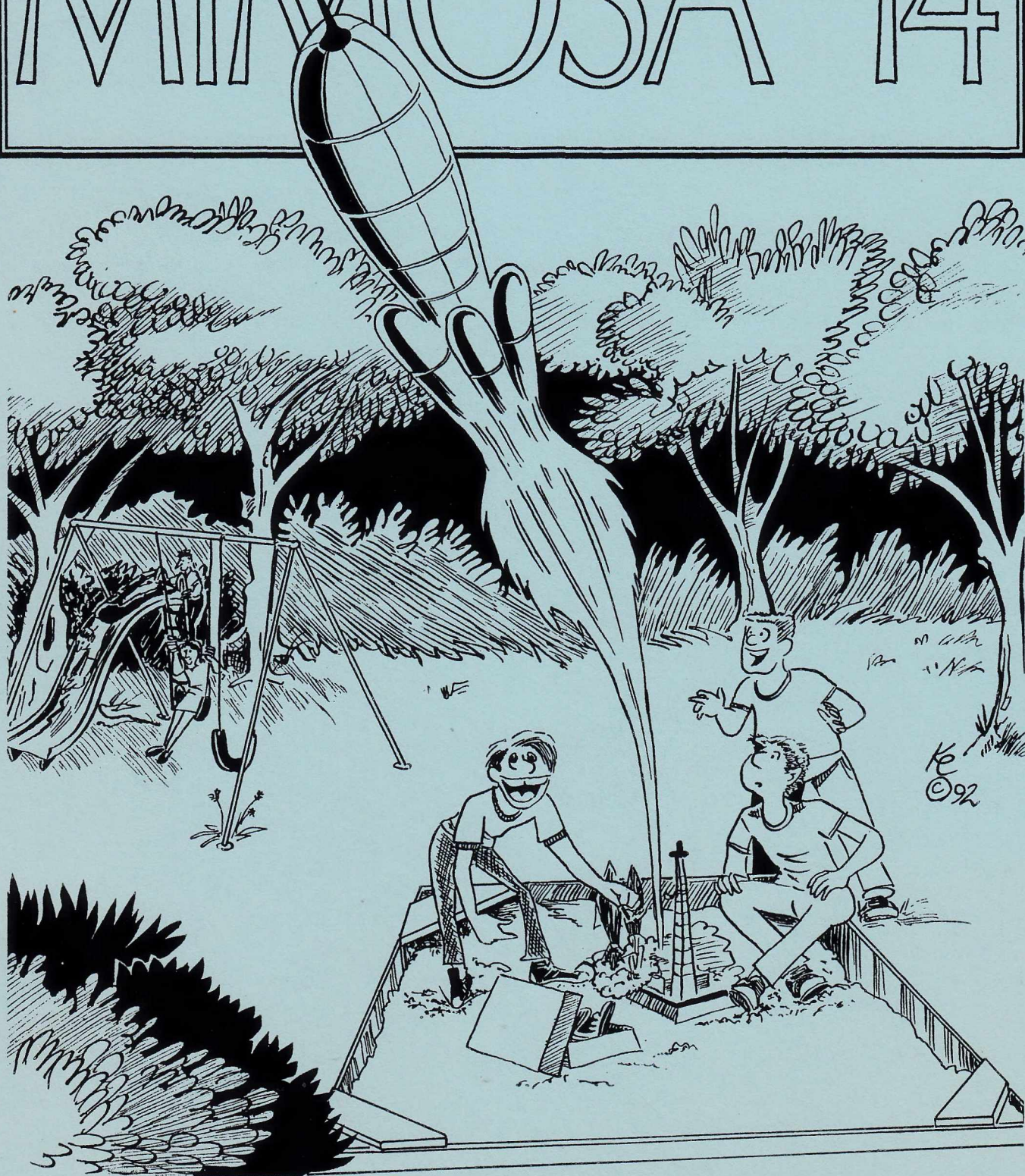


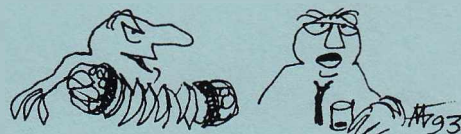
MIMOSA 14





MIMOSA¹⁴

Undemeath the cover, by the colophon
Jophan stands awaiting for letters, one by one
He waits for the letters he don't get
And pubs his ish, with no regret
My fa-aned Jopha-an, my own faned Jopha-an.



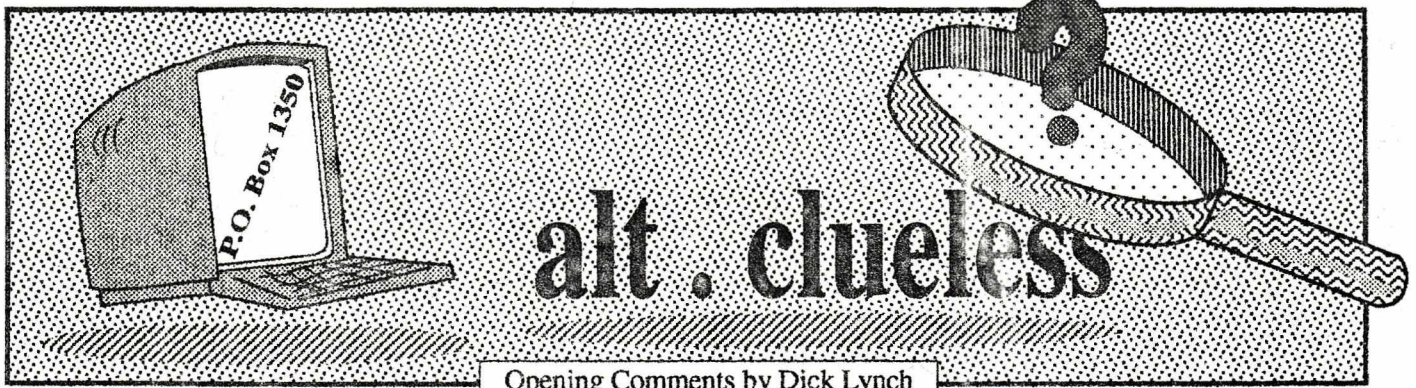
from **Dick and Nicki Lynch**, P.O. Box 1350, Germantown, Maryland 20875, U.S.A.
Internet: lynch@access.digex.net

This fourteenth issue of *Mimosa* was published in August 1993, and is available for the truly inflation-fighting price of two dollars (U.S. currency or equivalent). Please note, however, that we'd much rather receive your fanzine in trade, instead (dollar bills aren't very fannish). Or better yet, send us a first-person article of an anecdotal nature about science fiction fandom and/or things fans do, especially if they are of fan historical interest; publication of same here will keep you on our mailing list permanently. We also welcome Letters of Comment; for the frugal, a letter or e-mail of comment on this issue (addressed to both of us, please) will bring you a copy of *M15* early next year. This entire issue is ©1993 by Dick and Nicki Lynch, with individual rights reverting back to contributors after this one-time use. All opinions and versions of events expressed by contributors are their own. On with the show...

☐ If this box is checked, we really need to receive a letter of comment or e-mail of comment from you to keep you on our mailing list for next issue.

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You can see by our colophon that we now have another way of receiving letters of comment on *Mimosa*. Earlier this year, we decided to subscribe to a local service that offers access to the Internet world-wide computer network. For the \$150 a year that it costs, we can send and receive electronic mail all over the world. As a comparison, for \$92 a year, we rent a one cubic foot hole-in-the-wall at the Germantown Post Office for hard-copy mail (and we still have to buy stamps).

But there's more. By subscribing to Internet, we also gain access to the Usenet discussion/user/news groups. For those who aren't familiar with Usenet, here's a brief, oversimplified description: think of a fanzine or amateur press association (apa) which you're familiar with and that's centered around a single, discrete topic. Now, imagine that, instead of appearing as a set of stapled pages, it exists only as a series of text files on some remote computer (but one which you can still easily access through your own computer's modem). Now stretch your conception of this fan forum: instead of appearing every two, three, or six months, imagine that it appears daily, hourly — or even that new articles and letters of comment (or their equivalent) are *constantly* being posted by the large number of readers (including yourself). Finally, envision that instead of just *one* electronic apa on *one* specific topic, there are *hundreds*, on almost every topic you can imagine. That's Usenet.

If you think that there is probably lots of information available on Usenet, you're right — too right. If you need information on any specific topic, chances are there's

someone in one of the user groups who'll have it. But there's far too much in Usenet for any one person to be able to assimilate. Luckily, each of the several hundred user groups has a descriptive name that identifies it with a specific topic, which makes it easy to decide which groups not to bother with.

It turns out that there are several sf fandom-related user groups (such as **rec.arts.sf.fandom**) available on Usenet, as well as other related groups devoted to separate aspects of the science fiction genre, like movies and books. Besides these sf-related newsgroups, I regularly browse through other groups that have ongoing discussions of interest. In the **sci.energy** user group, for instance, there's postings of interest to my professional alter ego of Program Manager of Advanced Power Systems at the U.S. Department of Energy. But there are also quite a few newsgroups devoted to recreational topics like television, movies, sports, cooking, music, and crafts.

There are so many user groups on Usenet, that, quite literally, there's one for practically any subject you can think of. Looking through our *Mimosa* mailing list for this issue I note that Lon Atkins, for instance, might be interested in the **sci.aeronautics** group, while Lynn Hickman might be more attracted by **alt.pulp**. Eric Lindsay may already know about the **aus.sf** group, while Terry Jeeves might like to browse through the **soc.culture.british** discussion group and Marty Helgesen might be drawn to the **soc.religion.christian** group. Arthur Hlavaty might be tempted to check out **alt.sex.wizards**, while Timothy Lane & the rest of

the **FOSFAX** gang could very well be mesmerized by **alt.fan.rush-limbaugh**. Dean Grennell could get into **rec.guns**, and we *all* might find out some things about our favorite pastimes in **rec.collecting** and **alt.beer**.

You name it, it's there. There's something for just about everybody on the net, all the way from **sci.astro.hubble** to *shudder* **alt.karaoke**. It ranges from the prosaic (**talk.philosophy.misc**) to the undescribable (**alt.exploding.kibo**).

With all that information bombarding you from every direction, maybe it's unsurprising that there are people who seem to be overwhelmed by it all. It's pretty often that you come across a posting for, say, information about *Star Trek* in a discussion group about upstate New York (one instance that comes immediately to mind was the person who kept complaining about the postal service in the **alt.fan.letterman** group). It turns out there's a special newsgroup intended for these terminally fogged-in people: **alt.clueless**. Now, whenever Nicki or I come across a person who's life appears to be ruled by the laws of chance (and there seems to be a lot of these, lately), we say to each other, "There's someone who belongs in **alt.clueless**."

#

And here we are with a new issue of *Mimosa*. It doesn't seem like it's been more than a dozen years since the first issue. I

didn't have a clue back in 1981 that we'd still be publishing all these years later; I remember all too well that it took us five years to even get the second issue out. Since then, preservation of fan history has become almost a crusade, and a driving force for continuing to publish. Right now, there are still far too many bits of history out there that need preserving to even consider putting the mimeograph out to pasture.

Actually, though, there is one thing that might affect our future fan publishing intentions — the cost. Commercial printing, at least here in the Washington, D.C. area, is just too damned expensive to even consider (I think that all the quick print shops here must be in cahoots with each other). So for now, that means Nicki and I have to drink a toast every New Year's Eve to the continued good health of our ancient Gestetner. And we've also got to hope that a supply of the soft-and-fuzzy paper (which is still the best stuff available for mimeo) stays available.

But speaking of soft and fuzzy, I've got to make sure I leave enough room for the *Chat* cartoon below, and this looks like a good place to stop. Now that we've got e-mail service, I'm looking forward to seeing some of you on the net, perhaps to talk about fan history and preservationism. *Don't*, however, expect me to speculate about what the *next* dozen years might hold.

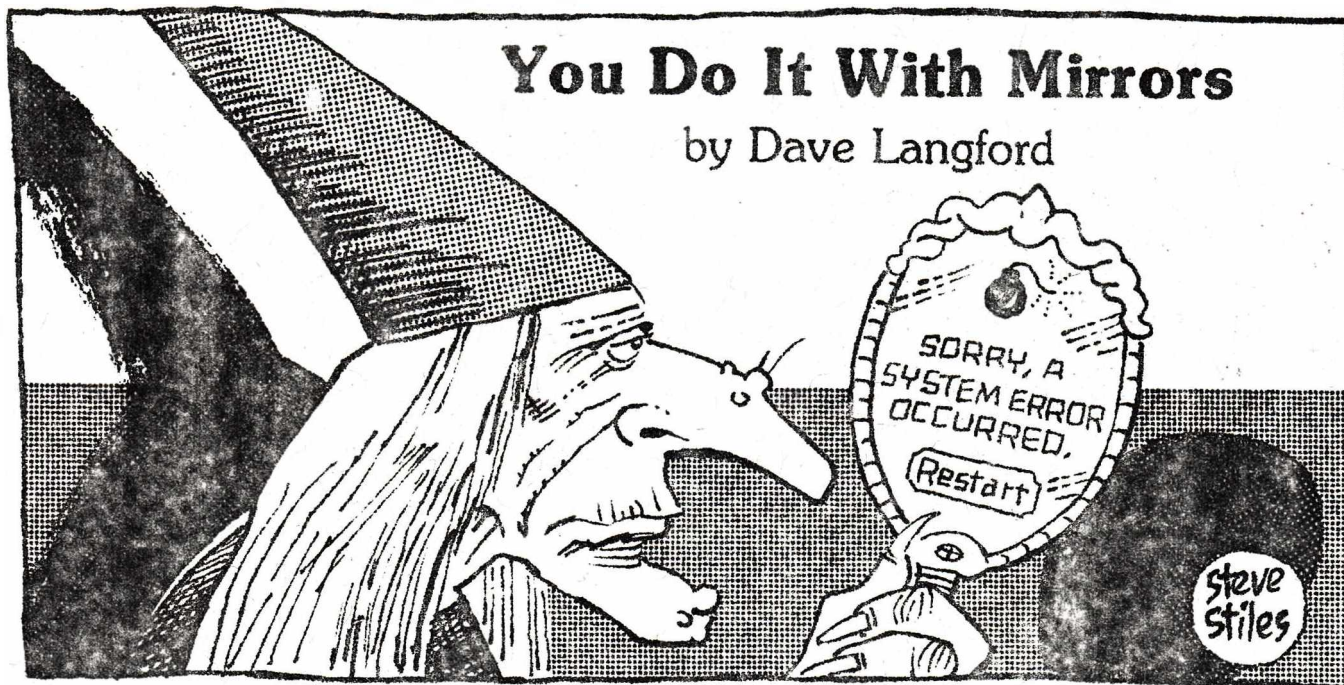
On that topic, I'm clueless... *

CHAT, THE 4TH FANNISH GHOD

By TEDDY HARVIA



☞ We're not at all clueless on how to begin this issue of *Mimosa* — an entertaining new article from Dave Langford. This is his first article for *Mimosa*; an excellent collection of some of Dave's previous fan writings, *Let's Hear It for the Deaf Man*, was recently published by NESFA Press (and is a Hugo finalist this year).



Fourteen Months Before. It was one of those incautious moments. I was at Boskone 29, enjoying the heady sensation of being a guest and looking forward to liberal supplies of bourbon, groupies, contracts and coffee. 'We can get them all for you,' Ben Yalow explained, 'except perhaps for the bourbon, groupies and contracts.'

The Boskone newsletter (*Helmuth ... Speaking for Boskone*) had just been impressing me with its deeply professional policy of printing anything I submitted. After a few too many beers in the hotel bar I heard my mouth say, 'British con newsletters are usually so boring and stark and functional.' Interested in what I would declare next, I began to pay attention and found my lips issuing the statement, 'What they need is better production, and traces of literacy, and more funny bits so fans will read the whole thing including the tedious programme changes.' My tongue went madly on to utter, 'In fact I could —'

Suddenly I found that even here in kindly America I was surrounded by committee members of Helicon, the 1993 British Easter-

con, all wearing wide, fanged smiles. 'You're on, Dave,' someone cried.

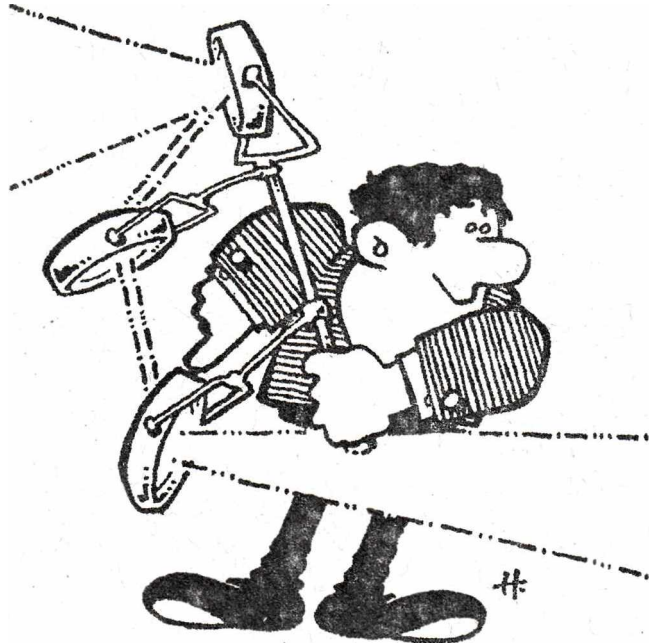
'Glmmmmmmpf,' said my nostril as I choked on the beer.

The Langford theory of newsletters was no more than a few vague prejudices at the time. Keeping it simple seemed a cunning plan: no elaborate DTP systems that encouraged the priests of the inner mystery to spend hours at a time laying out perfect paragraphs like exquisite corpses in satin-lined caskets. An independent survey of what I was already using for *Ansible* favoured WordPerfect, into which any fool can type text.

(*Technical Bit Which May Be Skipped:* a non-Windows WordPerfect 5.1 with Bitstream FaceLift fonts, if you really must know. The committee's weird idea that we could move stuff between the computers using Laplink was rapidly superseded by my own high-tech solution known as Hurling Floppy Disks Across The Table.)

What was the thing going to be called? Helicon was named for its site, St Helier in

Jersey, and the last con newsletter there had been called *Jersey Yarns*, which made me gently puke. Helicon used a 'sun' logo. Sun ... writing ... *Heliograph*. 'I am not afraid,' I wrote to the con committee, 'of the totally bleeding obvious.' Harry Bell drew a newsletter logo and we were in business.



Heliograph

Some months in advance I started writing news items. Editorial policy regarded any white space as a tacit admission of failure. And no matter how boring the lists of programme changes, I wanted the whole thing larded with funny bits to ensure it got read from end to end.

Strange anniversaries were ruthlessly researched (with help from Andy Porter's *SF Chronicle* birthday list, to remind the reveling fans that time's winged chariot was parked outside the door and blowing the horn). Besides the complete new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of SF*, which I luckily had on disk, I consulted that useful reference *The Perpetual Pessimist: an Everlasting Calendar of Gloom and Almanac of Woe* (by Daniel George) ... so the first issue on 8 April 1993

not only had birthday messages for E.J. Carnell, S.P. Meek and Ralph Milne Farley but also revealed that Helicon was auspiciously beginning on the anniversary of a failed prediction of worldwide deluge in 1524.

Thus, helped by the fact that the convention was also a noted fictional birthplace, we were ready for the traditional First Issue of Newsletter problem (i.e. no news)...

WELCOME TO HELICON. And welcome to *Heliograph*— the newsletter which we understand is pronounced something like 'Heliogrrraph'. As noted by Helicon's most famous native, 'I have the Heliconian stress on the letter "r".' (Harri Seldon, in *Forrward the Foundation* by Isaac Asimov.)

BICENTENNIAL: in April 1793, the New England inventor Eli Whitney did a huge service to all sf professionals by inventing gin. (A Pedant Writes: That was the cotton gin, you fool. *Heliograph*: There's no pleasing some fans.)

The first item duly provoked an outraged response in #2, for the benefit of esoterica fans:

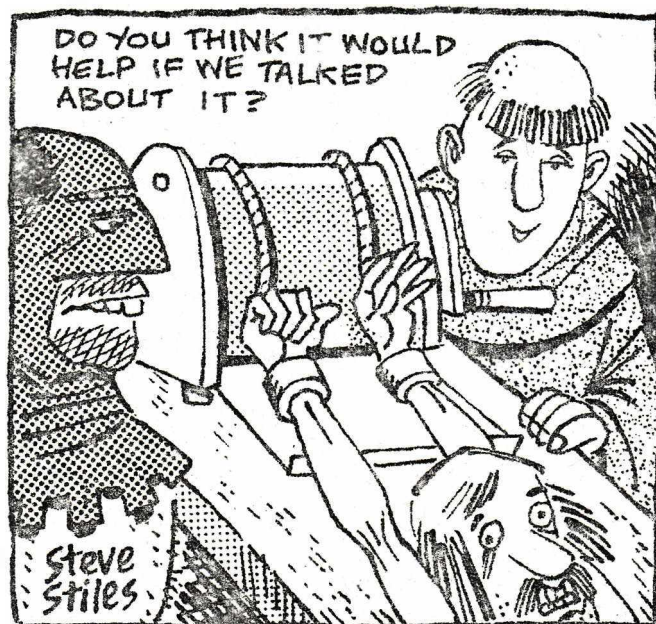
COMPLAINT: 'What's this in issue #1 about some parvenu called Seldon being the most famous person from Helicon? What about us, then?' Signed: Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia and Urania.

But I'm getting ahead of events. All too many thrills and spills lay between the hapless editor and the first printed copy of *Heliograph* 1. I flew to Jersey days early, leaving Hazel to enjoy herself at home ... our different attitudes can be detected from the phone call when I got there. Me: 'It was great fun, I had a window by the landing gear and the plane stopped at Guernsey on the way so I got to go up and down twice for one fare!' Hazel: 'Oh! Oh, that must have been so horrible for you...' Being paranoid about electromagnetic damage to disks, I had one set in my pocket, another in my suitcase

and a third travelling with Martin Hoare on a Channel ferry. *Martin*: 'It's great fun, the crossing lasts hours and hours, and you can drink yourself silly all the way over and watch other fans get seasick and vomit all over the bar!' *Me*: 'What a pity that I foolishly booked a plane.'

After the usual adventures I was introduced to my newsroom, which in the interests of total security had a combination lock on the door. Fortunately this didn't block traffic too much, since vast numbers of British fans remembered the unchanged code from previous conventions. (Later remark by Chris O'Shea, quoted in a post-final *Heliograph*: 'The secure store isn't, Ops doesn't, and the newsletter hasn't.')

As it finally took shape, the awesome newsletter production equipment consisted of a couple of IBMs as I'd requested, a late-arriving laser printer (with an interesting scar on its drum that led to exciting black marks in every left margin and regular hotel-wide searches for Liquid Paper), and the Chris Suslowicz Museum of Industrial Archaeology. Yes, after each master sheet slid smoothly from the 1990s DTP system it was carried across the room and backwards through yawning gulfs of time to an ancient, rickety electrostencil cutter and a Gestetner mimeograph that had seen service with the Panzer corps.



While I first stared in awe, the committee broke it to me that Chris Suslowicz, the owner and understander of all this heavy-metal hardware, wouldn't be arriving until — according to my timetable — about half-way through issue three. I retreated to the bar and don't remember any more that day.

Next morning, with large tracts of the newsroom still commandeered for dynamic, last-minute badge production, I and all-round technical supremo John Dallman cut two dozen electrostencils of a dummy front page I'd brought with me. Or, to be precise, we cut or failed to cut the same one two dozen times, fiddling with all the controls (and wincing at the tactless comments of badge-makers who evidently hadn't enough work to do) until in a blazing burst of Null-A insight John noticed that the stylus was bent and changed it. Sparks flew and the characteristic atmosphere of the *Heliograph* newsroom immediately made itself felt: a billowing mix of ozone and random carcinogens as the cutter burned its way through acres of vinyl. The fine black dust that rapidly accumulated on the computer screens was a useful index of the state of one's lungs, and to conjure up a Lovecraftian vision of nameless, blasphemous ichor you had only to blow your nose.

