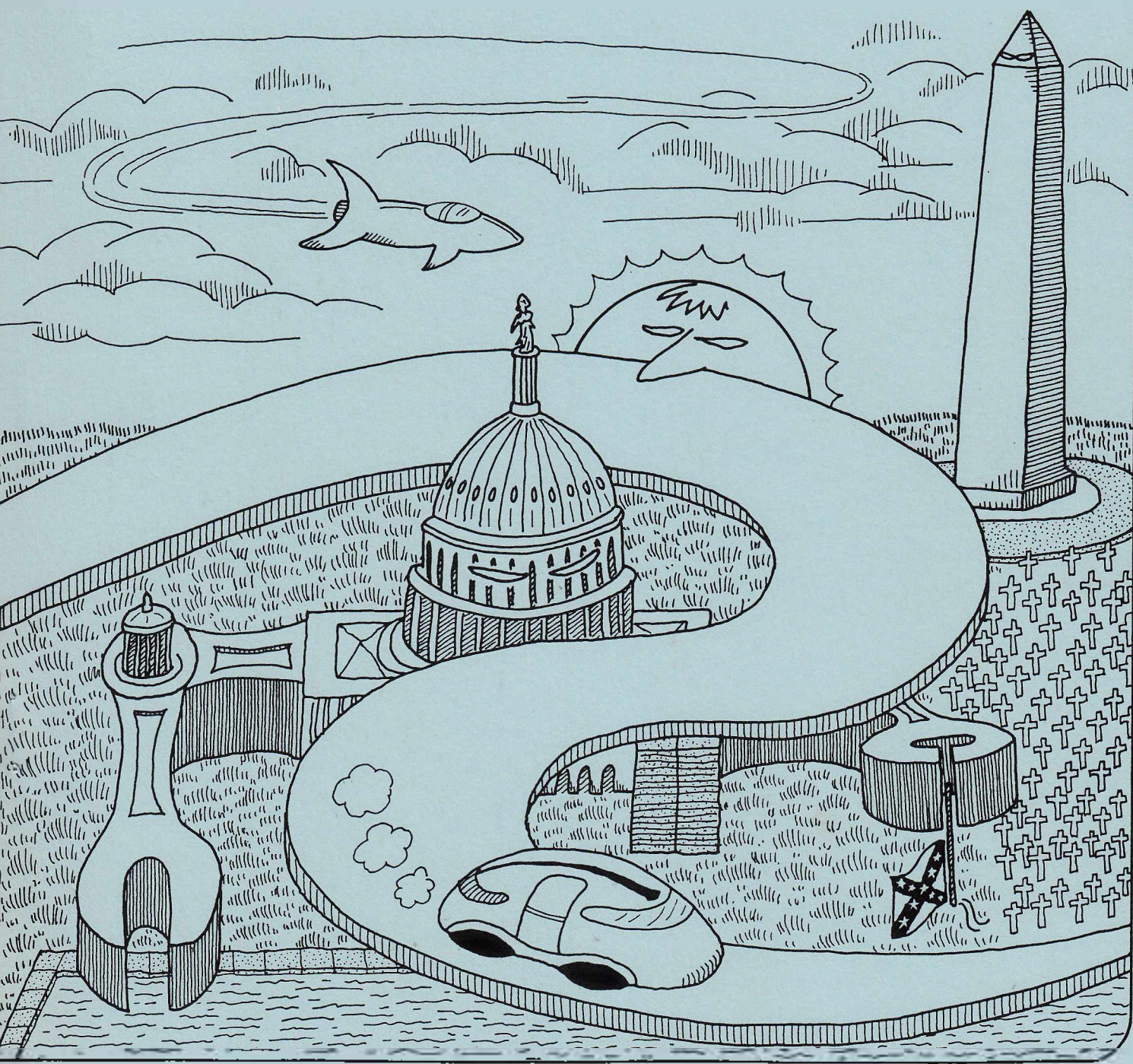


MIMOSA

ISSUE NUMBER SIX



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Mimosa 6, from Dick & Nicki Lynch, at the new address of P.O. Box 1270, Germantown, MD 20874-0998, U.S.A. And yes, we like it here in Maryland.

This issue of *Mimosa* was published in April 1989, and is available via the usually reliable U.S. Postal Service for just two dollars in U.S. currency; a fanzine in trade (better); or the promise to illustrate or write an article for next time (best). For the frugal, a letter of comment on this issue will also guarantee you get the next. But you knew all that, right? Opinions expressed by contributors are their own.

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NOTES FROM THE SECOND FLOOR

Opening Comments by Dick Lynch

Hello from Maryland! The last six months have brought about some changes, as you can see from our new address. Last issue, I wrote about my loss of employment, and not knowing where we'd be moving. Well, soon after *Mimosa* 5 was finished at the end of August, I got a phone call from the United States Department of Energy, where I had interviewed a couple of weeks earlier, and they offered me a position at their headquarters just north of Washington, DC. However, they wanted me to report for work in four weeks, before the end of September. Since we were getting ready to leave for New Orleans and NOLAcon, that left only about two-and-a-half weeks to pack, close out all our worldly affairs in Tennessee, get the house ready for sale, locate temporary quarters in Maryland, and head north. We did manage it all, somehow. We've now become homeowners again, and things are finally settling down to the point where we can think of other things besides day-to-day living. It's been a hectic half year, and that week before WorldCon when I was literally waiting on the edge of my chair for the phone to ring now seems almost a lifetime ago.

In New Orleans, I remember telling several people that the idea of leaving Tennessee, after having lived there for 15 years, seemed surreal -- it was as if I'd picked up a book, opened to a page at random, and read that "Nicki and Dick will move to Maryland". The idea of moving hadn't sunk in yet and wouldn't until mid-December, when we were finally able to move into our townhouse, after spending two-and-a-half months in temporary quarters living out of a hotel room.

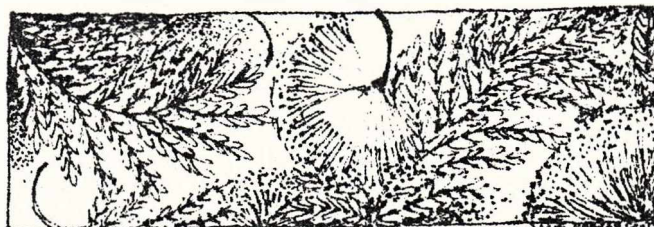
Our new residence just outside Gaithersburg seems much roomier than old 4207 Davis Lane in Chattanooga ever was. For one thing, we've got storage space galore, and a place other than the dining room to contain the mimeographs and electrostencil machine. And there's both a second-floor and basement, things we never had in Tennessee. One of the second-floor rooms is too small for a bedroom, but just right for the computer, typewriter, and other assorted odds and ends that we never could

find a suitable place for before. It's a perfect "fan lounge" area, and it's where this essay is being composed.

There's still lots of things we need to buy, though, to make this place seem more of a home. One cold night in late December I was standing outside the front door, watching the lone furniture mover unload our newly purchased living room furniture from his delivery van. He had successfully managed to get the chair and then the loveseat through the front door and down into the living room unscathed. But as he was pulling his hand truck with couch strapped to it through the small courtyard that leads to our front door, not watching very closely where he was going, he backed smack into the small tree that's growing there, lost his balance and fell over sideways, the couch following him. In my mind's eye I can still see the scene -- the couch tumbling sideways in slow motion, heading for the window of the neighbor's townhouse, and me lunging frantically, arms outstretched trying to get between it and the window. We all ended up in a heap, the couch resting comfortably on me and the mover; luckily the only damage to anything was one small nick in the couch's arm and a slightly larger one in my dignity.

That late in the year, there weren't any leaves left on the tree, and I hadn't really paid much attention to it before then. But the collision had knocked down one of the few remaining seed pods that were still tenaciously hanging on to the upper branches of the tree. While still lying on the ground, with delivery man and couch on top of me, I reached over and picked it up; it was long, thin, and bean-like in appearance. And suddenly, I knew what kind of tree it was that had given me this 'Welcome to Maryland' greeting.

It was a *Mimosa*.



{{ Back in August, just before our trip to the New Orleans Worldcon, we had only just found out that we'd be soon moving to Maryland; it hadn't sunk in yet, and we told more than one person that it was a little like reading in a book or movie script that 'Dick and Nicki will pack and move to Maryland in a month.' Now that we're here, we've discovered there is a lot more fans and fan activities here than there ever was in Tennessee; this area is host to at least three clubs, and was home for three past

Worldcons -- two in Washington and one up the road in Baltimore about five years ago. This first article for our first issue of 1989 is by Dave Kyle, who was Fan Guest of Honor at that 1983 Baltimore Worldcon. He's no stranger to Worldcons and Worldcon politics; he was Chairman of the 1956 New York Worldcon, and played a significant part in events at the very first Worldcon, fifty years ago this year. So here then, for the record, is a bit of history about that first Worldcon. }}

THE GREAT EXCLUSION ACT OF 1939

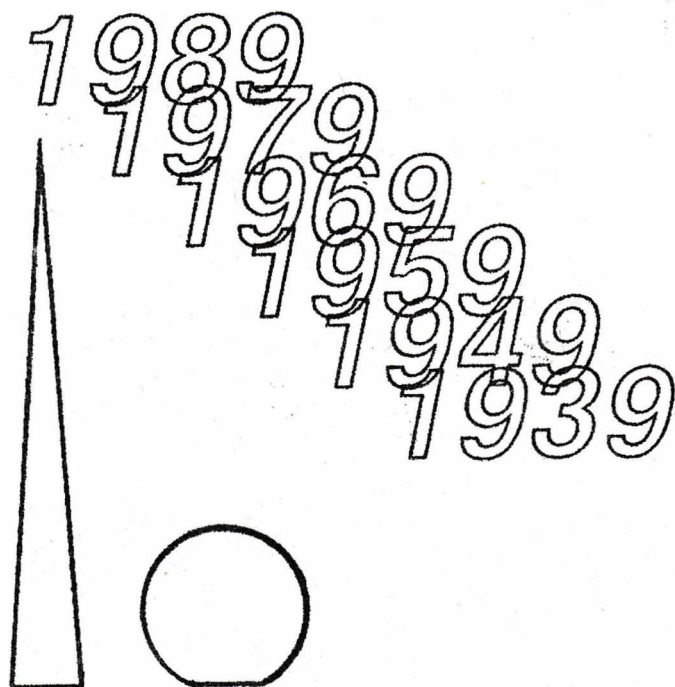
Dave Kyle

In 1939, six prominent science fiction fans were barred from attending the first World Science Fiction Convention in New York City. They were Frederik Pohl, Donald A. Wollheim, Robert W. Lowndes, Cyril Kornbluth, John B. Michel, and Jack Gillespie. Science fiction fandom at the time argued about the merits and tended to dismiss the event as some more crazy foolishness by "those New Yorkers". And now, fifty years later, most fans are only mildly curious about that quaint bit of fannish history. However, because certain famous persons are involved and because I bear much of the responsibility, I do feel that the central event should be clarified after all these years.

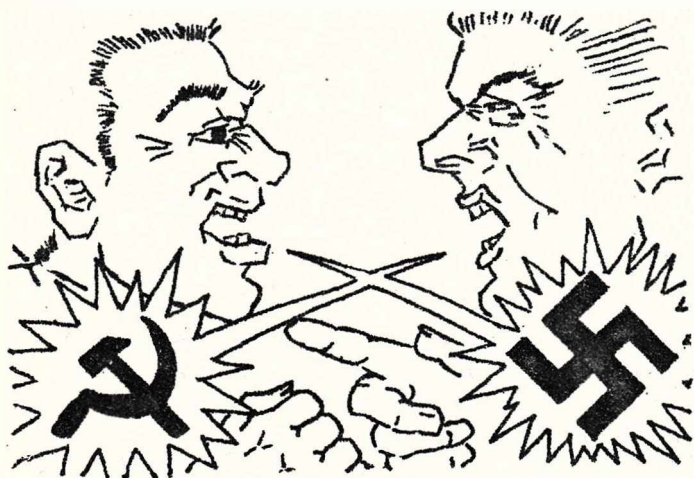
First, a very brief history lesson: the first convention, the "con" genesis, called "The First Eastern Science Fiction Convention" was held in the fall of 1936 in Philadelphia. New York fans (ISA) visited Philadelphia fans (PSFS) on a Sunday. Among the barely a dozen who were there were Frederik Pohl, Donald A. Wollheim, John B. Michel, William S. Sykora, and myself of the ISA, the fannish International Scientific Association. This led to a "First National" sf con the following year (1937) in Newark, New Jersey, just outside New York City, where Sam Moskowitz ruled the roost.

A strong rivalry had developed between the ISA leaders, who now identified themselves as The Futurian Society of New York, and the newly formed group called New Fandom, headed by William S. Sykora, Sam Moskowitz, and James V. Taurasi. At the "First National" in Newark a power struggle developed for control of the projected "First World's Science Fiction Convention" to be held in the summer of the 1939 New York World's Fair. New Fandom tactics and Futurian intransigence at the Newark gathering resulted in New Fandom's successful claim to be organizers of the "World" con. Charges and counter-charges were hurled at each other. The feud grew. By 1939 the bitterness was extreme. The rest of fandom, nationwide, participated to various degrees. The Futurians were the "intellectuals" in fandom who were enormously active, but the controversial espousal of "radical" causes, especially in political thinking, diluted their popularity and leadership.

The year 1939 was a time of world



wide turmoil, on the brink of real catastrophe. The Depression was our nation's sickness -- and all earth's, for that matter. The nastiest war of all time was about to begin. Communism flourished aggressively, appealing to world revolution, agitating all segments of society. Fascism, deadly enemy of Communism, had risen to power in many countries and developed military force and violence for its own ends. Dictatorships had exploded into sinister threats to "Americanism" and democracy.



By 1939, fandom was hardly a decade old. "Readers" had become "fans" and the activists were young; very young. Teen-agers were the troops and boys in their twenties were the "mature" leaders. In this cauldron of the 1930s, many young idealists who were science fiction fans decided that science fiction not only dreamed of brave new worlds, but that sf was grounded in reality and that fans should become activists as well as dreamers. That was the backdrop for the clash between the Futurians and the New Fandom people. One or the other was going to shape fandom for the future. That was the heart of the matter. That was what bubbled and burned and swirled and festered behind the scene at that very first world con. The adolescent behavior by all parties, myself included, was understandable, if not commendable. We took ourselves seriously, too seriously. Fortunately, the "professionals" at the time weren't interested in playing our games. They brought maturity to the event which kept the first world con from self-destructing.

I, for better or worse, was the trigger for the banning of those six fans from the meeting. I published the infamous "yellow pamphlet" which provoked the incident. It reflects the times in so many ways, both fannishly and internationally.

Sam Moskowitz wrote about these times and this particular situation in his fannish history book *The Immortal Storm*. He reported: "He [a fan] handed the pamphlet to Moskowitz. The pamphlet was dated July 2, 1939, and its cover also bore the heading 'IMPORTANT! Read This Immediately!' It contained four pages of text, and when Moskowitz opened it he found himself reading the following:" (Here followed in his 1954 book a supposedly slightly abridged copy of the pamphlet.) The offending hand-out appeared on Saturday morning of the first day of the convention. Trouble was already brewing as Futurians were being barred at the door. The sudden appearance of the one pamphlet alerted the three leaders. A search discovered the cache of "Warnings" under the heating radiator. Wollheim denied any knowledge, but it was disbelieved. I kept my mouth shut. That's why I was allowed into the meeting.

