effects that were left: a tiny amount of clothing, my air conditioner, Mac, tv, and a handful of books.

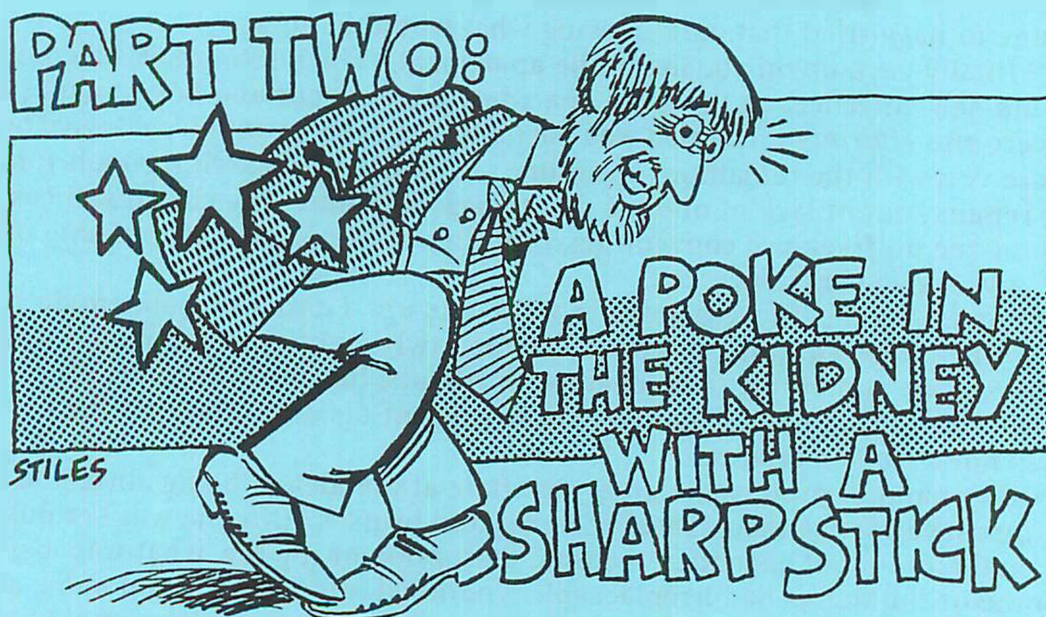
This leads me to the subject of the fate of my remaining possessions. In conversation with people, I frequently referred to losing almost all of my Stuff from that apartment in the fire, *and subsequent aftermath*. Often I just said, "Stuff I lost in the fire." This was conversational shorthand necessary to keep from launching into an excessively long-winded fuller narrative. A more complete version is herein.

At the time I was, of course, dead broke. Not that this is new to me, but the condition couldn't have been more emphatic. My only resources for moving Stuff, even the 14+ blocks from Fairview Avenue to West 186th Street, was to beg a friend to drive whatever I could load into their car, or to myself wheel whatever I could fit into a shopping cart load.

The repairs on the apartment at Fairview Avenue still has at least another two months to go, and the landlord said it was fine for me to take this much time to Move my Stuff out. I moved a First Load, with air conditioner, tv, semi-working stereo, and several boxes, thanks to Toni Weisskopf's generous willingness to make a trip. I expected that after another couple of weeks or Work, well within the safety margin of two months, I would have money to pay for a rented van and driver to move the remaining surviving Bulk (chiefly kitchenware such as the microwave, etc.), lots of books, my other personal things and fannish artifacts, and the surviving Heavy Furniture (impossible for me to get downstairs from a five-story walk-up on my own, anyway).

I had moved several triploads of Stuff via shopping cart in the first week before I found myself paying my regular visit to the offices of the Doubleday Book and Music Clubs.

I felt ill a great deal of the time during the month of July, and had a low-grade tem-



perature frequently, but had no great conclusions about this until the afternoon of August 2nd, 1991, in the then offices of the Doubleday Book and Music Clubs on 46th Street, between Lexington and Madison in Manhattan. Working for Ellen Asher, reading and evaluating manuscripts and galleys as to whether the Science Fiction Book Club should do them, had been one of my regular freelance gigs for quite some time, and since my friend Moshe Feder's office was immediately adjacent to Ellen's, my visits would sometimes be prolonged beyond business. I've always been prone to a restless digestive tract, so when the pain of what I thought was intestinal cramps acted up, while I was showing Moshe some tricks on the office Mac, I merely excused myself to the bathroom.

A number of white-faced, sweating minutes later, when I made my way back to Moshe, and he asked, "Everything okay?" I replied, gasping, "Not really. Do you think I might possibly be able to impose on you to come to the emergency room with me...?"

At the time I didn't know what the incredibly agonizing internal pain I was feeling was, whether it was a twisted intestine, a kidney stone, or what, but after a several-year-long taxi ride in which I gained the ability to twist iron bars out of shape, and shatter brick with deep low-vibration moaning, I made it to Beth Israel Hospital's emergency room, where I running/shuffled in, doing something of a Marx Brothers walk, panting and pointing, "*pain in abdomen/side here.*"

After an interrogation/examination, they said, "We think you're having a kidney stone attack." "Sounds reasonable to me," I moaned. So I got a nice gurney bed slot for myself, and settled in for what was to be a nine hour stay ("a three hour tour, a three hour tour").

I also experienced for the first time what was to be an inescapable theme with medical personnel on the subject of kidney stones. Apparently every mammal with medical training has the following phrase drilled into their genetic heritage so that when they hear the words "kidney stone," they pavlovianly respond, "*Oh, yes, I understand/hear that that's the single worst pain a person can experience, even worse than childbirth,*" and cluck sympathetically.

I never once failed to get this response when the words "kidney stone" were uttered. Never once, complete to the closing clause "even worse than childbirth." (Mind, *I'm* not claiming it's worse than childbirth; it's *their* ritual phrase. In fact, the single worst pain of my life was when they yanked on my arm bones to set the broken bones in my wrist, in 1988.) I was to hear this phrase close to a hundred times from the lips of medical folk desperate to make polite conversation. They seemed to feel this sentiment would make me feel better....

Since one is only separated from other patients, at best, by a thin curtain, hanging out in the emergency room of a major metropolitan hospital bears some resemblance to an audience participation version of *St. Elsewhere* or *ER*, but may bear more resemblance to forced viewing of *Lifetime Medical TV*, or films of surgery.

Though Beth Israel is supposedly one of New York's better/best hospitals (and its *ER* bears *no* similarity to Bellevue's—trust me on this, it's another story), there is the grotty reality of listening to the interns' and nurses' chatter about other patients ("They brought that old woman in from a nursing home—take a smell of her leg, it'll be educational for you." "Why?" "Gangrene.") or the patients' banter (senile old man: "I love you, nurse! I LOVE YOU! I WANT TO EAT YOUR HAIR! LET ME EAT YOUR HAIR!").

For about six of those hours, the person in the slot to my right was a disco-punkish young woman with multiple colored spikes of hair who had apparently been hit by a car while leaving Limelight, a well-known New York club (*Omni* once had their yearly extravaganza there). Though she showed no signs of major damage, they wanted her to stay for several hours to check for internal bleeding, etc. Since she could see no sense to this, I was subjected to six hours of her whining, complaining and abusing the staff.

Though the best thing for a kidney stone is to drink tons of water, since they only *thought* I had a kidney stone, and weren't sure, I was allowed to drink nothing. After the fifth hour, I was finally wheeled off to be X-rayed, and the extremely nice, though uncoordinated, attendant only rammed into one other gurney on the way. The first confirmation that I had a kidney stone came when, lying on the X-ray table, waiting for the technician to develop the X-ray, I heard a long, sharp, low, loud whistle. When I queried him, he said to me with his mouth, "That's the largest goddamn kidney stone I've ever seen in my life."

I am always pleased when I excel.

The attendant who wheeled me there and back was distinctly the nicest person there; he was quite chatty and sympathetic, and came round to visit later a couple of times, just to be friendly. Half an hour after the X-ray, I was waiting back at my familiar slot, clutching the X-ray itself that they had given me to hold and show to the doctors when they arrived. The medical staff, like that of every hospital I've experienced, held the traditional belief that cotton-rayon curtains are soundproof, and therefore it is cogent policy to stand one foot from the patients (whose symptoms they firmly believe must inevitably include deafness) and discuss them.

So it was that I listened to the intern who had last dealt with me briefing another on My Case.

I kept quiet while he garbled half of the facts, but when he got to the point of "—probable kidney stone, though uncertain, awaiting X-rays—" I began attempting to attract their attention, yoo-hooing and warbling, "Doctor, I have the X-rays here...really; you can see them...." After they had both looked them over and nodded sagely, I snagged the second one briefly for a few questions.