Then came the mimeograph, which after an hour or two I decided had not after all seen service with Rommel but with Torquemada. Let us draw a veil over this, mentioning only the anguished cries of 'Can we fucking ink it from side to side, not up and down?' ... the discovery that, Roneo men all, we none of us knew where you put ink in a Gestetner ... the ransacking of countless hotel rooms for complimentary packs of tissues after agreeing that we certainly knew how to make ink come out of a Gestetner.

(By happy chance we'd picked the right electrostenciller. Con chairman Tim Illingworth had provided a second machine out of the goodness of his heart, having bought it in a junk shop and being sublimely unaware of whether it worked — he thought we could have fun finding out. To add to the 'Lady or the Tiger' excitement there was also a second mimeo which, days later, proved to be utterly

unusable owing to damage in transit...)

As the first interestingly tilted and blotchy issue hit the stands, a part-blind fan labelled as 'Blind Pew' popped in with a request that all issues of *Heliograph* be clearly printed in black ink for the benefit of those with dodgy vision. 'Gladly,' I cried, and as an afterthought went to check the huge pile of ink-tubes thoughtfully provided with the hardware. One was red and the rest were green.

IAIN BANKS perpetuated a noble sf tradition by breaking his bed on the first night of Helicon. (As Bob Shaw discovered after Brian Aldiss broke a bed during a party there, Tynecon '74 was 'a five-bed convention'. Go for it, Iain!)

After cruel treatment by the Style Police, the *Read-Me* authors promise never again to write about 'medias' (see *But What Can Replace a Fanzine*, 1100 Monday). 'We have now been told correct datas and rethought our criterias,' said a spokesman. 'There will be no more such erratas.'

ARCTOPHILES 'are warned that the note on an exhibit in the Art Show means it. Do Not Open The Box if you care about cuddlies!' (Chris Bell)

BREAKFAST NOTES. Q: What's red and invisible? A: No tomatoes... The Action Committee for Mushrooms At All Con Breakfasts wishes to thank Helicon for ... sorry, *what was the message?*

HOW TO WRITE GOOD. Jane Barnett (aged 15¼), when told by her father that her writing showed poor control of nuance: 'I wouldn't recognize nuance if it came up and gently brushed my leg.'

... But most attempts to give the flavour of *Heliograph* as it turned out run slap into the 'You had to be there' syndrome. Famous author Iain Banks is a reliable source of eccentric news at British conventions, and later provided us with another fascinating snippet by crawling around underneath the carpet in the hotel bar. The 'arctophiles' item heralded a running gag about Tom Abba's bear-in-the-box in the Helicon art

show, which was shielded from unwary eyes because this unfortunate teddy-bear had been strung up with ghastly torture-hooks inspired by *Hellraiser*. ('BEAR HORROR SHOCK,' began a later item. 'A copy of *Eon* was sold...') Jane Barnett's father Paul writes as John Grant and under this name was technical editor of the new *SF Encyclopaedia*: he realized what a paltry and trivial job that had been when he came to work more or less full-time on *Heliograph*.

JOHN JARROLD becomes President of the World! Well, of World SF. Interviewed by *Heliograph*, the new President prised a beerglass momentarily from his mouth and said, 'I didn't know what was happening, I wasn't even there, don't blame me.'

BRIAN ALDISS demonstrated his mature technique for persuading one of Jenny and Ramsey Campbell's offspring to go to bed, culminating in a stentorian cry of 'FUCK OFF!' (It worked.)

STOP PRESS UPDATE: Matt Campbell wishes to announce *Very Loudly Indeed* that Brian Aldiss's amazing Getting-the-Little-Swine-to-Bed technique (*Heliograph* #2) DIDN'T ACTUALLY WORK.

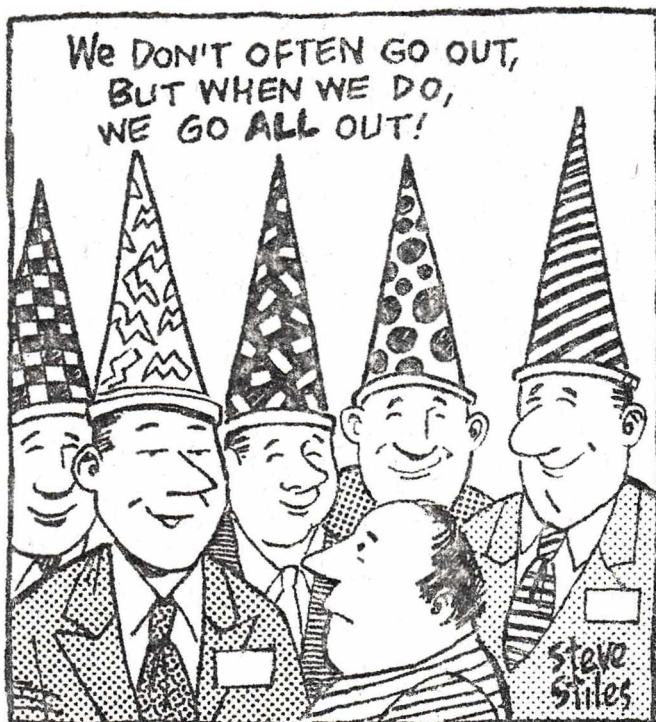
This was our first taste of controversy, when Mr Aldiss put a mildly stropky note under the newsroom door complaining of 'anti-Aldiss material' and asserting that 'I told no kiddies, not even Brian Burgess, to "Fuck Off".' Assured by witnesses that the first report was accurate, our protagonist having been a trifle off-sober at the time, we contented ourselves by printing his rebuttal prefaced by 'BRIAN ALDISS, Sci Fi author, corrects...' Meanwhile he'd given the newsroom a new euphemism, heavily used for the rest of Helicon whenever alleged abuse was to be recorded: 'Go to bed!'

QUESTION. Why exactly did Lawrence Watt-Evans think that he was Brian Aldiss and that John Brunner should go to bed?

Trying to make every item at least a bit amusing was a continuing policy. One slight

hitch was noted... Helicon had an influx of 52 Romanians, who all arrived in suits and strange tall pointy hats, like a delegation of heavily politicized garden gnomes. My idle fingers recorded the figure and on impulse (the line looked as if it could do with a bit more text) made it '52.02'. Well, at least I didn't add 'plus or minus 0.06', but the newsroom had a procession of puzzled visitors. 'We have had trouble with newsletter. Here it says [etc, etc]. Is special meaning or' (in tones of deepening menace) 'your Western sense of humour?'

Strange tongues were heard everywhere at Helicon, and to aid translation a complex system of colour-coded ribbons and little spots on con badges was supposed to indicate who could interpret between what. Fandom soon reduced the system to chaos. The 'I speak Romanian' ribbons ran out within 52.02 nanoseconds, and others lasted only a bit longer; soon the committee was running round trying to clip bits from the over-long and generous ribbons issued on the first day. Meanwhile one heard explanations like: 'And that one-quarter of a tartan spot on my badge stands for how much Gaelic I know...' Your reporter confirmed himself to be deaf in seventeen languages.



My biggest linguistic mistake on *Helio-graph* was in allowing my eyes to glaze over each time I tried to read a contribution from Colin Fine which appeared to be an essay on the artificial language Lojban. 'Too long', I kept saying. 'Maybe next issue'. Colin had neglected to hint in his headline that, just after the point at which I invariably fell asleep, this piece announced a new and imminent programme item in which Lojban would be discussed. Oops.

Besides Romanians there were Russians, who were doing a roaring trade in obsolete KGB credentials at their dealers' room table...

RED SALES IN THE SUNSET: 30 people had joined the KGB at last count. Beware the midnight knock on the door from Brian Aldiss, the entire Family Harrison and Anne McCaffrey (who will be carrying a small, monogrammed flame-thrower).

TRICENTENNIAL CYBERPUNK. In 1693 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz of calculus fame invented the first mechanical calculator that could multiply and divide, thus heralding an exciting new era of arguments over the restaurant bill. ('Fie on you and your Engine, fir, I had only a small falad and a Pepfi.')

JOHN CLUTE tergiversates: 'Text is terrifying!'

OVERHEARD: 'If this were a normal con all you'd have to do would be to find someone...' [And then you'd know where they were—Ed.] • In Ops: 'We printed out all the programme participant letters and A.N.Other's was three pages long...'

• Programming subcommittee irregular verbs: 'I reschedule, you slip, he runs late.'

TRUTH SHALL BE TOLD. The spellcheck on the mighty *Helio-graph* computer, confronted by 'committees', suggests 'coma-tose'...

TEN DAY WONDER TANDOORI. The *Taj Mahal* appears to work on the Lovecraftian approach to cuisine: 'I am excited not so much by the actual presence of mysterious Bengali dishes before me as I am by the eldritch rumour and suggestion that

these exotic apparitions might one day appear.' Be warned... (Ramsey Campbell)

EROTIC SF panel: 'The French are suggesting installing teledildonic machines in hotel rooms...' Mike Cuile: 'I'm not sure I would want to put anything of mine into any such orifices.' Dave Clements: 'What about your credit card?' Mike Abbott: 'By barcoding suitable portions of anatomy you could pay at the same time.' Brian Ameringen: 'Surely, when you cross a teledildonics machine with a cashpoint you get someone coming into money?'

DISCRETION. We are not allowed to reveal the number of the room in which GoH Karel Thole and Jean Owen broke the bed.

In a more serious and scientific vein, the Hotel de France venue has a built-in chocolate factory and shop, leading to a blitz of useful information:

HELICON STATISTICS! We have filled 7 Jersey hotels and drunk 1,600 pints of real ale, as at 1300 Saturday. Chocolate sales: 2,500 champagne truffles, 55* of the 5kg blocks, 7 large rabbits, 82 Easter eggs, 1 lifesize Tim Illingworth, and 20 people have taken the behind-the-scenes tour. (Still 3,000 truffles and 8,500 other chocs to go. Must Try Harder.)

* By the end of Helicon, it was 238.

Quite a respectable team of *Heliograph* newsroom regulars had somehow coalesced out of all this insanity. I dutifully credited them all, one of my own favourite ideas being to end each issue with a credits box using linked literary 'job titles'. It was sheer luck that, having picked *The Hunting of the Snark* for the first such theme, I needed to credit Amanda Baker:

.....
Heliograph 1, 8/4/93. Bellman: Dave Langford. Baker: Amanda. Boots: Dave Clements. Boojum: Caroline Mullan. Snark: John Dallman. Ocean Chart: Harry Bell. Strange Creepy Creatures: John Stewart, Mark Young
.....

I hugely enjoyed watching fans in the bar turn straight to the end of each newsletter to find what daft link the credits had this time. The sequence went on through Niven (Thrint: Dave Langford. Grog: Paul Barnett. Speaker-to-Duplicators ...), Asimov (First Speaker: Dave Langford. Emperor: John Dallman. Mayor: Boo Webber. Mule: Chris Suslowicz. Encyclopaedists: John Grant, John Clute. Prime Radiants: Amanda Baker, Pam Wells. Second Foundation: sshh!), Dick (Glimmung, Kipple, Conapt, Pink Beam, Vugs), Wolfe (Autarch, Hierodules ... the large person who got to be the Group of Seventeen was unamused), Ballard (Drained swimming pool, Spinal landscape, Marilyn Monroe, Traven, Talbot, Travers, Talbert, Travis etc) and more. The real mind-burster that no-one could guess was based on an obscure passage of Aldiss's *Report on Probability A*: Impaler of Distortions, Impersonator of Sorrows, Suppressor of the Archives, Wandering Virgin — 'Thank you for making me a virgin again!' cried Lynne Ann Morse with mixed feelings, and was duly quoted out of context in the upcoming issue.

Incidentally, *The Hunting of the Snark* also gave us Rule 42: 'No one shall speak to the Man at the Helm.' This, alas, was not rigorously applied despite all my efforts, and urgent stints of *Heliograph* typing were apt to be interrupted by arcane queries in strange international accents. Once, overwhelmed by too many satirical birthday congratulations (I was 40 on the Saturday of Helicon), I must admit that the editor rose up and told all the chatterers present to 'Go to bed.'

CLOSING CREDITS. *Heliograph* could not have been brought into existence without the help of very many people, but nevertheless it was. (Chorus: 'Start again, Langford!')

Newsroom madness grew more and more uncontrollable. Short quotations aside, I'd resolved to rewrite every single story until it was maximally terse, funny and comprehensible, or at least the first two. Mean-

while Paul toiled over increasingly excruciating headlines... Helicon had a crowd of weird emaciated punk Finns with nose-rings and things ('Differently intelligenced ... or differently nostrilled?' I mused) who claimed to be zombies and sent in countless bulletins on their rotted state: at one point I found Paul unable to decide between ZOMBIE FACTOID — IT'S DEAD TRUE! and DEATH IS NOT THE FINNISH, and could only break the impasse by using them both.

And then there was Thog the Mighty.

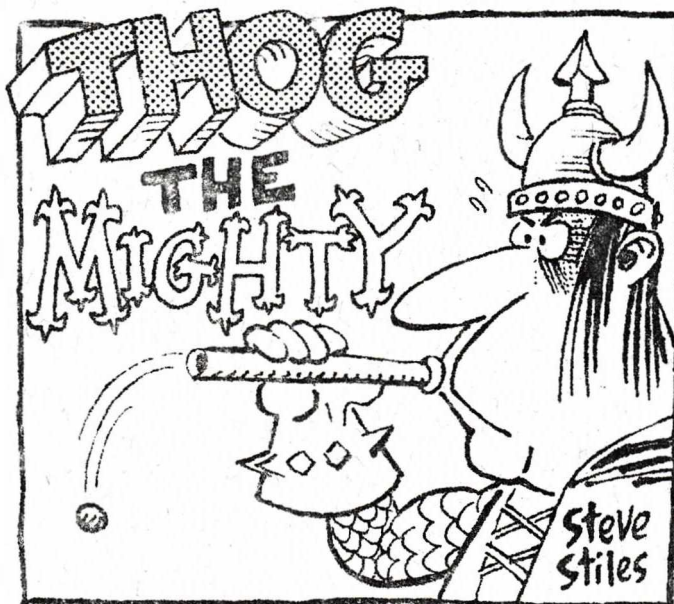
Although we dutifully recorded programme changes, *Heliograph* production was more or less incompatible with seeing any of Helicon's programme. (The exception in my case was the banquet, which I had to attend because I was giving a speech, on particularly revolting meals in sf. Later in *Heliograph*: MARY CELESTE MYSTERY SOLVED BY IAN SORENSEN! 'Dave Langford did the after-dinner speech.') One item, however, spread all over the convention and newsletter like some rampant fungal growth: the scabrous 'If I Ruled the Universe' election campaign.

This featured various mighty beings attempting to sway an ultimate audience vote and thus become Universal Ruler. The candidates were Sir Edmund Blackadder (Neale Mittenshaw-Hodge), Boadicea/Boudicca (KIM Campbell), Genghis Khan (Mike Cule, whose cheerleaders' chant of 'Yak Fat! Yak Fat!' still haunts me), Tim Illingworth (Chris O'Shea), Ming the Merciless (Alison Scott) and Stupendous Man of *Calvin and Hobbes* fame (John Richards with mask, cape and of course Hobbes — a battery-powered growly tiger which remorselessly crept along tables and fell off the end). Helicon was duly plastered with campaign posters, mostly vile lies from Blackadder ('ILLINGWORTH plays with Barbie dolls!') illustrated with grossly libellous Sue Mason cartoons. In the end the audience vote for Universal Ruler went to a last-minute write-in ... Hobbes.

My favourite silly moment in all this came when, after talking to a press photographer and coming away muttering that the bastard wasn't interested in sf but just wanted pictures of weirdly dressed fans, John

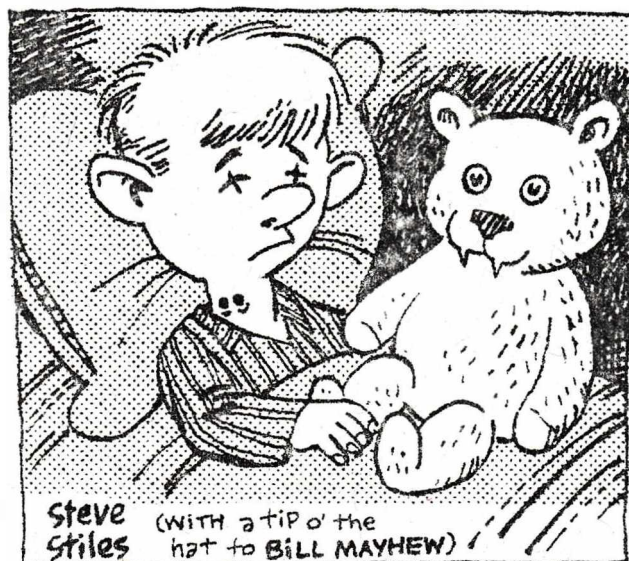
Richards found a particularly insulting Blackadder poster in the hotel foyer. He faded into the secure store and, seconds later, the awesome masked figure of Stupendous Man lumbered along the corridors. With heroic and theatrical gestures the offending poster was wrenched from the wall; our superhero turned majestically away to discover that same pressman with mouth hanging open, fumbling frantically for his camera. After one ghastly frozen moment, Stupendous Man demonstrated super-speed.

This is where Thog came in. Idly filling out a paragraph in which potential world rulers abused each other, Paul remembered a bit-part character from his own fantasy novels and typed: 'Thog the Mighty doesn't want to rule the world.' This could have been a mistake. From commenting on the hustings ('Thog the Mighty spells universe "glib".'), this brutish entity swiftly overran the whole newsletter with fire and the sword. Even my carefully researched birthday lists sprouted addenda like: 'Every day my birthday — Thog.' If towards the end of Helicon there was a *Heliograph* gestalt, a newsroom group mind, it was undoubtedly named Thog the Mighty. Wrestling wildly over the semicolons, grown men found themselves talking in Thog. 'Stop nitpicking and let's print the thing.' 'Hah! When Thog the Mighty nitpick, nit know it have been picked.'



Somewhere out there the convention was reeling along out of control: 'Oh God,' cried a passing committee member, 'the organization's a shambles, we're just about managing to paper over the cracks, and that's *not for the newsletter*.' There were fewer and fewer programme changes to record, and the news items that filtered in grew sillier. When soft toys start sending in contributions, you know it's time to stop:

LEWIS P. BEAR complains formally about the anti-bear and bearist artworks in the Art Show. Arnold Schwarzenbear ... [aw, go to bed — Ed.]



One can even be reduced to raiding the newspapers:

THE INDEPENDENT's article on Helicon today catches the subtle, elusive flavour of fandom: 'Otherwise it is unclear who these people are. They could be someone's neighbour or relative...'

But the manic *Heliograph* staff made the dangerous discovery that news items from 'outside' were hardly necessary. Desperately witty things — well, they seemed witty at the time — were constantly being said in our own fume-filled room, and could instantly be quoted. If Helicon had lasted a few more days the newsroom might have become a self-perpetuating news vortex, feeding madly on itself and generating endless

one-liners to be listed in our ever-longer sections titled OVERHEARD, VOX POP and the like.

'You mean I'm — wow! — a CROSS REFERENCE in the *SF Encyclopaedia*?' • 'Are you claiming to be nubile?' • 'Someone bit me last night and I don't know whom...' • 'Isn't it sad when the snappiest dressers in fandom are the soft toys?' • 'Even Iain Banks doesn't know why he crawled under that carpet...' • 'If I turn the Gestetner up to full speed I can make it to the Banq — oh dear.' • 'I want to complain! You didn't credit my comment!' (Anon) • 'A draft of artists?' • 'An acquisition of publishers?' • 'A whinge of writers.' • 'A spittoon of *Heliograph* staffers.' • 'Why Thog not in *Heliograph* credits?' • 'I have a Complaint. Too much chit-chat; not enough news.'

I actually sought out the one aged fan who complained, in the hope of making soothing noises. The conversation went something like this... Aged Fan: 'Yes, your newsletter is full of in-jokes and I'm not an "in" person.' Me: 'But that "bear" stuff is about the Helicon art show...' AF: 'Never go to art shows.' Me: 'And *this* is all to do with the *Read-Me* booklet...' AF: 'Couldn't be bothered with that.' Me: 'And "Tim Illingworth" is the convention chairman...' AF: 'Never heard of him.' Me: 'And this credits line is actually an sf reference to **The Book of the New Sun**...' AF: 'Like I said: all in-crowd jokes.'

Suddenly it was Monday evening. Helicon was miraculously over. I could start eating again, and perhaps even sleeping! To hammer home the message, I changed the subtitle box of the ninth issue from *Helicon's Newspaper* to *The Last Dangerous Heliograph* and made sure that all subsection titles referred to sf stories about entropy or the closing down of universes ('Travellers in Black', 'The Voices of Time', 'Running Down'). The final, post-closing-ceremony item was typed ... since nothing hugely newsy had happened, this merely offered an 'AT-A-

GLANCE SUMMARY OF THE CLOSING CEREMONY. See pages 94-146.' It was all over.

(Actually there was no room to write up the full horror of the closing multi-channel slide show based on 1,000 embarrassing snaps taken at Helicon itself. Forty-five minutes after the ceremony was due to start, Martin Hoare and his team of ace technocrats carried in the projectors and began to set them up. The audience thrilled as the very first slide that actually appeared read: 'That's All Folks!' Every possible permutation of the guests' pictures and names was shown, with John Brunner labelled as George R.R. Martin and artist Karel Thole as fan guest Larry van der Putte ... then Brunner as Martin and Thole as Brunner ... and so endlessly on, to a stream of esoteric technical remarks like 'Now John Brunner's head's in the way of the side screen.' Afterwards Mr. Hoare exulted that the committee had confessed they'd never believed he could put on the slide show at all.)

It was, as I said, all over. Unfortunately several people said interesting or appalling things at Monday night's final party, and on Tuesday, as the convention was being dismantled around me, I found myself typing up a supplementary *Dead Dog Memorandum*. Our mimeo experts were not in evidence; the laser printer glowed white-hot as hundreds of copies churned out to meet the delirious demand. Then I went home.

But *Heliograph* was the newsletter that would not die. Chris Suslowicz and Cathryn Easthope had a hotel room full of computer gear, and two more ersatz issues rolled out of my fax machine, the *Undead Dog Memorandum* and *Embalmed Dog Missive*. Excerpts follow, as rewritten by me for the unbelievably rare *Heliograph Souvenir Edition*:

IT IS TUESDAY, the newsletter office is deserted and the equipment has been packed for its eventual return to the mainland. *Thog the Mighty* has discovered that his transportation (Horde, one, for the use of) has been misbooked for the previous day and is sharpening his sword. (Alex Stewart: 'Thog say, plane for wimps.

Thog swim.') Langford has departed for the mainland to avoid the likely bloodshed, pausing briefly to Blu-Tack™ 5,271,009 copies of the *Dead Dog Memorandum* to various walls. 'Stop that man and nail his feet to the floor,' screamed an enraged Martin Easterbrook, engaged in convention poster removal. Too late—the denuded corridors had been fetchingly redecorated...

FOOD CORNER. There are no restaurant reports because with typical selfishness all the reporters are still in the restaurants. There is also an absence of newsroom—the final wording on the door was 'go away in a huff and never return', so copy is not arriving, and the Alternative Newsroom is making it all up from a secret location. Stay tuned.

.....
Heliograph 10-ish, 13/4/93. Wook: Dave Langford. Clattuc: Chris Suslowicz. Chilke: Thog the Mighty. Tamm: Cathryn Easthope. LPFers: BSFA Council. Yips: Ops.
.....

And then it was really over. The egoboo was tremendous (as editor I probably got an altogether unfair share, but that's life). The physical and mental debilitation lasted three weeks. I wonder what it would have been like to attend Helicon?

●
Three Weeks After. It was one of those incautious moments. I was at Jean Owen's and Martin Hoare's wedding party, reduced to a slithering moral jelly by heady speech-making and champagne cocktails, and Caroline Mullan was telling me what she thought of *Heliograph*. 'All right for a mere Eastercon,' she allowed grudgingly, 'but your approach just wouldn't work for a Worldcon newsletter like ours at ConFiction.'