[The pamphlet is reproduced here. Bear in mind that the italic typeface represents the portions of the pamphlet that were NOT printed in his book. Moskowitz's edited version represents the kind of manipulation of words which no one should do, especially a researcher of Moskowitz's stature. But I forgive him even though others haven't after all these years. It's not easy, however, to read his disclaimer without some irritation even after a half century. He wrote: "The booklet ended **after a few more paragraphs of a similar nature** ..." One has to consider how much material was deliberately expurgated, more significant than just "a few more paragraphs" (60% deletion!) and, outrageously described as "of a similar nature". And he did so just to strengthen his arguments as to why he, Sykora, and Taurasi banned six such prominent sf fans from one of the great fannish events of all time. But you be the judge. (And be tolerant of the purple prose, please.)) This is it:

Read This Immediately!

A WARNING!

July 2, 1939

BEWARE OF THE DICTATORSHIP

YOU, who are reading this pamphlet, have come to attend the World's Science Fiction Convention. You are to be praised for your attendance and complimented on the type of fiction in which you are interested. But, TODAY BE AWARE OF ANY MOVEMENT TO COERCE OR BULLY YOU INTO! Remember, this is YOUR convention, for YOU! Be on the alert, lest certain well-organized minorities use you to ratify their carefully conceived plans.

Why This Warning?

This warning is being given to you by a group of sincere science fiction fans. The reasons for this warning are numerous; THEY ARE BASED UPON EVENTS OF THE PAST -- particularly events which took place at the Newark Convention of 1937. At that time the gathering of fans and interested readers was pounded into obedience by the controlling clique. The Newark Convention set up, dictatorially, the machinery for the convention which you are now attending. THE NEWARK CONVENTION MUST NOT BE PERMITTED TO REPEAT ITSELF! It remains in your power to see that this convention today will be an example of perfect democracy.

Startling Facts

The Queens Science Fiction League was formed by the Newark Clique, after that convention in order to make the necessary local organization upon which the dictatorial Convention Committee could base itself. *The editors demanded such an organization. The self-appointed chairman of the Newark Convention accordingly arranged to form it so as to get a New York City organization for the similarly formed New Fandom. A constitution was written for it which is kept secret for the most part, but is arranged so as not to allow the possibility of any opponent joining the organization by the mechanics of allowing only one blackball, instead of the traditional two.*

ALSO,

The Queens Science Fiction League is run arbitrarily by its three leaders and discussion from the floor and dissension in any form is rigidly controlled or suppressed. The editors and those dependent on them for a living, the authors, have made it a duty to attend Queens S.F.L. meetings regularly in order to keep it going and to keep the 1939 Convention in hand. At the elections held last meeting, held openly so as to detect any possible opposition, the three dictators were re-elected unanimously in perfect undemocratic harmony.

The Newark Revolution

Led by a few indignant science fiction fans, the Convention of Newark in 1937 passed, OVER THE REFUSAL OF THE CHAIRMAN TO RECOGNIZE THE MOTION, by a MAJORITY OF MEMBERS, a resolution officially censuring the Chairman for his "undemocratic, dictatorial acts" which was placed in the minutes of the convention. Afterwards, a petition was SIGNED BY A MAJORITY further censuring him, together with his cohorts.

High Handed Tactics

At the same time that the Queens S.F.L. was established, a large number of New York City fans formed the Futurian Society of New York. Contrary to much propaganda, the Futurian Society is not confined to communists, michelists, or other radical elements; it is a democratic club, run in a democratic way, and reflecting sincere science fiction fan activity. At a meeting about three

months ago, the Futurians, in the interest of peace and united friendly action in New York for the Convention, voted an offer of a united meeting with the Queens S.F.L. to work out such co-operation. THIS OFFER HAS NEVER BEEN PLACED TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE OTHER ORGANIZATION, BEING SIDETRACKED BY THE DICTATORS OF THE CLUB.

A Loaded Weapon

The World's Science Fiction Convention of 1939 in the hands of such heretofore ruthless scoundrels is a loaded weapon in the hands of such men. This weapon can be aimed at their critics or can be used to blast all fandom. But YOU, the reader of this short article, are the ammunition. It is for YOU to decide whether you shall bow before unfair tactics and endorse the carefully arranged plans of the Convention Committee. Beware of any crafty speeches or sly appeals. BE ON YOUR GUARD!

History In The Making

What is done at this convention will make science fiction history. YOU are making it. MAKE THIS A DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION!

Warnings

BE CAREFUL: when the Chairman asks you to vote for something without discussion! DEMAND DISCUSSION! Be careful: when the Chairman suggests that a person be UNANIMOUSLY elected to an office; that is DICTATORSHIP! Be careful: if the Chairman says his critics are deliberately destructive; HEAR THE OTHER SIDE! Be careful: if the Chairman says there will be no time to vote; TIME MUST BE MADE! Be careful: in every way not to place unlimited power into the hands of the Convention Committee. THERE MUST BE REPRESENTATION, REPRESENTATION OF YOU! And above all, INSIST UPON DEMOCRATIC CONDUCT OF THE CONVENTION. DO NOT BE ROUGHLY SUPPRESSED!

In Conclusion

It must be said that this pamphlet has been written not because it is KNOWN that something dictatorial will happen. This pamphlet was written only because of past actions of the present Convention Committee. We sincerely hope we are mistaken in our suspicions. But we have learned too much from the past, not to be warned of the future.

The Publishers

Who are we that have published this? We are science fiction fans, young men who believe that science fiction is a new type of literature which must not have its future destroyed by any selfish interests. We believe that free speech, co-operation, and democratic acts and thoughts must be granted to science fiction fandom. This pamphlet was NOT published by the Queens Science Fiction League. Likewise, it was NOT published by the Futurian Society of New York. Nor by "communists". Nor by "Fascists". Nor by any other clique or organization. This is published by a group of science fiction fans for no other purpose than to assure the person who attends the Convention a voice in the Convention, and to set them on their guard against any un-American dictatorial, or subversive management of the Convention. DESPITE ANYONE, OR ANYTHING, THE 1939 WORLD'S SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION IS BOUND TO BE A SUCCESS! And if the Convention Committee should decide that democratic methods are best we will be the first to admit that they deserve full credit and praise for this gathering for the three days of July first, second and third. MAY SCIENCE FICTION PROSPER!

THE ASSOCIATION FOR DEMOCRACY
IN SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM

((Moving is a cathartic experience. One of the useful things about it is that you're forced to get rid of all the useless odds and ends you've accumulated over the years that make your garage an undesirable place to park the car. When we had to decide what to keep and what to toss, we were somewhat surprised by the number of boxes and bags of Stuff we threw out that had somehow taken up a mundane existence

of their own in out-of-the-way corners of the attic, garage, and various closets. The following article, which originally appeared in a recent mailing of the apa SAPS, describes such a situation taken to the extreme. We've known the author in print for several years, but only recently were able to take advantage of our new proximity to him to meet him in person. Such are the hidden benefits of moving.))

THE HOUSE ON SUMMIT AVENUE

Harry Warner, jr.

Every so often, you see in newspapers pictures and stories about the incredible clutter found in the house or apartment of a recluse who has died or has been carted off to the funny farm. I used to get an uneasy feeling when I saw such items and thought about the way the clutter of books and magazines has been growing in the three upstairs rooms I use for storage purposes and in the attic. But now I feel better. Unbeknownst to me, I'd been living for many years next door to just such a genuine case of terminal clutter without realizing it, and the situation in my neighbors' home makes my accumulation seem trivial.

The elderly couple who lived on the second floor of the building next to mine were a bit of the wild side. She had been, of all things, a professional boxer in her youth. Apparently there was a profession for female boxers around the middle of this century and she was part of it. She must have been pretty good, if I may judge by the left jab I saw her land on a young man who she thought had parked too close to her car one afternoon. Her husband came up to me one day and told me in confidence that he had heard me shooting the previous night. I hadn't even been home that night and I don't own a gun, and I haven't pulled a trigger since I patronized a booth at the Hagerstown Fair in my teens, but he smiled knowingly at me. Their minister told me that they were in the habit of interposing mailing comments during his sermons in loud voices. About five years ago, the telephone company laid a new cable up Summit Avenue, mostly under sidewalks, resulting in the laying of new sidewalks for most of us and

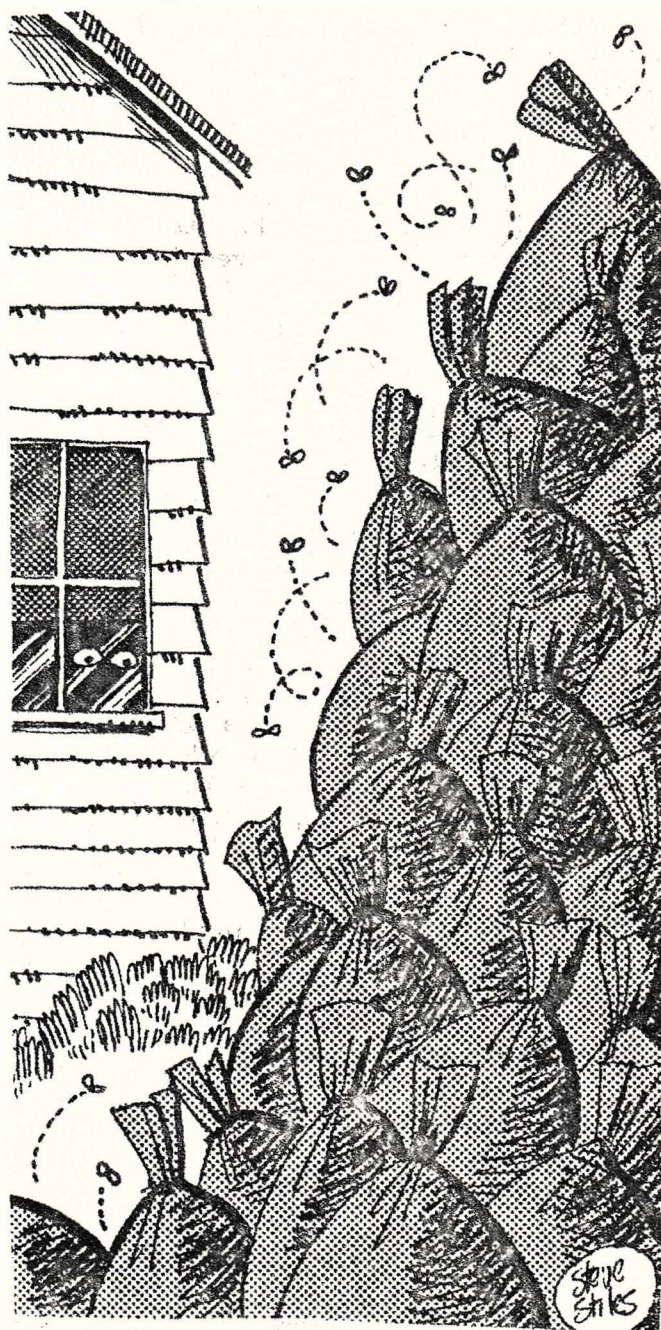
new curbs for some of us. A concrete-splattered workman told me one day almost with tears in his eyes about the hard time my neighbors had been giving the crew; they insisted on a flattened section of curb in front of their building to make it easier to get a wheelchair onto the sidewalk, even though neither the husband nor wife needed a wheelchair nor had ever used one; they just thought such a feature of the curb might come in handy some time in the future. The woman carried a cane most of the time but laid it aside when she was in a hurry, and I've seen her climb the steps to her door with two heavy bags of groceries in both arms without walking difficulties. They apparently used the local ambulance service the way people used to ask doctors to make house calls. The ambulance would roll up with siren screaming at least once a month, stay double-parked for ten minutes or so, and then roll away without either of the couple as occupants.

A local attorney and his wife once visited my home asking me to begin a career in espionage: this couple and my neighbors had both patronized a public auction, both couples had successfully bid on sets of dishes. Then in the attorney's version, my neighbors had walked off with the more expensive dishes which the attorney had paid for. I was supposed to pay them a visit and verify this fact by seeing the dishes in their home. I knew the two went regularly to public auctions, and once in a while I saw them at yard sales. But I didn't often see them taking acquisitions into the house, which left me unprepared for what happened early this year. The two had become less and less

visible as the years passed, sometimes not moving their car for weeks at a time, so I didn't think anything of it when someone asked me where the man was. Nobody had seen him for a long while, despite catching occasional glimpses of her. We speculated that he might be in a rest home. Last yuletide, I noticed that the Christmas card from her was signed in a strange hand, and a few days later her obituary notice appeared in the local newspapers. There was no mention in it of her husband, and one of the neighbors somehow learned he had died two years earlier. It is unheard of that a Hagerstown resident should die without an obituary in the local newspapers, but it had somehow happened.

A few weeks later, people unknown to me began removing things from the apartment they had occupied. It began in a modest, unassuming way, with some battered pieces of furniture hauled away in a small pickup truck and a half-dozen or so garbage bags of unidentified contents placed at the curb for the trash collector. Then it escalated a bit. Instead of the pickup truck, there was a larger truck with greater capacity drawing up in front of the building and becoming laden with large boxes and mysterious shapes which I could not identify as anything known to civilization. Moreover, plump garbage bags also began to be hauled away by truck.

Perhaps a week later there was a tremendous commotion outside the house. What to my wondering eyes should appear but a dumpster, one of those huge ones, wider than a big truck, half as long as a boxcar and with sides and rear wall extending perhaps five feet up. Its arrival signaled a new phase of the emptying of the apartment. Now, instead of things being carried down the steps and out the door of the building, they began to descend with resounding thumps from upstairs windows and the upstairs balcony, tossed at random to the walkway and lawn below for transfer into the dumpster. I wouldn't have believed that apartment could contain enough stuff to fill a dumpster, but it did. They piled that dumpster so high that they had great difficulty getting a canvas cover over the mountain. All the neighbors were marveling and some of them were looking at me as if there



were a secret tunnel through which I was transferring a lot of my stuff to the neighboring apartment.

After the huge green dumpster had been hauled up atop a sanitary disposal truck and hauled away, the neighborhood wondered for about 24 hours what that apartment could do for an encore. Then we saw it. The dumpster was back. And again the dumpster was filled to overflowing and again it was hauled away and behold, the dumpster returned and acquired a third load at least as high and tottering as the

first two. After it left for the third time, Goodwill Industries stopped by with a large truck to pick up a good bit of stuff. A few days later, for the first time there emerged from that apartment things that appeared to be in excellent condition: a living room suite, refrigerator, stove, and so on.

I've looked at that building and I've tried to cipher out in my head the probabilities that so much stuff could have been occupying its second floor without resorting to fourth dimensional packing methods and I haven't had much luck. It occurred to me once that some of the stuff could be coming from the first floor apartment, but then I realized they wouldn't have hauled first floor stuff upstairs to throw it off the balcony or out the window. I've never been through that building so I can't be sure about its attic but from the outside, it doesn't look as if there could be a very large attic, so not too much of the stuff evacuated could have come from there.