The following dialogue ensued: Doctor: "...so it's certainly a major kidney stone. Unless, of course, it's a gallstone." I (puzzledly, since no one had previously mentioned this possibility): "A gallstone?" Doctor: "Yes, it could be a gallstone, being so high up on the right side as it is." I: "Er, right side? The pain is on my left side." Doctor: "Are you sure? Isn't it on the right side?" I (not pondering whether I had mistaken on which side I had felt the second most intense pain in my entire life which lasted for hour after hour and temporarily gave me the power to crush large diamonds into carbon while singing opera; calmly): "No, it really is my left side. Honest. Really." Doctor: "Your left? Are you sure?" I use my heat vision power. Doctor withdraws muttering to re-examine X-ray. Comes back. "Er, sorry, I was, um, looking at it backwards. No, it's, ah, definitely a kidney stone." I refrain from hitting doctor upside the head with large wet fish.

Finally, after a variety of other small comedies and dramas, and the reversal (after the shift changed at midnight, and new doctors got to make the decision) of the plan to hold me for further testing, I was released with the commandment to see my doctor and a urologist the next morning. I had been there from 5 pm till past 2 am.

The next day I saw the HIP urologist, Dr. Pelman, after an IVP (intravenous pyelogram; i.e., they pump your renal system full of chemicals and take a lot of fancy X-rays of it). I went back up to his office, and five seconds after he looked at the pictures he reached for the phone, saying, "I'm scheduling you into the hospital immediately; we need to do a procedure as quickly as possible." He then set up an operation for the next morning without another word to me.

The short explanation I was able to drag out of him afterwards was that this kidney stone (though certainly not the largest *he* had ever seen) was partially blocking the kidney and was in immediate danger of moving at any time to fully block it, which would cause it to shut down, which would cause me to, like, in Captain Kirk's words, "cease to function," or drop dead.

They needed to insert a renal stent, or shunt, which is internal tubing, into the kidney, and the canal that leads to the bladder, to keep the kidney open and functioning.

This would keep me from dropping dead before they could do lithotripsy, the ultrasonic bashing of the stone into gravel. Don't ask how they got the tubing into the kidney—trust me, you don't want to know, though it reminds me of a room in the Field Museum in Chicago, one side of which causes men to involuntarily clench their thighs closed towards their crotch, the other side of which creates the same effect upon women—it's a fun, sadistic room to people-watch in. Let's just say that I'm very glad they use a general anesthetic for this procedure, and it wasn't an idea I planned to store to contemplate to induce zen calm.

The next day found me in a double room at St. Luke's/Roosevelt Hospital at 10th Avenue and 59th Street in Manhattan, sharing the room with an elderly man who almost never awakened the entire three-plus days I was there. The movie *The Doctor* had just been released that week, and I got to have a nice chat with a cute young Chinese-American urologist who told me how realistic she felt it was, right before I got to watch *Doogie Howser, M.D.* I made the mistake of not looking carefully at my plastic wrist ID until I got to my room, where I discovered that I was "Gary Faber." Conversation with hospital staff revealed that I was now going to be "Gary Faber" until I left, because, as they put it, "the paperwork would be much too complicated to change now."

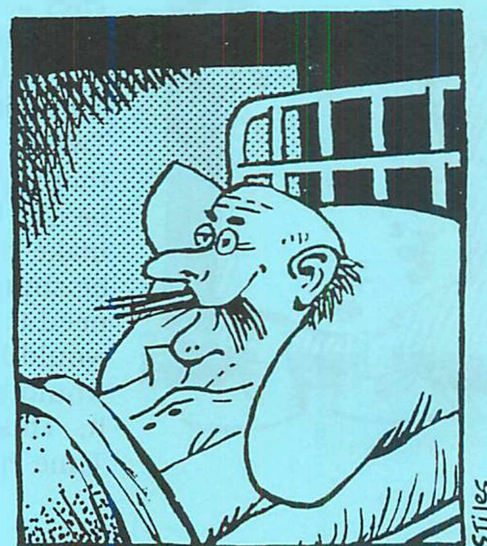
I awoke from the operation to find that I was not comfortable. Initially, not comfortable can be defined to include the concept of being a live-action version of Wile E. Coyote shooting up through twenty ceilings for the first day's worth of attempts to make wee-wee. As it developed, I was to be not comfortable, in a somewhat different, though related, fashion, for the next nine months.

Aside from the immediate effects of things done during this procedure, I found that, as the doctor said, "some people find the renal stent more comfortable than others." Personally, I don't recommend it to enhance your vacation.

During my stay, the usual sort of hospital hassles occurred, like being unable to get the phone connected for two days, being initially booked into the wrong room and then having to wait, getting the wrong food, and so on; I'll spare you all that, except to note that I had wondered why my room was so hot until the private nurse of the Unconscious Gentleman explained that a blanket had been placed over the air conditioner to that the UG would not feel cold (note: this was not for medical reasons, but for comfort). I hope his unconscious was comfortable. The story becomes even more convolutedly long and tedious after that, so the only summary you get is that after several weeks of delays, I finally got the lithotripsy done on October 21st, 1991.

Lithotripsy is an interesting experience. They first give you an epidural block, just like some pregnant women get, to nerve-block your lower half, then wire you up to a table with a liquid basin under you, separated from you by a membrane. After more anesthesia through an IV, and giving you headphones to you can pretend you're on an airline run by insane SMERSH terrorists, they whomp you with several tens of thousands of ultrasonic bangs—wham, wham, wham, wham.

I found the lithotripsy, per se, quite innocuous, actually. I was less wild about the epidural block, which was uncomfortable, especially getting this ludicrously large needle, about the size of a jackhammer, slid into your lower back to camp out, snooze, and play cards for a considerable time, though playing with a numb lower torso and legs for a couple of hours later was an interesting new experience.



After the necessary two-week waiting period for results, X-rays showed that my stone hadn't even flinched from the sonic assault. My stone had apparently journeyed here from the planet Krypton, with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal kidney stones, and upon being subjected to several thousand smashes, had merely shrugged, and said in a bad French accent, "Ha, I laugh and wave my private parts at your leethotreepsy!" My new doctor, Dr. Marks, the lithotripsy expert, explained that only two percent of stones don't respond to this treatment, but I was in the lucky two percent.

I am always pleased when I excel.

Rather than full-blown kidney surgery, in which they would open me up all the way to extract the stone, which would be a ten-plus day hospital stay, and six-plus weeks of recovery, the intermediate step would be percutaneous lithotripsy, a milder form of kidney surgery. In this, they make a small opening, about the size of a large pen, insert the instruments down a log tunnel they carve, and do the lithotripsy internally, at point-blank range, then snag out the remains. This, Dr. Marks assured me, would be sure to do the job.

So I was scheduled for surgery at Beth Israel Hospital, and a three-plus day stay. (If you liked their ER, you'll *love* their OR.")

I then proceeded to make five separate visits to the hospital to be admitted. Each time, after being on the gurney, about to be wheeled in to be operated on, I was given a postponement for, in order: lack of the right blood test; being bumped by an emergency cardiac case; high blood pressure which first had to be treated for several weeks; uncertainty over my liver functions; and my GP's failure to give me a hepatitis clearance as he had been asked to do in light of my abnormal blood work-up (he decided he needn't respond to Beth Israel's doctors' request; they decided they wouldn't operate).

In the meantime, I was in constant major pain, drugged up on percocet and codeine, and pretty much unable to work or do much of anything but pee lots of blood, groan when I moved my pelvis, and practice my zombie routine through Method Acting.

And I was *really* depressed. I had yet to come to understand severe clinical depression, but I was living it.

This brings me back to my Remaining Stuff. Remember it? We left it sitting back in my burned-out/getting-repaired former apartment on Fairview Avenue. When a couple of weeks had passed after my initial hospitalization for the insertion of the renal stent Torture Device, I called both the super of the building and the landlord to let them know what was going on with me, and make sure we were on the same wave-length as to how long I would be able to let Stuff stay at Fairview Avenue. They assured me it was Not a Problem for at least another six weeks while my former apartment was still being reconstructed.