'Oh, I don't agree ...' my mouth began to say, until I suddenly noticed we were surrounded by a horde of feral, red-eyed 1995 Worldcon committee members, licking their lips and closing slowly in. For once my brain managed to insert a few words of its own. 'Er, I mean, you're *absolutely right*, Caroline.' *

⇒ Before we go exploring some of fandom's past glories, here's another article concerning more contemporary fan history — about the Hugo Awards, which, as we can personally attest, have had their share of mishaps, adversity, and misadventures. The writer is no stranger to the Hugos, himself, having won in both the Fan Writer and Fanzine categories (and has been nominated for Best Fanzine again this year). This is his first article for us.

A Child's Garden of Rockets

by Mike Glycer



Aristocratic in white tie and black tails, Aussiecon 2 toastmaster Marc Ortlieb introduced the 1985 Hugos: "They are democratic awards — anyone who has enough money can vote..." Next morning, the hoax daily newszine said of his performance, "We applaud Comrade M A Ortlieb for his sterling courage in the teeth of capitalist-inspired adversity by exposing the fundamentally anti-democratic nature of the little silver rocket ships while he was forced to adopt the garb of a running dog vine steward (who failed to deliver the services repeatedly demanded of him)."

The 'capitalist-inspired adversity' that plagued Aussiecon 2's Hugo ceremony came from a disastrous attempt to make it into a multimedia extravaganza. Five carousel slide projectors flashed nominees' names and related photos on a cinemascope screen at center stage while Ortlieb repeated the names aloud. Or that was the plan. The slides never came up in the order written in Ortlieb's cue cards. Then came the ghastly moment that the John W. Campbell award winner was exposed before all the nominees had been completely announced. But I admired Ortlieb's coolness amid disaster: for the nominees' benefit he preserved the digni-

ty of the occasion to whatever extent that was still possible.

That was the worst mistake I had ever seen at a Hugo Awards ceremony, until Saturday, September 5, 1992: while Spider Robinson handed Magicon's Best Fanzine Hugo to George Laskowski, a slide flashed behind them that the winner was *Mimosa*, edited by Dick and Nicki Lynch.

The mistake was reminiscent of the year (1970) that Isaac Asimov, apparently unable to believe 'No Award' had finished first in a Nebula category, accidentally announced Gene Wolfe's "The Island of Dr. Death" had won, and had to correct himself while Gene was on his way to the dais. Legend holds that Gene's friends told him everyone felt so awful that all he needed to do was write another story, call it "The Death of Doctor Island," and SFWAns would surely vote him a Nebula. It's true that Gene won a Nebula for that story...

Justice was not delayed at Magicon. Within minutes, a shaken Spider Robinson revealed *Mimosa* was the correct Hugo-winning fanzine. Laskowski graciously joined him to turn over the trophy to Dick and Nicki Lynch.

And do you know, that incredible mis-

take made the Magicon Hugo Awards Ceremony a legend. Hugo night gaffes inevitably fix an occasion in the forefront of memory, unlike showmanlike, smooth performances that soon fade into the mind's background noise. Indeed, I can hardly remember any of Chicon V's perfect 100-minute ceremony of two years ago.

If it's true that we forget the technically perfect Hugo ceremonies, is that merely due to fannish perversity? I don't think so. Magicon and Chicon show that the difference between what we remember and what we forget lies in the emotional, humanizing moments that penetrate the coolness of people engaged in a performance. These moments wrench us with empathy, as during last year's Best Fanzine miscue, or evoke our admiration for grace displayed in the face of adversity as with Marc Ortlieb, George Lasowski, or, long ago, Terry Carr.

We often remember that Terry Carr made us laugh, and laugh again without forgetting how graciously he transformed an awkward moment at the 1973 ceremony. That year, Terry won the Best Fanwriter Hugo. To the chagrin of Torcon II chairman John Millard, the rockets had not arrived in time for the ceremony: winners just got the bases. Terry brandished his empty base and joked that he once previously shared a Hugo with *Fanac* co-editor Ron Ellik. Yes, between his half-Hugo for *Fanac* and his Best Fanwriter Hugo base he'd won one complete Hugo.

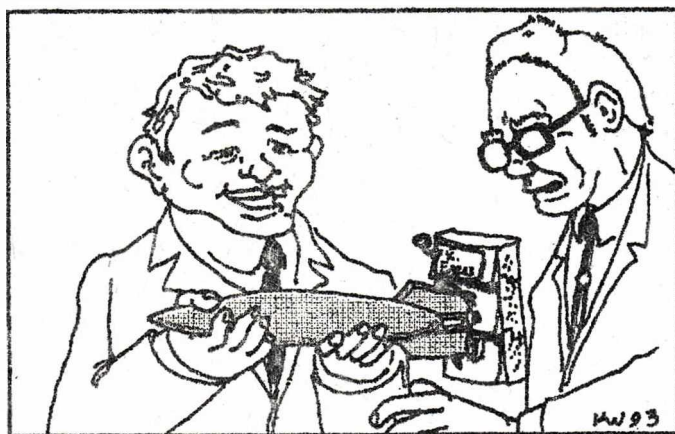
Laughter is that interrupted defense mechanism Niven's Puppeteers consider madness...for why would anyone interrupt a defense mechanism? Maybe because any other reaction is more painful. And for every story you know that illustrates this point about the Hugo Awards, there's at least one you don't know because it never happened on stage to a Carr or a Lynch.

And I'll begin by showing you what it's like when a victim of one of these gaffes cannot laugh it off.

Imagine you have just earned the highest honor in science fiction, but think the trophy is made like junk jewelry. How sad

you would feel, and how ungracious you would sound berating the committee about your disappointment! In 1990, Lois McMaster Bujold won ConFiction's Best Novella Hugo and the next morning she complained bitterly to Jo Thomas (who I was working with in Program Oops) that her Hugo rocket spun loosely on its base, allowing the chrome fins to score the marble. Fuming, Bujold devised a cardboard pad to keep the pieces from grinding together until someone with the proper tool could tighten the assembly.

Of course, considering what some conventions pay for Hugos, it raises a person's expectations. NOLAcon II paid \$750 a copy for the base alone, and it looked like it dropped out of a tall cow. And there's nothing anyone can do about it. But back when a wooden base was standard, Bujold's disappointment was foreshadowed by Kelly Freas, except that Kelly had a grin-and-bear-it attitude. He said the shoddy base on the Best Professional Artist Hugo he won at Heidelberg, Germany, in 1970, "...looked like scraps from someone's barn door..." — unexplainably bad woodwork from the country known for Black Forest cuckoo clocks. When Freas got home, he tore off the committee's base and made his own. (Freas told me this story in 1989, and I wonder if he knows that — according to Bruce Pelz — Heicon chairman Mario Bosnyak really *did* make the 1970 bases from an old barn door, when those he'd ordered failed to arrive!)



If someone regards the Hugo Award as the epitome of their career in science fiction, it is best he separate the idea of the Hugo

from the physical Hugo, which is often a leaky Grail, at best.

Back when I thought Robert Silverberg's best-known book was *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations*, a fourth-grader reading about ancient mysteries never to be solved, I learned frustration over the fiery destruction of the Library of Alexandria and delivered this childlike criticism: if only people had been more careful! As an adult, I know differently: I understand the fragility of everything manmade. How can we expect to receive the Library of Alexandria intact when we can't even design Hugo trophies that survive awards night?

Remember the Noreascon 3 Hugo base and all its conic cross-sections, including the green 'toilet seat' shape that appeared to revolve around the rocket and was decorated with brass studs and glass marbles? Several winners discovered decorative bits falling off their Hugos; Connie Willis loved telling everyone how Charlie Brown lost one of his balls. Laughter was a much better answer than irritation.

But the best of the broken Hugo stories is told by the man who explained laughter to Puppeteers, Niven himself.

Larry Niven was up for three Hugos at MidAmeriCon in 1976, and he won Best Novelette for "The Borderland of Sol." They held the ceremony in a Kansas City auditorium where the winners, after coming onstage to receive their rockets, returned to their seats by a circuitous backstage route. Clutching his Hugo with the Tim Kirk dragon ceramic base, Niven hurried through the dim corridors trying to get back to his seat before they announced the winner for Best Novel, possibly *Inferno*, co-authored with Jerry Pournelle. Niven stumbled, his Hugo hit the floor and broke its sculpted base. "Oh, shit!" he cursed, at the very moment the MC was announcing Joe Haldeman had won the Best Novel Hugo for *The Forever War*. Niven was sure he had been heard by everyone...and had forever confirmed his reputation as 'Mister Tact'.

Someone who seems to have done an excellent job of separating the Hugo ideal

from the Hugo trophy was Chesley Bonestell. Rumors persist that a Special Hugo Award given to Chesley Bonestell in 1974 was relegated to his bathroom, and sat on the lid of his toilet tank.

Bonestell showed that if the meaning of the Hugo transcends imperfect physical representations, its meaningfulness to the winner depends entirely on his relationship with the audience that gives it. This was never more brilliantly proven than in Larry Niven's reaction to Harlan Ellison's guest of honor speech at the 1975 NASFiC, held two weeks after the first Australian worldcon. Though in many other years he had actively courted fandom for Hugo Awards, at the 1975 NASFiC, Ellison declared from a lectern surrounded by his Hugos and Nebulas, that he no longer wanted to be defined as a science fiction writer or limit his audience to sf readers.

Half an hour after Ellison's speech, Larry Niven was going up in a hotel elevator, proudly carrying the Hugo he received for "The Hole Man" which friends had just brought him from Australia. Two teenaged boys popped into the elevator next to him and recognized the award, but not the owner.

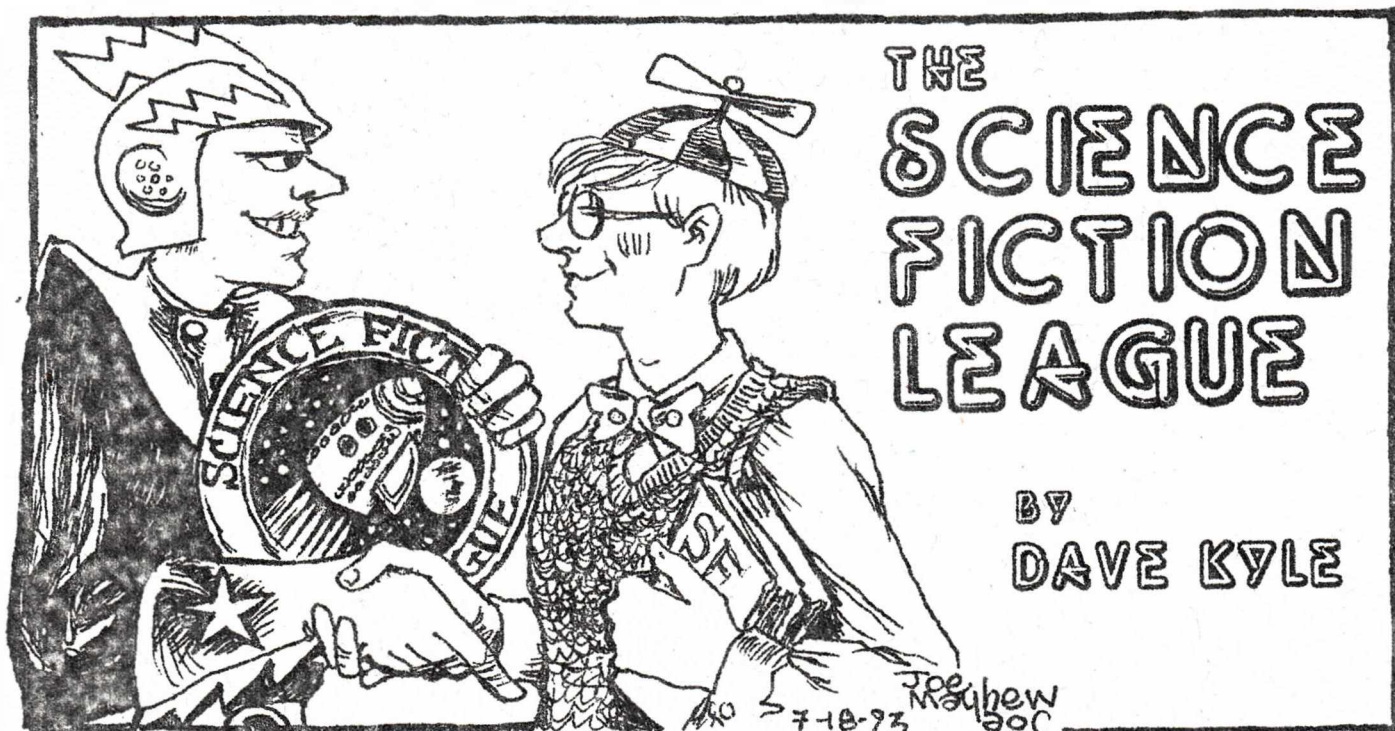
"Gee, mister, where did you get the Hugo?" one asked.

Without hesitation, Niven cynically answered, "I got it from Harlan. He's quitting science fiction and is giving away his awards. I think he still has a couple left."

The two excited kids jumped off the elevator at the next floor and went pounding away down the hall in search of Ellison. Niven hopes they found him.

On stage or behind the scenes, all these stories reveal character under stress, which the personality may express graciously or angrily, bitterly or humorously. People understandably remember best the moments that teach us something new about the winners' humanity. But we fans who give Hugos hope that, even when the execution is flawed, the winners will endure good-naturedly because Hugos represent our admiration and affection for them — and that ought to be worth a smile. *

☛ It's time for a little time-tripping with Dave Kyle's newest fan history article. This time Dave takes us all the way back to the 1930s and the earliest days of science fiction fandom. Back then, there weren't any conventions; there wasn't any organized fandom at all, except for a few isolated big-city fan clubs. And then, Hugo Gernsback organized...



Now here's a question which is a puzzle-ment — how do you, a science fiction fan, explain yourself to the uninitiated?

"My interest is science fiction," I state. "I'm a science fiction fan," I confess. Do I sound proud? Perhaps a bit defensive? What does 'fan' mean? Does one launch into some more-or-less involved explanation? I'm more than just a reader, see. That I write it, or once published it, or was an sf editor and artist doesn't clarify my status of 'fan'. As for 'fandom'... that's even harder to explain.

Do you do what I do — talk about being an enthusiast for a special form of fiction which stretches your horizons and provokes all sorts of good and wonderful ideas? "Science fiction — it stimulates the imagination. It makes one think. And for me, there's a sort of fraternity, a social group of special people, but no, there's no special, official name." Do they understand that when I wear a pin it can only be a substitution, like the British Interplanetary Society? (For my fan gatherings I can wear my First Fandom

blazer patch or, for the most obvious identification, my St. Fantony 'S/F' patch — which is why I so often do. Too many times, I fear, I embarrass my wife Ruth, also a fan, who despairs of my being a "...gosh-wow, gee-whiz, propeller beanie-wearing, over-exuberant, dinosaur Fa-a-a-n." And she says I can quote her.)

My best elucidation for the ignorant about my unusual addiction is to mention The World Science Fiction Society — for the world conventions. How does one describe a *world* science fiction convention, although in existence for over half a century? (I wish it would make sense to say that for over fifty years I've been a member of the SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE.)

I could, I would, wear my Science Fiction League lapel button — if I hadn't lost it in the distant past. (It cost me 35¢ nearly sixty years ago, which was a small fortune to me then.)

The Science Fiction League? Can it really be true that most 'science fiction fans'

may never even have heard of it? Oh, how sad that moment in time when it was snuffed out of existence! Proclaim: FIJAWOA. Fandom Is Just A Way Of Anarchy — were the New York Fanarchists right?

Once upon a time, I almost believed that Hugo Gernsback clapped his hands and thundered: "Let there be scientifictionists! Let there be fandom!"

Maybe I was right?

The moment of creation is right there, bursting out of the Frank R. Paul cover of Hugo Gernsback's *Wonder Stories* of May 1934. A large round spot of glorious red and blue and yellow. SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE, reads the ring of words. In the bulls-eye is a spaceship accelerating past the earth.

How did this happen? It was the talented touch of the finger of the mighty one himself. It was Hugo Gernsback who did it, of course.

Going back in the history of science fiction, few things had greater importance than the founding in 1926 of the unique, popular-oriented, American science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*. Gernsback did it.

Tracing the track of the history of science fiction fandom, nothing has had greater significance, importance, and universal effect than the formation in 1934 of the Science Fiction League. Gernsback did it.

The SFL came to life in *Amazing's* competitor, *Wonder Stories*. This monthly periodical was the amalgamated descendent in 1930 of the second and third ever sf magazines, *Science Wonder Stories* and *Air Wonder Stories*, both established in 1929. Gernsback started all them, too.

(Coincidentally, probably not inspired by the sudden appearance of the Gernsback SFL, there appeared about a month later a fan-created 'International Science Fiction Guild'. It put out a fanzine, called simply the *ISFG Bulletin*. The following year the ISFG changed its name to the Terrestrial Fantascience Guild and faded away. Incidentally, I got into the fan club/organization game in 1934, thinking to fill the void left by the inactivity of somebody else's 'Science

Fiction Advancement Association', by planning [unfulfilled] 'The Legion of Science Fiction Improvement'. About this time, I published my first fanzine, *Fantasy World*. Then in 1936-1937, newly arrived in New York City, I pushed my 1935 dream of the 'Phantasy Legion' and the 'Phantasy Legion Guild' for writers and artists. I was now thoroughly immersed in the boiling fan scene of the time. The 'Legion' had a brief, hot life which expanded out into other centers of fandom, but it died as only an imitation of the SFL which was by then firmly rooted and growing.)

So, no wonder, not at all amazing, that the single individual whose influence was most profound at the beginnings of fandom was, of course, Hugo Gernsback. It is fitting that the annual sf awards given by fans should have been spontaneously named after him.

Gernsback created the pioneering SFL for two reasons. The first, quite naturally, was to solidify his magazine readership and thus make money. The second was much more high-minded — he passionately believed in that vigorously growing new type of literature, science fiction. He was a prose-lyte, with a special interest in science-hobbyists, and he wanted to spread the word through the power of the press.

The SFL had a natural evolution. Gernsback had established contact with the readers of *Amazing* in January 1927 through a department called "Discussions" which published their letters. At first, the letters were identified only by initials and cities; later the correspondents' complete names were printed and still later, full addresses were added. He followed the practice in his *Wonder* publications with "The Reader Speaks." But it was the Science Fiction League, in 1934, which united individual fans around the world into a fraternity.

Researching the early days of the *Amazing* "Discussions" department uncovers a letter from nineteen-year-old Holger E. Lindgren of Olympia, Washington, in the October 1927 issue. In it, he says, "I have just finished reading a letter in 'Discussions' about

forming a Young Men's Science Club." Because, he notes, the location is limited to the New Jersey area, he suggests an 'International Science Club' by correspondence. The editor replies that *Amazing Stories* would be willing to act as 'official organ', and would "...set apart a page every month for news of the Club." Although this offer did not materialize into anything significant, it marked the earliest interest leading to Gernsback's Science Fiction League.

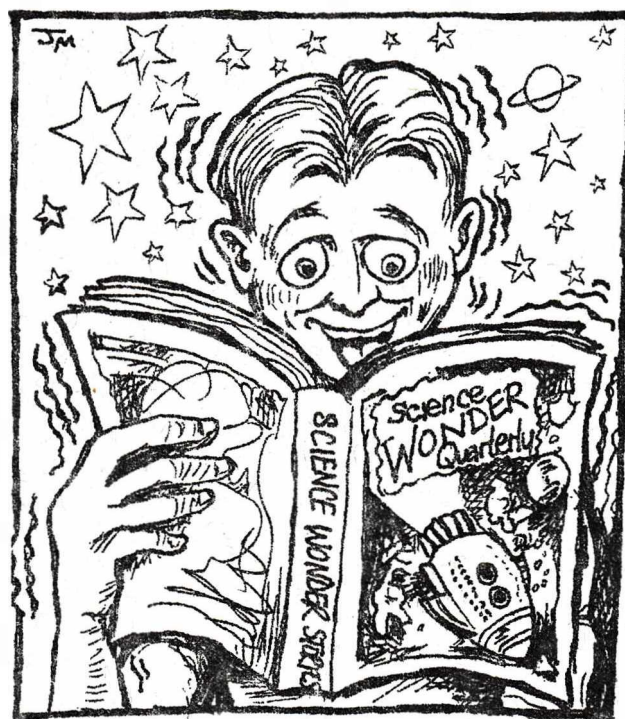
However instrumental Gernsback was in the development of science fiction fandom, the genesis actually began independently, earlier in the 1920s. (Once again, the fact is that Gernsback during those years was stimulating the interest of readers in 'pseudo-scientific stories' in the letter columns of *Radio News* and *Science and Invention* magazines. Incidentally, as a forerunner of the SFL, he earlier established the Short Wave League.)

Beginning the second decade of the twentieth century, when there was no name for 'science fiction' (which Gernsback first used in the start-up of his 1929 *Wonder* magazines), the focus of activity by readers was on the science and not the fiction of the writing. This is a very important distinction. 'Science clubs' were being talked about, and although Gernsback had manufactured the term 'scientifiction' — the contraction of the words 'scientific' and 'fiction' — there was no idea of forming sf clubs. Instead, about the time of the appearance of his second sf magazine, *Science Wonder Stories*, enthusiasts formed the 'Science Correspondence Club', encouraged by Raymond A. Palmer and other early fans. That club is noted for having published seventeen, mostly monthly, issues of a fan magazine. The first issue, dated May 1930, was titled *The Comet*. Later issues became *Cosmology*. The emphasis was very much on science articles and discussions. Then, about this time, science fiction readers in the metropolitan area of New York were gathering together for meetings. The group (which included the now-deceased Mort Weisinger and the now very-active Julius Schwartz) called themselves 'The Sci-

enceers'. Because the members' interests gradually shifted from science to fiction, this club was in reality the first truly-sf club, and marked the beginning of fandom as we know it. Two months after the appearance of *The Comet*, the Scienceers published *The Planet*. Then, shortly thereafter, there arrived what was probably the first true fanzine: *The Time Traveler*, which led quickly to the eminently successful *Fantasy Magazine* metamorphosing into the preeminent *Science Fiction Digest*.

With the demise by 1934 of The Science Correspondence Club (which had evolved into the International Scientific Association [ISA]) and the Scienceers and *Science Fiction Digest*, the stage was set. In that spring of 1934, I was now into my 15th year of life, a sophomore in the Monticello, New York, High School, and into my third year of being a genuine sf fan. The fireworks for me were about to begin.

The opening skyrocket was launched from the single editorial page in the April issue of *Wonder*, "An Announcement by Hugo Gernsback." Huge in the middle of the enveloping words was the emblem of the LEAGUE — a fat, multi-rocketed spaceship crossing a distant earth.



Gernsback began by stating that: "It may be said that science fiction, as a popular movement, has finally arrived. While science fiction, as such, is not new (but goes back to Edgar Allan Poe, and even further) the vogue of science fiction has steadily gained new followers in every part of the world." He went on to talk about the "...thousands and thousands of active fans..." who were serious about the 'artistic endeavor' and who collected stories and did research in the field. He said he watched its growth since his first 1926 magazine, and now believed one coordinating, comprehensive international group should be formed, "...to become the parent organization of innumerable local science fiction clubs throughout the world."

(The idea almost succeeded. Fan feuding and financial difficulties with Gernsback's publishing empire in the throes of the Great Depression weakened the effort. The spiral downward had begun. Twenty years later, in connection with my chairmanship of the 14th World Science Fiction Convention in New York, I tried to recapture the dream by creating the World Science Fiction Society, Inc. After a tempestuous score of months, the dream exploded into a nightmare of fan feuding and lawsuits, and the corporation was destroyed. Today, the name survives from year to year with the worldcons, but the international fraternity of 'a parent organization of innumerable local science fiction clubs throughout the world' as visualized by Gernsback doesn't exist.)

Wonder Stories, Gernsback pledged, would be the medium to report the activities of the League, "...a non-commercial membership organization without dues or fees of any kind. It is purely a literary, scientific organization for the betterment and promotion of scientific literature in all languages." As always, true to his convictions, Gernsback, though inviting "...anyone interested in science fiction to become a member," was stressing 'science' as the foundation. There was the promise of lapel buttons, seals, stationery, etc. ('selling at cost') "...to enhance not only the standing of the LEAGUE but the popularity of science fiction as well." He told

us to: "Watch for complete details in our next issue!" Wow!