Of course, I have no idea what may have been in the garbage bags but the workmen wore masks over their mouths on the job so I fear the worst. Visible were unbelievable quantities of empty pasteboard cartons, ranging from pizza type to large ones. There was a great deal of nondescript lumber. Vast quantities of what may have been old clothing but looked more like rags pure and simple came out.

Remember, I didn't make this spectacle my full time occupation during those weeks. I'm sure there must have been many occasions when a truck rolled up, loaded,

and drove away without my knowledge because I wasn't home or wasn't looking out the window. And there seems to be a sort of nervous tension to this day in the neighborhood over that apartment. People look fearfully at it from time to time, as if they expected their credulity to be stretched to the snapping point by the sudden resumption of evacuation operations. I'm not sure if I could bear it if I suddenly saw more stuff beginning to flop out of the window or balcony because it would outrage all the laws of probability and reasonableness.

Since then, exterminators have been active in that building, and I've seen other men enter and leave with mysterious-looking instruments in their hands whose purpose I can't deduce. I can't help wishing that the apartment has been rendered uninhabitable for the next half century or so because I'm fearful of new tenants who possess a substantial quantity of small children moving in and creating territorial rights problems for my back yard. And I can't imagine how that man and woman managed to live in that apartment or how they explained the environment to those ambulance crews.

Eventually, everything will come out of 423 Summit Avenue. It will be imposing in its quantity but almost all of it will be books, records, magazines, music, and usable furniture, and the neighbors won't think it worthwhile to gossip about what a hoarder I was, because my clutter will seem quite unimportant in comparison with the things they saw emerge from next door. And I never did spy out that set of dishes for the attorney, and it's too late now.



((The hardest part about moving far away, aside from selling the house long distance, getting everything moved without losing or breaking anything, finding a house, finding a new doctor, dentist or job, or finding anything you used to have at your fingertips, is leaving friends. (See I had a point!) Sharon Farber is one friend we especially miss, but we're still in contact. Her article

for the last *Mimosa* was well received, and she's back with the promised sequel on life as an intern in a big city hospital. You can imagine she had some culture shock moving to the South. However, the internship she talks about takes place in St. Louis, so she at least had a taste of the South before moving into the Heart of Dixie.))

TALES OF ADVENTURE AND MEDICAL LIFE, PART II (In Which Our Heroine Finds a Dead Body)

Sharon Farber

Sometime during the second year of medical school, we all put on our white coats for the first time, stuffed the pockets full of shiny, undented diagnostic equipment, and went across the street to the hospital. My group was met by a senior resident, who gave us a last minute briefing before we were to go in and meet a real patient and say the traditional words of greeting, "What brought you to the hospital, Mrs. Jones?" ("My brother's pickup truck.")

As we stood in the corridor, four well-groomed medical students receiving instructions with all the attentiveness of Moses getting the commandments, we were really watching a hall-monitor. This was basically an oscilloscope on wheels, attached by a very long line to a patient inside the room. It was not very useful -- you couldn't hear the beeping from the nurses station -- but served to reassure the family and the lawyers that the patient was being closely monitored. As we listened to the resident, the monitor went *beep beep beep* and then stopped. The little green line on the screen went flat.

Our jaws dropped in amazement and anticipation. Someone's heart had just stopped. We were going to see that most dramatic of hospital events, the code. The cardiac resuscitation. Where life and death meet, and doctors go *mano a mano* with destiny. Boy, this was going to be a great day!

The resident glanced at the now silent monitor with annoyance. She walked over, held up her fist and thumped it once.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

She looked at us. "Remember. Never panic."

I finally saw an actual code during my first week of third-year, on the neurology service at City Hospital. We were at morning rounds in the ICU, hearing about the admissions of the night before, when a nurse across the room turned from a twenty-year-old semi-conscious patient and casually announced, "His temperature's 106."

Immediately, everyone jumped on the patient and attempted to hold him down while the chief did a spinal tap to see if he had meningitis. My resident lay atop the thrashing man, laughing and saying "Wrestling at the Chase." My fellow student (the Robot) and I were still not used to seeing doctors act this way. Did Marcus Welby crack jokes? Did Ben Casey subdue patients by sprawling over them?

(*Wrestling at the Chase*, I pause to explain, was a unique St. Louis institution -- a Sunday morning wrestling show, incongruously televised from an auditorium in the Chase Park Plaza, one of the classiest hotels in town. My hovel was in the shadow of the Chase, and wrestling fans lined up for hours before the show, sometimes spilling into the street and making it hard for me to get to my apartment. More interesting were the chunky wrestling groupies, who hung out in the parking lot by the vans, waiting to meet their heroes. You ain't seen nothing til you've seen wrestling groupies.)

As six men held down the fighting patient, I did my bit by hanging on to his free arm. Then he got quieter, and I put my fingers to his pulse, and then lost it.

I said, "Gee, I don't feel a pulse?" and then the code began.

The Robot and I were utterly useless. Actually, in a code, all but about six people are useless -- the guy who watches the heart monitor and gives the orders, the people doing the chest compressions and respirations, a nurse to find meds in the crash cart and another to administer them, and then a spare doctor, who amuses himself by drawing blood gases and offering suggestions. Everyone else just gets in the way. Codes are exciting, and since everyone goes to one, it's a good place to run into your friends, or see who's around. Codes are the social events of teaching hospitals. It's not uncommon to have the room packed so full of people that you literally cannot move or leave.

Anyway, while the Robot and I watched and tried not to be too underfoot, someone handed me a syringe stuck into a styrofoam cup full of ice, and told me to run it to the lab. So I did, feeling proud and happy that I had been chosen for this important task.

The lab was three buildings away, but I ran it, skidded to a halt inside the door, and gasped out "Blood gas! From a code!"



One of the surly lab techs glanced up at me, pointed to a machine, and said, "Put it there." The other sneered at me, except for one short, foreign-appearing woman, who wore an expression of pity.

I ran back to the ICU. The code was

still in progress, and I was handed another syringe. I figured that the purpose of all these blood gases must be so that one might later sit down and go over the results and see, in retrospect, how well one had done the code. It was quite a shock, a month later at the university hospital, to discover that dispatchers come to codes to run samples, and that the lab will process the gases on arrival, so that the results arrive by phone before the blood-runners have had time to get back.

But then, the lab at City was famous for refusing to run samples unless properly labelled (and they invented new rules at a moment's non-notice), for losing samples, and for hiding the results. They say that when they cleaned out an unused dumbwaiter shaft in the lab, they found it full of tubes of blood.

I thudded into the lab again, panting and wheezing. Everyone ignored me except the small woman at the hematology station, her face more pitying than before. I put the styrofoam cup beside the last one, now leaking melting ice, and trotted back. The code was over, successful -- the patient lived for a year and a half before committing suicide -- and now they were drawing multiple tubes of blood in order to try to find out why he'd gone sour.

I limped back towards the lab. As I came up the hall, the hematology woman looked up, saw the tubes in my hand, sprang from her bench, and before I was fully inside the doorway she had snatched the purple top tube from me and begun to process it. Somehow, I found this encouraging.

Two years, later, when I returned to City Hospital as an intern, a year before the place closed, relations with the lab had deteriorated even more. There was even a sign in the lab, telling techs who they were to notify if a doctor attempted to murder them. (Justifiable homicide, in our opinion.) One day, I was hunting unsuccessfully for some results, and in desperation approached someone sitting at a bench. "Can you help me..."

The woman spun around hatefully. "Find it yourself!" she snapped. It was the short foreign woman.

But enough about labs, except for this story. The lab at the VA hospital was said to be even worse. Every microscopic urinalysis came back with the nebulous results "0-3 red blood cells, 3-5 white blood cells," which could be interpreted in any way, so you'd have to repeat the test yourself. (It really meant that the lab techs had not really looked at the urine.)

Legend has it -- and I heard this from multiple people, the last being an attending cardiologist who swore he had interned with the doctor in question, meaning that the story is probably about as reliable as your average tale of pulling swords out of stone -- Legend has it that an intern became tired of the UA results, and sent a sample of apple juice to the lab. It came back "0-3 rbc, 3-5 wbc". He took it to the administration, and they attempted to fire him for sending phony samples to the lab.

III

Another notable deficiency of City Hospital was the vital signs. Legend has it that you would find them charted for the next few shifts on patients who had died hours before. In fact, I myself once saw that. (Boy, that makes the story reliable, huh?) My chief resident swore that the nursing aide taking pulses had once called, "Hey doc, got the time?" He had no watch.

In defense of City, I might note that I have since heard similar stories about every other large, underfinanced, big-city charity hospital. But we used to joke about getting medic-alert bracelets that read "Do not take to City Hospital".

A patient in the men's ward, an old skinny black man in a coma, had very noisy respirations. Wherever you stood on the floor, you could hear his loud gasping breaths.

One day, my first week, I came back from lunch and headed to the conference

room to check a reference book. I stopped by the elevator. Something felt...wrong. Something was different. Cocking my head to the side, like a curious dog, I wandered into the men's ward. What had changed?

Then I realized what it was. No more loud agonal respirations. I went over to Mr. Jones' bed. He looked pretty much the same as before, aside from the fact that he wasn't breathing. The patients in the beds to either side of him were young, alert, healthy sociopaths with back pain. They looked up from their newspapers, saw it was just me, and went back to reading. They had to have noticed when his breathing had stopped.

I said, "Mr. Jones, are you okay?"

I touched his shoulder. He wasn't cold, or stiff or anything. It's hard to describe what changes when a person dies. Try to think of the difference between picking up a seven-pound defrosted rump-roast, and picking up a sleeping cat.



This was my first dead body, and I wasn't sure he was dead. He looked pretty bad, but he had never looked very good to begin with. I tried to find a pulse and couldn't, but I wasn't great at pulses yet. What if I declared him dead, and he was just in very deep coma, with minimal vital signs? Boy, would I be embarrassed!

So I took out my stethoscope, and tried to hear a heartbeat. Now, if you put your stethoscope to something silent, you can hear the ocean, and you can some-

times hear your own heartbeat. So it took me about five minutes to convince myself that the guy had boxed. Bought it. Gone to the eternal care unit.

I approached the nurses' station. A large, mean-looking woman glared at me. The nurses hated new medical students -- we didn't know how things worked, and we didn't know our place. I said, "Excuse me, but Mr. Jones is no longer with us."

"Huh?"

"He's gone."

"Where?"

Abandoning euphemism, I said, "He's dead."

She looked bored. "Okay."

I went to the conference room. The chief resident was reading. "Mr. Jones is dead."

He perked up. "Yeah? What happened?"

"I don't know. I just found him."

"Does anyone know?"

"I told the nurse."

He scowled. "Dammit! You shouldn't of. We could've held a pool, to see how long it took them to notice."

I'd spoiled his fun. He didn't speak to me for the rest of the day.

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Next: the best hospital food in town, and The Man Who Likes to Kill Women.

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{{ One slight disadvantage of living in Maryland is that it now will take a lot longer to drive to Midwestcon in Cincinnati each June. And Midwestcon, as we mentioned last issue, is a true fannish nexus, an event where fans from all regions and all

eras convene. The following was written by Roger Sims and Howard Devore, who have seen and participated in their share of fan history, not to mention just about all of the 39 Midwestcons that have been held so far. }}

THE DEFINITIVE STORY OF NUMBERED FANDOMS A Play in One Act

Roger Sims and Howard Devore

Our story opens on a sunny afternoon in late March, 2058 in a large room with no windows, some one hundred years after the organization of First Fandom. There is no one in the room. A large box stands in the middle of the room. It is approximately six feet long, three feet wide, and three feet high. A table with a candle which never seems to go out has been placed at each end of the box. There is a very large fireplace on one wall, not burning. The only other piece of furniture is a chair located at one end of the box. It faces the box.

The door opens and a very old man enters. He walks over to the chair and sits down. Looking at the fireplace he thinks fire, and immediately the fireplace springs to light. It looks like a friendly fire. However, as the smoke rises up the chimney some of the smoke escapes into the room, drifts over to the box and seeps into its cover. Soon the lid opens and a very well preserved man sits up. The man in the chair speaks:

ROGER: Well, Howard, how was your sleep?

HOWARD: Fine, but what do you want now? I was in the middle of a dream of a very erotic nature, and I might add you interrupted the cl.....

ROGER: Never mind. It's time to tell the Story once again. It was decreed on the death of the last First Fandomite that First Fandom would never let the rest of Fandom forget what they did for all new fans.

HOWARD: We taught them to drink, play poker with a deck of cards that had a missing ten of clubs, and to worship Ghu. Should we have done more?

ROGER: Sniff, glue?

HOWARD: No, Ghu, the only true Ghod.

ROGER: Good, but now you must tell the story of how First Fandom began.

HOWARD: Well, it was at some drunken party somewhere in the Midwest, I believe at something that was once called Midwestcon -- not MiddleAmericaCon, which as we all know stretches from the Allegheny Mountains to the Rockies. However the date is still the same last full weekend in June and the place is still the same Cincy. But for the last several years all attendees have been teleported at the same time to the lobby, which as I remember from the last one, created a very big mess and caused the firing of many desk clerks.



ROGER: That's all well and good but let's get back to the issue at hand. Namely, the question that I've been waiting to ask

you ever since the last First Fandomite, you, died. "What happened to the bottle of Brandy?" As you know, as permanent head of Second Fandom, it was to be my task to open the bottle for the last First Fandomite. However, as you're aware, we couldn't find it when you became the last one. And at that time we decided that when you meet up with Lou Tabakow in the Great Fanzine Room upstairs you would ask him, so that when you woke up on the first hundred-year anniversary, you would tell me and I would make sure that the bottle was ready in 2158. So?

HOWARD: That son-of-a-gun took it with him. I've seen it but he won't give it up. You'll need a "Rite of Habeas Corpus" before you can exhume the body, then he'll have to give it up. You'll find it tucked under his left arm bone.

ROGER: Good, that's cleared up. We'll have no trouble bringing the bottle to you on your next anniversary. Now, how did First Fandom really start?

HOWARD: Well, a bunch of the boys were whooping it up at the Malamute saloon when someone said that we were losing our heritage. The new kids don't know that we are responsible for all of this. They don't treat us with the reverence we deserve. We must do something so that we can have our proper seats at all functions. That is, in the front. After all, our eyes and ears aren't what they used to be. And we don't want to miss any of the beautiful girls in their no-costumes. Long Don Ford as I recall asked "What will be our underlying purpose," and stubby Bob Madle piped up with, "We will tell them how Ghod and Hugo Gernsback created the Universe." Scrawny Lynn Hickman piped up with, "It took them six days to build it and Ed Hamilton 15,000 words to wreck it. Back in the thirties he could do that twice a week and sometimes on Sunday, too."

ROGER: Well, how did you decide who belonged in First Fandom?

HOWARD: At first, we decided that you had to have a long white beard, but Margaret complained. So we finally settled that you had to have been more than just a casual reader of science fiction before January 1938, and prove it by correspondence, published letters, or some such.

ROGER: But what kind of activity did First Fandom do before 1938?