As my Return to something resembling Normal Operating Condition kept receding into the Future, in units of Another Two-to-Three Weeks From Now, I consistently called both of them again and again and again, to make sure my Stuff would be ok. I repeatedly gave them my phone number so they could make contact with me were anything to change. When it got to be somewhere about October, the landlord said that they did need to get the Stuff out of my former apartment, but that he would have the super move it down to the basement, where it would be safe, and could be kept indefinitely until I could claim it. This was More Than Fine with me, as it not only lessened the Time Pressure, but would make it far easier to move when it



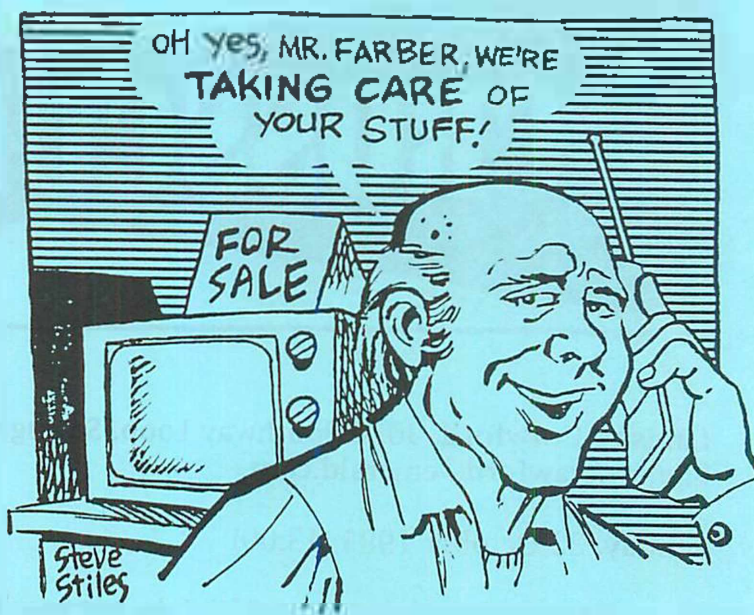
came time for me to get my Stuff as I wouldn't have to deal with it being at the top of five flights of narrow stairs.

I continued to call every few weeks to update the landlord, though I now always ended up speaking to his secretary or answering machine. I always re-stressed my phone number if they needed to speak to me, and the importance of my Stuff to me.

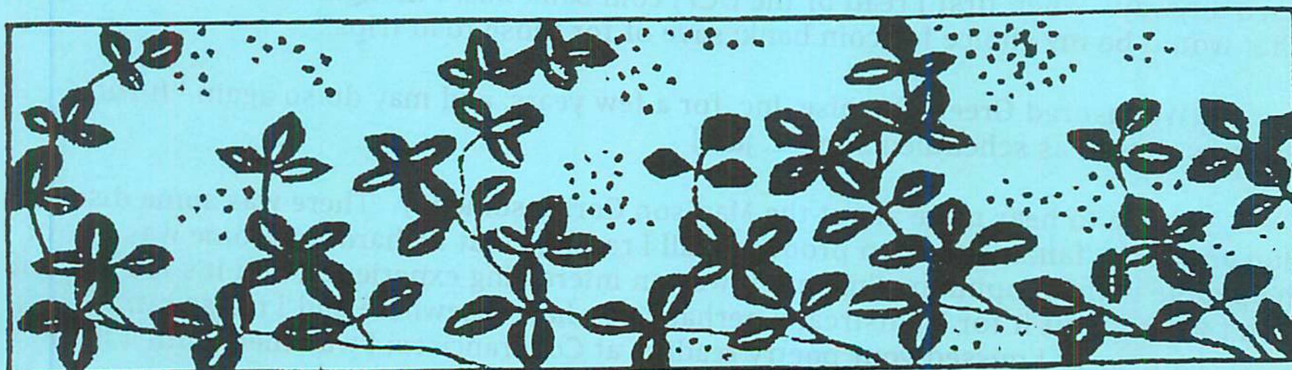
I finally had the operation, successfully, on May 8th, 1992, nine months after my first hospitalization. It was less fun than my stay at St. Luke's/Roosevelt, and lasted five days. I learned many amusing lessons about the interconnections of one's internal parts, as well as the meaning of the term "renal colic," among other learning experiences. One thing kidney problems does for you is encourage the wiping away of any remaining taboos concerning wee-wee from your pee-pee. I was not generally impressed by the quality of nursing care (with a couple of exceptions), and was impressed by the lack of thought given to standard patient care practices. But that's Another Article.

I called the super at Fairview Avenue. I could finally get my Stuff later this week, I told him. Oh, he communicated across the language barrier (he had a little English, I habla no Spanish), they had "thrown out" everything. The language barrier prevented any further communication. I called the landlord, who wouldn't take my calls. I knew I had no legal position, as I had no legal standing to hold him responsible for my remaining possessions. I had, through lack of any other apparent options, been forced into believing his repeated prior claims that my Stuff was safe. Too late, I realized that this scum-bucket was delighted to take this opportunity to screw me and have revenge upon me as the trouble-maker I had been to him.

I was devastated yet again, and Plunged Ever Further into the Depths of Depression. But that, too, is Another Article, as yet unfinished; I meanwhile recommend William Styron on depression.☞



--Gary Farber/1993, slightly re-edited in 1995



CROSSCURRENTS

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Sunday, 22 October 1995 (13:00)

Thanks for *Mainstream* #16. I do not recall having ever talked to you before Orycon 16, but I know I've seen you at many cons since the late 70s. The fanzine room at Orycon was a pleasant habitat, and I only wish I had been able to visit with fmz fans more in the evenings, but I was hosting bid parties and had to talk to my guests, which was mostly a pleasure.

Nice cover by Craig Smith; who are those veterans of the staple wars? I'd have to reread *All Our Yesterdays* or something like that. The drawing is good enough that I'm not concerned about who the figures represent; either I'll learn or not. I like fan history slant.

Clean layout on the ToC, all the pertinent data is easy to see at a glance. The combination of desktop publishing, laser printed masters, electrostencils and mimeo has produced another fine looking fanzine. "Bewitched, Bothered & Bemildred" is #? in a series which goes back at least to the early *Spanish Inquisition*. I am not familiar enough with Seattle fandom to know if the 1992 Solstice Festival to which you refer was a fannish gathering, but it seems likely. Good reaction to being Lord of the Misrule: "It was fun, and I felt that perhaps it would mark the beginning of a lucky new year."

{{The Solstice Festival was not a fannish event. It was sponsored by the Greenwood Grove, a local Neo-Pagan group. jak}}

All I know about insurance companies, aside from the Newshour mention, is what I read in mystery novels. I hope the D.W.F. & A. job has worked out for you. I'll have to remember W.E.T. is Western Experts in Transportation; another odd factoid to hoard. When I read that you worked with charter bus insurance policies, I thought of Green Tortoise, but I believe they are not a charter company and they probably get their insurance in San Francisco anyway. When first I read of the UCPI coin bank bus, I thought of the "Further" bus. That would be my choice for coin bank; save of for those road trips.

{{We insured Green Tortoise, Inc. for a few years, and may do so again. It runs charters as well as scheduled service. jak}}

I hope to hear more about the Madison Corflu someday. There was some discussion about the fanzine the con produced, all I recall is that Richard Newsome was one of the people with an opinion. I'm sure it was an interesting experience, and it's too bad you didn't write about it for *Mainstream*; perhaps you have elsewhere and I missed it.

I am sorry I missed your poetry reading at ConFrancisco; I was there with a large

contingent of then-current and former APA-50 members and most of the con was spent visiting with them. I had hoped more of us would spend time seeing the con, and I'm sure (had I but known!) if I'd seen you in the program I would have been able to get some of my friends to join me in attending your reading. Many of them have written poetry and have a keen appreciation for it, while I tend to know what I like.

You seem to have felt it was a special moment, and I am aware of San Francisco's rich past in which the beat poets, among others, figure prominently. Did you happen to talk to Dave Rike at the con?

I am not sure how deep you are into Buddhism, but you might be interested to know that one thing we did instead of attend the con, was to take our APA-50 Official Gargoyle Tom Jackson (erstwhile reporter for the Lawton Oklahoma Independent, if I remember correctly) to the local Buddhist temple, where he spent the afternoon. (By local, I mean Marin County) Tom is continuing to explore the Buddhist experience in OK.

The writing about Hawaii by Jerry and others was informed by my memories of visiting several of the islands for a week in July, 1970, when I was 11 and on a tour with my grandmother and a group of retired persons. I will never forget the landscape of plains and mountains covered with green growing trees and flowers and the salty island breeze along the coast.

The pieces by Carol Severance and Sophie Keller do complement each other, in linking the beauty of the physical world to some inner place of spiritual beauty. Of course beauty has an opposite, wherever the one is found so is the other. The mystery of life is a journey began to destination at which we are never quite arriving. Each workshop is step along the path, and I believe in progress, but at what point do we find a place to sink roots?

On "My Favorite Year": I like the contrast between Vonda's statement: "My life hasn't peaked yet—I'm still looking forward to my favorite year," and that of Marci Malinowicz: "At the very moment you are reading this, I am having my favorite year." I look forward to meeting Tom Whitmore, Kate Schaefer and Glenn Hackney at Ditto 8. Interesting comments from all.

Andy Hooper's "How to Be a (Seattle) Fan: 1994" was fun and informative. "I may be comparatively soft and friendly in my observations." I haven't read the other "How to" from the Haydens' zine, but I may have it here somewhere and look forward to it. In the meantime: Andy has certainly captured the flavor of the local fan scene. He walks a fine line between telling it like it is and suggesting how it might be. He is making fun in a careful way so as to bring some objective perspective into play, rather than damn everyone for their pretension. You have to admire his fortitude. Humour is always precious, even when it bites reality.