Enough of Gernsback. (I have already paid fulsome homage to Hugo Gernsback in my book, *The Pictorial History of Science Fiction* [Hamlyn, London, 1976] when I chose him as one of the four great men in modern sf, the other three being Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and John W. Campbell, jr., and said that he was "...a pioneer who foresaw [the advance of science and technology and] created his own power of communication and then had the inspiration to use it in his own personal crusade.") Now for the progress of his Science Fiction League...

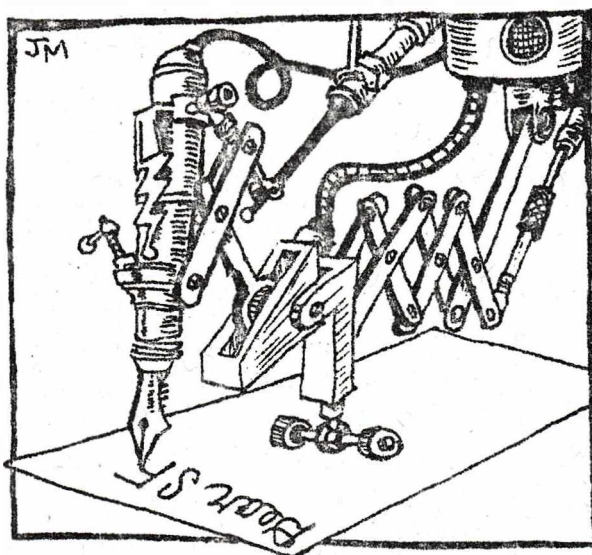
For the following weeks during that spring of 1934, I haunted the newsstands with building anticipation. Then came the day. That May 1934 issue, with the colorful SFL emblem on the cover, jumped off the rack and injected me with a shot of adrenaline. There was a four-page editorial by Hugo himself. I was told that the idealistic purpose was for "...several thousands of our 75,000 readers..." to join and "...spread the gospel of science-fiction and increase our followers," as it is an "educational literature" for the world which "...broadens the minds of the readers." This fact the membership "...should emphasize at every opportunity." Yet, even "...more important than educating..." is science-fiction's "...facility for making you *want* to learn more about things..." and this, Gernsback's conviction was, would lead more young people into careers of science. (And, as a matter of fact, sf has a genuine record of having done so many times over.)

The first printed responses came in the July issue with four letters. The first was from Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, who volunteered to undertake "...a big boost..." by immediately soliciting new members, and said, "I think the Science Fiction League an excellent idea and it should do much toward the popularizing of science-fiction." (The hyphenation was a style used at the time for both noun and adjective.)

The second letter was from Raymond A. Palmer, who pledged that his ISA "...with

chapters all over the world..." would become "...a branch of the SFL, with each group of members a chapter of the SFL, so I have no doubt that you will immediately have some 400 members working for you tooth and nail."

The third letter was from Milton A. Rothman, who in turn said, "I am going to try to start a local chapter in the Central High School..." which idea Gernsback had encouraged from the outset, mentioning all educational institutions. Shortly thereafter, Rothman's SFL Chapter Eleven in Philadelphia during the winter of 1934-35 combined with the stronger Boy's SF Club in Philadelphia (Robert A. Madle being a prime force) and a year later commenced its life as the Philadelphia SF Society, a legendary club which still is going exceptionally well.



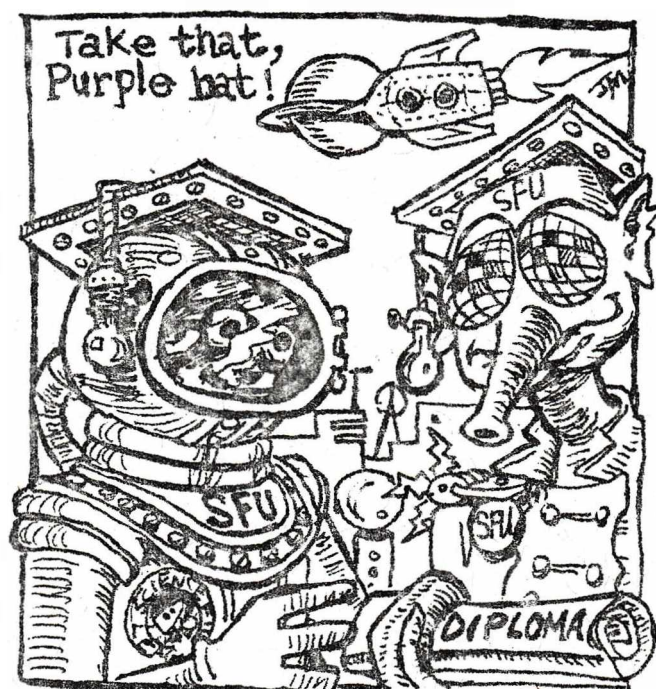
The fourth and final letter was "...a message from David A. Kyle" (By Golly, it really was me!) which, the editor said, "...is typical of the enthusiasm." I am quoted in part as saying: "Ever since the May issue came out, I've been running around in circles. I just feel like shouting with all my might and beating a tin pan. You guessed it! — It's the SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE! That's something that I've been trying to start for the past year. The principles of it simply take my breath away! I hope it results in international correspondence. The principles are excellent. The insignia is excellent. And speaking of the Board, it looks like a Hall of

Fame, with Forrest J Ackerman and Jack Darrow on it. I recognized the insignia at once when I saw it. The space-ship is the same one that was illustrated on the cover of the first *Science Wonder Quarterly* published. The name of it was the *Greyon*." Naturally, it was Frank R. Paul who did the design. As for my reference to the 'Board' — the Executive Directors — the seven named were the original 'honorary members and incorporators'. Besides the notorious young letter writers, Ackerman and Darrow, they were Eando Binder, Edmond Hamilton, Dr. David H. Keller, P. Schuyler Miller, and R. F. Starzl, with Hugo Gernsback as Executive Secretary and Charles D. Hornig as Assistant Secretary. Hornig, a teen-age fan who had captured Gernsback's attention the year before through publication of a fanzine, was managing editor of *Wonder* and certainly deserves his place today in First Fandom's Hall of Fame.

As members joined, they were given numbers. The honor of being Number One went to George Gordon Clark of Brooklyn. I was very late sending in my application, so I got a high number, 359. I still have my certificate among my sf souvenirs. There was a good reason for my being slow to fill out the simple form and send it in — I didn't have the money right away. The cost was fifteen cents.

Subsequent issues had many innovations. In July, a 'Science Fiction Swap Column' was introduced at a "...ridiculously low cost" (for 2¢ a word). By September, a list was printed of names and addresses of those wishing to strike up correspondence. By October, there was a list of 15 potential chapters, including Liverpool, England; Shanghai, China; and the Philippines. (Sydney, Australia showed up by December.) Eventually, the first overseas chapter was in Leeds, England, organized by Douglas F. Mayer, but best known for the activities of J. Michael Rosenblum and as the centre of British fan and pro activities. There is much merit to the claim that Leeds on January 3, 1937, and not Philadelphia in the autumn of 1936, was the site of the first science fiction

convention, because the Philadelphia 'convention' started as an intercity visit by New York City fans, whereas the Leeds event had been planned and advertised for all of Britain. (Another legitimate claim for the first convention was marred by travel delays — the official visit to New York by Jack Darrow, William Dillenback, and Otto Binder [one-half of Eando Binder] in June of 1934 at SFL headquarters. An impressive number of local fans and pros had assembled for the occasion which the Chicago trio missed.) Also, in the October 1934 issue was the suggestion by a member for the establishment of a 'University of Science Fiction' as a department of the SFL, leading to the awarding, through tests, of various degrees such as B.Stf. and D.Stf. (Bachelor and Doctor of Science Fiction, but using the old Gernsbackian abbreviation for scientifiction).



The November *Wonder*, with more news of developing activities, printed a number of ideas from members. My contribution was a lengthy one about organizing District Chapters for 'unfortunate members', those who lived isolated in small towns and rural areas. My vision was to develop close relationships within certain bounds leading to postal discussions, friendships, and the possibilities of visits, maybe even occasional club meetings.

I was thanked for my kind suggestion, but the idea was dismissed with the logic that the correspondence connection column would solve that problem, that chapters were for personal contacts, and that district chapters would be more limiting than unifying. Nevertheless, that idea continually persisted.

A new idea was advanced in December, the 'Ace Member'. Get a letter published in a newspaper, inspire an editorial, do something to promote sf to the general public and you could be an 'Ace Member'. This idea was due recognition for the successes by a number of members. Also in that issue, Thomas S. Gardner of Johnson City, Tennessee (and later of New Jersey) elaborated on the idea of tests leading to a 'science fiction degree'.

The year of 1935 for the SFL started off with a bang (appropriately, there was such an explosion depicted on the cover of *Wonder*, illustrating David H. Keller's story, "One Way Tunnel," as painted by Frank R. Paul.) This issue had the most information ever, plus "The First Science Fiction Test" to earn a B.Stf degree. Other tests would follow every six months. This issue is also very noteworthy for the space devoted to a "Complaint from a Member." The complainer was the yet-to-be-notorious William S. Sykora himself. There was an exchange of letters between him and the editor over the proper use of SFL stationery: Sykora said SFL rules were being broken and stated his case, and the editor disagreed. The seeds were being sown for the vendetta against *Wonder Stories* and Hugo Gernsback through bitter letters and accusations which would later develop into legalistic controversies, mostly revolving around certain SFL chapters. This was a harbinger for the decades of fannish feuds which were fated to follow.

Finally, by the February 1935 issue, the official formation of chapters was announced. I had filed for and received a charter for Monticello [N.Y.] Science Fiction League Chapter Number Five. Despite what Fred Pohl is fond of saying, I did not join under many different names to make the requirements. (The rascal did those things himself.)

I actually recruited some high school pals: Walter Scheible, Charles Kaufman, Israel Ellenberg, Abraham Wolf, and William Rothleder. I reported that: "We assemble Sundays at five o'clock in the office of my father. We hope to make this Chapter worthy of the Science Fiction League." Walter, Charles, and Izzy were neighbors, while Willie and Abe lived on the other side of the village. We planned to put out a fanzine, just as Clark, Member Number One, did for his Brooklyn Science Fiction League Chapter Number One, with *The Brooklyn Reporter*. As the head of SFL Chapter Five, I was sent a copy. We (actually, just me) did about two or three of our own, making carbon copies, but the amateurish efforts quickly vanished without a trace.

The SFL Chapter (Number 14) that included the biggest names of the day, such as Jack Darrow, was in Chicago (with its outstanding *The Fourteen Leaflet* publication). However, the Number Ten New York SFL Chapter eclipsed Chicago and Brooklyn for prestige. It was the first club which actually brought the fans and the pros together. Among the New York members were Julius Schwartz and Conrad H. Rupert (both still seen today at conventions) — and the hyper-active William S. Sykora, John B. Michel, and Donald A. Wollheim.

I remember that February issue for something else, too. I had my first nom-de-plume letter published, signed "The Purple Bat". Re-reading it, I'm impressed that I managed to sound less juvenile than usual and had some worthwhile critical analyses. Bob Madle has never forgotten that letter, and still refers to me, almost sixty years later, as the Purple Bat. (This is my very first public confession of our secret, Bob.)

Metropolitan New York has always seemed to be a cauldron of trouble in the fan world. There have been friendly conflicts, of course — but very bitter ones, too. The SFL encouraged fellowship and harmony, but it also fed egocentrism and the struggles for power. None of us active fans were untouched. Clark's Chapter One, at the zenith of organized fandom, bred jealousy and

would soon lose its preeminence. An aggressive rival group, later to become the Eastern New York SFL Chapter, coalesced into a subchapter and became Brooklyn's successor. (I got involved in the action, but not in the personality conflicts. The official organ of the ENYSFL was *Arcturus*, the competitor of *The Brooklyn Reporter*, and I drew a cover for it, directly on mimeo stencil, depicting the fannish legend of Ghu emerging from the egg.) Sam Moskowitz, in *The Immortal Storm*, ends a chapter on the rise of the SFL with a view of this "sensational" rivalry, and makes an extravagant judgement: He says that the climax to the squabble "...was an explosion which rocked the Science Fiction League to its very foundations..." At the time, that's the way it was seen by some locally, if not in the rest of the world.

A combination of events eventually led to the expelling from the SFL on June 12, 1935, as officially published later, in the September *Wonder*, of three New York members "...for disloyalty." They were William S. Sykora, John B. Michel, and Donald A. Wollheim. What happened and the repercussions over the ensuing years will be skipped here by me. Unpleasant events have been happening in New York fandom decade after decade. As Moskowitz knows, that's a book in itself!

Throughout 1935, more and more magazine space was given to the news from the Chapters. The underlying problems developing around the New York City area were neither really recognized nor taken seriously by me or others, even after the June expulsions. In retrospect, that published SFL report had furnished many hints. However, only after my arrival on the New York scene, as the summer of 1936 ended, when I entered the storm center did I observe and somewhat understand the fannish thunder and lightning, finally personally involved with the BNFs and thus party to their schemes.

The April 1935 issue was of particular interest to me, because it listed 41 names of those who had passed "The First Science Fiction Test." I was at the top of the list! Why that was so, I don't know. My score was 92% (with Lionel Dilbeck), but we didn't



have the highest. Forry Ackerman, Lewis F. Torrance, and William H. Dellenback tied at the top with 97%. Milty Rothman and Julie Schwartz shared the next honors with four others at 95%, followed by Doc Lowndes with two others at 94% and five at 93% including Tom Gardner, George Gordon Clark, and Don Wollheim. Being at the top of the list, however, certainly looked nice. Much data, such as the readers' favorite writers and stories, came from those tests. Other topics in that issue included a long report by Forry Ackerman on 'scientifilms' — and more space to the Sykora controversy, foreboding things to come.

Month after month, through 1935 into 1936, the SFL information was poured out. More tests were given. More Chapters were chartered. More members were gained. Month after month, as befits a teenager, I worshipped at that temple. Incredibly, my first science fiction story, "Golden Nemesis," had been accepted and announced for a forthcoming issue.

Then the world ended after April 1936. *Wonder Stories* was gone. Hugo Gernsback, too, was gone.

There arose out of the ashes of that calamity a new creature: *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. The world had come back into existence, but it was not the same: the publisher was new — Leo Margulies, the entrepreneur of a string of pulps. The editor had changed,

another young fan. The content and format were different. Hugo Gernsback no longer spoke to me or to the League. Even the inimitable Frank R. Paul had seemingly vanished. The SFL still existed, but it now was a mutated thing which I unreasonably, emotionally rejected. Perhaps cruelest of all was receiving the page proofs of "Golden Nemesis" with its Charles Schneeman illustration, and being told it would not be published. Over time, beyond my concern, the SFL faded away.

As spring bloomed in 1936 to mock the departed, I was still in high school, still a science fiction fan, but, abruptly, my umbilical cord had been severed. The world of my youth now changed. I moved to New York in 1936 to go to art school. No more Gernsback — but, instead, I found the personal world of fandom — the young men who became my lifelong friends, Wilson, Wollheim, Wylie, Pohl — the whole arena of action of the ISA — the 'first con' of 1936 — the politics and intrigue of the fading SFL, the ISFL (Independent SFL) — the 'Bohemian Hall' con of the ISA (possibly the first true con, because it was well planned and advertised, and included the professionals) which started the new year of 1937 — the coming of the famous Queens SFL out of the sabotaged Greater NY SFL and the wreck of the ISA... The fannish world of my youth had evolved into a higher form.

One year before the shocking demise of Gernsback's science fiction publications, the May 1935 *Wonder* had printed my brief essay, taken from my First SF Test, on "Why Do You Read Science Fiction?" The optimistic song I had sung then, in all its extravagant, flowery language was, in the post-Gernsback decades, a tune I still believed. It sings in my heart to this day. I still believe. And I wish there was a national organization, like the old SFL, to which I could pledge my identity.

After all, I'm an Ace Member of the defunct-but-still-here-in-spirit SFL, with a 92%-rated degree in STF (read that SF) — and as *Wonder Stories* once proclaimed my boast, "My middle name is Ackerman!" *

☞ We jump ahead a decade or so for another tale about science fiction fans in the days before they found their way into science fiction fandom. It probably isn't surprising to see that, for a young fan, the sense of wonder inherent to science fiction can fill in for a lack of outside fannish contacts. But it still helps to have a steadying influence like the subject of the following article...



Every young fan should know a Mr. Melvin.

Join me in a trip down memory lane. Way down memory lane, actually — back to when I was fourteen years old. I lived in Lynn Haven, Florida, a town of maybe 3,000 population at the time, and a few miles north of Panama City.

First, let me elaborate on the setting. Across the street was a building that was old even then; a two-story frame building owned by a splinter group of the Masons called 'Odd Fellows'. (Isn't it appropriate? A young fan living near an Odd Fellows building...) The building was about fifty feet wide by one hundred feet deep and its upper floor was the Odd Fellows' Hall; to the front of the downstairs was Lloyd's Country Store. Mr. Lloyd was the stereotypical jolly fat man who would stand behind the counter when things were busy. Otherwise, he sat in the middle of the store in an old rocking chair, rocking slowly and fanning himself with a cardboard fan that advertised Dental Snuff. He would sometimes slip kids a piece of bubblegum or a lollipop — if his wife, Miz Kitty, wasn't watching.

There was a little bit of everything in the high-ceilinged, cavernous store; from hardware to bolts of cloth, a soda fountain, a slanted glass case displaying colorful candies

— and comic books.

They didn't carry what Miz Kitty called 'those trashy pulp magazines'. Which, since they did carry Westerns and Detective pulps, I easily translated to mean she disdained science fiction.

I learned speed reading at the comic book rack. I'd quickly leaf through two or three (under Miz Kitty's baleful eye) before selecting one, and I developed the art of rapid comprehension so that, for the price of one, I could read three or four.

Lloyd's took up three-fourths of the first floor. At first, I thought it was the most important part of the building.

Then I met Mr. Melvin.

The remaining quarter of the first floor was to the rear, across the street from where I lived. I had seen a white-haired old man come out of that door at times and paid him little attention, other than to recognize he was tall, broad-shouldered, and not stooped. For no reason other than we lived near the Gulf of Mexico, I fancied him to be a retired sailor.

Winter had been mild, with occasional warm days, then came summer, and the temperature rose. One day I was crossing the street with a buddy of mine. The old man's door was open, and he was in a ladderback chair, sitting on the sidewalk. (The front of

the building and this side had a porch roof over the sidewalk, held up by wooden four-by-four columns.)

My friend stopped in the middle of the street and nudged me. "Look what he's reading!" he whispered.

Mr. Melvin was holding a yellowed copy of a Gernsback *Amazing Stories*!

His attention attracted by our huddling in the middle of the street, Mr. Melvin looked at us. His broad mouth curved in a gentle smile. He held up the magazine. "You boys recognize this?" he asked. "Come on over," he added, getting up. "Two more chairs, right away."

We couldn't resist.

He brought out two collapsible chairs, one a rather rusty metal one and the other a worn wooden one. "As I'm alone, I never bothered to get furniture in sets," he later told me.

He had three old *Amazing Stories* magazines, a couple of early issues of *Weird Tales*, and many other old magazines: *National Geographic*, *Liberty*, *Colliers* — and many I don't remember.

After that, I visited often. The interior of his place was lit by only a few light bulbs hanging on long cords from the high ceiling. Such ceilings were common in old buildings; it helped them stay a few degrees cooler in our semi-tropical temperatures. Mysterious (yet comfortable) shadows always hovered protectively above us.

Mr. Melvin had other antiques: an old Olivetti typewriter that had its keys curved up on each side of the machine, instead of hidden behind the keyboard. He had another typewriter of more standard appearance — but its keys weren't arranged the same as modern machines. Mr. Melvin explained to me that it had been an early attempt to improve keyboard layout.

He had several old radios, two of which still worked; radios with many dials and knobs for adjusting reception, volume, tone; fine-tuning that allowed the listener to change the radio as reception conditions changed.

And he had ancient books, including a

set of encyclopedia over forty years old, a geography book from before World War I, something from the Rosicrucians, and — of course — H. G. Wells and Jules Verne.

One of the Wells books was his *Outline of History*. This was my first knowledge that Wells wrote non-fiction. I later found a copy of that book for my own pleasure. Yes, pleasure; before that, all history I had read had been dry textbooks in school, crammed with dates. Dry, uninteresting. Maybe it was just because I liked his fiction, but Wells made it interesting.

Mr. Melvin was self-taught. He had an exploring mind, uninhibited by restrictions of thought imposed by formal schooling. That meant he entertained thoughts that would be scoffed at — sometimes, deservedly so — by the educational elitists. Sometimes he would spend a long time talking about thought transference, and vibrations in the ether that could pick up and reflect thoughts, explaining (he said) why a new theory or invention would occur to men on different parts of the globe at the same time.

"The patent office often gets requests for patents for the same thing from two or more people the same week," he informed me. "It's because of thought vibrations reflected back from the ether."

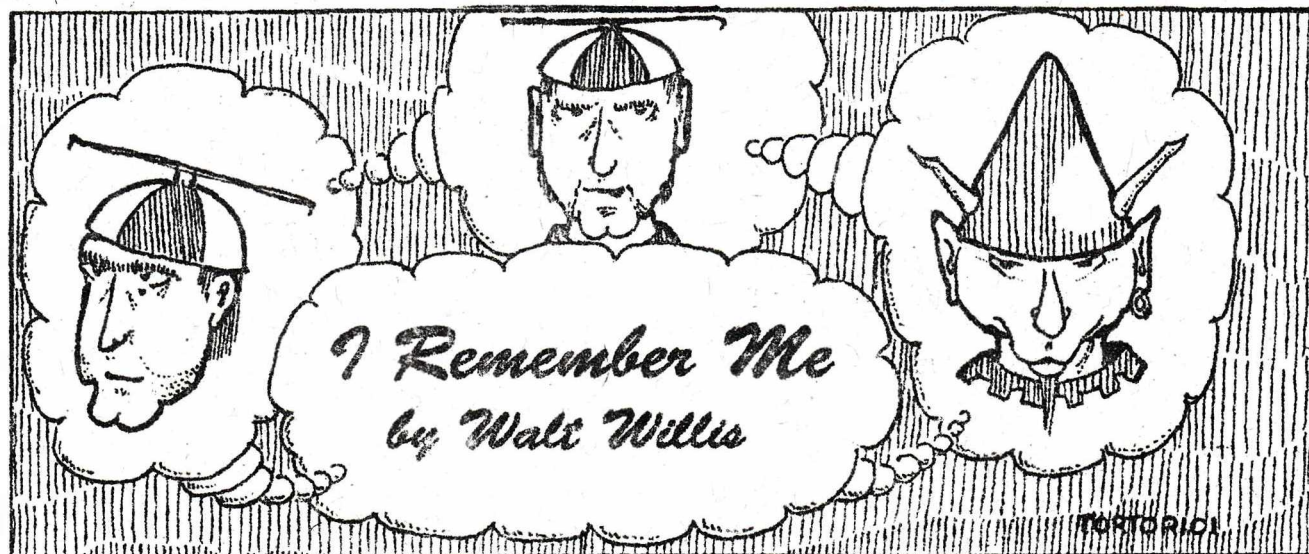
Sounded good to a fourteen-year-old.

At another time, Mr. Melvin said: "Let your mind run wild. Don't worry about what people say is impossible. Visualize, building from your own foundations." Then he gave a soft chuckle. "You can get a great high from that, but be careful — when you come back down to earth, better watch who you tell your ideas to, unless you can back your fancies up with something others will recognize. Great discoveries can be made that way, but you can't depend on a skyhook to hold your ideas up. Get your ideas, but then try to build a foundation that will attach them to the ground.

"But don't let reality stop you from dreaming!"

What better mentor could a young fan have than a Mr. Melvin? *

Walt Willis returns, now, with another look back at the year 1954. The thread of Walt's correspondence file this time takes us through darkest Ireland (with knife, fork, and spoon) to the tower of the Enchanted Duplicator. In passage, we'll gather quotes from Eric Frank Russell, note fuggheadedness from F. T. Laney, and hear about a late-night phone call from Harlan Ellison. And there's more yet...