HOWARD: Well, the most notable and the most fun was the Staples War. Bob Tucker wanted to eliminate the metallic staples from science fiction magazines and bind them instead with chewing gum. Wollheim opposed this, and wanted the plain metallic staples replaced with platinum ones. That way you would be able to read a 15-cent magazine, then remove the staples and sell them for 30 cents with which you could buy two more mags. The war ended when Bob Tucker sent out his newsletter with blood-covered staples, indicating that he had given up.

ROGER: OK, how about the associate members?

HOWARD: They're not really members. What they really are, are camp followers. They are allowed to sit in the far corner of the room, that is, during the business part of the meeting. After the business meeting when we really get down to business, they are expected to carry the booze down from upstairs, provide the ice, pay their annual dues, and bow their heads when a true member speaks. And, in very rare cases, drink Beam's Choice and say 'smoooooooooooooth' for anyone who can't do it for him/herself. As you can see, they are really handy to have around. Bill Cavin makes sure that we have a free meeting room wherever we are. And little Ray is encouraged to send out newsletters at his own expense. Now, Roger, it's your turn; talk about Second Fandom.

ROGER: Well, let me see; where should I start? Best I start with Dapper Dave Kyle, the darling of the airwaves and the Air Corps. He wanted to make sure that there would be an organization patterned after the great First Fandom to carry on the traditions that started in the dark ages of fandom. He enlisted the aid of some unsuspecting fans at SunCon, and here we are, carrying on just like the old days. But as you might imagine, we aren't long for the fray ourselves, and are about to give the steering wheel to the latest group. The question is, which group? What at one time constituted Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Fandoms have now dried up and blown away like the ghosts of the writers that gave them breath. For as



history tells us, they really only existed in the small minds of Jack Speer and Bob Silverberg, who in fannish days wrote long-winded articles of their greatness. However, Seventh Fandom was more to the point, what with its great ghod Ellison. But as we all know, Ellison changed his religion and disappeared into the great mundane world. So, what we are left with is 117th Fandom, which as memory serves me was organized by the 135 direct descendants of George ("Don't Ask Me How Many

Times I've Been Married") Young.

Howard: Yes, but tell me about the 117th Fandom. You know that I've been asleep for some time now, and don't know anything about these new fandoms. The last one I remember was the 50th. Didn't we decide that it was to be the Last?

Roger: Yes, we did. But you know how young folks like to do their own thing. And who is there to stop them? After all, you're here only to be waken every hundred years, and even I won't be around to wake you next time. In fact, I understand that I am to occupy the box next to you. Yes, I know that it isn't visible yet. However, I've been told it will be ready when I am. Anyway, to get back to the explanation: these youngsters of Young got together in one mind, and created the Last Fandom, which they christened the 117th. And why not? Who has a greater right? We certainly don't; our time has come and gone. And now, on that note, I'm out of here. So until next time...

The smoke which had been slithering around the box slowly removes itself. As it leaves, HOWARD also very slowly lies down as the lid closes. The fire goes out, and ROGER gets up from the chair and slowly drifts out of the picture as a smaller box begins to show itself.

** CURTAIN **

ARTIST CREDITS

Sheryl Birkhead - pages 31 (bottom) & 39

Kurt Erichsen - pages 15, 17, 33 & 35

Brad Foster - page 2

Teddy Harvia - front & back covers; pages 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 & 32

William Rotsler - pages 31 (top) & 37

David Rowe - pages 4 & 5

Julie Morgan Scott - page 3

Steve Stiles - pages 9 & 10

Charlie Williams - pages 12, 13, 28, 29 & 30

{{ We don't normally publish articles as long as this next one, but we couldn't resist Yugoslav fan Bruno Ogorelec's window onto SF in Yugoslavia, past and present. We received it not more than a week before we moved to Maryland; it's certainly the most unusual going-away present we've ever gotten. }}

The history of American mass-market SF and the fandom thereof -- from Gernsback till today via numerous pulpy begats -- has been researched in exhaustive detail and seems to be familiar to everyone by now. The British oldpharts, sharing most of the skiffy/fannish roots with their U.S. cousins, have documented their own history just as painstakingly. They are much given to recounting how they started reading SF after bumping into a cornucopia of American pulp magazines, the lucky bastards. They were apparently imported in bulk (the pulps that is, not the lucky bastards) and sold for a pittance to the impressionable British youngsters. No such luck for me, however, nor indeed for most of the other Continental Europeans.

Our lands have not been blessed with such manna. Locally brewed science fiction pulps have always been rarer than hen's milk here, while importing pulp magazines in a foreign language never made much sense, of course. Even the early sixties (my entry point into fandom) were more or less a barren desert. You Anglos had it easy. In the English-speaking countries there existed a mass market for SF, and fandom flourished. It is a market phenomenon, after all. Nowhere else could you find the skiffy-consuming masses for fandom to spring from. It made significant inroads into the rest of the Western

world only very recently, with the advent of another mass market: media SF. Before that, non-Anglo fandom was of necessity a realm of the unusual, of people like me, or worse. It has always been sparse, its lot unsung and unresearched.

A pity, that. Most of us being oddballs, we could have furnished some lurid fan histories. It takes a peculiar bent of character to get this much involved in something you share with perhaps three or four people in your entire country and which is, moreover, virtually unobtainable.

In this vein, while we are on the subject of unusual: a few months ago in *Anvil*, Skel wrote of an unusual Britfan beginning -- to wit, getting his first SF book from his mother. It was a response to Buck Coulson's column in an earlier issue in which Buck had stressed the improbability of a fan's mother in the fifties having anything to do with anything as disreputable as science fiction. Hah! Piffle! If a mother was an improbable source of SF, what about a grandmother? Or a great-grandmother? Now that is what I would call improbable.

Yes, you've guessed it, of course -- therein hangs a tale. A long one; I am congenitally incapable of writing anything short and succinct:

GREAT JUMPING GRANDMOTHERS

A Cautionary Tale of Female Emancipation

Bruno Ogorelec

I am a scion of a venerable fannish family whose passion for SF and fantasy started at about the same time the peace accords were being hammered out at Versailles, in the aftermath of World War I. My country, Yugoslavia, had just been put together out of assorted Balkan states, nations, and territories. My family, in contrast, started going asunder. Did I say "family?" Hm, for want of a better word, perhaps. Well, you'll see for yourself.

If I want to begin at the beginning,

I must start with my great-grandmother. She discovered science fiction in 1920. It wasn't labelled "science fiction," of course, but that's what it was. An awkward person, my great-grandmother. Wish I could speak of her in a more positive light, her being the very first fan of us all, etc., but by all accounts she was a difficult woman; cold, rude, and fiercely independent.

She married halfheartedly, only because the changing social climate had made our comfortable family traditions no lon-

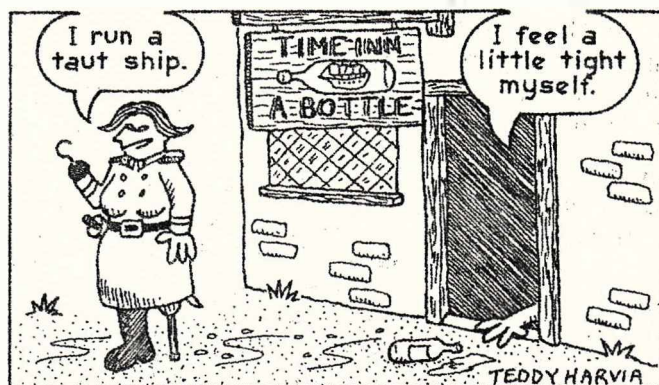
ger acceptable. Till then, my female ancestors never even thought of getting married. Instead, they occupied a rather peculiar niche in the contemporary order of things. This will sound weird, I know, and have to brace myself for some incredulity: our women were all illegitimate daughters of Catholic priests. When they grew up, they in turn became women-about-church and the priests' concubines -- and eventually bore the priests' illegitimate children. This is what we had in place of the conventional family. (In the XIX century, mind you.)

It may seem like a mean existence to you, but was in fact a pleasant enough life, vastly preferable to the fate of a peasant's wife, for instance. The priests -- often highly-placed church officials -- took very good care of their women and children, making sure their "families" never lacked anything. The women never had to toil for subsistence, a rare blessing in an era in which a woman's toil was a terrible burden indeed. Work around the church was undemanding and often interesting. Our women were educated far above the norm for those days, and even had access to the church libraries. Their lives were simple, easy, enlightened -- and independent, free of many stifling family strictures. No wonder none of them ever wanted anything better either for themselves or for their daughters. (For once it was the men who got the rough end of the arrangement. Sons did not fit into the scene at all, and most of them drifted away and became itinerant field hands.)



It was only my great-grandmother that broke the tradition, pressured by the increasingly secular society, but according to the family sources she did it reluctantly and later came to regret her bold move. Before her time, scoffing at a cozy role in life such as hers was rare

and pointless; envy was a much more common reaction. However, with the decline of the feudal system and the rise of urban democratic society, the church lost much of its clout and prestige. The cachet of being a prelate's concubine had paled accordingly.



Great-grandma was a proud woman and didn't want to be scoffed at. She ditched the tradition, married a young railroad track inspector, and with the considerable family savings opened an inn in the country. She ran a taut ship, gave good value for money to the inn's patrons, and prospered. As a wife and mother, however, she was a failure, obviously resenting having to take care of a household and family on top of her busy inn. Great-granddad was thus happy to roam the country inspecting the railroad tracks, returning home for one weekend a month (if that much). His wife of formidable will, unsettling education, and unpleasant moods had turned out to be more than he could handle, and it was good to be out of the way most of the time.

Little Grandma, his daughter, soon realized her Daddy hadn't been a fool. She was a teenager then and, though scarcely involved in any momentous events, could clearly sense that big changes were afoot in the wide world. She was seriously rethinking her options in life. At home she was largely ignored as a person, but very much taken into account as a laborer. How could she fancy being a waitress and kitchen helper in a country inn? She didn't relish playing second fiddle to her mother's ego, either. As well educated as was the family custom, she wanted more out of life. A whole new world beckoned her from outside. So one day she simply packed her modest possessions and left for the Big City.

ence fiction. Among the first possessions she packed were books. Perhaps a dozen altogether, the cream of the cream of the family library. Among them were the two freshest additions and Great-grandma's favorites: *The End of the World* and *The Last Days of Men* by Camille Flammarion. Beautiful books bound in silky green fabric, with titles embossed in black and gold. I remember them so vividly -- the smooth solid things with intricate ridges of the embossing, cool and pleasant to touch, not like the modern slick book jackets that turn sticky against your palms.

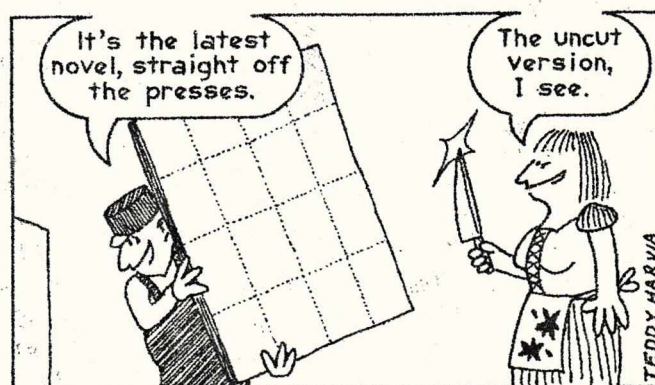
They were all illustrated with superb, richly detailed lithographs of dark, brooding character, ideally complementing Flammarion's literary images of decadence before the doom. The one I remember best depicted a rich man's living room somewhere in Paris. He is reclined on an opulent sofa and watches a huge flat circular TV screen, wall mounted in a baroque frame, with more levers sprouting from its base than from a DC-3 control panel. The screen shows a plump bejewelled belly dancer clad in silk dimi, performing before an audience of beggars and street urchins somewhere in Baghdad. Another picture, much smaller, more of a vignette, showed a cluster of badly misshapen flowers, ominous signs of the impending fall. All pictures had fitting captions, dripping with morals, but they elude me now.

Great grandmother was furious at her daughter's flight. Amazingly, it was the "theft" of books that incensed her the most. To her the books were a bit sacred, a link to her rather elevated past, and a token of her stature in the community. The only other people in the village that read books were the parish priest and the schoolteacher. Flammarion's disappearance pained her most acutely. She clearly loved the fantastic literature, her latest discovery, best of all. It was a genre much frowned upon by the church then and reading it was thus a small defiant gesture towards the regrettably abandoned curia. Small, because Flammarion was a religious moralist at heart. Flaunting him was at best a hedged bet. (Curiously enough, the church libraries routinely held books that were not Ideologically Sound, even while railing against them in public. But then, laymen generally did not have access to them, and the priests must have

been considered immune to their corrosive influence.)

Her daughter inherited this appreciation of the fantastic, but went a step further, embracing "hard" SF as well. For her, free of any longing for the staid tradition, Jules Verne was the man to watch, writing of the brave new times and gadgets, and of men with the Right Stuff.

I have often wondered how she managed to buy books. She came to Zagreb with a small cardboard suitcase, little money, and fewer prospects for a sound and gainful employment. Luck was with her, though. She soon found a job as a printer's assistant in the big *Tipografija* printing plant which specialized in all kinds of office forms for the government, banks, insurance companies, etc. It was hard work and paid little, while the books were frightfully expensive. Common folk hardly ever read real books -- but then, Grandma had always considered herself a cut above common, inheriting from her mother also a dose of haughtiness. Ordinary literate people found their reading pleasure in, well, pulps. Not SF, I hasten to say, but historical romances and novels of intrigue. They were more basic than the American pulps, insofar as they didn't have proper covers and weren't even bound or cut. The big printer sheet (46" x 33") was simply folded over four times to give 32 uncut pages. An illustration and a title were printed in the corner destined to end up as the front page, and that was it. You would cut the pages yourself, most often with a kitchen knife, and perhaps sew the pages together at a fold with a sewing needle and some thread. I don't think staples existed then. If there were any around they must have been out of common folk's reach.

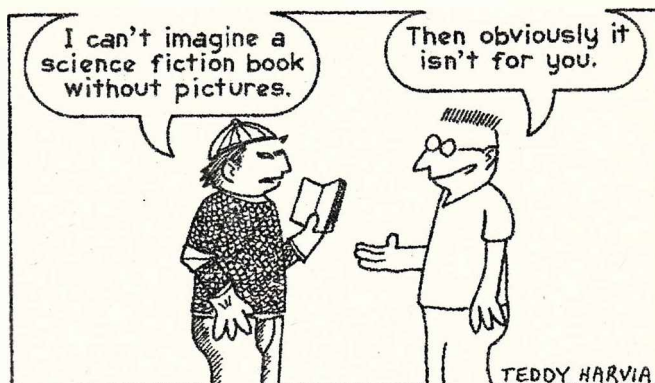


While Grandma did prefer (and buy) books, the pulps were certainly not below notice in her household. They were purchased regularly, read carefully, and then bound together in volumes. She befriended some guys in the printing shop bindery, bribed them with beer and smiles and got proper hard bindings done. As the *Tipografija* works only did office supplies and thus only had relevant binding materials, Granny's bookshelf looked suspiciously like an office file cabinet, with rows of what looked like stiff cardboard file dossiers, dark gray with a pattern of dull green swirls, edged with black cloth and labelled along the spine. The labels were blank, though, and once you took a "file dossier" down from the shelf you saw the illustrated front page of the pulp romance neatly cut, glued, and pressed onto the front side. Rather like those fake-book-shelf cocktail cabinets, only in reverse.