Thanks to the relentless writers of locs ("Cross Currents"): Both, I gather. Great to see Brian Earl Brown, George Flynn, Lee Hoffman, Ethel Lindsay, Beth Miller, Brian McNett, Jeanne Mealy, Lloyd Penney, Ken Rudolph, Ron Salomon, Tracy Shannon, Mae Strelkov, Shelby Vick, Harry Warner, Jr, Ted White and Walt Willis all in the same place. Gives me a good idea of what I missed in *M* 14/15, and some idea of what these folks are up to. The voices of fandom never fail to excite me.

And the WAHF column: goshwow, it's an honor just to be nominated.

Terry Garey's "Bee Parking" is a fun little horticultural moment, even for those of us with passive gardens.

"Suzlecol," about the passing of time and parents, is concerned with changes we all face sooner or later. The display of values in relationships is enlightening. I hadn't thought of this since reading it over a year ago, but a random glance at the text brought it all back. I had forgotten that Suzle skipped the Virginia Corflu due to lack of interest, and as attending would have meant a trip across the continent, I can certainly appreciate that

there would have to have been a really compelling reason to make the effort.

{{It wasn't lack of interest exactly, but lack of funds, and growing certainty that the con would be very much like their "Progress Reports." I understand that I was proven right about the latter. svt}}

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Joshua Wachtel, somewhere in the Peace Corps

October 2, 1994

I guess all fans must find their own paths into sf and the ephemeral and morphic worlds of sf fandom, supposing their offbeat fancies should carry them that far. It's taken me awhile to find my own way into fandom, although I've been vaguely aware of its existence in various forms for some time. I'm almost 23 now, and science fiction—including other forms of imaginative literature, films, television, comics and games, which I have never much discriminated between—has been weaving its way into my consciousness for nearly as long as I can remember. I think I've always been a fan, but whenever I've tried to list what sf has been most important to me, the result has always been more cluttered than useful. The obscure juvenile fantasy novel or the low-budget Japanese sci-fi tv show, which might have made a reasonable impression on me at a certain age, would for all purposes be useless to someone else. And such a list would never include all the things I never saw but were central to another person's experience. Still, there's no denying, all that stuff seeping up through the cracks of the culture, the stories of other times, beings, people, powers and places, which I learned to identify with the spirit of sf, has been drawing my life along in a certain direction. Now, all of a sudden, I am finding in fandom a host of other people who have caught hold of that same spirit, and who are riding along with it in their own time and their own ways.

Ostensibly, here's how I find my way into these pages. After graduating college and a summer's living at home in Pennsylvania, I decided to pick up and move to Seattle to live and work. Over the last year I've been doing some writing in my spare time. Best as I can tell, the writing I am attempting to produce is sf—at least according to my loose and still uncertain understanding as to what sf really is. When Alexei Panshin, who is a science fiction writer and friend of mine from Pennsylvania, heard I was trying to write sf and realized I was living less than five blocks from John Berry and Eileen Gunn, he put me in contact with them. I've been going to monthly Vanguard parties since July. At the last one, looking for more clues into the nature of sf fandom, I asked Jerry for a copy of his fanzine and he invited me to write a loc. A strange series of coincidences, or living proof that sf has its own methods of drawing people together?

The reason I don't hesitate to ask such a question has to do with my reaction to *Mainstream* 16. In the two articles related to Hawaii, it is suggested in one that there may be useful forms of healing outside the bounds of conventional science-based medicine, and in the other that a woman might be able to consciously control the winds and that spirits of the dead might haunt children. One might be tempted to call these ideas occult and dismiss them out of hand. And yet, there are indications in both articles that there are people in Hawaii who have accepted certain mysterious powers (that is, mysterious to us) as realities of life; and also that certain "technicians" in Hawaii are able to employ those powers to human benefit. Since there is little if any mention of science in the entire issue, it makes me wonder if the future of sf won't have more to do with taming subtle forms rather than the gross material scientific powers which past science fiction was so concerned about coming to grips with. If there are powers beyond those our science un-

derstands, it seems to me imaginative fiction will be one way we bring those powers to better human understanding.

As to the whispers all through *Mainstream* 16 that sf fandom is degenerated, perhaps the impression of a new fan would be of interest. In truth, my entrée into Seattle fandom could not be felt more kindly. Even though Alexei's main involvement in sf fandom was in the '60s and '70s, I've been treated by his old friends and acquaintances like they'd just seen him yesterday. The fan parties themselves seem like a hot spot of activity. So far I've been to four events at as many houses, seen and met new people at every one, tried every unusual food Jon Singer's put in front of my nose, and had conversations on topics I'd not likely get a chance to talk on elsewhere. The last party I walked away from with two fanzines (including *MS*), *Machinations* (subtitled "Plans, Plots & Schemes of the Seattle Cacophony Society," and including invitations to a scavenger hunt in the cemetery and a game of sardines in the Pike Place Market), and a broadside titled, "Solutions to Everything by Michael Ventura" (which provided 38 points of advice that really made me smile). Well, maybe all this is a degeneration, but for somebody like me, fandom is looking quite generative.

Last note. I asked John Berry at the last Vanguard why no one seemed to talk about science fiction. He sort of laughed and said that it always seemed to be that way, and that what mattered was that everyone had an unstated interest in sf. As it happened, to prove the point, the conversation did come around to science fiction, and I knew he was telling the truth. May the spirit march on.

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Lynne Ann Morse, Caan van Necklann 63, 2281 BB Ryswyck, The Netherlands

November 23, 1996

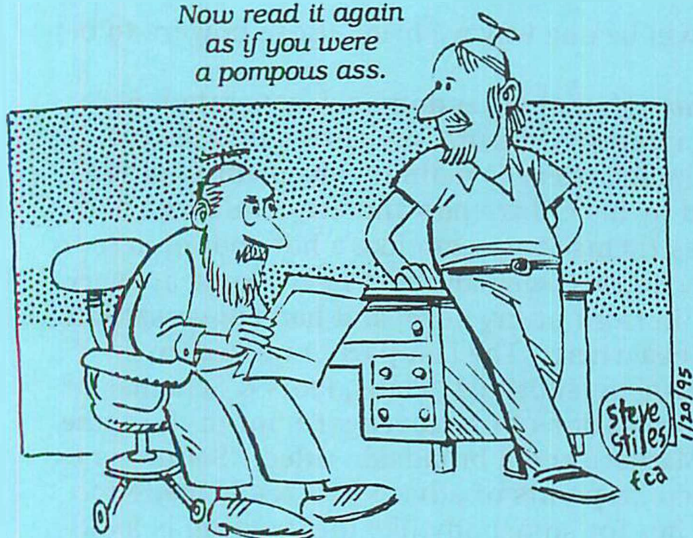
My reaction on reading Hooper's piece, "How To Be a (Seattle) fan" was, "Oh, so THAT's how it's done." All the necessary secrets in one easy lesson. Well, maybe not easy for Andy, from whose article bitter experience flashes through (such as with Generic Overstuffed Career Activist).

I very much appreciated the quality, content and tone of "Present At Creation" and "Coincidental Magic"—the authors report their experiences, but don't oblige you to agree with the interpretations presented. I've met more than one sort who promises, "I'll pray for you," clearly expecting some resultant conversion; Christians have no monopoly on this sort of behavior. I've met it in New Agers, Neo-Pagans, and so-called "natives"—all espousing variants of, "If you take me seriously and respect my beliefs, then you won't confront me with any disagreeable differing viewpoints." Which seems as if such folk are *looking* for you to "dis" them, so they can get mad all over you. But with the extra room Keller and Severance give to their audience (and keeping the report on their experience, without any expectation of their audience's belief), comes the freedom for me to reject (if I wish), but also to consider from this other point of view. Refreshing.

A big hug to Suzle (if she's in for that sort of thing). Five years ago my mother-in-law died, and 18 months after that so did my father-in-law. We both learned a lot, Roelof and I, but that doesn't make the pain go away. That the end of "M" had to include dealing with the betrayed trust placed in Fay seems doubly unfair. There is really nothing to say except lots of sympathy. And take care of yourself, to recover from this sort of idiocy others choose to inflict on you.

{{Thank you. I appreciate your thoughts. Since things got unexpectedly even worse before I had the chance to write comments to all of you who expressed sympathy, I'm us-

Now read it again
as if you were
a pompous ass.



ing my editorial to do so now. svt}}

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Algernon D'Ammassa, P.O. Box 23101,
Providence, RI 02903 (check address)

October 10, 1994

Thanks for *Mainstream* 16, and the wonderful stories herein. I especially appreciated Terry's story about zinnias. Many people plant gardens with only their own enjoyment in mind. The discovery that your Pink Splendors served as motels for bumblebees is fascinating, and gave wonderful new purpose to your gardening.