In April 1954, we published *Hyphen* 9. On 2nd May, Eric Frank Russell, as usual, returned his copy with a letter of comment:

Your MSS returned as unsuitable for publication.

After some thought, I've come to the conclusion that should have been obvious without the strain of thinking, namely that no faned can contribute more than about 50% of the success or failure of what he puts out. The other 50% is completely beyond his control because it depends upon the mood of the reader and a mess of fortuitous circumstances. You don't mind polysyllabic words, do you?

This ish of *Hyphen* may not be more than average for you. But to me it seems extraordinarily good because (a) it caught me in a mood to be humoured and (b) it came in the same post as another much inferior fanmag which I happened to read first; whereupon *Hyphen*'s scintillating self-sufficiency was enormously magnified by contrast.

Anyway, I must say that I enjoyed this *Hyphen* very much and let half a dozen promags rest untouched while I read it. In fact, compared with one or two promags

which shall remain unnamed, it's more value for money.

Some more items for you to use as you wish--

Here's a pathetic relic of the Pogo-Tig-rina Dynasty... I'm starting a fan mag and would like you to write it for me... There's an active fanny club in Beaulieu... It's extremely hard to conceal mental uniqueness... How can anyone paint zebra crossings and still be a fan?... Why did the entire bunch get blackballed from the White Horse, answer me that?... I suppose you know he can't cut a stencil without taking his corsets off... I'm one of the Old Guard, having started with the first ish of *Galaxy*... It costs quite a piece merely distributing my photographs... I've only just discovered that the keys are supposed to turn the ribbon reel... She's withdrawn into herself, a typical actifan's wife... I shall carefully time my entry into fandom.

This last paragraph was intended as a source for the quotes we used for the back cover of *Hyphen*. So far as I know, this lot was never used so they're available for use by any aspiring faned.

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In July 1954, Chuck Harris visited us in Belfast, a trip which he later wrote up as *Through Darkest Ireland, With Knife, Fork, and Spoon*. It gave rise to the one-shot we produced for FAPA called *WAWCRHETC*, possibly better known as *Wilde Heir*, after my own contribution, which was a satire on Francis Laney's denunciation of homosexuals in LASFS, with Chuck playing the role of Laney and myself as Charles Burbee. It was reprinted in *Warhoon* 28 {ed. note: the massive, hardcover-bound 600+ page all-Willis issue}. We sent a copy directly to Burbee, together with a Fandango Fugghead Award for him to pass on to Laney. It was described in this letter we sent to Robert Bloch:

As you probably know from the headlines in the sporting sections of your newspapers, I am far too busy to engage in much fanac. At this season of the year I am perhaps better known as Yaroslav Drobny, or Ken Rosewall, and it is particularly exhausting when I happen to meet myself in the final. You have no idea of the agility required to play both sides of a tennis match. I am glad I didn't go in for the doubles.

You'll understand, then, that I have only time for the barest minimum of fanac and must confine myself to works of mercy, like giving shelter to the needy — as required by the traditions of Oblique House. Every day, people pass by crying "Succor! Succor!" and when this happens I send out neofen with casks of Amontillado tied round their necks. (This is part of a large supply I picked up for a song the other day when, for some reason, the bottom dropped out of the Poe market.) The other day, one of them dragged in a poor wretch who called himself Chuck Harris and claimed to be a friend of yours. In spite of his exceedingly unprepossessing appearance, I felt we had to give him asylum, because he would otherwise have been torn to pieces by the enraged forces of law and decency.

Judge of my horror to find that this

refugee, a renegade from the Rainham Society for the Advancement of Science Fiction and Imaginative Literature with a price on his head (he has buck teeth, which makes 24 dollars for them alone), who only escaped the Society's agents through an ultimate sacrifice by the beautiful Miss Hepzibah Snoopwhistle, and whose life was not worth a moment's purchase...(HALP!)... Judge of my horror to find that this human derelict, once I had fed and clothed him and given him instruction in the elements of civilised behaviour, *began to try to usurp my position*. Yesterday there were five items of mail delivered to this house. *Every one was for Harris*. Worse still, today he brought me a letter which, with many a sly smile and unctuous hand-rubbing, he claimed to have emanated from you. Almost at once I knew it was a forgery. Admittedly, the writer had succeeded, at heaven knows what cost to the balance of his mind, in emulating your style, but he had made one laughable mistake. He had represented you as suggesting that I might reply to your letters.

You may well say "Faugh!" It is well understood between us that you will write me brilliant and witty letters every month or so by way of penance for being a vile pro and that I may print them or file them away as I think fit. Henry Kuttner, Eric Frank Russell, damon knight, and others of your ilk know not to expect anything more...until the end of the tennis season, at least.

But now, so that you will see that my reports about Harris are correct, I am going to allow him to use the typewriter. I wish you could see him. It would gladden Mr. Pitman's heart to see someone typing with all fingers and toes.

Chuck here. Well, what else can you expect from just a faan. I travel 400 miles to get here and, instead of introducing me to hoardes of Connemara redheads, he forces me into the attic and presents me with three gross of the *Vargo Statten* mag-

azine to autograph {{closed note: which contained Chuck's one published story }}. Instead of whooping it up in Amelia Street, I am forced to stay home and play Laney to his Burbee. Furthermore, I spend my time washing up the dinner things instead of slaving over the promised Hot Dishes. O'Bleak House is a veritable home from home. (Although I must say that the room service is the best I've seen anywhere — I'm told that even the Tucker Hotel doesn't slit open the envelopes before handing out the mail.) Willis is pestering me to be allowed to write something else to you and if you can bear with his pathetic attempts at literacy, you may find solace in the fact that I shall be writing again after I get home.

Walt here again. Well, as you can see, Harris has left the typer without producing the works of Shakespeare. Another 49,999,999 to try.

We did a Burbee-type oneshot the other day and sent you a copy. We also sent Francis Towner Laney a 'Fugghead Certificate' for stamp collecting. We got it out of a copy of *Fandango*...you know, one of the Awards printed by Laney himself, and added a citation, 'Francis Towner Laney earns this Award by squandering his fine mind and fabulous talents on the accumulation of small pieces of paper inherently limited as a medium of literate self-expression.'

We sent it care of Burbee, with a covering letter which read as follows.

Dear Charles. Perhaps you'd send the enclosed certificate to Laney the next time you don't see him. We're not sure of his present address.

Yesterday, we mailed you 68 copies of the enclosed oneshot for the August FAPA mailing. We sent them first class with a rich assortment of stamps for which Towner would probably trade a complete file of *Acolytes*. Let's hope you get them in time.

In *Hyphen* 9, mailed about two weeks

ago, we used your "Al Ashley: Elfin Edison." If the comments of the English readers are anything to go by, it hasn't lost anything over the years. However, we don't know how you feel about our reprinting your stuff without formal permission, and maybe you'd let us know if there is anything which you specifically don't want reprinted?

When *Hyphen* 1 was published just over two years ago, I — Walt speaking at the moment — enclosed a note with Towner's copy to the effect that my ambition was to produce a mag that you and he might write for. I don't know whether we've done that yet or not, but the inestimable Redd Boggs tells us you enjoy *Hyphen*, and also that you were looking for a publisher, so here we are clamouring at your door. We would be proud, nay willing, to publish any material by you. Naturally, a regular column is what we would like most, but anything would be appreciated. It does not, of course, have to be aimed at British readers; we have some 200 US subscribers, fairly congruent with your old *Quandry* group. If you have any thoughts overflowing from your San Francisco report for *Skyhook*, for instance, they'd be very welcome.

As far as I remember, I never got any reply to this letter, nor reaction to the Award to Laney. I did, however, get a letter from Harlan Ellison, about a phone call he made to me, an enterprise which was slightly handicapped by the fact that I didn't have a phone at the time. He got my father's house, which was a block away, and my sister didn't come and get me because it was raining.

To say I'm merely angry or hurt would be a gross understatement. I'm completely devastated.

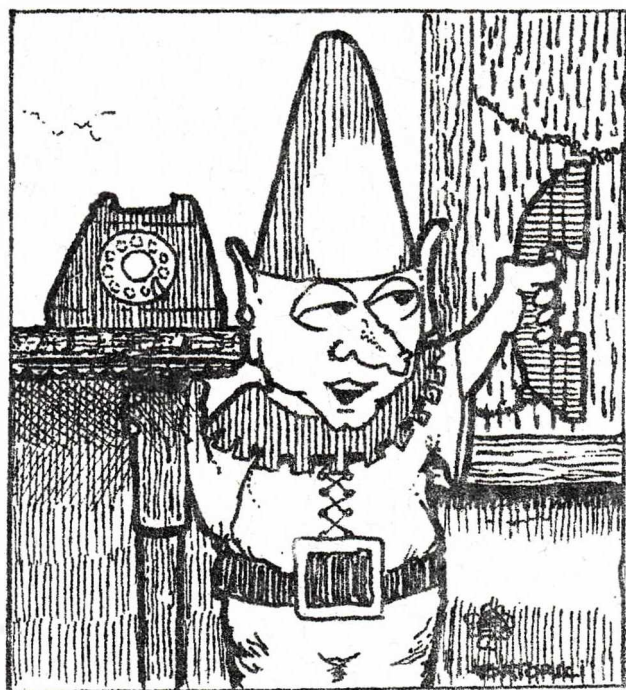
You sent me "Mike Hammer at the Philcon," and I sent it out to be illustrated. Sure, it took me a year to get to it, but I was suspended with college work. Now when I have it on stencil and run off and

announced as in the next issue with illos by Nasman Peterson, I pick up Mari Wolf's column and see *Space Times* has already pubbed it. I'm really in a mess with the thing, and personally I think it was both poor taste on your part and a gross injustice not to at least write and tell me what had happened, before you sent a carbon to anyone else.

I'd like a reply on this if you get the chance.

Tried to call you the other night, but they took so long I left the house where I was visiting, and the call didn't go through till noon of the next day, over fifteen hours later. Oh well...

Expectantly, Harlan.



I replied as follows.

Dear Harlan,

Come now, old Birdbath. In the first place, how do you expect me to know you wanted the MS if you didn't even acknowledge it? You wrote several times asking me to do something for you, but when I did send it there wasn't another peep out of you. In fact, you folded your fanzine, retired from fandom, and

changed your address. Not that I thought all this was on account of the MS, but in the absence of any acknowledgement or mention of it in any of your blurbs except the last one, how was I to know you were going to publish it? Especially since it had been meant to be topical.

In the second place, I wrote you a postcard about six months ago asking you to send the MS back and you didn't reply to that, either.

In the third place, the thing as published in *Space Times* was at my request billed as a reprint from *SF Bulletin*. *Space Times* was running a regular series of reprints from prominent US fmz, and this was one of them. It wasn't my fault if the reprint was published before the original.

In the fourth place, *Space Times* has probably only about half a dozen State-side subbers, and you have only about the same number in England, so I don't see where the injustice lies. The thing will be new to 95% of your readers.

I waited an hour and a half for your phone call that night and was disappointed at not being able to talk to you after all. I still am, because I don't imagine you'd have spent the whole time recriminating, but — haw — it was still good for something. Chuck Harris was staying with me at the time. The mail had just arrived, he had got five letters and there were none for me, and he was pulling my leg about my fan status having declined. Then my sister came round with the news that there had been a phone call from a Mr. Ellison of Ohio. Thanks, pal.

All the best. Walter.

This was at a time when transatlantic phone calls were almost unheard of in fandom. My recollection is that Chuck asked me, did I often get phone calls from American fans, and I said, "Only when it's something important."

Harlan apparently didn't bear any grudge against me, because we have been on the best of terms since. I have met him

twice, on both my previous visits to America, and consider us to be close friends. I think he feels the same.

#

While staying at Lee Hoffman's house in 1952, I accidentally came across a piece called "The Mind of Walter Willis," in which Vernon McCain attempted a psychological evaluation of me. It was never published, and I don't think I was supposed to see it, but writing to me in June 1954, Vernon raised it himself by saying, in the course of some remark I made about his writing that...

...I long ago learned to discount by about 60% everything favourable emanating from your typewriter (as I mentioned in "The Mind of Walter Willis") since you obviously feel a compulsion to buck up everyone's ego whenever possible.

In my reply to Vernon, I said...

...I do have a compulsion of that sort, though it's hardly the way I would have expressed it. I've noticed it since I came into fandom...I seem to have appointed myself a sort of clearinghouse for egoboo and spend quite a lot of time passing on complimentary remarks about people to those concerned. I have quite a guilty conscience when I omit to do it — it seems to me almost a crime to allow pleasure like this to go to waste for the lack of a little trouble on my part. I also, as you've noticed, seem to have acquired a sort of Messianic complex. Ghod knows when this came on the scene, but I've noticed I seem to have developed a sense of responsibility for fandom. Instead of doing what I want to do, I spend time writing encouraging letters to neofans, in the hope of securing the continued existence of fandom, by as it were, promoting desirable recruits. I suppose if my basic motivation were revealed, it would be a desire to keep fandom alive so it could worship me, like God created mankind, but I do think there's a little more to it

than that. I know I can never meet a beautiful woman without feeling a strong need to tell her she's beautiful, and though of course I'm all for the continuation of beautiful women as a species, even my subconscious is not likely to think I am ensuring their perpetuation by flattering them. Especially as I'm happily married with no urgent desire to assist towards that end myself. No, I must have some bee in my bonnet that virtue should be rewarded. I am the sort of person who writes to employers when their staff gives me particularly good service.

#

Six months after the publication of *The Enchanted Duplicator*, we were still getting enthusiastic letters about it. This one, from Richard Geis, was notable for its use of out-dated slang...

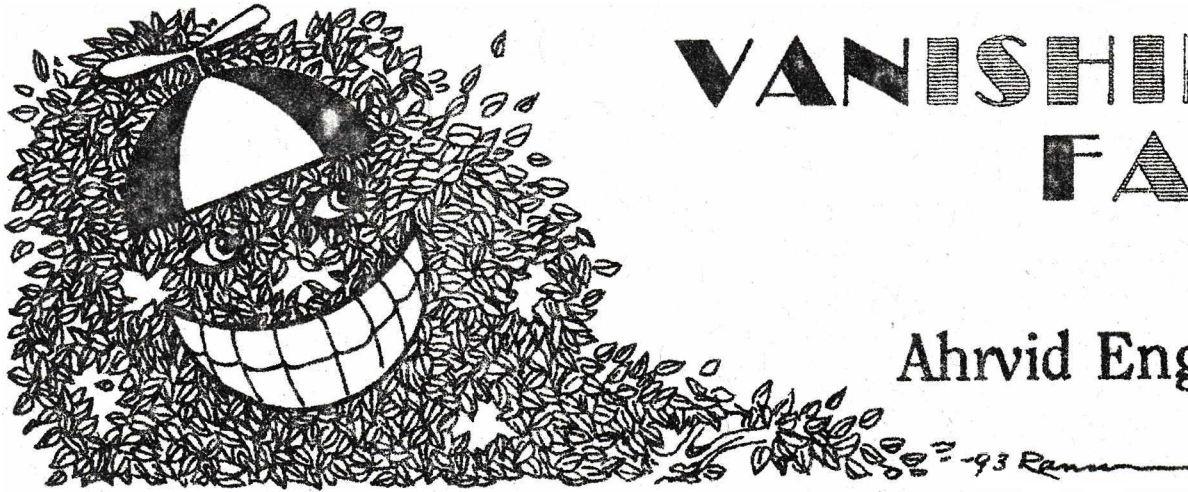
I lent my copy to Jim Bradley to read, and he thought it was the most to say the least. Real dark green with sheen. Simply cataleptic and gone. He flipped and lay there stoned and cold after he'd pinned your crazy diary.



NO, "FROODLE" AND "DROOLER" ARE NOT IN THE FANGLISH DICTIONARY — but they ought to be....

Next time: My life with damon knight. *

☞ Our progression through the decades brings us to the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and a visit to the fandom of Sweden. Although we have never actually met the writer of the following article, we can tell you he is one of Sweden's best known and most active fans. On the other hand, considering the topic of this article, maybe we can't really say that for certain!



VANISHING FANS

by
Ahrvid Engholm

If you see a new fan, you better check his ID. If a fan dies, check his coffin. You can't be certain in the world of hoaxes! People who like to be deceived by fantasy literature, have always liked to try to fool each other too. Among the trolls and the elves in Scandinavia, mystical figures are moving in the fannish circles. Some half dead, some half alive. Everything is possible, in the Twiltone Zone...

Have you heard about the strange case of Marvyn de Vil's death, of Bob Weber the conning Canadian, or of Klaus van der Link the Hell's Angel with a different Dutch treat? These are examples of hoaxes that Swedish fans have engaged in. We use the word 'hoax' in Swedish fandom too. It's always nice to use a foreign word. To call it 'hoax' also gives the message that it is something special, and not a common fraud.

Swedish fans have been involved with hoaxing from the start of our fandom in the mid '50s and on. Early examples are fanzine publishers doing fake issues of their competitor's publications, which in one case even led a publisher to request a police investigation. Even a whole convention, Malcon, was hoaxed from the beginning to the end in those early days. In the '60s we had 'Carl J Brandon, Jr.', a hoax so well known that it stopped being a hoax.

The Brandon, Junior

The fan John-Henri Holmberg had read the '50s American fanzine *Fanac* {{☞ ed. note: edited by Terry Carr and Ron Ellik }} and decided to start a Swedish edition of the newszine under the name Carl J Brandon, Jr. (after another hoax fan named Carl J Brandon, who I don't think I have to tell you about). At the same time he was also, under his own name, editor of the Swedish edition of *Science Fiction Times*. His parents lived by a street corner, so he simply put up an extra mailbox on the crossing street to get a new address.

Contrary to fannish myth, the *SF Times*' Swedish founder (one Sture Sedolin) knew about it all along, and most people of any importance also soon knew. You couldn't read a foreign fanzine without becoming suspicious of a name like 'CJB jr'. It turned into a pen-name rather than a hoax. ('Carl J Brandon, Jr.' became especially known for pushing for the 'objectivism' teaching of Ayn Rand in numerous LoCs and fanzine articles.)

Then hoaxing stopped for a while, but in the late '70s we had an new outbreak, with a new younger generation of fans appearing. New fans want to be noticed, so they begin to do things they hope won't be noticed — until they with a wry smile reveal the hoax,

to collect huge amounts of Egoboo. (They hope.) Neofans tend to publish fake fanzines, invent people, send fake LoCs in a desperate attempt to get recognition.

Such Egoboo shortly becomes very thin, but that has never stopped a good old neo: since everybody seem to do it, it must be good. In the end of 'he '70s the atmosphere was sometimes so thick with hoaxes that one seriously doubted the existence of any new fan emerging unless he could provide a photo-ID.

Before we continue, a word of warning. All this hoaxing stuff sounds very entertaining, but there are serious problems. If you have to assume all new fans are hoaxes, it may seriously effect recruitment and make it difficult for neofans! Time after time I used to bump into people I was convinced didn't exist. Imagine the problems.

Death hoaxes should be dealt with carefully and done in a certain way, so you don't hurt anyone. The person who 'dies' shouldn't be too close to anyone, the funeral must already have taken place — so people don't send expensive flowers — and the death shouldn't last too long.

#

The Death and Life of Marvyn de Vil

The hoax inflation of the late 70's made the success of the death-hoax of Marvyn de Vil in 1978 even more remarkable. One day in early fall news reached fandom from Marvyn's friend Anders Åkerlind (who is founder of the Swedish apa SFF, by the way) that the fan Pär Johansson a.k.a. 'Marvyn de Vil' had suddenly died. He was known to be a pretty wild figure, heavy on booze, experimenting with drugs, the live-hard-and-die-young-type, so the news wasn't unexpected.

A memoriam fanzine, titled *Hippie Forever!*, full of solemn words, was published by Åkerlind. Everyone felt sad for at least as long as it took to read it.

A couple of weeks later we had the next Minicon in Stockholm. Åkerlind was there, as well as the BNF Bertil A G Schalén, known as BAGS from his initials. BAGS was known to be into mysterious things and strange cults. He had for instance bought a

priesthood by mail from an American pseudo-church called Universal Life Church, and all his fanzines were published by 'Universal Life Church Press'. (Despite this, BAGS wasn't very nutty — but simply interested in nutty people. He later got a degree in psychology, and he probably considered fandom as just another of these strange cults that he should investigate.)

Late one evening during the con, BAGS suggested that we should have a seance to try to get in touch with Marvyn De Vil on the 'other side'. The place was the legendary club house of the Scandinavian SF Association on Pontonjär Street, with a barren cellar that with some imagination could have come from a Frankenstein film. If your only illumination was a candle it could get quite spooky there.

Pontonjär Street was also the place where the police earlier had come when the members of 'weapons fandom' had fired blanks in the middle of the night. Strange things were normal there.

BAGS was to lead the seance. About a dozen people were present and sat down around the big table in the cellar. He lit a black candle on the middle of the table, all other lights were turned off. Everyone took the hands of their neighbours. BAGS told us to concentrate on the candle's flickering light.

BAGS began to mumble things. We were at first giggling but soon everyone fell silent. One stair up, the wind made the street windows moan, and the whining sound reached down into the cellar.

BAGS went on for minutes. Several times he repeated that everyone must concentrate on the candle, hold hands and be silent. BAGS is a person of natural authority, and he was obeyed. I remember that we held hands so long that my palms began to sweat. After maybe ten minutes he began to call on Marvyn de Vil.

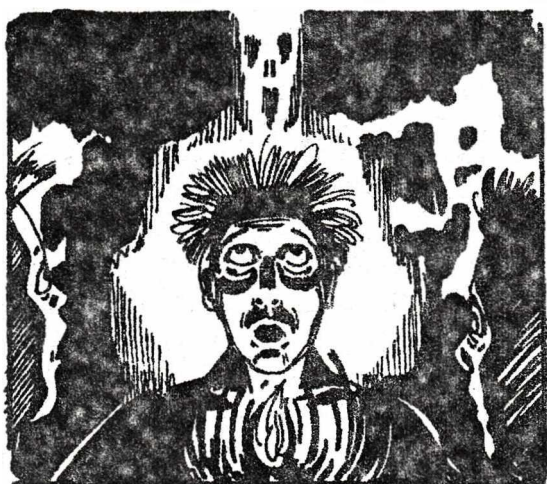
"Marvyn this is your friends calling. Are you there?"

No answer.

"Marvyn, are you there? Show us a sign."

Maybe there were some extra flickerings from the candle, but the room was silent. BAGS went on repeating the words for a couple of minutes. If you did as instructed and looked into the candle, you couldn't help feeling half-hypnotized at this stage.

"Marvyn this is your friends calling. Step out from the land of shadows!"



And then out of the shadows, in the faint light from the candle, a figure emerged. Or was it a hypnotic illusion? A very pale face with dark clothes strode forth from the corner of the room where the stairs down to the cellar were. It was no illusion — it was Marvyn de Vil.

For prolonged moment, the room was absolutely silent. You could hear your heart pounding and a book review from the *Jules Verne Magazine* fall (the Swedish prozine's critics have always been lightweight). During these few seconds one's entire view of the universe was shaken, turned upside down, cut to pieces and then re-assembled in the wrong order.

I have never believed in ghosts or any spirits other than those in bottles. But those who thought they saw Marvyn De Vil standing a few meters from the table were dead right.

After a while the giggling started, from Anders Åkerlind and BAGS, and the whole thing was revealed. Against all odds the story had stayed to three fans, including de

Vil himself — until the very climax. It wasn't by accident that BAGS had suggested a seance, and how and when Marvyn would enter the cellar had been planned very exact.

Last time I met Marvyn de Vil a few years ago, he had tie, a suit and claimed to have reached Jesus.

I think de Vil is an example of a good hoax. A good hoax shouldn't be done to harm anyone (death hoaxes can be done in the right way, as this). A hoax should be limited in time, it should involve efforts and hardships for the hoaxers, it should be intelligent and it should end in a climax.

A good hoax, just as a good story, should have a dramaturgy where suspension grows, and on the moment of letting the bubble go, people should be thrust from one belief to its extreme opposite.