But below the bound pulps were shelves of real books. A surprising number of them were fantasy or science fiction, considering how few had been published here at all by that time. The French had a notable presence, far bigger than they would manage (or merit) nowadays. Jules Verne led the pack, naturally, but his lead would have been even greater had Grandma ever learned the Cyrillic alphabet. Several interesting SF books had been published in Belgrade in Cyrillic, among them the first SF book ever published in these parts: Jules Verne's *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, in 1873 (only six years after the Turkish army had retreated from Belgrade, freeing it after 450 years of Ottoman occupation!).

Of Wells there was only *The Invisible Man*; surprising in view of Granny's strong Socialist leanings. It was a 1914



edition with no illustrations, which was quite unusual for the time. Perhaps the illustrator found drawing an invisible hero too much of a challenge? The only other English title, as far as I can remember, was Bellamy's *Looking Backward*... No E. A. Poe, who was virtually unknown here till the fifties for some unfathomable reason. No Stapledon, either. But then, Olaf Stapledon still hasn't been published here at all...

Despite long hours and miserly pay, Grandma did manage to buy and read books and indulge in some other soul-satisfying activities, like singing. In her time off she sang in the trade union choir, and there she met my grandfather, her husband. He sang in the Print & Graphic Trades Union Choir despite being a panel beater. The contemporary repertory apparently put a heavy emphasis on lyrical tenors and Grandpa, a carouser of some repute, was also reputed to have a voice of a macho nightingale. The PGTU choirmaster had lured him away from the Machinist's Union Choir offering him God knows what, but most probably the chance to sing with girls (the MU Choir was, not surprisingly, all male). Grandpa took the opportunity with both hands. In the new crowd he soon found a good companion in my grandmother, who also liked singing, wine, and merry company, and they got happily married.

But they did not live happily ever after, alas. A sad note intrudes here. Grandma soon lost her job. She was very active in the PGTU, helped organize a big strike in the late twenties and got sacked in the *Tipografija* owners' reprisals. For two years the Trade Union Strike Fund paid her a weekly support allowance, but with the onset of the Great Depression their coffers dried up. By that time, the daughters had arrived, three of them in

quick succession, the one in the middle being my mother. Grandpa fell ill, suddenly. A stomach cancer was diagnosed; very soon he withered away and died.

But the women in my family have titanium-allow backbones. They know not defeat.

The legend has it that one day, as Grandpa lay ill on a cot in the kitchen -- to be at Grandma's hand in case he needed anything -- the taxman came to the door to collect long-overdue taxes. He'd come armed with a court order empowering him to seize movable property in case the tax debt could not be collected in cash or financial paper. Grandma herself used to recount the thunderous encounter with some relish, cackling gleefully. When the appeals failed to soften the taxman's resolve, she went over to the woodshed and returned with a huge axe, a mean four-foot mother she could barely raise with both hands, and offered to split his skull if he but dared to cross the threshold. The funny and mysterious thing is that, after beating a hasty retreat, he never came back, ever. Grandma has always maintained that she never paid those back taxes, and that nobody has ever tried to collect them again.

If she was capable of putting the fear of God into the Municipal Revenue Services, she certainly wasn't going to be fazed by life's minor knocks, so she somehow raised her three daughters single-handedly, despite the highly irregular income, and by my mother's words, she did it with flair and in style. The girls were fine-mannered and always well-dressed. Grandma had even offered them good education, but all three stopped after high school and found jobs instead.

For some reason only my mother inherited the literary interests of her idiosyncratic mother and grandmother, but that was enough to keep the tradition. When she married and went to live with my father, she started a SF library of her own and now has a sizeable collection, including, I think, all SF books published in the Croatian/Serbian language after the war. She has always felt that by embracing science fiction, she took over a family trust that had been kept and nurtured over the generations. She still has this sense of mission, almost, and could never

really understand her sisters' total lack of interest. How could anyone fail to see the innate conceptual beauty of science fiction was beyond her powers of comprehension.

This is the environment I grew up in, you see.

Funnily enough, the tradition has always been handed down from mother to daughter, no men in my family ever having the slightest interest in SF. Great-granddad never read anything at all, excepting the *Agramer Tagblatt*, the leading Zagreb German-language daily paper in its day. Grandfather, in turn, respected his wife's tastes but preferred the French classics and, surprisingly, Grandma's bound pulp romances. My father, a physicist of international repute, hates science fiction.

So there it was -- the beginning of the sixties, the Hula Hoop craze had already subsided, Rock'n'Roll had started its conquest of the Balkans, and there was still no female offspring in sight to take the tradition over. Bene Gesserit were getting worried. Was the work and dedication of generations destined to turn into dust, with no one to carry the torch? Grandma, distracted by life's calamities, had managed to instill the True Faith in just one of her three daughters and that one, perversely, bore her a grandson, not a granddaughter. Useless. You couldn't make a man into a Truthsayer. Family history had by that time proved conclusively that men simply did not take to science fiction. The other two daughters did have female offspring but the young girls couldn't be bothered to peruse the comics, much less read the weightier stuff like Heinlein's juveniles or Isaac Asimov. To all appearances it was a dead end.

But appearances can be deceiving, you know.

It was a fine summer day in Zagreb. Mother was cooking dinner, her son destroying the last of the cherry pie, browsing through some old issues of *Savremena Tehnika* (a kind of local *Popular Mechanics*), and all was well with the world.

"Mom!" the boy called out. "How does a mountain open?"

"What?"

"How does a mountain open?"

"Hm. Well, it doesn't, usually."

"Yes it does. It says so here.

Listen: 'When it looked as if our flying machine would crash straight into the mountainside, the huge rock face simply split apart. The entire mountain opened along a vertical seam. Full speed ahead, we flew through the opening and into a giant brightly lit cavern cut into the rock. Already the mountain was closing back behind us like a clamshell, cutting us off from the red desert and orange sky. We were inside Mars!'"

Mom dropped her pots and pans in shock, her face blanched. She couldn't believe her ears. With the tympani pounding Richard Strauss' "Zarathustra" in her mind she ran over to the boy and looked at the magazine in his hands. Aye, there it was, verily, the third installment of *Among the Martians*, a short novel by Hugo Gernsback.

A curious sound escaped her lips, neither a shout nor a whisper. To the boy it sounded like a name, a man's name in some strange and exotic language: Kwisatz Haderach! But it could have been just a sneeze.

At any rate, the boy took to science fiction like a duck to the water, to the disbelief of the women. He thrived on the skiffy diet, growing and growing in stature and fannishness over the years, finally to become me as I am today, a worthy successor to the science fiction witch coven. Unexpectedly, I even found the place that no Truthsayer could see into. It was said that "... a man would come one day and find ... his inward eye, and that he would look where Truthsayers before him couldn't."

I found that place in the English language.

Before me no one in the family ever learned English; German and Hungarian were our foreign languages of choice. All foreign science fiction we read had been translated. Roughly a third of it was Russian, another third French, and the rest Angloamerican. The others were truly rare. The rarest of all were the Yugoslav authors, a mere dozen or so. It was a

fine, if limited, choice. To an American fan it would be quite unfamiliar, the Russian part in particular. More's the pity.



I liked the Russian stuff pretty much most of the time. Alexander Belyayev used to be a favorite, the grand old man of Russian SF, bound to the wheelchair by polio and compensating for the sedentary destiny in a spectacular manner, inventing very lifelike and convincing heroes: amphibious men, flying men, and mad scientists. To me, the fondest of his creations, however, is a certain young lady from "The Head of Professor Dowell," written in the late forties. The said professor had an unusual dream: to salvage from crash victims what body parts were in viable condition, and recycle them. Out of the remains of two or three deaders he would cobble together one live one, reducing thereby the traffic fatalities tally by thirty to fifty percent -- a noble aim in the forties, surely. Totally impractical now, of course, what with the current cost of malpractice insurance and all. Anyway, he kept the heads potted, somewhat like petunias, in the basement lab and fed them hydroponically. One head used to belong to a lovely, shy, fragile blond. Very conveniently, along comes a delectable corpse of a hot-blooded bar singer, shot through the forehead by a jealous lover. The voluptuous body is mated to the elfin head, and the results are hilarious as the worldly body clashes with a shy and innocent mind. A good book.

Modern Angloamerican science fiction was represented by Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, and hardly anyone else. The others appeared haphazardly, by accident more than by design. We had no reason to suppose that Angloamerican SF was much more plentiful than French SF. It was more exciting, true, but contem-

porary Russian SF often matched it in excitement and was usually better written. Of the Americans we knew, only Bradbury could write but his SF was wooly and poetic, which was counted against him. Way back then we still expected science fiction to have some hair on its chest.

Ahem. Where was I? Ah, yes; the English language. I learned it as a lark, mostly. Some of my friends collected stamps, the others made model aeroplanes, and I collected feelthy peekchers and studied English. Frankly, it wasn't of much practical use to me. The English language, I mean. Rock lyrics have always been unintelligible, even to the native English speakers. Movies were (and still are, thank God) subtitled. What else was there?

Well, in time I found the British motoring magazines. Ah, the *Autocar*, for example! The patrician among the peasants. I didn't understand much at first, but it doesn't take you too long to learn such pearly perfect syntagms The Double Overhead Camshaft, or Desmodromic Valve Actuation. Pure poetry in steel and Valvoline. Gradually I soaked up enough of a vocabulary to read and understand most of the articles. I even learned that you didn't say "bonnet" or "boot" to an American, but "hood" and "trunk" instead, and that the tyres and tires were one and the same thing.

And then, inevitably, I bumped into science fiction.

By the mid-sixties I had read virtually every single SF book available in Croatian/Serbian and was down to the misfiles -- you know, the books with promising but misleading titles (like Jack London's *Moon Valley*) or non-SF books by SF authors. Logic said that there must have been some misfiles in the opposite direction as well, science fiction that did not look like science fiction. I started fine-combing the entire stock of a big public library to find them, and Bingo! found one in the very first try. It was *From Lucianus to Lunik* by Darko Suvin, filed -- not entirely unexpectedly -- under "Literary Theory". It actually was literary theory, a hefty volume explaining science fiction, that they snubbed it out of prejudice, not out of knowledge. So,

to illustrate the points he made, he had included a dozen SF stories in a kind of appendix. I opened the book at the appendix and was hooked from the start. In the first entry even the author's name dripped with the sense of wonder -- Cordwainer Smith! The story was "Scanners Live in Vain" and it hit me like a sledgehammer.



The book's theoretical part was no less fascinating. It traced the history of fantastic literature all the way back to the ancients, and analysed its content to show the reasons for its enduring importance in the human culture. Somehow I have always felt science fiction to be more important than its surface showed, but could never quite frame the right arguments. All of a sudden there was that professor in Zagreb who understood.

He opened my eyes in yet another respect, teaching me that somewhere out there, there existed an incredibly vast mountain of science fiction in English, of which I had never even dreamt. That all the SF I had read till then was but an anthill compared to the Himalayas. My mother also read Suvin's book and was non-plussed. She liked the stories a lot (Heinlein's "Misfit" being her favorite) but hated the idea of thousands of such stories, out of reach because of the language barrier. She felt betrayed.

I felt feverish. God, could it be true?

From the age of five I'd been a member of the library and yet I never climbed the short flight of stairs leading to the first floor. There was no reason to -- it held the foreign language books. But now... Suddenly I put two and two together and ran all the way to the library, three or four miles, the tram seeming far too slow and roundabout for my purpose.

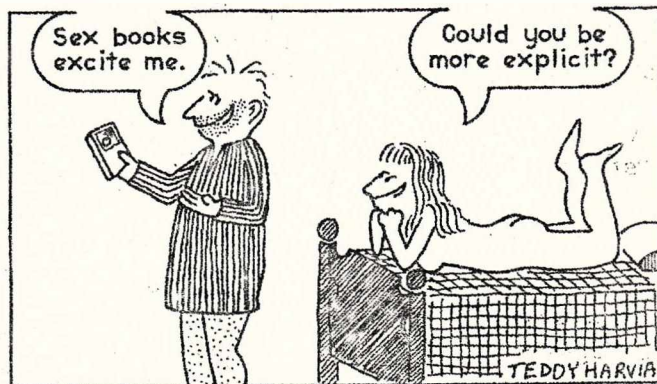
I will state publicly here that my collision, head on, with the rows upon rows of science fiction paperbacks on the library shelves stands as one of the two distinct pinnacles of excitement in all my 37 years of life. (The other was a fresh spring day a year or so earlier, when a stunningly beautiful Jewish girl I tutored in geography invited me to get more physical in my approach to learning. Sweet Jesus, what delights that girl had in store!)

But I was talking of science fiction, wasn't I? I spent the entire afternoon in the library and was forcibly evicted at the closing time, with two books chosen after hours of painful deliberation tightly clutched in my hands. One was *Galaxies Like Grains of Sand* by Brian Aldiss, and the other *The Reefs of Space*, the first book of the Starchild trilogy by Fred Pohl and Jack Williamson. Despite a very shaky command of English I read them right through at once, one through the night and the other next morning, every single word of them. I would have read the bar codes, even, had they been invented by then.

Thus started the final stage in my transformation into a fan. One to two books a day for months and months on end, with unceasing fervor and dedication. My great-grandmother must have smiled on me benevolently from the Great Worldcon in the Sky where she went after giving up on the mundane world at the age of 90. Grandmother did smile benevolently, even though she apparently disbelieved the existence of so much SF in the world. Her disbelief was abetted by the weird covers of my paperbacks; nothing that lurid could have been serious, in her opinion. Mother did not smile benevolently; she was piqued. Only when a flurry of small press publishers appeared here in the eighties and started flooding the market with translated Angloamerican SF, did she forgive me for having the gall to look where she could not.

I didn't care much about anyone's opinion then. I read and read and read, trying to catch up on the thirty years of American and British science fiction production that had passed me by. If I could, I would have taken the books intravenously, or soaked them up through the

skin; reading was so damn slow. I'd have absorbed them whole, together with the bookworms. In time, with enough bookworms ingested and accumulated, I'd have turned into a bookworm myself, a giant obese Shai-Hulud of bookdom, burrowing deep down under the library and bookstore basements, coming out in a geyser of bricks, parquet, and hardcovers only to devour the latest skiffy releases.



What saved me was supply-side economics. It delivered a shock that brought me to my senses, kept me out of the claws of depravity, and let me be just another ordinary fan. Namely, the book business went soft in the early seventies and the foreign book bookstore a couple of blocks away from my library decided to meet the challenge aggressively. They tried catering for a wider clientele, especially in the paperback section of the store, and to that purpose added several new genre lines to their usual choice of romances, gothics, and skiffy. One of the new choices, to my amazement, was pornography. Overnight there was a whole new section of shelving devoted to the Olympia Press "Traveller's Companion" line of books, with color-coded covers. Green covers for "regular" sex, yellows for the gays, pinks for the kinks, etc. Some of the stuff was very good, too, exciting and beautifully written.