You say you wish you could do as much for the human homeless. There is a Boston-based artist/visionary/wacko name of Paul Laffoley who has a beautiful fantasy about that: "living architecture" composed of thriving vegetable matter. I quote him:

"I want to live in an orchid. An orchid can literally be made larger than its form...the orchid, of all the flowers, is overstructured, it's overdesigned. You could enlarge it a couple of times, probably ten or fifteen times its size and still have its form remain. You could make it so large that you could live in it. There are a lot of interesting spaces in an orchid."

A conversation with this man is a liberating experience, a synthesis of mystic spirituality, psychoanalysis, Duchampian invention and looneytune pseudoscience. I met him at an exhibition of his paintings and designs in Providence in July of this year. Boston-area dreamers should look him up.

Behind my parents' house are some unruly woods which belong to us but which we've ignored. I've made plans to start taming these woods, to clear a path into the heart of them and to build a meditation garden there, with a small gazebo for sitting. Now, in addition to shelter for a human contemplator, this garden may also provide shelter for some weary bees, as well. Thanks for the tip.

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Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York, NY 10034

October 8, 1994

Mainstream 16 is a delight, starting with the fanhistorical humor on the cover. It's also a pleasure to see fanzine people using the advantages of the new word processing technology, without giving up on the benefits of mimeo. (This may appear an odd statement, as I have never produced a mimeoed fanzine, but I simply don't have a mimeo, or convenient access to one, and photocopiers are all over the place. It's those start-up costs: Kinko's and its ilk would look at me blankly if I brought in stencils.)

{{That's us! We're right on the blunt edge of technology...svt We're still learning how best to combine the two. See Harry Warner Jr.'s letter further on for some complaints about our previous attempt. jak}}

I greatly enjoyed Sophie's tales of Hawai'i (is that apostrophe really standard spelling in Hawai'i?), and only wish I had something to offer in return other than thanks. And Carol Severance's piece on coincidental magic is fascinating. Living in a densely populated Western city, I have had no similar experiences: we keep our dead in neat rows, put concrete and steel over everything, and barely have room for falcons, let alone ghosts.

{{I no longer remember what the standard spelling in Hawaii is, but I've gone back to the dictionary standard for this issue. As for falcons in big cities, Seattle has a project to encourage peregrines, and they have a protected nest on one of our downtown skyscrapers. jak}}

Andy's "How to Be a (Seattle) Fan" was amusing, even to a New Yorker. I would add, "Ask all visitors when they plan to move to Seattle, even if they've only been there for three days and you've just met." Seattle is a nice city, but I found this habit of Seattleites a bit surprising: I have visited London, Toronto, Boston, Minneapolis, Madison and a number of other cities, enjoyed all of them, and not been asked this.

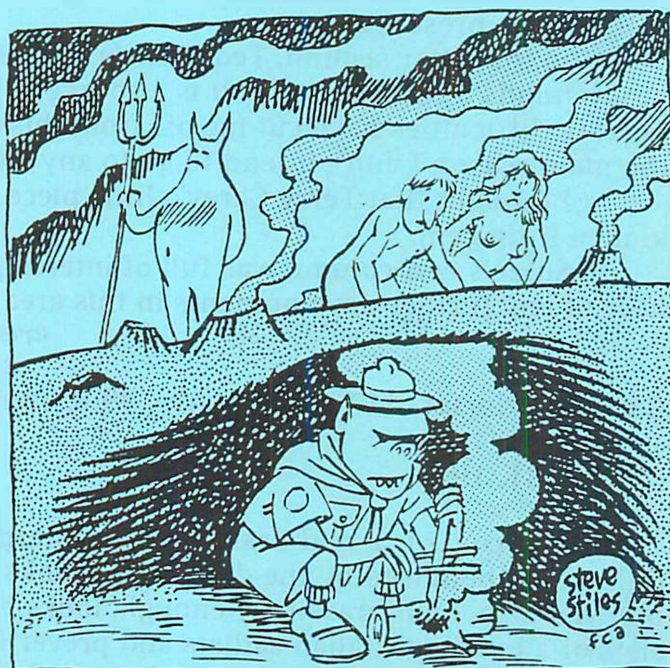
{{It could be because over the years, some folks who come through "visiting" are in fact "scouting it out." I mean, Jerry was, 21 years (EEK!) ago, when he came out to visit. svf}}

I've never had any really bad neighbor experiences, although we did find out after the fact that we'd had some potentially deadly neighbors at one point: we were living in a third-floor walkup apartment, one of six cut out of what had originally been a pair of semi-attached houses. Shortly after we moved out, we read in the paper that a terrorist ring [sic] had been broken up by the FBI, and had been using one of the apartments in the other half of the building to store weapons. Fortunately, they either didn't have explosives or knew how to handle them. (And all that time, we thought *ours* was the dangerous household: a previous roommate had put barbed wire up on the backyard fence, and painted it flat black.)

{{The bracketed "sic" is in Vicki's letter. jak}}

Terry Garey's piece on bee parking was delightful, both for the information it offers (I had never before wondered where bumblebees spend the night; I think I assumed they had hives, or nests, or something) and for the attitude she conveys.

In re Corflu: I found the Madison Corflu, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say Madison fandom, warm and welcoming; they showed us bookstores and the farmer's market (though I realize that relatively few visitors wanted to get up early enough for the latter), fed us all the home-made cheese-cake we could eat, and my only complaint was that I had too little time for



Well, at least now we know where
all that smoke comes from.

everyone and everything I wanted to see. In fact, Madison is on my personal list of the best Corflu I've been to. I agree, though, that giving one person "special dispensation" to smoke in public areas is a bad idea: it makes things difficult for people who are physically sensitive to smoke, while still inconveniencing the other smokers. It seems, almost, like the worst of all possible arrangements.

{{I agree that the Madison folks worked very hard to give us all a good Corflu, and by just about everyone's estimate, did just that. The more I think about it, the more I realize that my mood that weekend may have been being colored by the the fact that, unbeknownst to me, my Mother was in the process of dying. It wouldn't be the first time that I've picked up on horrendous future events in the lives of people close to me. Sometimes it takes a few years to gain perspective. However, be that as it may, in a setting such as an intimate convention like Corflu, allowing one person (possibly without knowing it) to restrict where others may actually *be* is a mistake. svt}}

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Walt Willis, 9 Alexandra Road, Donaghadee, Co. Down, North Ireland, BT21 0QD

October 31, 1994

Thank you for *Mainstream* #16. I liked both covers very much, the back one being uncannily like the actual approach to the Tower in County Down.

I also like Jerry's editorial and Suzle's collection of various people's favorite years, an excellent idea.

Andrew Hooper's article is mordant. Curious, this is the first time I've had occasion to use that word, but it seems to fit.

Carol Severance's article fits in nicely with Sophie Keller's. I wonder though about the old woman she credits with supernatural powers over the wind. I think the old woman might reasonably be expected to have extended her control to allow the spectators time to reach shelter. Obviously either she hadn't complete control over the elements or she didn't care about the spectators' discomfort, neither of which alternatives seems to fit in with Carol's presentation.

In the letter section, Ted White's contribution stands out for me by its evocation of group minds at conventions. It is a source of great sadness for me that my increasing hearing difficulties have cut me off from this sort of conversation at conventions. This is the main reason I don't intend to go to any more conventions, including Glasgow in 1995.

I thought that Terry Garey's little piece at the foot of page 29 was perfect of its kind, a little gem.

Suzle's end column was full of interest, especially the mystery about Fay. I'd like to hear of any further developments in this area.

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Gary Deindorfer, 447 Bellevue Ave, #9-B, Trenton, NJ 08618

October 31, 1994

The cover is a real Craig Smith masterpiece. It is a hilarious idea, rendered exactly right. I am bemused by the driver, who looks like he's either in the Mafia or Secret Service, but who also, embarrassingly enough, looks like me; except that I think that the Mafia consists of a bunch of Italian sadists and preverts and wish it would Go Away, and as for the Secret Service, I would not leap in front of President Clinton to stop a bullet meant for

him, but then neither would you, probably. As for the also magnificent bacover, it is a piece of timebinding fannish history with a twist, namely that long and winding road up to the Tower of Trufandom. Damn, this is the kind of thing that fanzines can do that conventions really can't. I mean, just how many "live" fanzines can you present for the masses? After the first twenty or so, would the cheers from the audience still be as loud? No. But we fanzine fans appreciate really creative and funny and harmonious and ambitious timebinding, such as the cartoon genius Craig Smith has bestowed on the front and bacovers of the wonderful *Mainstream* 16.

I must differ with Ted White on Hooper's piece in the 15th issue. I thot it was rather successful as a pastiche, perhaps because I'd just read Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* the year before and was still fresh in my mind, giving me referentiality. But for a reader who had not read this great novel nor seen the film *Apocalypse Now*, they might admittedly be rather lost. But as I told Andy Hooper in a letter some while ago, I detect a note of genius in this piece.