#

Bob Weber of Canada

Early in 1981 I received a call from the fan Erik Andersson in Gothenburg. I publish a newszine in Sweden with not a too bad circulation and did so also in 1981. I had cooperated with Erik in many fannish matters. He was the publisher of the fanzine *Der Leuchtturm*, probably the best Swedish fanzine of its time, responsible for printing at least two complete novels by the genius David Nessel.

Erik presented an idea and wanted help. He had this friend who had stayed in Canada a while and could speak rather fluent English without (or almost without) accent. His friend was interested in science fiction, and in a few months time we'd have the next big convention, Regncon, in the west coast city of Borås. ('Regncon' means 'Raincon', but it later became known as the only convention in May where it snowed.)

Why not announce that Regncon would get an overseas visitor, Erik suggested. A fan from Canada, for instance; I could write in my newszine that Erik had received a letter from this person and that it was "possible" that we'd get a real, live Canadian to the con.

We needed a name. I dug in the bundle of American and Canadian fanzines I had

and came up with the name Bob Webber, who is an existing person and a fan. (I've never had any contact with him. So if he reads this I suppose he'll get surprised.)

It was an advantage to borrow a real person's name, if someone should try to check the story. In the noise on the telephone lines between me and Erik the extra 'b' was lost, so the name of our fan became 'Bob Weber'. It was important to say that it wasn't certain that he'd come to Regncon; it's a subtle way of raising expectations. If he appears despite uncertainty and hardship, people will be more willing to accept that he is who he claims to be.

The word was spread, in print and mouth to mouth. The Regncon committee was of course informed, and if Bob Weber turned up they were willing to allow some time for him in the program. At that time, the fandom of Borås was the center of everything interesting happening. At one time their core, the Smyslov group, almost went through with a bomb attack on a school parade (small home-made gunpowder things, though). Regncon was surely something, and everyone would be there.

'Bob Weber' was really a person by the name Jan Lennart Andersson (no relative to Erik), a friendly guy who was in his early twenties, brown haired, with a taste for whiskey, a typical mingler easy to speak with. And of course he did turn up on Regncon.

'Bob' (as he actually became known as, after this) turned up not too early and not too late, so he wouldn't stick out. He asked for Erik and for me, saying something about that he "had heard that this was supposed to be a science fiction convention."

He immediately went for the bar, where he started to mingle with people and make passes on the girls. I and Erik took him aside a couple of times during the evening to brief him, both about persons and on how fandom worked. 'Bob' was of course new to it. (If he wasn't, people would have met him before.) Once we were close to blowing it when someone almost stumbled upon us, because we briefed him in Swedish and 'Bob' wasn't supposed to know that language.

He got himself respectable amounts of liquids to drink, which got us a little bit worried. He had to remember to speak English all the time and couldn't be too intoxicated. But not even Swedish fans with good knowledge of English and experience from foreign cons suspected anything. His accent wasn't perfect, but he spoke in a very soft way to hide it, and few people there really knew how Canadians spoke English.

The biggest threat was the bar pianist, the fan Kjell Waltman, who had had engagements as piano player in Canada and knew a lot about the country. But when it was appropriate, 'Bob' didn't remember details or had "...never been on that particular spot." (Afterwards Kjell told me that he'd been suspicious, but I'm not sure I believe him. It's easy to be wise in retrospect.)

He also managed to impress the girls, and stayed the night at the home of a local Borås femmefan. What happened there is a matter of privacy, but they came back to the con together the next day and to my eyes they didn't look too unhappy. She was still convinced 'Bob' was from Canada.

The Saturday worked the same way. The bar. Mingling with people. One thing I remember is how the very young Nybro-fans got excited when they found a phone-booth on the con that still took 10 öre coins — worth about 1,5 cents — and used it to phone random numbers abroad to wake people up. They'd get about two seconds of swearing until the 1,5 cents were up. I'm sure they phoned Canada too.

'Bob' managed to become quite popular, and also managed to exchange views on Canadian sf with the pro Sam J Lundwall. Sam J always makes the impression of knowing everything about sf in all countries, and 'Bob' of course didn't know anything about Canadian sf either.

Then the Sunday came. The committee had a closing program event in the main hall where speeches would be held, some awards presented, and so on. 'Bob' was scheduled to appear here, as one of the last things on the convention. This was his speech:

He looked into his papers, and said, "Hi!

I'm Bob Weber from Canada. I'll try to hold this speech in Swedish. Miss (the girl he stayed with) helped me to translate it, and I hope I will be able to read it." He paused, looked into his papers, seemed puzzled, tried to form silent words with his mouth, and continued in a rather broken Swedish: "This has been a nice con, and I've enjoyed it very much, but think that Borås is a very boring city..." A dramatic pause, and then he continued in (of course) perfect Swedish: "But I knew that already because I did my military service here. I'm Jan Lennart Andersson, and I'm a typical hoax."

I have it on tape. There is a moment of silence, then some screams and sounds of uncertainty, and then a very long round of applause. The girl he had stayed with almost fell off her chair.

People started to approach 'Bob' to ask questions, some so uncertain that they still spoke English.

'Bob' himself later wrote an article about this in my fanzine and said that he had enjoyed it very much. After this he spent a short time in fandom, but vanished as he began law studies at Stockholm University. I had him as guest one week in the Futurian Embassy in the beginning of his first semester, before he found a student's apartment.

#

The Hell's Angels Link

To make a successful hoax, it is absolutely essential to have as few people as possible who know about it. Three is a maximum. If more people are involved, the truth will leak out. My next story demonstrates this — the failed but rather funny hoax of 'Klaus van der Link'.

Martin Kristenson, one of the famous Sala fans, travelled on an interrail youth ticket by train in Europe. From England and later Denmark he mailed copies of fanzines to the most well known Swedish fans — especially one Kaj Harju in Stockholm — in the name of 'Klaus van der Link'.

The fanzines gave a picture of a huge Dutch fan who had a motorcycle and was a member of Hell's Angels. He wanted con-

tacts with Swedish fandom (and gave Poste Restante addresses people could write to) because he was coming here on his bike.

On his trip to Stockholm he stopped to visit local fans, and new fanzines came from for instance Malmö in the south and Gothenburg in the west. The fanzines were very weird. 'Klaus van der Link' was illiterate, had a raw language and didn't care much for English grammar. It soon became obvious that his real intention with going to Stockholm was to "...beat the shit out of Kaj Harju" — the latter had in some unclear way annoyed this Hell's Angels sf-fan. "Watch out Harju! I'm coming to get ya!", 'Klaus van der Link' wrote several times.

Unfortunately, the scheme of publishing fanzines from different places blew the hoax. Cooperation was needed with local fans in different cities, and more and more people began to know the truth.

I'm not sure if Harju really learned the truth until it was obvious that 'Klaus van der Link' wouldn't come, but it doesn't matter. 'Klaus van der Link' never made it to Stockholm, and Kaj Harju escaped what was coming to him.

The classical hoaxes described above inspired Swedish fandom to continue to be full of hoaxes, through the '80s. I can easily remember a dozen or so.

#

A Strand Full of LoCs

I pulled off a couple of them by myself, and at least the brief 'Birgitta Strand' hoax was interesting because of the sociological conclusions you could draw.

Before I moved where I now live ('The New Epicentre' I call it) I lived in the 'Futurian Embassy'. (Yes, I've read all the books about how New York fandom in the '40s moved from slanshack to slanshack. Great stuff.) The former owner of the Embassy apartment had the last name 'Strand', and the name was still on the door when I moved in. So I mailed a fanzine from a new femmefan, 'Birgitta Strand', whose address was my new (unknown) address.

This girl 'Birgitta' (nicknamed 'Gittan') was young, apparently attractive and very

interested in getting to know other sf fans. I sent out about 50 copies of her zine, all but one to male fans. (No discrimination intended, this was the ratio of male to female fanzine fans of the time.)

I got an amazing 35 LoCs on this not too good fanzine, and you can't avoid the conclusion that Swedish fans are starved for female company. No LoC was really inappropriate or so, but somehow everyone seemed to find masterpieces and brilliant writing in her zine.

About a week after I had formally announced my new address, and the hoax was revealed, I happened to stroll on town with a femmefan from Borås — and bumped into the fan Anders Bellis outside his standard beverage gas-station.

The devil got into me, and it took me and my friend about half a second to agree to present her as 'Birgitta Strand', despite the obvious problem that the truth was out.

"Hello, may I introduce Birgitta Strand," I said.

"But you're a hoax!" Bellis said.

"Ah, you fell for that! I'm not a hoax," she said.

"But I've checked with the police and there is no 'Birgitta Strand' where you live!" he said.

"Well, you see, my father works for the government," she said, "in the department of industry. And authorities are instructed not to give out addresses and information about my family, for security reasons..."

I can still hear the outcry of amazement, echoing in the alleys of the Stockholm Old Town: "Oh! You *do* exist! Gosh, I was absolutely convinced you were a hoax!"

#

Those were the days! All the hoaxes I've told you about appeared from 1978 to 1981, a Golden Age of Swedish fandom. Since then, fandom here has been on a downslide.

A few years ago, an obvious hoax femmefan, one 'Patricia Alholm', appeared in Farsta, a southern suburb of Stockholm. Ms. Alholm appeared in an extremely cruddy zine called *AZQII Fanzine*, whose general content

was bad layout and unintelligent insults of well-known fans whom the editors had never met. I felt a lot about the zine (including the title) needed explanation, but all I originally came to learn was rumours spread by other fans, especially from Kaj Harju of 'Klaus van der Link' fame, who in his typical insistent way tried to convince everybody there was nothing hoaxy about the zine. When I asked why nobody had ever heard of the people who did this zine, I was told that they had seen an article about fandom I had written for the Postal Office advertisement magazine *Skriv och Berätta* ('Write and Tell'), and that they had learned everything about fandom from this article. But after re-reading that 1,5 page article (which was quite innocent), I didn't find anything that could inspire *AZQII Fanzine*.

I, who was so suspicious that I would hardly even accept a photo-ID as proof of existence (and who had previously *created* fake femmefans), took this so un-seriously that I even assumed that the male fans around Ms. Alholm were fake. This caused some problems, but that's another story. Few people believed in her, anyway, and the whole thing was soon forgotten. It was soon revealed that two of the numerous editors of *AZQII Fanzine* did exist, but the rest didn't.

A few months ago, I read an article from one of the 'real' Farsta fans (despite possible lack of photo-ID), where he claimed that 'Patricia Alholm' had been "...one of the best hoaxes in the history of Swedish fandom."

Maybe that statement was a hoax in itself! *

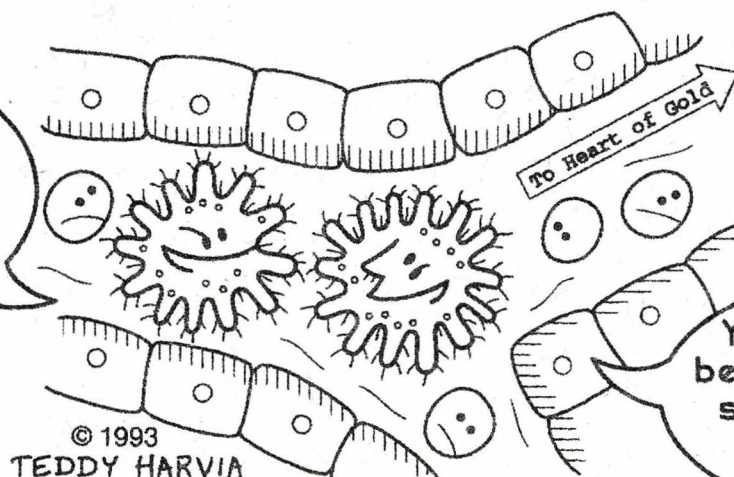


☞ We leap forward once again, back to contemporary fandom and another installment of what's become our most popular continuing feature — Sharon Farber's Medical Adventures series. We're happy to report that Sharon was a Nebula Awards finalist this year, for a story that was derived in part from one of her *Mimosa* articles. And there's more to come yet...

Tales of Adventure and Medical Life, Part IX

By
Sharon
Farber

What a great place. This guy doesn't have a mean cell in his body.



Yeah. It sure beats infecting someone with bad blood.

Nice people get bad diseases.

That is one of the primary superstitions of medical students and housestaff, and often debated by them. Do nice people really suffer more, or is just that the doctor cares? But it seems true: if a drunk stumbles off a curb he'll spring back up, but a kindly granny will get a blood clot in the brain and die. The scuzbucket who smokes three packs a day and stole your stereo is fine; the dedicated teacher who started his pack-a-day habit in the Army will get lung cancer for sure.

The problem with nice people is that you like them. And if you care too much for someone, you lose your clinical judgement — you hesitate, you equivocate, you worry too much, you pretend there's no problem. That's why doctors aren't supposed to take care of family members.

One of my medical school roommates had a patient who was young, attractive yet modest, intelligent, an upstanding member of society. He never failed to be polite, even when suffering. He commiserated with the housestaff when they seemed fatigued, thanked them for their concern, and insisted

they help themselves to the candy and fruit. He was NICE.

So when his tests came back negative, the doctors knew that had to be wrong. He was so nice, he had to have something bad. *Really* bad. Probably disfiguring and terminal. So they ordered more tests, and when those were fine too, they didn't give up. They ordered still more arcane studies, looking for even more obscure diseases... Finally the attending caught on, and said, "Look, the guy's fine," and sent him home before they suggested exploratory surgery.

Of course, there are many levels of clinical detachment.

Recently, the Lynchi were kind enough to show me a letter of comment that called me "a callous quack." Now, I certainly take exception with *quack*. If I were promising to cure your cancer with spinal manipulation, then I'd be a quack. *Callous* though — well, yeah. Readers of previous installments will have realized that, without a fair modicum of callousness (self-preservation, if you will), a doctor in training will wind up either ineffectual or an alcoholic. To paraphrase that

medical school bible, *The House of God* by Samuel Shem, "Remember that the patient has the disease."

Think about it — do you really want a doctor who, upon witnessing disaster, says, "Oh, this is too awful, I'm going to go vomit and then cry. And I'm so upset, I think I'll take the rest of the day off." No, I suspect you'd prefer the cold clinician who will gently push aside the shrieking relatives and then *do something*.

I have stories where I saw tragedy and suffering, and it affected me. But do you really want to read stuff like this:

The young man's chest wound has burst open and he's covered with pus and blood; the odor is enough to knock you flat. He's screaming. I'm running beside the stretcher as we try to get him to the surgeons, holding his hand and saying, "You're going to be fine." The medical student on surgery is a classmate. "See?" I tell the patient. "This is my friend. He's going to take good care of you." He should have done fine. Before I even have a chance to get back to my ward, they announce a code, and I know that he's died.

Loads o' laughs, eh? Or how about:

The bald, emaciated little boy in pajamas, an IV attached to his arm, sits proudly in his huge black Knight Rider toy car. He's back in the hospital to check on the progress of his soon-to-be-terminal brain tumor. Two equally tiny children, also with pajamas and IVs, stand in front of the car, pretending to check under the hood. It is unbelievably cute and unbelievably tragic. I go into the staffing room so I can wipe my eyes.

These stories aren't callous but they also aren't especially entertaining. And I'm being paid here to be entertaining.

Hey waittaminute — I'm not being paid here!

#

The last couple episodes have been about people who fake diseases, usually to manipulate family or the medical system. But not all fakers are faking. I learned this important lesson in my fourth year of medical school, on my emergency room rotation.

I didn't learn a heck of a lot in the ER, but it was 8 to 5 and no weekend or night call — in other words, heaven. I spent most of the off time moonlighting in Labor and Delivery at a suburban hospital.

The main problem with the rotation was the pair of surgical interns who alternated 24-hour shifts. The male intern thought I should see a patient, jump to a conclusion, and then support it with tests. The woman thought I should gather all the data before deciding on the diagnosis. I had to alter my mindset 180° every day, something that's not particularly easy for a student, especially one who's been up all night with pregnant women. My main memory of the rotation is of the *intern du jour* yelling at me for doing things the way the other intern preferred.

I did learn to suture after the fashion, but as people went to surgery clinic for follow-up care, I only once saw the fruits of my labor. A workman I'd sewed up my first day returned to the ER with a new injury six weeks later. Seeing me walk by, he held up the arm I'd repaired and shouted, "Hey Doc! Looks great!" I was intensely relieved. I'd been a bit worried that my patients were all having their wounds fly open once they got home.

One day a neurology resident I knew came down to the ER to consult on a teenager who claimed to be completely paralyzed. I wandered over to watch the exam. Her muscle tone and reflexes seemed okay and she wasn't lying in the floppy manner one would expect with extreme weakness. (Or death. I sometimes don't realize when someone on TV is supposed to have passed on to the Great Beyond, as they clearly retain tone. Or are still breathing. It really helps when someone says, "He's dead, Jim.")

The girl didn't look paralyzed. But she still refused to move.

"Raise your arm," the neurologist said. She whimpered. "I can't."

So he lifted her arm and let it drop. It fell back onto her chest, but not as quickly as a paralyzed arm should have. Very suspicious. My friend looked at me and raised an eyebrow. Then he lifted her arm, suspended

it over the gurney railing, and dropped it. *Thunk!* He did it again. The arm struck metal again.

The third time, she pulled her supposedly dead arm away. My friend nodded sagely, the fakery confirmed. She was bundled into a wheelchair — still refusing to walk — and taken to a suburban psychiatry ward.

A couple of weeks later I left the ER to become the student on the neuro consult service. Before we began, the attending said, "I'd like to read you this letter from a local neurologist. 'Dear Doctor, please remind your residents that the diagnosis for Guillain-Barré exists.'"

It seemed that the girl had been suffering from early acute demyelinating neuropathy, a sudden rapid weakness that often follows an immunization or viral infection. She had become progressively weaker while on the psych ward, and wound up on a ventilator.

Now, had she come into the ER saying, "I feel funny, kind of weak. I'm having trouble walking and it's getting worse," the proper diagnosis would have been suspected immediately. Instead, perhaps worrying that doctors would not be impressed by minor weakness, she exaggerated. And since you obviously can't detect a subtle weakness in someone faking total paralysis, she was misdiagnosed and nearly died.

I've kept this paranoia-inducing lesson in my mind ever since; it's caused me to give the benefit of the doubt to many people with clearly functional (fake, psychogenic) problems for longer than most neurologists would. Sometimes you can find a real problem underneath all the functional overlay (i.e., bullshit). Sometimes you just have to sit back and watch and wait.

It's just not a good idea to exaggerate to your doctor. You'll either have *all* your problems disbelieved or, what may be worse, believed.

A fellow medical student with unfortunate histrionic tendencies forgot this principle. She went to the ER with a migraine. She should have told the doctor: "It's one of my usual headaches, but it isn't responding

to medicine; I need a shot." But no, she had to say, "It's the worst headache of my life." Now, at the Barnes ER the phrase *worst headache of my life* was properly interpreted as meaning *I may have a subarachnoid hemorrhage. I want a lumbar puncture.* So she got a spinal tap she didn't really need or enjoy. She blamed me for it, too, because neurologists invented the spinal tap, and I was planning to be a neurologist.

(Lumbar punctures are called LPs. I knew I'd been a doctor too long when I heard the radio announcement 'Win a free LP or cassette', and found myself wondering why the hell anyone would want to win a spinal tap.)



Cases in the ER were usually either boring, sad, annoying, or gruesome. They could also be messy. Nowadays, people wear goggles, gowns, and gloves just to draw blood; in those pre-AIDS days, blood was considered a relatively clean bodily fluid. If it got all over your hands, hair, clothes, shoes, eyes...well, that was an inconvenience, or maybe a fashion statement.

The ER was in the distant corner of the hospital. The only way to get anywhere was down the busy main corridor in front of the cafeteria. I have vivid memories of pushing bloody accident victims past unfortunate visitors who had just enjoyed lunch. Then there was the time we got a woman with a gunshot

wound in her breastbone. Every time I compressed her chest, blood oozed out onto my hands and I'd start to slide off. She was so young that the surgery resident got a little desperate — he sliced into her chest and began open heart massage. I last saw her being rolled off to surgery — down the corridor in front of the cafeteria, the surgeon's hand inside her. No wonder, when they remodeled, they added a back route out of the ER.

I mostly kept a low profile. The other student was busy chasing after the guy who was later to win the Nursing Service Award, for the intern who slept with the most nurses. My main goals were to get out in time to go moonlight, and to avoid annoying the surgeons. I wasn't out for a rep.

There were three trauma beds in a row by the ambulance entrance. One day a schizophrenic man came in after swallowing half a bottle of aspirin. We wanted him to take an emetic and vomit up the pills. He sat on the middle trauma bed, crossed his arms, and refused.

"You know," said the medicine resident, "you can drink this now, or you can get your stomach pumped."

The patient just grinned.

"Get the nasogastric tube," ordered the doctor, hoping the threat would be enough. Then all hell broke loose — two cardiac arrests rolled in simultaneously.

The resident shoved the ipecac into my hand. "Get it down him, or put down an NG," he snapped, and went to one of the codes.

There I was, surrounded by chaos. Bed number one was occupied by a dead man, a dozen shouting nurses, doctors, and medics crowded around him doing CPR, putting in lines and tubes, and giving drugs. The same in Bed 3. And Bed 2 has me and a guy who was refusing to swallow ipecac.

"Take this!" I shouted. It was too noisy to communicate any other way.

He shook his head.

I tried reason. "If you don't, you'll wind up dead, or on a machine with a bunch of tubes. That's real uncomfortable." I waved

the cup invitingly.

He grinned with lips tight. I think he was enjoying it.

I tried threats. "Drink it, or I'll shove this tube down your nose." Yeah, sure. Like I could pump his stomach without five orderlies to hold him down — all the orderlies were at the codes. Where I would much rather have been, the drama of life and death being a bit more exciting than too much aspirin.

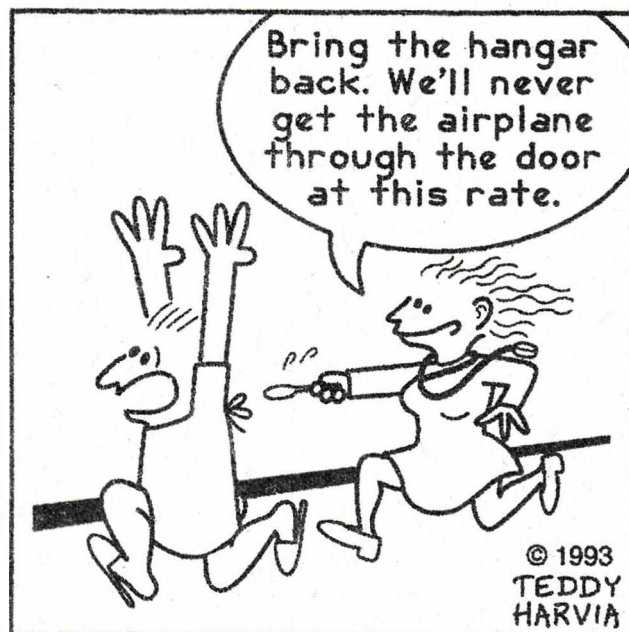
I tried begging. The patient showed me clenched teeth.

I was getting desperate. The codes would end eventually, and the resident would be furious if I hadn't done anything. Not to mention the fact that this guy was in danger every minute the aspirin stayed in his stomach.