Hm. I cannot say I turned from a SF fan into a pornophile. No, I have always approved of explicit sex, in art or out of it, and still do. And I never stopped reading science fiction. It is just that suddenly there was a timely reminder of other things in life. Slowly I brought the reading pace down to normal, the fever receded, and I stopped bearing Ghu's witness before the world. Science fiction became Just A Goddam Hobby then, and has remained that ever since.

{{ The last issue of *Mimosa* was sort of a transitional "Farewell to Tennessee" issue for us. We lived there for 15 years, and found that despite ourselves, roots are only too easy to put down. Many of our most vivid memories and most of our connections to fandom originate in the mid-south part of the U.S., of which Tennessee is heartland. Although we're not sure it was ever really 'home' to us, we know we'll miss it. This issue was originally meant to be a "Welcome to Maryland" issue; we don't know if it'll actually turn out that way, but in any event there are still some loose ends of our Tennessee years to write about, and

the following article is one of them.

For the past eight years, Dick's job in fossil energy R&D quite frequently took him to a coal-fired power plant out in the wilds of rural Kentucky, where landscapes had been severely and immensely altered by strip mining long before land reclamation laws were ever thought of. Curiously, this station is somewhat paradoxically named The Paradise Power Plant; a place farther from paradise would be hard to imagine. Dick likes to say that the place isn't the end of the world, but you can see it from there. Here is more about that place... }}

PARADISE

Dick Lynch

I remember the day well. It was a warm late-summer day in 1980. I had recently taken an engineering position with a large, government-owned utility company (the Tennessee Valley Authority), and this was my first trip to the coal fields of western Kentucky. I had hopped a ride with a fellow worker, and after a long drive we had stopped by this little greasy spoon diner for lunch just outside the coal-fired electrical generating plant where we were scheduled to be that afternoon. I was still pretty green to my new job at that point; before TVA I had worked as a process development engineer in a research laboratory, where the biggest concerns were keeping whatever hazardous chemicals you were working with inside the fume hood, and making sure your monthly progress reports got to the secretary on time. Not here, though. I had always wanted a job that put me out in the field a little more, doing something a little more interesting and with a little more practical applications than developing chemical processes that nobody seemed interested in. Well, I had gotten my wish.

The little car we'd requisitioned from the TVA motor pool had been one of those no-frills Pintos that Ford had made in the last year they were built. With hard hats, overnight bags, and equipment we were bringing to the plant, it was a tight squeeze to fit just the two of us in there. It kind of reminded me of the limerick about the Young Man from Boston /

Who Bought Himself an Austin; the car was a little bigger than that, but not much. This car was even more no-frills than most, because it lacked basic human necessities like air conditioning and a radio. The lack of air conditioning we managed to cope with; we just used the old stand-by: two-fifty-five air conditioning -- two windows down at fifty-five miles an hour. Having no radio, though, presented an inconvenience we couldn't overcome; even conversation tends to peter out during a long, four-hour drive. There was one other thing a radio could have provided us -- the news. Lots can happen in a four-hour stretch when you're effectively cut-off from humanity. In this particular four-hour stretch, something did happen that had we known about it, we would have probably have turned the car around and headed directly back to Chattanooga. Because there are some things in the world you just don't want to mess around with, and one of them is a coal miners' strike.

The United Mine Workers in recent years seems to be losing some of the clout that it once had. Coal prices have been on the decline worldwide for several years; mines have closed or curtailed their work forces, and miners are moving on to different, less backbreaking, and safer professions. They're no longer such a feisty lot, either; it takes a lot more nowadays to enrage them as a group where organized action takes place. One of the things that will set them off, though, is when a utility brings in coal produced by

non-union mines. TVA had done just that, and now there I was, right in the middle of a wildcat strike that was just starting to get ugly. The little roadside diner was called the Red Rooster; turned out that it was UMW Central, at least as far as this little disturbance was concerned. Coal miners are usually depicted as big, dumb, hulking brutes; these guys looked to be no exception. I was in favor of leaving right there and then, but Bill, the fellow engineer I was travelling with, insisted that he was hungry, and By God, he was going to have something to eat. We had just placed an order for hamburgers, which looked to be the least disgusting thing on the menu, when Bill saw two guys near the doorway, reading what a third guy had just tacked up on a bulletin board. I'll say one thing for Bill -- cats have nothing on him in the curiosity department. So before I could grab him to pull him back down in his chair, he grabbed me by the arm and as he was pulling me over toward the bulletin board said, "C'mon, Dick, let's go see what's going on."

With a great sense of dread I followed him, if only to be a little closer to the door. Bill, though, knew no fear. The object of interest on the bulletin board turned out to be some newspaper clipping that was sympathetic to the UMW, which had previously lodged complaints about importing coal from non-union mines into an area where union miners were being laid off. There was a big placard, in fact, right next to the clipping that read "This Is a Union County". As Bill read the clipping, he started chuckling to himself, undoubtedly about how unbiased local reporters and editors had become lately. He didn't seem to realize that all the while, his antics were starting to draw attention from some of the miners who heretofore had been pretty much minding their own business. Finally, two of the bigger fellows seated not too far away put down whatever delicacies they were eating, looked at each other, looked at us, then started easing their chairs back from their table a bit, as if they were getting ready to get up, come over, and check us out to see just what was so funny. It was obviously time to take some drastic action, so I turned and gave them what I hoped was my broadest, friendliest smile

while talking to Bill out of the side of my mouth: "Okay, Bill, let's get ou-u-u-t-ta he-e-e-re!"

It was very soon indeed after that we were back in the Millennium Pinto and headed for the plant. Bill grouched a little about not being able to eat his lunch, didn't have an answer when I pointed out that two big guys almost had us for lunch. As we approached the plant, signs of labor unrest were more obvious -- groups of people, some carrying "On Strike" placards hanging around the plant entrance highway, a state police car or two watching the situation, and a big coal-haul truck by the side of the highway without a windshield (the cop said it had been shot out). Somewhere, about halfway down the plant entrance highway, we decided we didn't really need to stay overnight in the area, after all, so we just dropped off the equipment we had brought with us, turned around, and headed for home. It wasn't until we had gotten all the way to the county line that Bill laughed, turned to me and said, "Well, Dick, you've just been to Paradise."

And you know, we never did get anything to eat that afternoon.

But wait! There's more...

I had originally intended to end this article here, but I find that I can't yet. I've lost count, but after that first trip to the Paradise Power Plant, I must have returned there maybe a hundred times more. And each time I returned, I found out there was something new and interesting about the place I'd previously missed. There's lots more to tell about it. For instance, there's how it got its name...

Old-timers at the plant told me that once, maybe thirty or forty years ago, this part of Kentucky was indeed a wonderful place, with hills and valleys, beautiful forests everywhere, and the Green River as a source of water and transportation. It was off the beaten path, and relatively undisturbed. Right on the Green River there was a town named Paradise, that was settled by the deliberate, slow-talking kind of people that

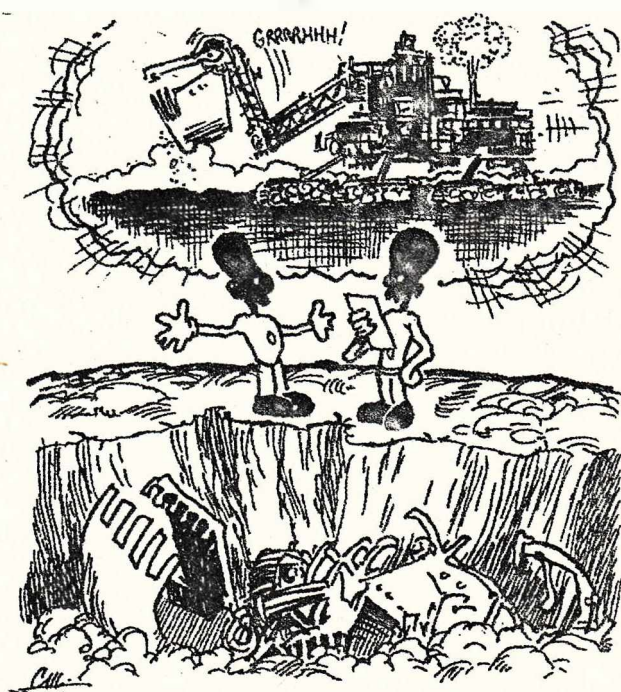
still live in that neck of the woods. There's still enough wilderness around there that I can imagine what it must have been like; the original settlers must have thought they'd found their equivalent of the Promised Land. Then, back when the nation was in a period where new energy reserves were needed for the war effort and ensuing population explosion afterward, some mining geologists from the Peabody Coal Company discovered there were large coal reserves in that part of the state. So the coal company moved in and bought up all the land, then moved everybody out, razed the town, and strip mined the land for the coal. A songwriter named John Prine even wrote a song about it:

"And the coal company came with
the world's largest shovel;
And they tortured the timber and
stripped all the land.
Well, they dug for their coal till
the land was forsaken;
Then they wrote it all down as the
progress of man.
And daddy, won't you take me back
to Muhlenberg County;
Down by the Green River where
Paradise lay.
Well, I'm sorry, my son, but
you're too late in asking;
Mister Peabody's coal train has
hauled it away."

Once, I was in the right place at the right time to be invited to visit the world's largest shovel referred to above. It was used to remove the 170-or-so feet of what is euphemistically called 'overburden' so that the eight foot thick seam of coal could be mined. The result was one of the largest holes in the ground I've ever seen. It was so large, in fact, that the first time I went to the mine, I didn't grasp the scale of the place until I saw a tiny section of rock at the lip of the mine fall lazily in slow motion to the bottom. Only it wasn't really in slow motion; the depth of the mine and the distance of the fall only made it seem so. Once the true perspective snapped in, I could see little toy vehicles down on the floor of the mine that were actually bulldozers the size of a bus. The shovel itself had to be one of the mechanized wonders of the world; it was taller than a 20-story building, as wide as an eight-

lane highway, and could remove 115 cubic yards in one scoop. One gulp from that monster, and your whole front yard is gone. Another, and your house disappears, too. When I got inside, I was astonished to find that it was controlled by a single operator, located in a cupola about five stories up. When we got to the 'roof' of the cab, at about the ten-story level, it was like being on a ship in a storm from the constant back-and-forth motion of the shovel while it continued to remove dirt and rock. I was told that if I had been crazy enough to climb all the way out to the end of the shovel boom, I would have experienced about one-and-a-half gravity centrifugal force as the boom swung round.

It was the mightiest machine; the largest self-powered mobile land machine ever built. And it doesn't exist any more. About three years ago, the strip mine finally ran out of a usable coal supply, after some 30 years of production. The big shovel was such a dinosaur that it was cost prohibitive to move it to another mine. So they just salvaged all the electrical parts that were of any value, lowered the big boom one last time, and covered the whole thing over when they filled in the pit. I can imagine that some far-future paleontologist will think that metal monsters once roamed the earth, when the metal bones of this behemoth are uncovered again someday.



There was also an underground coal mine in addition to the strip mine in the vicinity around Paradise; the place is very rich with coal. And, with some trepidation, I and a couple of co-workers took a trip down there. I don't think I could ever be a miner. I wasn't particularly scared up on top of the big shovel; just awe-struck from its immense scale. Down underground, I couldn't help wonder in *that* particular section of rock ceiling was just about ready to come down, right on top of me. And the miners seemed to take particular pains to point out parts of the ceiling where there had been rock falls. I guess they found it an instant cure for visitor cockiness.

The trip down there was pretty eventful in itself. I guess I had expected something safe and boring like an elevator, or at least a walkway. Instead, we got the tram ride from *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. I kid you not; there were enough twists and turns, low ceilings, and stomach-churning drops to put any amusement park to shame; they should have sold tickets for that thing. When we got down there, we found that the depth of the coal seam being mined was only five feet. This meant that six-foot people like me had to adopt to a new way of walking around -- like Groucho Marx in *Duck Soup*, we grasped our hands behind our back, bent over forward slightly with our chins jutting out, and did a sort-of bent-knee waddle. The only things missing were bushy eyebrows, horned-rimmed glasses, and cigars. Dave, one of my co-workers, later asked me if he looked as foolish down there as I did to him.



And speaking of foolish, it always seemed that whenever something bizarre or surreal happened while I was at Paradise, Dave, Bill, or Dave and Bill were somehow also involved. Like the time we were snowed in there one weekend. Dave was driving around a rental front-wheel drive Toyota, and was surprised at how easily it got through even the deep, packed snow that snowplows throw into the front of driveways. The car was making it look so easy that Dave was losing all fear of getting stuck. So of course, we did.

Bill was staying at a place a few miles from our hotel, and we were to meet him for dinner, since his place had a kitchenette and ours didn't. By the time we reached the parking area in front of Bill's motel room, Dave was of the impression that there was *nothing* this car couldn't do. I guess we should have been suspicious of the lack of tire tracks in the white snowy expanse of the parking lot, but we weren't, and Dave blithely pulled the car straight in. Or tried to, that is. We got within about 15 feet of what looked to be the curb when the car suddenly sunk about six inches, followed by a noisy crunching sound. And it wouldn't go any farther. When we got out, we discovered that there was at least one thing that car couldn't do -- it couldn't swim. The parking area turned out to have such poor drainage (Bill had forgotten to tell us) that it wasn't unusual for several inches of water to accumulate. Dave's car had just broken through the icy crust under the snow, and had sunk down to where its bottom was flush against the ice. We had to wade through five inch-deep icy slush to make it to shore.

Getting the car free was just as exciting. We wanted to call for a tow-truck right then and there, but Dave wanted to give it one good try to free it by muscle-power before we gave it up. So, with much apprehension and fortified with three new pairs of tall rubber boots, we waded out to the car to give it our best shot.

Bill claimed the driver's spot, since he had played no active part in getting us into this mess. Dave and I stationed ourselves at the front of the car at each headlamp; we would do our best to push the car out, while Bill kept a



steady foot on the accelerator with the car in reverse gear. It was probably one of the most hopeless plans we had ever come up with, seeing as how the car was completely bottomed-out; yet it just might have worked except for one thing we didn't know about.

After being immersed in icy water in sub-freezing temperature for an hour or so, the right front wheel -- the one I was stationed in front of -- was frozen solid. All the engine's torque was going to the other front wheel, where Dave was. The result was predictable: when Dave gave Bill the signal to press down on the accelerator e-e-easy now, Bill naturally stood on it with both feet. And as Dave bent his shoulder to the front of the car in one last valiant attempt to push it free, all that torque applied to the one free drive wheel spun it so fast that it shot a geyser of ice-cold water twenty feet in the air.

And Dave, poor Dave, was standing right in the middle of it. It was quite a while before he in good humor again.



But wait! There's still more...