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

November 22, 1994

[Regarding the "lateness" of his loc] I could claim that it took me seven weeks to read the less than satisfactory mating of thin computer typeface and blue paper in the 16th *Mainstream*. But I've been equally late with recent comments on other fanzines that were easier to read. You must remember that computers are limited to the movement of electrons when they are called upon to assist in the production of fanzines, while typewriters have entire molecules at their command. That seems to make a difference in the thickness and darkness of typefaces.

{{And what do electronic stencil cutters work with? I think our stencil cutter carries some of the blame. We'll do better this time. jak}}

All I know about Hawaii is its good offices in making it possible for Julie Andrews to star in a long motion picture and the fact that FAPA's official editor used to live there. But now I feel much more informed on the islands, thanks to all the material about them in this issue. I must confess inability to share vicariously the sense of wonder that the lava flow gave Sophie Tatianna Keller. Her description of it reminded me of the rather similar results that strip mining has produced in some parts of the United States and I wondered why the creation of new barren lava beds should be in any way superior to the destruction of landscape by miners. I also wondered why the people watching the volcano in action weren't rendered skeptical about science's estimates of the age of Earth. Surely its interior fires should have cooled if the planet has existed for tens or hundreds of millions of years.

"Coincidental Magic" pleased me greatly, however. I'm not sure I believe in the existence of these ghosts. But I had a strange experience with that same movie mentioned earlier. Before vcrs were on the market, I audiotaped the sound from some favorite movies as they were shown on the telly. Twice I tried to do it with Julie's *Hawaii* and each time, the trusty Wollensak taper refused to record any more during the scene of the old queen's death. I never found any reason why the recording stopped at this particular point, so I was left wondering if even a fictional account of the passing of royalty was bad medicine that shouldn't be preserved on audiotape.

Of course, the parents of a baby might be happier if they believed it cried in the

small hours of morning because a ghost was harming it, rather than out of sheer perverse cussedness.

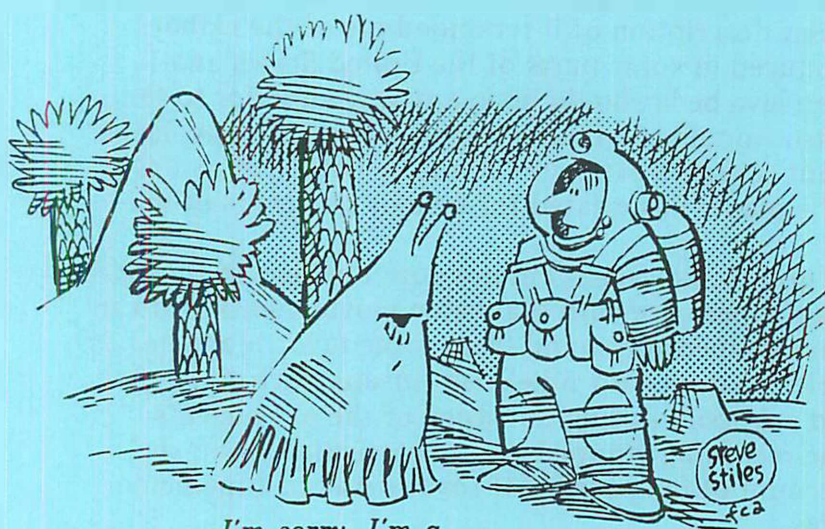
I assume Andy/Andrew Hooper isn't entirely serious in his recipe for cooking a Seattle fan. I'm a member of SAPS which currently has 14 Seattle area residents on its roster. I've met some of them, have corresponded at length with others, have been told many things about some of them by fans living elsewhere, and I can't imagine that more than one or possibly two of these SAPS members has the slightest resemblance to the nature and behavior of the Seattle fans described in this article. I know something about several other Seattle fans who aren't in SAPS and none of them seems to fit these generalizations, either.

{{There's very little overlap between different fannish groups in Seattle. Andy was describing the Vanguard crowd (which would include the folks that put on Corflu and Potlatch), and Mark Manning (whom Andy featured) is the only overlap between Vanguard and SAPS. They are very different in character, and both differ equally from the old Nameless bunch and the Northwest Science Fiction Society. Someone else will have to explain "How To Be a Seattle Fan" for those groups. jak}}

Belated regrets in the death of Suzanne's mother and a sense of sharedness on the sad events following it. My father died in 1960, three years after my mother's death. He had kept most of her possessions. Several relatives offered to help me to dispose of the things that I couldn't use but others could. I don't think I would have been able to bring myself to pack and send away their clothing, for instance, even though I knew the garments were going to a good purpose, to parts of Europe where there was still much misery and want even though the war had been over for 15 years. I gave the assisting relatives a number of things that had belonged to my parents. After the job was completed I discovered that my father's binoculars had vanished. I had seen them earlier in the clearing out procedure so I knew he couldn't have lost them or otherwise disposed of them. One of those relatives had stolen them, and probably would have acquired them legally by merely asking me if he or she could have them. It was very difficult to hold my tongue but I never asked any questions or dropped any hints about the fact I knew someone was a thief. All but one of those relatives are dead now and I still don't know who did it. A decade later, a cleaning lady whom I trusted began pilfering pieces of china and glassware

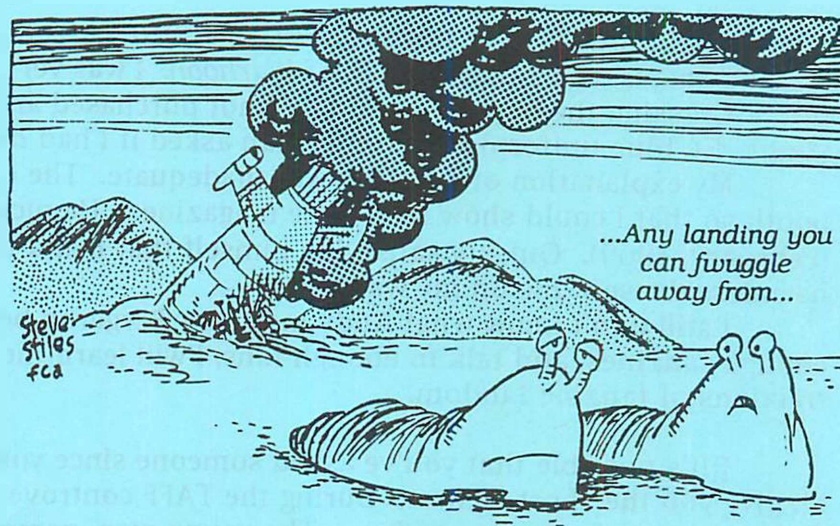
after years of scrupulous honesty on the job. She quit when I asked her what was happening and I didn't feel capable of going through the nastiness of a complaint to police or a warning to her regular employer (her job took her into many area homes for reasons other than cleaning).

Craig Smith's First Staple War cover is brilliant. Maybe it will reawaken interest in that conflict sufficiently for someone to write a detailed history of it. There were lots of letters in prozine letter sections that could be excerpted for this purpose. In fact, the prozine loc sections rep-



*I'm sorry, I'm a
stranger here myself.*

resent the most neglected aspect of fan history. Sam Moskowitz didn't dwell on them very much in *The Immortal Storm*. I decided that my histories of fandom in the 1940s and 1950s would become impossibly long if I went into detail about this type of fanac and I didn't have the patience to try to track down the current holders of copyrights on those old prozines to get permission for lengthy quotations. There was brilliant writing on occasion in those letter columns, it was the first published fanac for many individuals who later became famous in fanzine fandom, and even editorial replies have some interest today.



{{The auction at Corflu this year included some pulps from the early fifties, and folks in the audience were more interested in the letter column contents than the fiction contributions. jak}}

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Murray Moore, 377 Manly Street, Midland, Ontario, L4R 3E2, Canada

November 24, 1994

I motored through the landscape of *Mainstream 16*, enjoying the smooth highway, the scenic vistas to either side. The trip ended with "Suzlecol." I had to pay more attention. I had to turn off the cruise control. The road became rougher, the gradients steeper and the curves tighter.

I am trying to say that while I enjoyed every word in *Mainstream 16*, "Suzlecol" was the element that roused me out of constant reader's rapid eye movement.

"Suzlecol" got my mind going the most because I had just seen my parents—both past 80, my father losing his sight—on my way home from a fanzine convention.

The first note I made as I read *MS 16* was, "Craig Smith is a treasure." My mind tugged at me after I read your grumbling about Tucker smoking at will at the Madison Corflu. I had noticed on the cover that the middle of the trio of Staple War veterans was reading an issue of *Astounding*, and that the headline, "Tucker Dies," was printed across the bottom of the pulp's cover. I went back to the cover and noticed the invitation "Smoke Me" on the pulp's back page. Coincidence?

{{Total, I'm sure. We didn't show Suzle's editorial to Craig before he drew the cover, and we don't want Tucker to die. jak}}

Coincidence, connections. In his introduction to "How to be a (Seattle) Fan: 1994," Andy begins his fannish riff with, "A long time ago, when Richard Bergeron was only one person...."