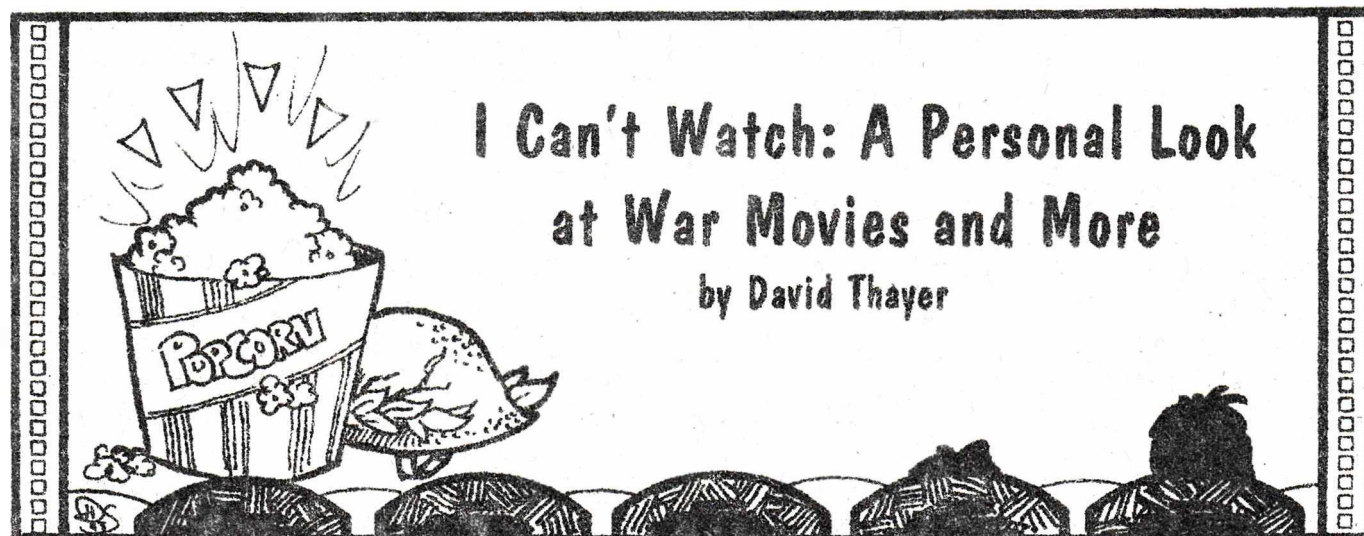
So I held the cup in front of him and shouted, "Open the hangar door, here comes the airplane!"

His mouth dropped open in utter astonishment, and I threw the ipecac in... And suddenly realized that everything had gone silent. The two codes had stopped, completely. Everyone who seconds before had been busily resuscitating the dead were now paused to stare at me, aghast, unable to believe what they had heard.

But hey, it worked. *



☛ *Mimosa* seems to be often categorized as a fanzine about the history of science fiction fandom, but that's not exactly true. Many of the articles we publish do attempt to preserve some of our past, but we're equally interested in articles about things fans do, or have done. David Thayer's series of remembrances of the Vietnam War exemplifies this second type of article. As Walt Willis once noted, this is the sort of thing which supplies missing pieces of our ever fascinating fannish jigsaw.



Growing up in '50s America, I thrived on World War Two movies. I longed to be a hero like John Wayne or Audie Murphy. Enemy bullets failed to stop their drives to glory. The movies taught me that in war there were winners — us. We were good, the enemy evil; we right, they wrong. With only a child's world experience, I didn't read between the lines of the films like *Pride of the Marines* (1945), *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), *To Hell And Back* (1955), and *Pork Chop Hill* (1959). What did I know about hell? The stars acting out war looked little different than kids playing it. The last great war movie I saw before I went to war myself was *Patton* (1970) at the boot camp theater. It offered me no solace.

The trailer for a forgotten B-grade horror film from my childhood warned me, "Keep telling yourself, 'It's only a movie.'"

In my youth I sometimes confused cinema for reality. I didn't actively seek out movies whose main purpose was to scare me. Early on I watched the first few minutes of a bad slasher movie. In it, teenagers, like those in countless other horror flicks, entered a house occupied by a killer. After they split up to look around, a knife, emerging from behind a curtain, stabbed one. At the sight of red, I

covered my eyes. The stupid victims were the last ones I wanted as role models.

Low-budget movies about mad scientists were a different story. A scene from an otherwise unmemorable one stuck in my mind. The main character rigged the eyepieces of a pair of binoculars with spring-loaded nails and mailed it to his intended victim. I didn't fear the killer — I felt I could spot his evil charm a mile off, but I became wary of the deadly potential of inanimate objects.

I did not blindly accept everything I saw in war movies. In a minor World War Two era film about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, there appeared a secondary character oblivious to the main action of fighting Nazi spies. He had a seemingly innocent obsession for trees. The main spy, on the verge of escaping after committing a dastardly crime against humanity, made the mistake of trampling a newly planted seedling. The tree-lover gunned him down. The good side's need for the services of a disturbed character confused me.

The classic *Godzilla* (1954) made me fall in love with larger-than-life monsters. The title creature personified both the uncontrollable forces of nature and the evil of the civilized world in a convenient hard-to-miss

target. The rockets and shells fired at it by the Japanese military seemed little more than a harmless sound and light show, like the firecrackers set off by hooligans on the front row of the theater. I was convinced that the might of the U.S. armed forces would stop dead any monster who dared to attack the States.

Rodan (1957) gave me my first big cinematic scare. Before its giant flying reptiles broke out of their shells, I shared the terror of the men facing the unknown in the dark mine tunnels. The sight of bug-eyed killer insect larvae added to my fear, because I had experienced the pain of insect bites and stings. For weeks afterwards I took running leaps into my bed at night to avoid any claws lurking in the darkness beneath it.

After surviving my first few monster movies, I realized I could watch others without any lasting fear. *The Thing* (1951) fed on my childish dislike of vegetables. *Invaders from Mars* (1953) convinced me that alien forces controlled the minds of all adults. Its battle scenes substituted Martians for Japanese. The mountain climber in *The Crawling Eye* (1958) losing his head in a high-altitude fog made me thankful I lived on the flat prairies of Texas. *Them* (1954) missed its chance to scare me by not overrunning its scenes with ants as numerous as those on Texas anthills. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) played on my suspension that my parents had an ulterior motive for insisting that we children take naps (I refused to close my eyes).

I saw my first Vietnam War movie, John Wayne's *The Green Berets* (1968), before I served. Its portrayal of the war as one fought by old professionals conflicted with my feeling that the draft was breathing hot down my young neck. The glory of a mounting enemy body count paled as friendlies fell one by one. Only later did I see as pure fantasy John Wayne jumping unscathed out a burning helicopter crash, and as wishful thinking, the unerring accuracy of U.S. weapons.

After my return from Vietnam, I avoided war movies but not horror. The shark in

Jaws (1975) made me afraid to go in the water. *Alien* (1979) put me on the edge of my seat. But in the B-grade slasher classic *Halloween* (1978), I found for me the most frightening single character on film. I didn't believe in the movie's serial killer or its incipient teenage victims, but I did believe in the doctor played by Donald Pleasence. He talked and acted sane, if a bit stressed, amid the peaceful carnival atmosphere awaiting the killer to strike. His powerlessness to stop the madness only added to my fear. In the end, pumping bullet after bullet into an expressionless killer, the doctor seemed the more crazed.

In 1990, sitting alone in my apartment listening to the soundtrack of *Halloween*, after consciously avoiding Vietnam War movies for 18 years, I suddenly asked myself, "What am I afraid of?" At the video store I found *Platoon* (1986) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). After those, I went to *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) playing at a local \$1 theater. Back at the video store, I checked out *Platoon Leader* (1987) and *Hamburger Hill* (1987). The first three angered me with their anti-war cliches, and the fourth angered me with its adventure macho. But the fifth scared me.

Glimpses of the stately Capitol Building, trim lawns, graceful trees beyond the rows of the names of America's war dead on the Vietnam War Memorial brought back old anger. My stomach tightened with the first sounds of radio chatter and the whump of helicopter blades. I caught myself clutching for a phantom M-16 rifle in my lap at the crackle of small arms fire. I smelled the smoke, jungle, dust, felt the heat, sweat, dirt. "There it is," I said repeating the phrase from my Vietnam experience which had expressed the foot soldier's feeling toward things beyond his control and understanding. In *Hamburger Hill*, no larger-than-life characters or political hindsight disrupted my suspension of disbelief. It left my throat constricted and dry.

The hoopla surrounding *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979) had long put me off, but now compelled me to

feel I had to watch them, too. Both disappointed me. The first made the civilian lives of its main characters seem as depressing as tours of duty. The second populated the war with caricatures and gave the main character the bizarre mission of killing another American. Another film, *The Siege of Firebase Gloria* (1989), promised a realistic view of the war. Its central character, a know-it-all career sergeant, destroyed that.

I sought refuge in the escape movies of my childhood. But *Hamburger Hill* had opened a window in my mind. The shadowy figures of Morlocks lurking in the woods of *The Time Machine* became North Vietnamese regulars. The ferocity of the monster from the id in *Forbidden Planet* seemed more human than the spacemen calmly blasting at it. I felt sympathy for the monster of *Frankenstein* (1930), *The Mummy* (1932), and *The Wolf Man* (1941), tormented by armed humanity in their struggles to survive. The burning remains of Tokyo after Godzilla's rampage looked like war damage. The Japanese soldiers advancing into the darkness of the mine tunnel in *Rodan* reminded me of patrols in the jungles of Vietnam.

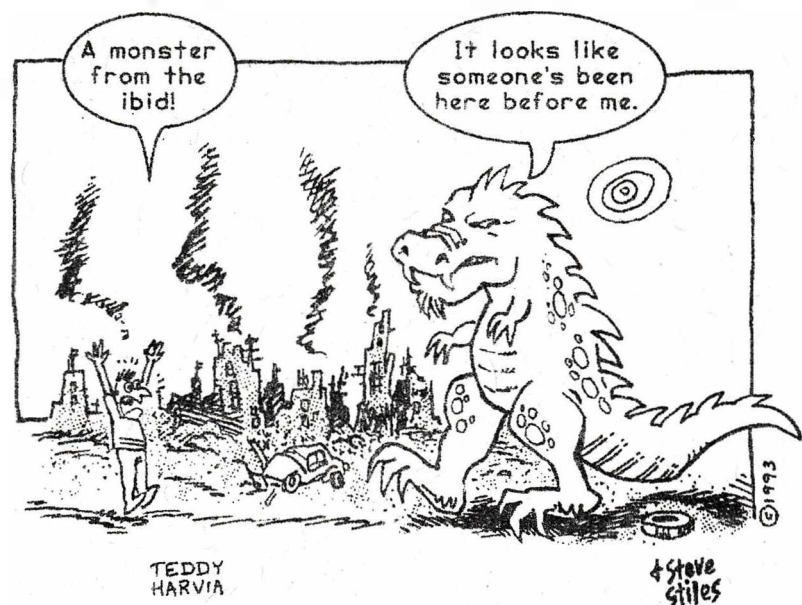
Wanting to share my childhood experiences with my 8-year-old daughter, Matilda, I introduced her to the early science fiction movies. I kept my new insights to myself, but told her a scene in *Rodan* had scared me when I had been her age. "Is this what scared you?" she asked when the men first entered the mine. "That's not scary." "Is this what scared you?" she asked when they found the first victim torn to shreds. "That's not scary." Finally an unseen insect larva attacked the men. "That's what scared me," I said. "That's not scary," she scoffed. I felt like a child from a more innocent age.

Rewatching *Hamburger Hill* alone, I saw the line between victim and killer blur. I caught glimpses of the enemy as human. The superficial view of combat in the old war movies began to horrify me. What scared me most about *Hamburger Hill* was how easily I identified with the young G.I.'s trapped in the catch-22 of war. To stop the killing, they had to become more efficient killers than the enemy.

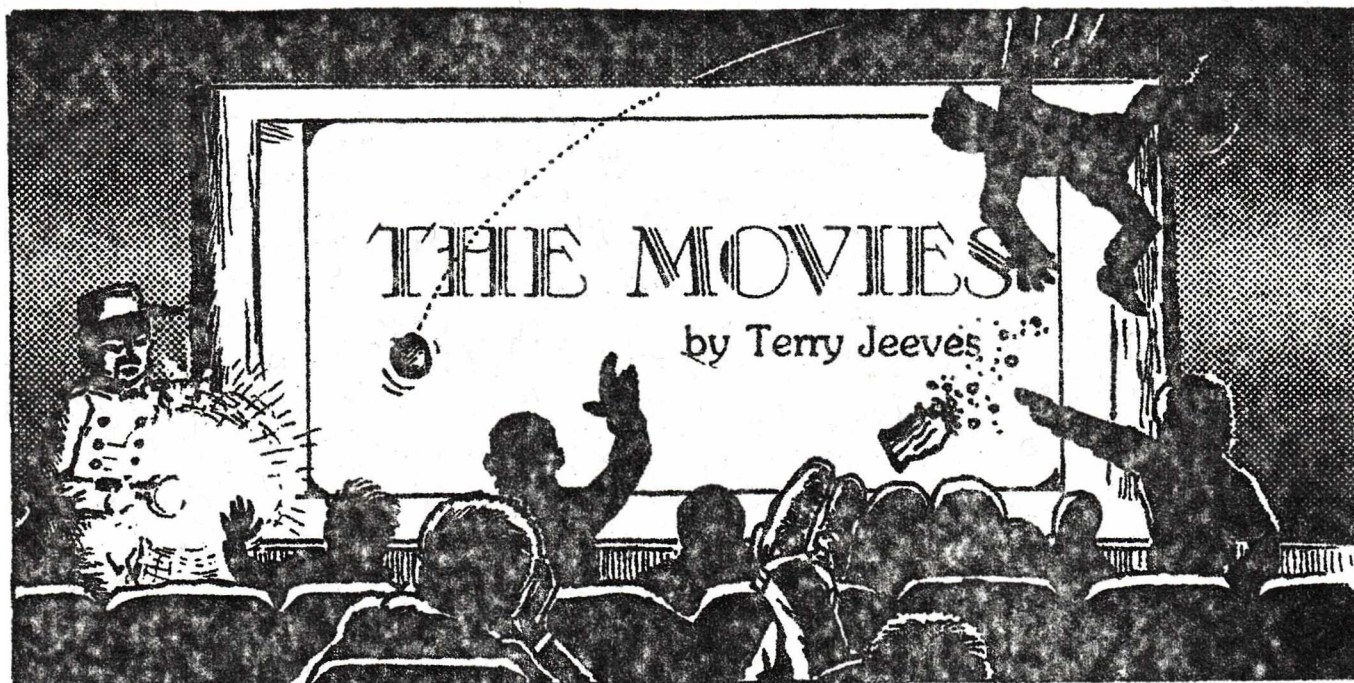
Seeing yourself for the first time as the monster sends chills through you that you cannot simply outgrow. *

Artist Credits

Harry Bell - page 6
 Sheryl Birkhead - pages 3; 64
 Kurt Erichsen - front & back covers
 Alexis Gilliland - page 2
 Teddy Harvia - pages 4; 38; 40; 41
 Teddy Harvia & Steve Stiles - page 44
 Joe Mayhew - pages 17; 19; 21; 22; 24
 Linda Michaels - page 49
 Peggy Ranson - pages 32; 34; 37
 William Rotsler - page 59
 Diana Stein - page 25; 42; 52; 55; 62
 Steve Stiles - pages 5; 7; 9; 11; 12
 Phil Tortorici - pages 27; 30; 31
 Charlie Williams - pages 45; 47; 48
 Kip Williams - pages 14; 15; 51
 William Rotsler & Steve Stiles - pages 54; 56



Here's another story about the movies, but turned back, once more, before the days of organized fandom. The setting this time is England; the writer went on to become one of the most active fans of 1950s British fanzine and convention fandom (he still publishes a fanzine, in fact). Here is a recollection of some of his early influences.



One of the happy pastimes of my early days was visiting the cinema. From a very early age, long before I understood what was taking place on the screen, I would be taken along to the first house at the Coliseum every Tuesday and Thursday evening. It didn't matter what the subject of the film, or what the weather, there we were in the same balcony seats, twice a week without fail.

I have vague memories of seeing the black and white version of *Ben Hur*, Rider Haggard's *She*, and Frank Buck's *Bring 'Em Back Alive* films showing how he would trap animals for the world's zoos. Jimmy Cagney and Edward G. Robinson regularly shot each other to pieces, Greta Garbo gave us long, lingering glances, and Harold Lloyd defied death on some skyscraper. As for the Tarzan films, I lapped them up, even though emulating Johnny Weismuller's cry gave me a sore throat for weeks.

One film had Harry Carey in the role of an African explorer. Title and plot are long forgotten, but one sequence still sticks in my memory, thanks to the sloppy work of the continuity girl. Harry was being paddled

upriver in a canoe. Scenes alternated between closeup and long shot. Every closeup showed him with the hat brim turned up, but in the long shots, it had gone down again. In some of the quicker cuts, it almost seemed to be flapping.

Such films were incidentals; the real highlight of my film diet was the children's matinee. Every Saturday afternoon, a howling mass of young monsters would converge on the Coliseum. I was always given 3d to go in the balcony with the upper class hooligans, but occasionally, would blow a penny of this on sweets and have to get a 2d seat downstairs. I never sank so low as to sit in the neck-and-eye-straining front rows, which cost only a penny.

The great advantage of sitting up in the balcony was not because the kids were more refined, but simply it was an excellent vantage point from which one could hurl apple cores, toffee papers, orange peels, and other missiles down on the lesser fry below. Throwing them back up again was much harder. One summer, a glut of oranges saw them selling for four a penny! That was a

really cheap source of ammunition.

The cinematic entertainment usually consisted of an assortment of 'shorts'. Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Charlie Chase, maybe a Laurel and Hardy, and a cartoon or two. Some of these comedy films were produced by a company with the title, 'Educational Films'. I never did work out where the education came in, unless it was how to lose one's trousers in some perfectly innocent manner and then escape before being discovered.

Although virtually all the local cinemas had a kid's matinee, cinema brand loyalty was ensured by concluding the afternoon's performance with an episode of a serial. Each episode would finish with the hero or heroine trapped in some perilous position. They might have been lashed to a railway line as the express thundered nearer and nearer. Another week saw them in a plane as it crashed into a hillside, or trapped inside a building as it was blown sky-high. Naturally, we always came back the following week to find out what happened. This, despite the regular cheating which showed the train had just been diverted to a neighbouring line, the hero parachuting out just before the crash, or leaving the building by the back door prior to the explosion.

My favourite serials were those with a science fictional element. The earliest I ever saw was *The Master Mystery*, which featured that great escapologist, Harry Houdini. I watched, enthralled, as week after week, Houdini was trapped by the villains, then tied, chained, buried, or rendered *hors de combat* in some way designed to render him slightly dead by the following week. Sometimes he would be tied to a large black bomb with a slowly burning fuse. On other occasions, he was often nailed inside a packing case before being dumped in the river (a procedure which at least made for cleaner films).

Like all such heroes, he must have been a bit weak in the head, to have been trapped so regularly; but the baddies were equally stupid for not shooting him there and then when they had the chance. During these

activities, we would all shout ourselves hoarse, "Look out behind!" in a vain attempt to warn Harry of danger creeping up on him. He never took a bit of notice -- maybe he was a bit deaf.

The serial's SF content came in the form of a robot called 'Q'. This was operated by a bunch of gangsters as they pursued their evil ends. Time after time, Houdini evaded its claws or managed to free himself from the imprisoning ropes, chains, or locked safes. Although we didn't realise it at the time, his escapes were done before the camera, without resort to trickery or any of the standard, "After Harry had escaped from the pit of man-eating snails..."

If one robot was good, imagine the effect on my tender young mind of seeing *scads* of the things. That was what we got in *The Phantom Empire*. Throw in an underground city with futuristic buildings and you might think it the cat's whiskers for any youngster. It was, but there was one very big fly in the ointment. The serial featured a singing cowboy!

Mascot Films had roped in the baby-faced Gene Autry. Their crafty idea was to attract addicts of Westerns and musicals. Then, by throwing in the robots and masked riders, they could also hook the mystery and SF buffs.

The plot was (fairly) simple. Gene Autry ran Radio Ranch, which happened to have been built on the land above a secret underground city. His contract called for singing to his guests (poor blighters!) and putting out a regular radio programme. The inhabitants of the city spent all their time trying to stop Autry getting to the microphone to sing (an aim I fully supported), so that he would lose the radio contract, go bankrupt, and move elsewhere.

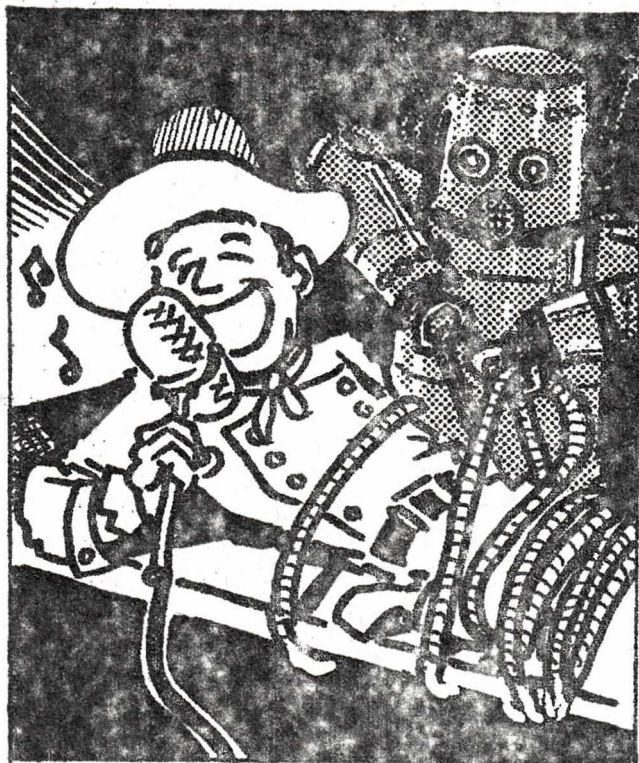
Each episode followed the formula...

1. Autry would escape from last week's peril.
2. The Masked Riders would emerge from their secret trap door, wreak some naughtiness, and charge back again.
3. Several quick shots of the futuristic city

- with robots creaking arthritically about.
4. Autry would sing, get trapped, and about to be mishandled by a robot.
 5. An ending with Autry in peril again.

Each week's ending had some such sequence as seeing Autry knocked unconscious, and dumped on a conveyor belt taking him under a robot's welding torch as it descended on his chest. At this point, up came 'The End' titles, followed by, "Will our hero escape? Don't miss next week's thrilling episode!"

Naturally, we came back next week, only to see that Autry had awakened during that time and was thus able to leap off the moving belt before it took him anywhere near the robot. Just once, why couldn't they have let the robot succeed in spot-welding Autry?



Then there was Flash Gordon, the college boy hero who zoomed off to the planet Mongo, along with Professor Zarkov and the nubile Dale Arden whose acting ability was even worse than Flash's — but at least she had much nicer legs. Their aim was to foil the nasty plans of the evil Emperor Ming, who lorded over everything from his Flying City. We got to see the wing-men, the clay-

men, some very strange robots, and Ming's daughter Azura who had the hots for Flash. Every so often, a rocket plane would splutter slowly across the landscape. No matter where it was in the script, the rocket plane was always over the same bit of terrain doing its unbanked turns. Rocket sparks dropped straight down, whilst the smoke went straight up. It didn't even convince us kids.

Eventually, all Ming's schemes got foiled, but I must admit he had one or two good lines, such as 'a fate worse than death' for Dale. At least Ming had the right idea — Flash never even gave Dale a kiss. No mushy s-x was ever allowed to corrupt the young audience.

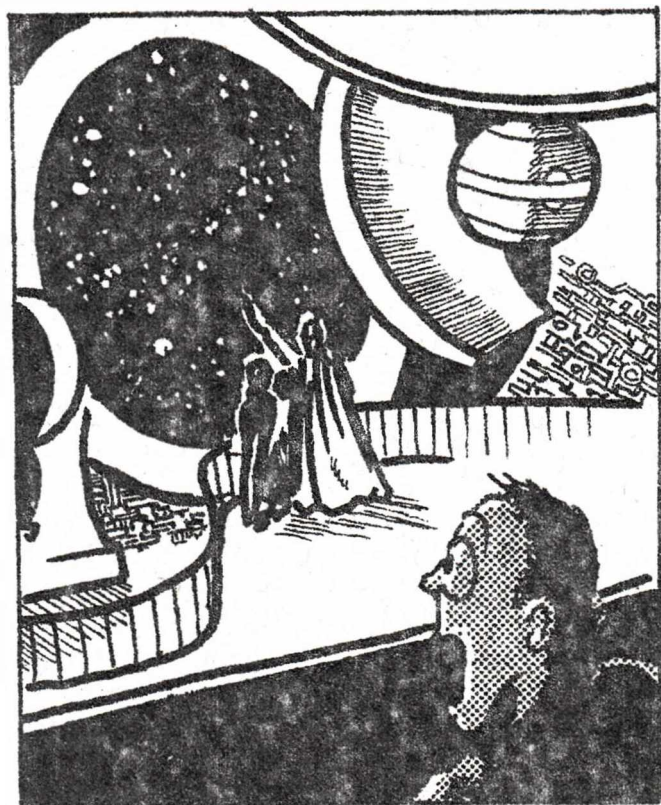
Not in the matinee, but at the main show, I recall seeing Conrad Veidt in *FP.1*, a title mercifully abbreviated from its full German version of *FP.1 Antwortet Nicht* which I gather means 'FP.1 Doesn't Answer'. *FP.1* was a floating platform tethered in mid-Atlantic so that aircraft could land and refuel on their way across. The baddies, hired by shipping magnates, scuttled the platform by opening the sea-cocks and letting it sink. I never did work out why the builders were so daft as to put sea-cocks on the thing in the first place.