After eight years of working in the area, the sights and sounds of the place don't want to go away very quickly. A co-worker once told me as we passed the county line on the way home that one of the greatest sights in the world was seeing the Muhlenberg County sign in your car's rear-view mirror; the dirt and filth from coal mining and the obvious signs of

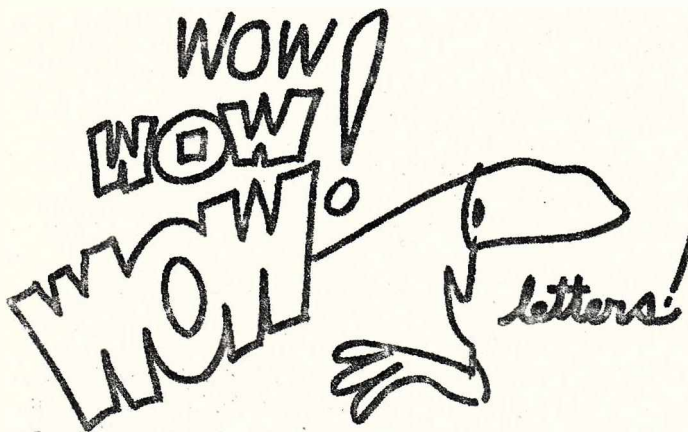
poverty in the area just tend to wear you down after a while. Even poverty itself seemed to fit the paradoxical nature of the area; whole families lived in shacks so run down and decrepit you'd feel guilty about keeping livestock in them, yet they would have a satellite dish antenna in their yard and a bright new four-by-four pickup truck in the driveway. There were the trips to little beer and liquor package stores just across the county line (Muhlenberg County was dry) -- on one of them we had an Indian visitor with us; when we ran into what looked to be a group of backwoods redneck woodsmen at a beer store I had a terrible sinking feeling that one of them would say something about the visitor that would lead to a complex series of events that could only end with someone beating the crap out of me (luckily, they didn't). There was the Noah's Ark of hardware stores in a nearby village, that had in its cluttered aisles just two of practically anything you might need. There was a parade of all sorts of memorable characters, places, and events. In fact, one reason why this article has been kicking around inside me for about five years is that I couldn't decide what things were memorable enough to write about.

Like the Polish visitor we had not long after the Solidarity union had been outlawed... He was here to learn about new advances in coal technology; I hosted him for a day in Kentucky, then drove him back to the TVA Office of Power headquarters in Chattanooga. He was outspoken about his concerns for his family and friends, some of which were union supporters, but he still interested in the rolling hills of the countryside that was passing by in front of him.

Not far from the plant, we passed through the one remaining grove of trees that somehow had escaped the strip mining that passed through years before. It was where part of the town once stood. I explained to him that here it was still possible to see wild hawks hunting rodents, and even catch an occasional glimpse of a deer. He turned to me and asked, "What is this place called?"

And I just smiled, and said, "Here? This is Paradise."

MIMOSA LETTERS



((We had a pretty good response to our fifth issue of Mimosa, even more than for our fourth issue and in spite of our relocation from Tennessee to Maryland. First off, here are some comments The Move, and on Dick's Opening Comments about "Life at Two Miles an Hour"...))

Skel, 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5NW, UNITED KINGDOM

Living one's life at two miles per hour seems to be a fairly lucrative pace if my mathematics isn't too rusty. If, in order to save 300,000,000 dollars, 7,500 jobs were given the welly, that comes to 40,000 bucks-a-throw. I think I might be just about able to scrape by on that sort of salary. I wonder, though, if there is any correlation between average speed and earnings? There probably is because people who jet all over the world probably tend to earn more than the average pleb who walks or buses to his manual factory job. I may in fact be a perfect example -- I cycle to work and back every day, and don't get around much at any other time. Hell, my average speed must be approaching entropy, as a glance at my paycheck will readily confirm. I think we've hit on something here, Dick, which is bound to be greeted with wild acclaim -- The Lynch-Skelton Law. I know you won't mind giving me my share of the credit. After all, without my name you'd never get it accepted by the scientific community -- nobody would want to be seen in favour of a "Lynch Law".

((Or the 'Anti-Lynch Law' about lay-off rumors: "No noose is good news." (Could-

n't resist that.) Anyway, your calculation of average salary is maybe a little too high; there were overheads and other costs factored in that the workers never get to see in their paychecks. Still, though, you can see that there was pretty much economic chaos in Chattanooga and other TVA cities where effects of this massacre were felt; we imagine many of the local merchants had a pretty grim Christmas season for sales.))

Pamela Boal, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, UNITED KINGDOM

What a marvelous concept, living 'life at two miles an hour'. Although Britain is so small I was constantly on the move around it until this past twelve years, even then regular trips to Derek's Mum until she died added up to at least 1,800 miles a year, and then there are holiday trips and family visits. I've been to Singapore, Cyprus, Portugal, and enjoyed two visits to America covering quite a lot of mileage while in those places. It's surprising how many miles you can cover even on a small island like Cyprus if you explore as often and as avidly as we used to. Of course, in my case the mileage has to be divided up by more years but I guesstimate I'm a real fast gal, living at least 3 miles per hour.

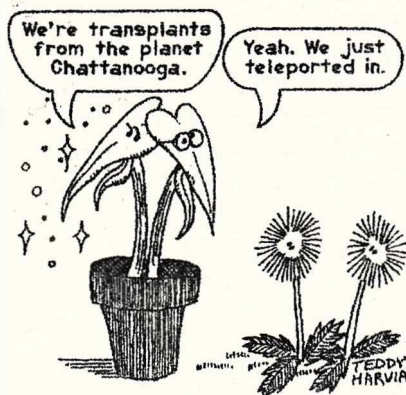


J. R. Madden, P.O. Box 18610-A, University Station, Baton Rouge, LA 70893

On 3 October, your postal card arrived bearing your new address in Maryland. I went to a map seeking to determine your exact location in that state; well, at least as exact as the scale of the map would allow. I found Hagerstown

where the famous Hermit dwells and Gaithersburg from whence *Thrusters* emanate at intervals. In the far western reaches, I even found a Thayerville and wonder if it is any relation to Teddy Harvia. But Lo! I found not a burg of the name Germantown. You will definitely have to enlighten me as to just where you are domiciled these days following your departure from Chattanooga.

{{ Well, you were close. We now live just outside Gaithersburg, even though the mailing address will continue to be Germantown, where Dick works. Germantown is just about half way between Washington, DC and Frederick, Maryland; you probably missed it if you looked in a Rand-McNally road atlas, because it's located right at the fold in the page. }}



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

I hope both of you will find interesting, profitable, and pleasant jobs wherever you finally turn up. It would be nice if another good job in fossil energy research became available, because then I could hope to profit someday by a discovery that would enable this particular fossil to regain some of the energy he used to have.

The Midwestcon reminiscing {{ "The Awful Truth About Roger Sims" }} was very fun to read. The only thing wrong with it was the way it made me feel frustrated, to think how many more discussions at cons as entertaining as this one must vanish permanently into oblivion because nobody takes the trouble to record and transcribe them. And I hope you make sure Harlan

doesn't receive a copy of this *Mimosa*. He has been increasingly disaffected by fanzines, and I fear there might be a frightening explosion if he found his old exploits put into print for today's generation of fans.

{{ We won't tell if you don't. Actually, though, reminiscing of this type is one of things we look forward to at Midwestcon. And we absolutely agree that a lot of fandom's early history, still fragily preserved in the memory of participants still living, will vanish forever if not put into print soon. That's why we try to publish at least one fan history article in each issue. More on this in the next letter.}}

Leigh Edmonds, 6 Elvira Street, Palmyra,
Western Australia 6157, AUSTRALIA

It was certainly nice to have the opportunity to hold and read a nice twilight genzine again. There are enough nice things in there that you should get some egoboo. However, the thing that stuck out most in my mind was Mike Glicksohn's comment {{ ed. note: in the Letters column }} about what fan historians will know about Walt Liebscher. Having become a historian somewhere in the past few years (it's not the degree that made me a historian, I just came to the realization one day that I knew how history was done and, consequently, I must be a historian) I found myself wishing that some of these "fan historians" would write some of that fanish history rather than simply remembering it. Fannish historians are really fans who collect bits of information about the past of their hobby, so I guess that makes me a historian who is a fan, instead. Since I was over there in 1974 and talked to Elinor and F.M. Busby about John Berry it seemed fairly clear to me that fandom really has a very strong oral tradition (of which fanzines is only a part), and unless somebody starts getting that oral tradition onto tape in the next few years, it will be lost. Fanzines keep a much more formal record of some of the personalities that have taken part in fandom, but they do not encompass the whole of the person. Until we get people who are willing to go to the trouble to do more than write personal reminiscences or reprint stuff from old fanzines, we will

be in danger of losing everything.

{{ Well, we think much of what early fan history that can still be preserved on tape will end up being mostly personal anecdotal reminiscences, the stuff fanzines are made of. We do agree with you, though, and we've been preaching in one form or another for a while, now the points you're now making. But luckily, there's a fan group that is currently working to capture fan history onto audio and video tape -- it's the SF Oral History Association (c/o Nancy Tucker, 604 Terrace Lane, Ypsilanti, MI 48198, U.S.A.). }}



A PRIVATE DEMON

Milt Stevens, 7234 Capps Avenue, Reseda, CA 91335

Considering your recent move, I won't be surprised if the next issue of *Mimosa* doesn't appear for a while. You should be able to get things back in order within four or five years. My last move was ten years ago, and I really should finish unpacking real soon now.

When I read things like "The Awful Truth About Roger Sims" I', impressed by the dedication of early fans. Granted, some of the First Fandomites may be exaggerating a little about the covered wagons, but still it must have been a real pain to travel to conventions in the old days. And when they arrived at the con-

vention, they got to spend a few days in living conditions that made the Black Hole of Calcutta look like a luxury resort.

Communal living, as described in Bob Lichtman's article {{ "Alabama Run" }} wouldn't be my cup of tea at all. The Navy was about as close as I ever came to communal living, and I found I didn't care for it. I valued privacy highly, and I find I'm becoming more of a recluse as I get older. At the same time, I'm still almost a complete urbanite. To me, nature is just another term for unimproved real estate.

Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina, CA 91722

"The Awful Truth About Roger Sims" exhibits a characteristic one notices in almost all Midwestern Fannish 1950s-era stories -- they're almost as much about Harlan Ellison as about their ostensible topics. This one is also a fine and delightful piece of fanhistory, and neatly points up how much things have changed -- nowadays a WorldCon Bidding Committee may well spend \$2,000 for parties at one con, whereas in 1954 Cleveland had only about \$200 for its entire bidding fund.

Lichtman's "Alabama Run" would be an excellent example of the faanish school of "I Believe I Have A Piece Of Chicken Stuck Between My Teeth" writing (though Carr or Ellik might've done better with the final paragraph) -- the Triumph of Form over Content -- except that Lichtman manages, also, to slip in lots of fascinating facts and opinions concerning The Farm. I'm looking forward to his future work on that topic -- and for that matter, to anything else he might write.

{{ In that case, check out the latest issue of Robert's excellent fanzine *Trapdoor*, which has another story about The Farm that picks up on one of the threads left dangling in "Alabama Run". }}

Mike Glicksohn, 508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3L6, CANADA

I found Robert Lichtman's tale of the Farm both fascinating and repugnant (and I was delighted he finally decided to put some of his experiences down on fan-

zine paper). The underlying sense of regimented lifestyle that all such communal experiments involve is totally repellent to me. (Even if the restrictions imposed -- e.g., vegetarianism, etc. -- are inherently good ones, this is a decision I want to make for myself, not have forced upon me from above.) And I've never been convinced that a sense of belonging to a community is vital for every individual, at least not in the all-pervading sense that seems common of most communes.

I've enough personal experiments with communes to know that they can work wonders with some very troubled individuals. At one time every other member of my immediate family except me became involved with what I would class as a religious commune. These people did some wonderful work. They took some extremely unhappy young people and gave them a sense of family, and a sense of purpose and direction for many formerly wasted lives. But when I visited them, I always found myself almost smothered by the overpowering sense of community involvement. Everything was done as a group: there were work parties every day, and food was prepared and eaten *en masse* and on those rare occasions when there was leisure time, it too was planned and carried out in groups directed by the local "gurus". I loathed it all, even though the people were sincere, dedicated, and almost all really decent human beings.

I get a similar sense of the Farm through Robert's reminiscences. (I also get a sense that he felt twinges of my own reactions and found ways around some of the more stultifying effects of communal living.) And yet I enjoyed his article more than any other in the issue, and hope he chooses to write much more of his experiences there.

I have to disagree with you guys when it comes to what a LoC should be. To me, the lowly and oft-maligned LoC, that cornerstone of fannish currency, is for the dissemination of egoboo. Hence I see it aimed primarily at the editors of the fanzine it responds to and secondarily at the contributors whose material it is in reply to. If it has additional purposes of making the letter-writer appear clever or entertaining to readers of the subse-

quent issue, this is far behind its main *raison d'être*. Thus as I see it, asking letterhacks to just send in a couple of clever paragraphs is circumventing the entire purpose of locking in the first place. What you decide to do with locs you get is your editorial prerogative (I happen to believe a healthy lettercol is the lifeblood of any good fanzine, and I think *Mimosa* would be even better than it already is if it had a more substantial one) but from my own viewpoint as a letterhack of long standing I'll keep on commenting on things in each issue that I find deserving of a reaction.

Dal Coger seems to have overlooked the main reason that Claude Degler -- colourful though he undoubtedly was -- is considered so negatively by fans who knew him in his heyday. He stole things. He stole things from fans. He stole things from fans who'd been kind enough to show him hospitality. If it were only Claude's rather naive ideas about the superiority of fans that had passed into fanhistory, I doubt he's be the legendary fan he is today. But when his oddball ideas were coupled with his less-than-savoury personal habits, the result was a figure of mythic proportions. I very much doubt that any of the old-time fans who had choice items from their collections vanish with Claude's departure would have quite the sympathetic viewpoint that Dal brings to this particularly bizarre part of fannish history.

{{ You'll notice that much of your letter made it to our letters column unscathed and uncut this time. We've had several months now to think about our request for more succinct LoCs (and get readers' feedback); we now feel that we were perhaps overzealous in our attempt to get more usable material for the letters column. For instance, we don't want to discourage Walt Willis or Harry Warner (or Mike Glicksohn) from sending us their usual long and delightful commentaries on our current issue; letters like those are the energy source that keeps faneditors publishing. So, then, please do, writers, continue to comment on everything and anything you think deserving of a reaction. We appreciate your letters. And we'll continue to print the best sections from them. }}

G. M. Carr, 8325 31st NW, Seattle, WA
98117

I really enjoyed this *Mimosa* and I thought I'd better write and tell you so. It was like a trip through yesterday, seeing all those names of fans I used to know or hear about. Like Claude Degler -- I used to hear a lot about him though I never met him. He was just phasing out of fandom when I started; that was about 1949. There was lots of griping about him, but this is the first time I ever found out why. He was evidently regarded as an out-and-out fughead, but nobody ever really went into detail, and since I was also widely regarded as an out-and-out fughead as well, I felt a sort of sneaking sympathy with the poor guy.

IN THE INTEREST OF GOOD
TASTE, THE FOLLOWING CAR-
TOON HAS BEEN CENSORED



Lloyd Penney, 412-22 Riverwood Parkway,
Toronto, Ontario M8Y 4K1, CANADA

After some years on the fannish social circuits, it's impossible not to read or hear something about Claude Degler. Scraps of rumour pop up... I heard about him being seen at a convention somewhere, too. Thanks to Dal Coger for gluing together bits and pieces of that legend.