In my first participation in fanzine fandom I sent for, and received, a copy of

Warhoon. I brought back from Ann Arbor [Ditto 7], from the DUFF pay-what-you-please fanzine box, issues 24, 25 and 26 of *Warhoon*. I was very pleased to contribute to DUFF.

Crossing the border, I said I had not purchased anything. Cleverer than I, the young, fit, blue-uniformed customs man asked if I had *acquired* anything.

My explanation of fanzines was inadequate. The customs man stepped out of his booth so that I could show him these magazines. He picked, at random, *Warhoon* 26 (February, 1969). Quickly satisfying himself that I, and my unusual magazines, were harmless, he sent me on my way.

I still don't know what Andy meant by Bergeron being only one person. If I read enough fanzines, and talk to enough fans, I will learn the answer. That is one of the attractions of fanzine fandom.

{{It's possible that you've asked someone since you wrote the above, but in case not, I'll give you the short answer. During the TAFF controversy known as Topic A, Bergeron found another fan in Puerto Rico. The young man, named Cesar Ramos, fully took Bergeron's side in the controversy, wrote a few letters, published one issue of a fanzine. Many people on the other side of that controversy decided that Ramos was a hoax or fantasy perpetrated by Bergeron. jak}}

Having to decide between cutting a 1,000-year-old redwood to make paper, or doing without paper on which to print Steve Stiles art and cartoons, would not be easy.

Yes, it would. The redwood can be replaced. Steve Stiles will happen only once.

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Lloyd Penney, 412-4 Lisa Street, Brampton, Ont., L6T 4B6, Canada

November 27, 1994

W.E.T.'s symbol is an upside-down umbrella? There's another insurance company located in Toronto called The Traveller's Insurance Co., and their symbol is a right-side-up umbrella.

{{Just so. My boss was playing a little joke on the Traveller's symbol when he picked one for Western Experts in Transportation. The name itself is a play on our location on Western Avenue. jak}}

I would think it's tough to pick a favourite year. Every one has highlights, heart-breaks, triumphs and embarrassments. This year, 1994, has been good because it saw a return to employment, a return to living as we did, and the return of Yvonne's smiling face, because these past three years of unemployment or underemployment have been a strain.

A local fan and budding writer, Terri Neal, goes to the East Coast to go whale-watching each year. It's become a pilgrimage for her. This year, I believe, she's going to the West Coast to look for killers. Wish I could go with her, and go back to Victoria. When I lived there, I didn't see much in the way of wildlife in the straits, but one day, I did see something strange while walking by Victoria's Inner Harbour...a sea otter, lounging on his back, between some of the docked cabin cruisers. I had to look twice, but there he was, taking the sun and looking back at me. I had to smile: he moved a hand as if to wave at me, and then disappeared beneath the surface. I told this to my Victoria-born girlfriend at the time, and she never did believe me, scoffing that otters never came into the harbour.

I have a correction to the loc of mine that appeared in the MS 16 local. I said that

the mediafan reads, because there's over 120 Trek novels in print, and someone's got to be buying them. I made the assumption that a book purchased meant a book read, and this isn't necessarily so. In the 18 months since I wrote that letter, I have found that a good percentage of Trekkers who buy the books do not buy them to read, but simply to collect them, like an action figure or gum card. That's the reason the Trek novels are numbered, for ease of collection. Collect the whole set, 1 through 75 at last count, I think. One fan in Toronto has them all, but has never so much as peeked inside the covers.

{{I'm having trouble with the math. Is it "over 120" or "1 through 75"? jak}}

There's so much moaning about the lack of fannish community these days; it's not that this sense of community is lacking, it's that we get older, and people change, and friendships change, too, and our interests subtly shift. I have no doubt that fans ten years from now will say the same thing, and regard the '90s as the good old days.

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Greg Benford, 1105 Skyline Drive, Laguna Beach, CA 92651

October 3, 1994 (postmark)

Of course I liked Andy Hooper's "How to Be a (Seattle) Fan," quite true to the spirit of my ancient piece for *Outworlds*. He catches the right oblique view of fads and fantasies and half-hidden fanaticisms, all funny in retrospect. Good eye for detail; he'll surely make it as a pro writer. (I was starting pro writing when I did the Boondocks Fan etc. pieces, as I remember; good training?)

Mac Strelkov! Goshwow! Only in *Mainstream*.... I agree with her that Stu Shiffman, like Steve Stiles, catches an emotional tone to fan life, one we can't easily get with Mere Words.

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Patrick McGuire, 7541-D Weather Worn Way, Columbia, MD 21046

November 28, 1994

Mainstream 16's lettercol seems to differ from the *SpanInq* ones that I remember by virtue of the many locs from BNFs of fannish generations before yours and mine: Lee Hoffman, Walt Willis, Shelby Vick.... I imagine *SpanInq* did have locs from Harry Warner, who has always transcended all fannish generations.

{{If I'm not mistaken, you gafiated for a number of years, perhaps a decade or more? During that time fannish fandom, not just our publishing empire, saw renewed activity and interest from older fans like Shelby et al. Harry, in contrast, has continued to fan during our fannish lifetimes without noticeable breaks. jak}}

On the question of seventies fandom and community, I wonder if we have a parallel case to that by which the Golden Age of Science Fiction is twelve. Maybe the Golden Age of Fandom is somewhere around twenty to thirty, when social relations are more fluid that they tend to be in later life, and friends are made more easily. On the other hand, I've made a lot of acquaintances through fandom in more recent years, and some of them are beginning to mature to the point where they could be called friendships.

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Mae Strelkov, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, Argentina

September 13, 1994

Mainstream 16 just came with its choice of riches. All you have on Hawaii was great, but first let me praise Terry Garey's piece, "Bee Parking." As simultaneously had arrived Britain's Martin Tudor's *Empties* 12 & 13, re: being uprooted, even homeless as its main theme, I quoted a bit to Martin from Terry's exquisite little piece. Hope you all don't mind. I gave references—your zine, her name too.

So good—"Present at Creation," and "Coincidental Magic." Your experience, "Whale Watching," too, Jerry! Could any mood pictures be better evoked than you all have done?

I true-believer myself, could tell many tales of the infringing of alternate dimensions with our own, at key spots. Pele certainly is one! As for the ghosts attacking babies! A strange thing happened here not so long ago. I'd been studying the implications of an old Chinese character where a footprint develops into a plant which becomes a sacred mushroom that "stands like a man," as it adds details to its composition. And that mushroom is also a stumbling-block, and so on. Detail by detail, Biblical patterns developed to illustrate the proto-ideas.

Well, it seems down in Patagonia the little daughter of our fourth son was playing with other children when (as she told her father) a beautiful woman appeared before her and said, "I will put a stumbling-block before your feet." "She was bad," the child added. At once the child, resuming her play, stumbled and broke her elbow.

It certainly put me off my studies for a bit when son Ed told me this on his visit months later. These studies of mine seem to rile "the Powers that Be," is dimensions beyond our recognition. Well, I can't give it up though frightened. Hurt *me*? Okay. Hurt an innocent infant? God help us. But I think: "Lady of the Stumbling-block—your time will come, to fall."

One fights back on that same plane. Even if I don't chew special magical herbs and crawl backwards in a circle on my knees to chase a ghost. But it does the trick in Hawaii! There are many ways to fight back.

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We also heard from:

Sheryl Birkhead (with a Bad Neighbor story), George Flynn, Brad Foster, J.R. Madden, Donna McMahon (who, in 1994, was beginning to sell fiction), Richard Newsome, Bruce Pelz, Ken Rudolph, Ron Salomon, Garth Spencer (who was still waiting for his favorite year), Dan Steffan, Candi Strecker, Taral Wayne, David Thayer (whose original postcard was returned to him; he sent an email copy the next year, thus becoming *Mainstream's* first electronic correspondent), Kristin Thorrud, R-Laurraine Tutihasi (twice) and Elisabeth Vonarburg. Thanks to all.☹

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Suzlecol:::colelzuS

Suzle's editorial

This is the editorial that I started writing just about three years ago, when we were actually planning to do our next issue with only a year's gap in between, a first for us in many years. It began with my describing the phenomenon that was gripping Seattle and sweeping us all up in its excitement - the end of the 1995 Seattle Mariners Baseball season. Yes, it's Suzle, whose feelings about sports generally run the gamut from indifference to active dislike, writing about baseball. Baseball is, at least, a sport that I followed as a kid and understand, although there have indeed been a lot of changes between the time when I watched the Pittsburgh Pirates and today. (For one thing, I don't recall nearly so much truly disgusting spitting back then, but of course now we have much more advanced camera technology, and it's in color, too!)

The gist of this column was about how our come-from-behind team, which had spent several years snatching defeat from the jaws of victory over and over again, had made it to the playoffs in a truly exciting manner, and the whole town (and it turns out, the whole country) got caught up in it. Jerry and I actually started watching games on television! It really did bring everyone together for a wonderful if brief period. Most Seattle baseball fans came away from that season, although the Mariners didn't make it to the World Series, with a tremendous sense of unity and even accomplishment.