{ More about the life and times of Claude Degler is in Harry Warner's All Our Yesterdays, an excellent book about fandom of the 1940s. }

Walt Willis, 32 Warren Road, Donaghadee
BT21 OPD, Northern Ireland, UNITED KINGDOM

Thanks for *Mimosa* 5, which arrived in 9 days flaunting defiantly it's "Fourth Class Book Rate" stamp. This Nine Days Wonder must be some sort of record. Obviously the fannish spacetime continuum has been so warped by the stress of the British postal strike as to briefly permit the postal equivalent of ftl travel.

Talking of which, I liked Dick's Zmph concept of life and am thinking of commending it to Stephen Hawking. This idea of biological spacetime isn't even conceived of in Hawking's bestselling *A Brief History of Time*. Dick now offers the startling prospect of a Unified Field Theory integrating Space, Time, and Life itself. Wouldn't it be nice if he won a Hugo for it, or at least the Nobel Prize? Some credit might even be reflected onto that Great Thinker Walt Lewis, who pioneered the concept of Subjectively Motivated Time Travel mentioned in Bob Shaw's speech (*ed. note: in Mimosa 3*). (Actually, it was in an Agatha Christie parody called "The Case of the Disappearing Fan.")

Meanwhile, my favourite piece was Nicki's First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Customers (*"Coffee, Tea, and Me"*). I've often secretly admired shop people for their patience in dealing with us customers, who tend by our very nature to be awkward, often unintentionally. I am, I like to think, a fairly considerate and reasonable customer, but I noticed in the days when I used to be a chocoholic that I would very often ask for the only bar of chocolate the confectioner did not have among his hundreds of goodies. Apparently my mind has subconsciously scanned the whole bewildering assortment and told me that the missing one is the one I want.

I understand a similar phenomenon is known to publishers. When they publish the first edition of a book or magazine they sometimes print only enough copies to meet, say 90% of the demand. The deprived 10% of potential customers then go mad with frustration and ask for a copy in about 9 other shops, thereby creating a false demand for a 100% reprint, which will bankrupt the publisher.

The accusation that customers do not seem to read notices is also justified,

but there are in my experiences extenuating circumstances. I read everything that appears before me, from bus tickets to sauce bottle labels, but I have found notices in shops and cafes to have a regrettably remote relationship with reality, from the OPEN/CLOSED notice on the door to the word "fresh" where it occurs on menus. Also, I have been told on countless occasions that the Plat du Jour, or "Today's Special", is no longer available, but I have yet to notice any of the staff dashing to correct the copy of the menu visible from the street.

{{ We're happy to report that Nicki was in fact able to find employment in a field related to her computer science degree here in Maryland. She's now working for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (formerly the National Bureau of Standards) in the Computer Security division. }}

Sheryl Birkhead, 23629 Woodfield Road,
Caithersburg, MD 20879

Ah yes, the joy of serving the public (preferably roasted with apple in mouth). This reads as if Nicki displayed a rather large degree of self-control. And, look at it this way -- at least you got a fanzine article out of it.

{{ It's getting so that whenever some misadventure happens, we always tell each other "There's a fanzine article in there, somewhere." }}

G. Patrick Molloy, P.O. Box 9135, Huntsville, AL 35812

Nicki's "Coffee, Tea and Me" reminded me of my first job -- a sales clerk in a mall pet store. Most common dumb question: "Does that dog/cat/bird/hamster/iguana/tarantula bite? Answer I wanted to give: "Hell, yes! If you stuck your finger in my face like that, I'd bite!" Other commonly heard statements: "That thing's gross!" (usually in reference to the iguana or tarantula), and of course, "It stinks in here!" (as Nicki soon could not smell the coffee, I soon could no longer smell the puppy cages).

Carolyn Doyle's article {{ "Copy

Editing and Coping in the Wilds of Columbus (Georgia, That Is)" }} reminded me of when I moved to Kentucky from northern New Jersey at age 12. Besides the strange accents, my biggest culture shock came when I learned that the McDonalds all put *mustard* on their hamburgers! Of course, now I have become acclimated to this Southern tradition, even to the point of preferring it (along with ketchup, thank you).

Robert Bloch, 2111 Sunset Crest Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90046

I found this issue of *Mimosa* particularly fascinating, because of the nuggets of information dredged up from waters which first flowed decades ago. Then, too, it's not every day that Carolyn Doyle reveals she's from Indianapolis. So all in all, I learned a great deal about fandom, past and present, thanks to you both, and some of the information is incredible.

{{ We're speechless. }}

Buck Coulson, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348

Loved Farber's stuff {{ "My First 36 Hour Day" }}; medical students always seem to accumulate a fund of very funny stories, and I always thank God that I never had any urge to become a doctor. Bob Passavoy trained in Chicago, and since he was the only white in his department, Ann bought him a t-shirt with the slogan "Resident Honky". Someone asked him if he was going to wear it to work, and he looked astonished and said, "Of course I am!" I try to avoid doctors at conventions; Juanita always mentions my diet, and they always want to make sure that I stay on it -- presumably to save themselves the trouble of treating a heart attack or a diabetic coma in the middle of their vacation.

Roger Weddall, P.O. Box 273, Fitzroy 3065, Victoria, AUSTRALIA

My god, I'd heard stories from Brit friends who had been to America on holidays about what the public health system there was like, but Sharon's short article

paints a picture of hospital conditions more closely allied to those you'd expect to find in a war zone. Tell me, really, are things that bad across the entire country, or is St. Louis an anomaly in this regard? I was reminded of the title of the Doris Lessing novel, *Briefings for a Descent Into Hell*, and while reading Sharon's account I just wanted her to get out of there -- but then, what of the patients? What can it be like for them when it's like that for the staff? If you could convince Sharon to write more I'd be fascinated to read it -- the way a rabbit can be fascinated by a snake about to strike at it.

((Things aren't that bad here, really. Hospitals like St. Louis City are pretty much confined to inner-city locations, but then again, some inner-cities are becoming more and more like war zones. We get the image of what a M.A.S.H. hospital must have been like; maybe instead of whites, doctor's gowns should have been camouflage.))



Michael W. Waite, 105 West Ainsworth,
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Mimosa 5 was loaded with little gems, like Sharon Farber's "My First 36 Hour Day". For days, I was checking my stools for color, consistency, and floatability! What a strain.

Stven Carlberg, 316 Cedar Crest Court,
Lafayette, LA 70501

It was nice to see Alan Hutchinson's Atlanta WorldCon report (("Tales Calcula-

ted to Drive You to AWC (Atlanta World Con)")) reprinted in this issue ((ed. note: it originally appeared in SFPA, the Southern Fandom Press Alliance.)) -- not only because my name figures prominently in it, but also because Alan's work is delightful, funny, clever, and deserves a big, appreciative audience.

((His covers for last issue were pretty funny and clever, too.))

David Palter, 137 Howland Avenue, Toronto,
Ontario M5R 3B4, CANADA

Alan Hutchinson's Tales of the Atlanta World Con is wonderfully funny, one of the great pieces of fannish humor that I have seen in my decade of fanzine reading. Fannish humor is highly stylized if not inbred, and it frequently seems to have no point other than to demonstrate that its author has a suitably fannish attitude, but this piece does it so well that it would be funny even to a non-fan, the ultimate accomplishment of fan humor. Alan's front and back covers for this issue are also quite amusing, so his overall contribution to this issue is pretty impressive. What talent!

Eve Ackerman, 2220 NW 14th Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32606

Alan's con report sounds a lot like the con I attended in Atlanta. But mine was slightly more surreal. And thanks for the paper helicopter.

We also heard from:

Harry Andruschak, Richard Brandt, Brian Earl Brown, Gary Brown, rich brown, Dave D'Annassa, Carolyn Doyle, Kathleen Gallagher, Maureen Garrett, John Guidry, Craig Hilton, Neil Kaden, Robert Lichtman, Ethel Lindsay, Adrienne Losin, LynC, Robert Newsome, Bruno Ogorelec, Berislav Pinjuh, Maureen Porter, Marilyn Pride, Charlotte Proctor, David Rowe, T. D. Sadler, Rickey Sheppard, Garth Spencer, Erwin Strauss, R Laurraine Tutihasi, David Thayer, and Allen Varney. And a special thanks to Pat Mueller for the boxes of electrostencils -- a true fannish housewarming present.

TWO AND A HALF MONTHS IN A HOTEL... WITH A CAT

Closing Comments by Nicki Lynch

If you've never spent long periods of your life living in one room with one bathroom and one cat, you might consider trying it. It's not as bad as you might think. But then again, it might be.

We had the opportunity to do just that when we moved to Maryland last fall. I'm not sure how people expected us to sell and find a home in two and a half weeks before the move, but to a person they all asked if we were moving into a house. Naturally not, but it never seemed like a stupid question to them.

The drive north took two days due to starting late on the first day and having two cars and one cat. Dick brought our eight-year old Siamese cat, Sesame, in his car, while I brought the houseplants. Both cars were stuffed with what we would need for two months of living in a hotel. That included: clothes for work and play, coats (fall coats and we should have had winter coats as well), shoes, radio, microwave oven, VCR, video tapes, plants, cat litter box and cat carrier. Oh, and books and fanzines too.

We only got as far as Bristol, Virginia, the first night before it started getting dark. We managed to find the last hotel room in town, since the whole town was booked up due to a big drag racing weekend in progress. It was the first hotel room our cat had ever stayed in and I think she liked it. She kept looking at herself in the full-length mirror and peeking out of the full-length window into the courtyard.

The final leg of the trip was memorable for Dick in that Sesame decided he needed some diversion. So, she spent most of the trip yowling and roaming the car. At one point, Dick said she sang a duet with Mick Jagger on the radio. But we did make Maryland and Germantown without incident.

We settled in the same hotel we stayed at when Dick was interviewed for his new job. It was a standard Quality Inn/Holiday Inn type of hotel, but with an

unusual assortment of clientele. When we had checked in that first trip, most of the people we ran into that evening were business people. But the next morning in the lobby, they seemed to have transformed into biker-types, complete with tattoos and leather jackets. We eventually discovered that rather than transforming during the night, both lifestyle-types stayed there in apparent complete peaceful coexistence. And both turned out to be nice enough neighbors.

Since small, well-behaved pets were welcome in the hotel, we happily shared the room with Sesame. She wasn't much trouble, or at least any more than usual. She did seem confused that the front door didn't open to outside any more, but that didn't stop her from continually asking to go out. I have no idea what she thought about looking out a window five floors up, but she occasionally got up there to sun herself. She also gained a fan club of sorts with the two women who were at the front desk most weekdays.

Since Sesame was an indoor/outdoor cat, I took her out on good days for some exercise and fresh air. We soon developed a ritual where we would stand at the front desk, Sesame on top of it, me standing beside her, for a chat with "her" friends.

After a while there, it had become obvious that we were not the only people living there long-term. The local school bus stopped there each morning to pick up a number of children, and there were other children that hung around the hotel all day as well.

Since I had the advantage of being Sesame's owner (which offered a chance for gossip with the woman at the hotel desk), I casually mentioned this observation one afternoon. It turned out that the hotel we were staying in had about 50% long term occupancy, with the majority of long-termers being construction workers and their families. A smaller group were homeless people who either worked or didn't, had also been placed there by the local government. We were unusual in that we fit

into neither category. She (who was one of Sesame's biggest fans) also confided to me that she liked us the best as we caused the least amount of trouble.

I wish I could have said that about the hotel. It had a "disco" and restaurant, but neither were actually run by the hotel. While the restaurant was very good, five nights a week we had to listen to loud thumping from five floors below, until about 1 AM. Not to mention the rowdy drunks and their cars.

But what really set apart this hotel experience from the usual fan experience of hotel living was the number of fire alarms that we had while there -- 11 in all, usually at odd hours of the night.

The first one happened just after midnight. We got up and got dressed while Sesame stayed tucked tight in the covers. She seemed surprised when we shook her awake to snap her leash on, and was not happy to be carried into a hall where there was some horrible noise blasting. After we were allowed to return to our room, though, she seemed annoyed that we didn't want to stay up after that.

The reason for the early alarms was that drunks in the disco were accidentally pulling the alarm boxes. Later, we were told it was due to a fault in the heating system, cold weather having begun. Whatever the reason, about once a week, we had to get up in the dead of night and leave our room. We got so used to them that we joked, when we were at a party, that we had to leave so we could get back in time for the fire alarm.

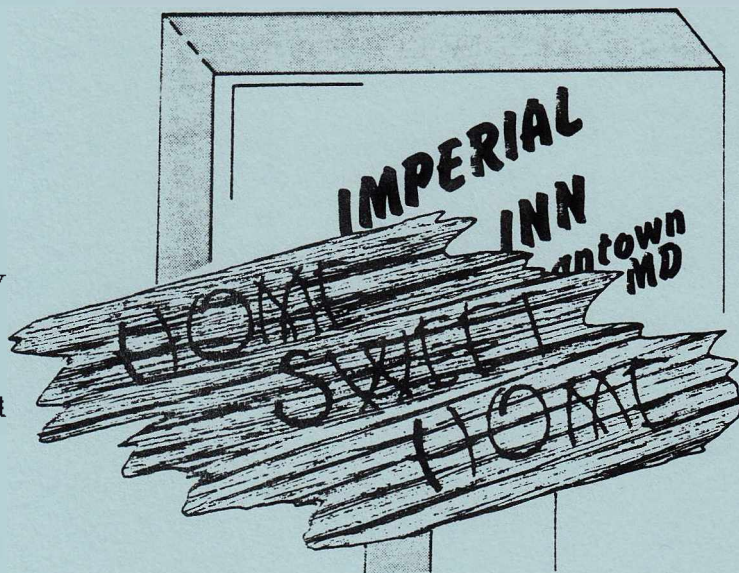
I was also there for one of the rare daytime fire alarms, but it wasn't very exciting. Sesame had a great time, because not only did she have several people fawning over her, we were allowed to walk back through the kitchen, rather than walk all the way around the hotel to get back to our rooms. I don't think Sesame had ever seem so much meat in her life.

Several times we were audience to interesting displays of temper by temporary guest as well as some of the long-term people. One very pregnant woman with four small children in tow, gave the night manager a great deal of verbal abuse before

declaring she would *never* come back down for another fire alarm.

She was as good as her word and most of the residents seemed to have followed suit. The next fire drill, just us, Sesame and one guy (who must have been a first timer to all this) went down to the lobby. Even the local firefighters didn't seem very enthusiastic and didn't spend the usual length of time checking the hotel out.

I was also looking for a job while we lived in the hotel. Several of the people who returned my calls thought I worked at the hotel. I had to explain each time that my husband had a job here, I was with him, and we were still house hunting. I guess it isn't unusual to move from one place to another in under three weeks in Maryland.



After living out of suitcases and restaurants for weeks, we finally found a house we could afford. About the same time, I got a semi-firm job offer. So after two-and-a-half months there, we finally moved out in December.

I don't know if they ever did solve their problems with the fire alarms. I thought about having a monthly fire drill at our new place, but Dick vetoed the idea.

I guess men just aren't very nostalgic.



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