Why write about it here? After a three-year gap, I was beginning to wonder myself. But it didn't take long to remember. There was a strong sense of camaraderie and belonging that grew from this common experience, and of joining together to accomplish something, feelings that I've always experienced within fandom. Years ago a former friend jeered at me when I expressed similar thoughts about what attracted me to and kept me involved in SF fandom. When I reflect on that time, I hope that he's grown up some and learned the importance of belonging somewhere, of pulling together to do something that, if not earthshakingly important, brings pleasure or education or friendship to others.

A while ago our local newspaper ran articles about folks who've moved to Seattle over the past few years (we'd had a lot of people move here over the past few years), and how they were faring. Some said that they felt isolated because it was difficult to make friends here; that you didn't feel "accepted" if you weren't a native or hadn't lived here for a good long time. I thought about my move to Seattle in 1978 (Jerry had arrived four months earlier), and realized that although I had never even been in the Pacific Northwest before, I had a community of friends here already. John Berry and Paul Novitski and Denys Howard and Loren MacGregor and people whose names I'd known for

years but had never met. Shortly afterward, fellow New Yorkers Anna Vargo and Gary Farber arrived. Patrick and Teresa, Kate Schaefer, and others who'd been hiding/recovering from/living in the Bay area after Iguanacon arrived a year or so later. We met and immediately became friends with natives and other transplants who'd arrived before us - Jane Hawkins, Vonda McIntyre, Clifford Wind, Bob Doyle, Marilyn Holt, et al. Of course I felt "accepted." Through fandom, I'd brought with or had easily established my own community. This was important. No matter how things have changed — people moved away, new folks arrived, lives altered through tragedy or good fortune — there will always be a semblance of that community here for all of us.

What (mostly) caused the three year delay (...obligatory late zine excuses...) was our searching for, eventually finding, buying, and moving into a house. Instead of a nice quiet collating party, we made our friends help us move again. We had vowed to get professional help for all the big stuff, but it was financially impossible, so once again, many of our wonderful friends re-formed the Seattle Crack Moving Team, and pitched in. At least this move was confined to only our actual possessions rather than past moves which involved belongings from everyone from Jon Singer to Gary Farber.

Of course, after former housemate, Bob Doyle, helped with our move, we helped him and his about-to-be-spouse Barbara Norwood move a few weeks later from Bob's Seattle house to a large horse-friendly place up in Snohomish County, and somehow, some of our stuff ended up at their new house.

Perhaps one day Jerry and I will write about the whole damned house-buying ordeal experience, if not too many of the wonderful memories (the \$700 in plumbing repairs a few weeks after moving in; the discovery of a circuit which had both the kitchen refrigerator and outlets and the basement office computer equipment on it; the mole; finding out that under the right circumstances I could Lock Myself In the House and Have to Make Jerry Come Home from Work to Let Me Out) have faded away. We're thinking of calling it "The Doorknobs Alone..." from a suggestion from the audience of old friends who showed up at our "Special Guests" interview by Ginjer Buchanan at last year's Boskone. Ginjer had firsthand knowledge as she had stayed with us about a month after we moved in and had to be issued a doorknob of her very own so she could get in and out of her room.

Come to think of it, there was period of time when I could have (and almost did) find myself trapped not just in the house but the bedroom. Of course, removing almost all the doorknobs in the house seemed like a good idea at the time, what with the painting and all....

Although we would rather have stayed in the North/Northwest quadrant of Seattle, where we, along with most of our friends, have always lived, the Seattle housing market forced us to look elsewhere and we ended up in "Little 'Ole'" Lake City, a Seattle neighborhood in the Northeast quadrant, about a mile south of the northern city limits. Our new house is a one-story, two-bedroom, one bath (*sigh*) bungalow-style built in 1946. It has a large living room and kitchen, but no formal dining room, which we miss; a large bedroom, and much smaller bedroom which we are using as a den/music room; a, luckily, finished basement with a laundry area (with a newly-

installed vinyl floor thanks to this summer's sewer-line back up...), and with a large pine-paneled carpeted room which is perfect for our office/guest room. There is also a very small, finished room which we believe was being used (illegally) as a bedroom, but is, in fact, the old furnace room - it makes a good, if small, storeroom.

We understand that the attic is high enough to stand up in, but I haven't actually seen it as the only access is through our bedroom closet ceiling. Our house inspector did go up there, of course, but he didn't mention abandoned trunks stuffed with valuables, or anything. Jerry did stick his head through the opening and didn't see anything. But he couldn't see into all the nooks and crannies, so perhaps there's stuff stuffed into the crannies....

And did I mention the hallway? There are eight doorways (kitchen/basement/bathroom/den/bedroom/closet/living room/closet) - no waiting!

Outside the house is what helped to sell us - there is a big, brick-floored front porch, and a small brook running through the property (under the large front yard, actually) as we are part of the Thornton Creek Watershed. We can see the brook and ravine on our west-side neighbors' property, and we have a lovely view of tall trees from the living room and bedroom. We're in the middle of a city, but there is a definite out-in-the-country feel, at least if you're looking in the right direction... We don't have a backyard - we have a garage and a cul-de-sac driveway shared by us and the three newish houses that were built beside and behind us on what must have been the original property, pre-soaring land/home values.

I'm still a bit overwhelmed by home ownership (does anyone know why our hot water heater would be ticking???), but like the fact that some of the money we are paying out each month is buying something.

You can come to visit now; our "sumptuous guest quarters" are back! (This, of course, means that we have a real room with a bed instead of a foam mattress on the floor in a room from which we needed to remove things like our printer to get it opened out....)

If you've read the lettercol, you may have seen that rather than reply individually to everyone who commented about my Mother's death and resultant problems which I discussed in my last editorial, that I would talk about it here.

As time passes, most events come into some type of perspective. I did want to thank those of you who offered condolences on my Mother's death and commented on the strange goings-on that followed it as far as our "old family retainer" was concerned.

It has now, amazingly, been five and a half years since these events. I have had no contact with Fay, and I have tried to not worry about what terrible things she might have told my Mother's friends and neighbors about my brother and myself. I don't actually care for my sake, as odd as that might sound, but how it affects what people think about my Mother. It's sort of complex, but there you have it.

And, even as I was gathering my thoughts to actually finish this editorial, interrupted by our house-hunting and move, I had another death to attempt to deal with. My brother, Kenneth Tompkins II, died quite unexpectedly three days before my birthday in June, two years ago. He was ten years my senior, had not been ill, and it came as quite a shock. Although we lived across the country from each other, Ken, my sister-in-law, Frances, and I were very close; we could see each other after several years apart and just jump back in where we had left off. I had actually been in closer contact with them since our Mother's passing, and I had planned a trip in the Fall, after Jerry and I

had presumably recovered from the Big Move.

I mentioned my birthday back there because the day before his death, Ken emailed me Birthday Greetings. (Once he was on line, he loved email and had begun sending me very funny notes, much like the letters he used to write me, and I was even replying in kind.) I thought it was odd to get a Happy Birthday message three days early. Later Frances told me she had asked him about it - why he'd sent it so early, and he said he didn't know; that he felt he just had to.

I am still in a sort of shock. For the first time, I feel truly orphaned. There have been times in my life when I felt that however bad things got, I always had Ken and Frances, who were there for me no matter what. Of course, Frances is still there for me and I am there for her. We speak on the phone as often as the three-hour time difference and our schedules allow. I think she is doing fairly well, now, although they were just about as close as I've ever seen a couple. A good friend of theirs gave her a job (she worked for my brother's law firm, which had to be closed) where she is working in a totally new environment with new people, making new friends, etc.

It's odd; this was the year of the "0"'s anniversaries - the year that many events in our lives have a special meaning. It is the 30th anniversary of Jerry's and my meeting; our (aahh!) 50th birthdays, Jerry's mother's 80th Birthday (and my Father would have been 90 and my brother 60), Frances' mother was also 80 this year, and it would have been Ken and Frances's 30th anniversary. Years ago, probably in *Granfalloon*, I wrote about missing my brother and sister-in-law's wedding to go to a Midwescon. The reason I did this was because I was going to be seeing, for the second time, someone I had met at the Marcon earlier that year and with whom I had been corresponding, and I just **knew** it was important. They forgave me, and Jerry and I did get to know each other better during the Con. It's odd what 30 years will bring.

And, originally, I had thought we would do some sort of party or celebration about our birthdays and anniversary, but somehow nothing happened. Perhaps in ten years?

When I began this column, I had no idea that three years later I'd be finishing it like this. I mentioned my feelings about fandom and community, and it seems that this is what it's all about. Within our community here, we will always be there for our friends (even if they don't ask us, I think they know it's true), and believe that they are there for us as well.

Oh, and good night, Suzle.