The crafty Germans hadn't put all their eggs in one basket, though. In another film, *Der Tunnel*, which Gaumont British re-filmed as *The Tunnel*, Richard Dix was an engineer charged with burrowing his way to America beneath the Atlantic Ocean. He also had problems, such as leaks, underwater volcanoes, and the usual crop of baddies trying to sabotage the project.

I also enjoyed *Death Takes a Holiday*, in which the man with the scythe sneaked off for a day, leaving the world to get along without him. Jockeys escaped unharmed from beneath falling horses, a man who fell off the Eiffel Tower didn't even need an aspirin, and so on.

The greatest film of that era was undoubtedly Korda's *Things to Come*. Though reputedly based on the H.G. Wells book, it had no discernable connection. After a devastating war, 'The Boss' is trying to rebuild a

barbaric empire and fight further battles, when Raymond Massey arrives in a futuristic aircraft heralding the giant bombers of a peace organization called 'Wings Over The World'. They drop anaesthetic gas bombs, free the Boss's subjects, and off everyone goes rebuilding a brave new world. The story culminates with an uplifting speech by Massey as spacetravellers orbit the moon. In answer to the ever-present malcontents, who always accept improvements in social life, housing, food, medicare, entertainment, travel, and so on — but who oppose anything 'new' on principle — he points out that mankind can either stagnate and decay, or go forward to new discoveries. As they observe the vast expanse of stars, his gesture includes them as he concludes, "Which shall it be, Passworthy? Which shall it be?" Great stuff, even for a teenager.



Another film based on a Wells story was *The Invisible Man*. Claude Rains had us all boggling in wonder as he unwrapped his bandaged hand to reveal... nothing! There was even greater argument as to how the lines of footsteps were created in the snow just before he died.

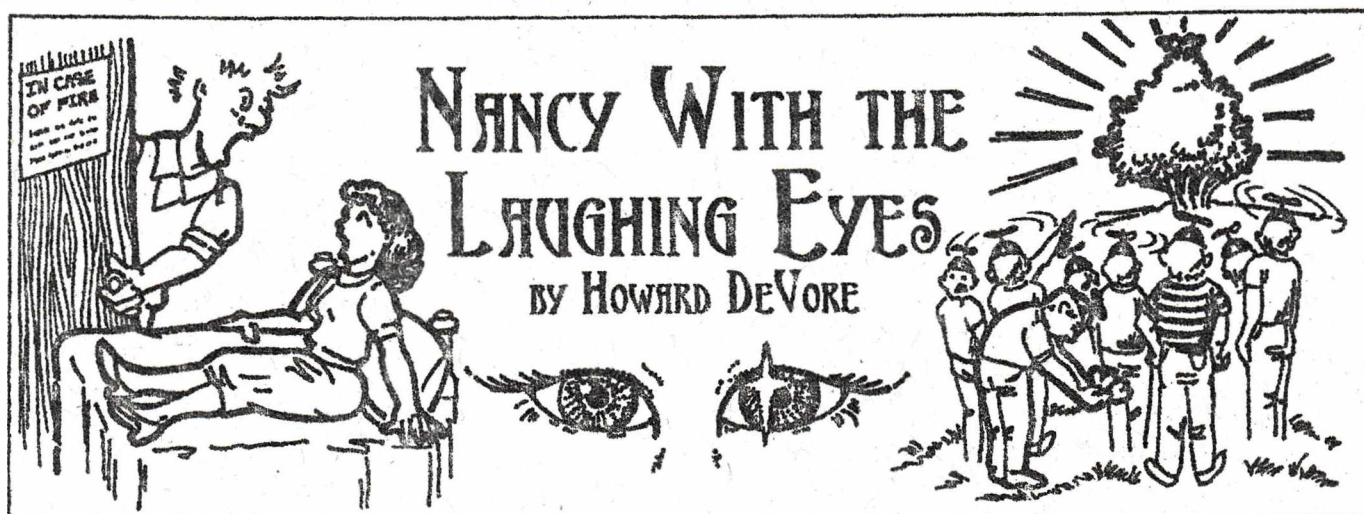
Then there was the wonderful trick photography which brought the giant ape *King Kong* to the screen. Even in jerky animation, Kong was a better actor than his human counterparts, and it was impossible not to feel pity for him in his unrequited love for Fay Wray, leading to his death in a final fall from the Empire State Building.

More recent SF films such as *The Thing*, *Them*, *Destination Moon*, and *War of the Worlds* still give me fond memories, but it is to those long-gone days of the children's matinee that I tend to turn with nostalgia. I remember all those post-cinema 'gunfights' when we fired off thousands of rounds from the inexhaustable chambers of our extended forefingers... the ropes we tied to tree branches so we swing to and fro in Tarzan-like fashion whilst ululating infernal laryngitis-giving screams... how we tied old bed springs to our feet to emulate 'Spring-Heeled Jack', or strove to hurl each other to the ground in the best 'Mr. Moto' style...

And we unconsciously took in other things as well. Heroes had white hats and white shirts, rode white horses, and were clean-shaven. The baddies were always in black, smoked cheroots, and usually had thin black moustaches. Scientists wore beards as a sort of trademark to make it easier to identify them at fifty paces. Our prejudices were also carefully manipulated: Germans were villains, Lascar seamen untrustworthy, Negroes shined shoes or rolled their eyes in fright, whilst the Chinese were master criminals to a man. Important people wore top hats, evening dress, and spoke 'posh'. Plebs were usually Cockneys, had cloth caps, and dropped their aitches.

On the other hand, we also acquired social values such as 'Crime Does Not Pay', 'Honesty Is The Best Policy', and 'Good Will Always Triumph Over Evil'. In our fights, we used no kicks, head-butting, karate chops, or knees in the groin. If an opponent went down, we waited for 'em to get back up again. Despite all this, people still tell me that films have no effect on impressionable youngsters. I wonder just who is living in cloud cuckooland. *

∞ We end this issue with a remembrance of a fan that perhaps not too many present-day fans have heard of. She's not mentioned in *A Wealth of Fable* or other fan history references, but she's been the subject of many anecdotal tales. Here are a few of them.



Nancy Moore Shapiro Raney died of lung cancer in April. She was 59. I do miss her.

Nancy had large dark eyes and was a woman full grown when the 1949 World SF Convention opened in Cincinnati, Ohio. If not the most beautiful woman there, she was certainly in the running, and attracted the attention of George O. Smith immediately. George O. managed to crowd into the circle surrounding Nancy and, at some point, suggested that she join him for dinner at one of the fine restaurants over in Kentucky.

Nancy was delighted. She was always happy when she was the center of attention, and here was the famous *Astounding* writer taking her to dinner. They caught a cab to Kentucky, entered one of the best restaurants there, and ordered dinner. The waiter suggested cocktails and as they were ordering drinks, almost as an afterthought, the waiter asked Nancy how old she was.

"Fifteen," Nancy replied proudly.

George O. choked and gasped, then declared, "And I just took you across a state line! Waiter, cancel her order. The young lady is going home in a cab — right now — ALONE!" It seemed probable that George O. ordered several extra drinks to celebrate his narrow escape.

#

A year later the Worldcon was in Port-

land, Oregon. Nancy's father had worked for a railroad before his death, and the family had a lifetime pass. Nancy had ridden the trains for three days and was disheveled and exhausted when she arrived at the Hotel Multnomah, only to learn that her room wouldn't be ready for a few hours. George Young from Detroit ran into her in the lobby and, learning of the situation, offered her the use of his room to take a nap. He explained that he was sharing a room with another Detroit fan, Ed Kuss, but Ed had gone downtown and wasn't expected back for several hours.

Ed returned early, however, and when he unlocked the door to his room and stepped inside, he found a young woman, fully dressed, lying on one of the beds. She raised up and screamed, "No! No! I'm only sixteen!"

Ed almost broke the door down getting out of what he assumed was the wrong room.

Nancy later confessed that she had done it to see his reaction. In later years, lots of Detroit fans would pay attention to Nancy, but Ed Kuss always maintained his distance.

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The first Midwestcon was held in May in that same year of 1950, perhaps as a partial compensation for the midwest fans who couldn't attend the Worldcon in Portland, and has been a yearly event ever since. In

1952, Detroit's very own Benjamin Donald Singer, founder of the Misfits (more on that another time), arranged for a ride with Martin Alger to attend that year's Midwestcon. Martin had a huge Packard, which could be stuffed with up to eight fans for trips like that.

Nancy was a regular attendee of the early Midwestcons, and the meeting of Nancy and Ben at beginning of the 1952 convention had the intensity of the sun going nova. They were together almost constantly the next two days. Perhaps there were kisses and adolescent fumbling, but the Misfits certainly implied that more was happening. Both Nancy and Ben, so happy to be real 'grown-ups', encouraged this. A few months later Nancy moved to Detroit, sharing an apartment with a local fan, Agnes Harook, and found a job. Nancy and Ben became a couple.

With my encouragement and help, Martin Alger prepared a memorial plaque for the 1953 Midwestcon. On apparent bronze it bore raised letters, showing two hearts bearing Nancy's and Ben's initials and the legend 'Under This Bush a Great Love Was Born — May 1952'. Both the 1952 and 1953 conventions were held at Beatley's on the Lake (later immortalized by Randall Garrett as "Beastley's on the Bayou"), a large resort hotel with extensive grounds. On Sunday morning we gathered a crowd of 100 people, including Ben and Nancy, and searched the grounds — hunting for the proper bush so that we might dedicate that hallowed ground. Ben and Nancy were delighted to be the center of attention.

Sometime during the next year after that, Ben and Nancy had a fight and she returned home to Cincinnati, but they didn't forget each other. Ben didn't attend the 1954 Midwestcon but Nancy did, and at the last moment she asked Martin Alger if she could ride back to Detroit with him so she could see Ben again. There was no problem about luggage, since all Nancy had was the clothes she was wearing and her purse.

Halfway back, Nancy asked Marty if he would stop at a restroom somewhere. Mo-

ments later we came to a roadside restaurant situated midway between two towns. Nancy left her purse in the car and went inside. Then, at someone's suggestion, Marty pulled around behind the restaurant and parked. We sat there for about ten minutes, then, when Nancy had still not appeared, Marty started the car and pulled back in front of the restaurant.

Nancy was standing there, gazing down the road, perhaps hoping that we would change our minds and come back for her. She didn't even have a nickel to make a phone call, and would presumably have had to hitchhike the 100 miles back to Cincinnati.

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There were many other incidents over the years, but most of them have faded in my memory. Life was never dull when Nancy was around. Later, Nancy and Ben would break up again, and Ben would marry a girl named Eleanor who barely tolerated fandom. Within a week or two after that, Nancy married Hal Shapiro, one of Ben's friends. This might have been a way of evening things out, but I suspect it was more a case of Hal, seeing that the competition was eliminated, simply overwhelming Nancy. Marriage was one of the things she hadn't tried yet.

That marriage lasted a couple of years, then Nancy divorced Hal and went into the army; it probably seemed a welcome relief after being married to Shapiro. After the army stint, she returned to Cincinnati and (at some point) married Dave Raney and spent the next thirty years with him.

Dave was a non-fan and Nancy seemed happy with that. She would show up at a Midwestcon every five years or so to see old friends, and she may have attended a few Cincinnati Fantasy Group meetings or parties. Her last public appearance was at Roger Sims' New Years Eve party in 1991. She explained that she came only because she knew what fine parties Roger had always thrown.

Like I said earlier, I'm going to miss Nancy. There were never many like her. Now there's one less. *

☞ Thanks once again to everyone who sent us a letter of comment or a fanzine in trade. The letters alone brought us several hours of pleasant reading while we were organizing this issue's letters column, and the fanzines made an impressive-sized stack in the spare bedroom. You know, editing a letters column isn't very easy — trying to keep this lettercol to a manageable size while still providing a representative sampling of comments received is a tough balancing act. We do appreciate all the comments on specific articles in your letters, and please be assured that your comments, whether or not they are printed in this lettercol, *do* get passed back to the contributors.

First up are a selection of comments about Dave Kyle's retrospective article last time on science fiction movies...

Guy Lillian III, P.O. Box 53092, New Orleans, Louisiana 70153

In this excellent issue I find many terrific articles, of which Dave Kyle's reminiscences of early SF movies {{☞ "Golden Ages, Silver Screens" }} stand out as a gem among gems. One hook of note: Dave Kyle's visit to the *2001* set. Perhaps it's rank sacrilege, but I disagree with Arthur C. Clarke that his novel explained all the nuances of that epic. I find it a richer and much more symbolically compelling work about science and Mankind's Quest Into the Unknown than the rather simplistic von Daniken pastiche *he* created. Clarke really has little faith in humanity; time and again in his works he advances the hope that our only salvation lies in E.T. Visits from Beyond. Which makes that strange saucerite passenger in *A Fall of Moondust* all the more interesting a character.

Martin Morse Wooster, P.O. Box 8093, Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

David Kyle's piece was a pleasant bit of nostalgia. Kyle makes some errors; Maureen O'Sullivan's performance in *Just Imagine* was her third film role, not her first. (O'Sullivan's first two movies were *Song of My Heart* and *This is London*.) And Michael Moorcock was editor of *New Worlds* in 1966, not Ted Carnell. But what Kyle captures best is the simplicity and innocence of an earlier era, when seeing Bela Lugosi perform was a bright new thrill instead of a sad old memory, and when it was possible to casually shake the hand of a second lead in a major sf film without being surrounded by publicists, press agents, and puffery.



Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, Michigan 48224

Dave Kyle is not the only one who finds the *Flash Gordon* serials with all their cheesy special effects more delightful than so much of the SF being filmed today. There are, I think, two reasons why *Flash Gordon* remains so enjoyable. One is that throughout it remains an enthusiastic and optimistic story. We never doubt for a minute that the evils of the world, as represented by Ming the Merciless, will be defeated. The future looks bright — it looks like a place we would like to be. You look at the *Alien* or the *Terminator* series and the future there is dark, dismal, foreboding and admits to little chance of getting better. It's not a future one would want to live in.

The other thing that, I think, makes *Flash Gordon* continue to be so delightful is precisely those silly spaceships with their smokepot rocket engines. They were the embodiment of the future. I don't know about anyone else, but I loved to read stories about guys jumping in their rocketships and cruising around the galaxy. That, to me, was science fiction. And those rocket ships in *Flash Gordon*, as cheesy as they were, looked like what you dreamed spaceships would look, and more importantly, act like. They added a grand scale to the story. Look at *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: the ship is so vast that most stories happen entirely on board it, and as a result, the series tends to look like a bunch of people running around in their pajamas at a screwy looking Howard Johnsons. Ultimately, there's a failure to connect. In *Flash Gordon* people were always flying around in spaceships which looked like spaceships. Even the landings had a spaceshipy feel to them.

Pamela Boal, 4 Westfield Way,
Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon
OX12 7EW, United Kingdom

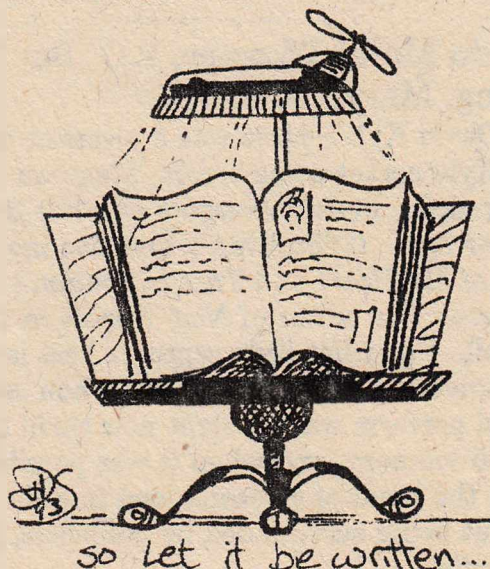
Dave Kyle evoked many happy memories for me with his article. With so much angst twixt media and literary fans it is good to recall the pleasure some readers once had

from films. It is possible that SF readers have a valid critical viewpoint that is overlooked by film critics. Like Dave, *Things To Come* gets my vote not only for the 30s but for all time.

{{⇒ Other readers, notably Walt Willis, gave identical praise to *Things To Come*. Speaking of Walt, coming up are some comments on his continuing series of articles ("I Remember Me") looking back at the 1950s, the first on Walt's description of Vincent Clarke tape recording Ted Tubb's picturesque prose. }}

Alan Sullivan, 20 Shirley Road, Stratford, London E15 4HX, United Kingdom

The only problem with 'I wish I had my camera/tape recorder' situations is that if you *did* have such a device and were unwise enough to use it, you might not live to tell the tale. Many is the time I have been told that if I used my camera, that I would need the aid of a proctologist to recover the film. The events in these letters from Walt's correspondence file sound like the sort that you look back and laugh — after the event. I also wonder if the people involved would have written as freely and easily as they do here, if they had known that they would later be quoted in a fanzine. Somehow, I suspect they would. I'm glad to be able to share these fanecdotes.



Ted White, 1014 North Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, Virginia 22046

It's nice to see Willis continuing "I Remember Me" after its long hiatus. The quotes from his correspondence file do much to give the real feel of the time (mid-fifties), in a way in which few remembrances, written long after the fact, can.

Buck Coulson's "Midwestcon Memories" was also enjoyable; I started going to Midwestcons in 1957, at the North Plaza, where I think I met Buck and Juanita for the first time. When speaking of Leigh Brackett, Buck says, "The first time I met her, I was too awed to say anything. (I know this is hard to believe, but it's true.)" In fact, I find it easy to believe. It may not be true today (I don't know), but in the late fifties and early sixties, Buck was extremely quiet in person; all his bark was reserved for *Yandro*.

Lloyd Penney's letter prompts me to respond that damned few, if any, of the fans I know are 'xenophobes' about Canada. We've enjoyed two previous Worldcons in Canada, and I imagine many fans even look for a good excuse to go to another country. Not that Canada seems so very foreign, being next door and (for the most part) speaking the same language, and all that. I mean, we share the majority of our cultural heritage, and if it comes right down to it, I've never encountered a *non-fan* in this country who felt any hostility towards Canada, much less anything as extreme as xenophobia.

So what is going on? Well, for one thing, very little apparent interest on the Conadian committee in publicizing their con in fanzine fandom, and no apparent interest in contacting fanzine fans for fan programming. I mean, no one I know has been contacted in any capacity. I heard about the convention by accident, at Magicon. Most fans go to conventions to meet up with their friends from other parts of the country (or other countries). If none of your friends are going, why should you go? There seems to be a stampede *away* from Conadian.

{{⇒ Generally, fan programming isn't done for a Worldcon more than a year in advance.

Since Conadian is in 1994, they probably won't be doing much, if any, programming until Confrancisco is over; it's useful to see what worked at the last Worldcon and what didn't. MagiCon set a high standard that future Worldcons are going to pressed to meet. }}

[Also in the letters column,] I'm glad Harry Warner said it first about Asimov. I'd been wondering if anyone would break the hypocrisy barrier and comment on Asimov's MCP side. My first meeting with Asimov occurred at the 1956 NyCon. It was right before the costume ball (as it was known then), and there were several very attractive women there in skimpy costumes. One woman had a semi-formal gown, with a low-cut bodice criss-crossed by laces tied up in a bow. Isaac virtually leaped upon her, crying out that he wanted to untie her bow. It wasn't meant to be untied, being sewed in place, but Isaac was not to be deterred. With a yank of both hands, he ripped her bodice down to her waist, exposing her attractive chest. I believe he expressed contrition after the fact, but the look of glee on his face had nothing to do with contrition or remorse.

Asimov was hardly alone in this kind of behavior. Buck Coulson mentioned in passing Randy Garrett's 'compromising situation'; Garrett was such a tomcat that John Campbell refused to allow him to marry his daughter.

{{⇒ Wow; *that's* an Asimov story that's not been circulated in fandom; even Dave Kyle, the chairman of the 1956 Worldcon, had never heard it before. From the way you describe it, though, it sounds like one of those classic misadventures: Isaac, trying to live up to his lecherous reputation, perhaps tugged on the bow a *little* too hard. From then on, it was a real-world demonstration of Physics in action... }}

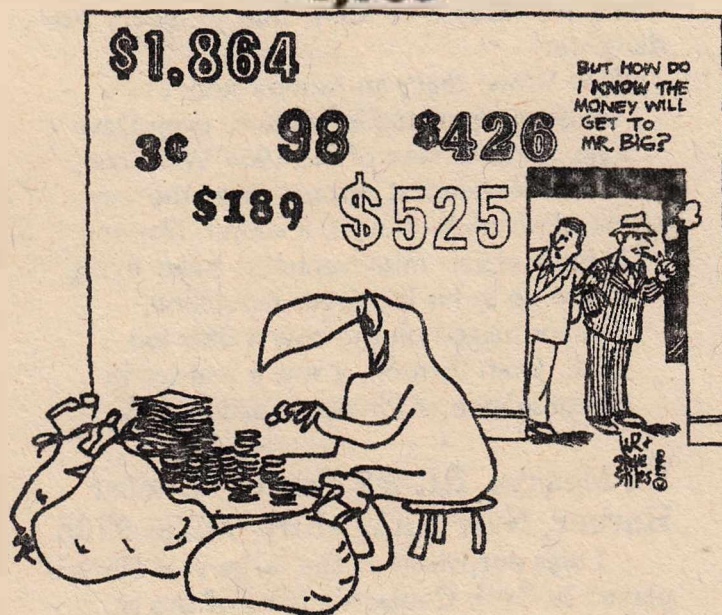
Ed Meskys, RR #2 Box 63, Center Harbor, New Hampshire 03226-9708

I was surprised at the large role Harlan played in Buck Coulson's tales of the early Midwestcons. I got onto the fringes of fan-

dom in late '55 and didn't get really active until '59; by then Harlan wasn't very active. I remember being in Harlan's Brooklyn apartment with Ted White when I was just beginning to learn the techniques of putting art onto mimeo stencil. In that period I occasionally saw Harlan in NY fan circles; I remember a confrontation between Harlan and Ken Beale at a New Year's party at Frank & Belle Dietz's. It wasn't face to face, but Harlan kept making remarks about how he would demolish Ken. The background was explained to me by Alma Hill (now deceased) from Boston, who had been active in Boston fandom (just before NESFA was formed) and in the N3F, and who had edited a newsletter for John Campbell's Interplanetary Exploratory Society. Ken had apparently borrowed a typewriter from Harlan and then hocked it. Harlan was giving him a hard time, so he sicced the police onto Harlan, telling them that there were drugs in Harlan's apartment. When the police arrived, they found weapons like brass knuckles from the time when Harlan had run with a Brooklyn street gang to do research on a book {{☞ and arrested him on the spot }}. Harlan eventually wrote another book about getting arrested, and what followed.

\$7,000

\$1,705



Curt Phillips, Route 7, Box 357,
Abingdon, Virginia 24210

I thought the best item in this issue is Charlotte Proctor's "Night of the Living Dead... Cat". I've taken the liberty of giving a copy to a cat-loving friend of mine who is also having trouble with neighbors. Yes, Charlotte's article was, well, Pretty Good. And you didn't mention her fanzine *Anvil*, which is Not Too Bad Either.

{{☞ *Anvil* is one of our favorite fanzines, too! }}

Buck Coulson's article answered a question that has nagged me for years. He confirms that midwestern fan Rog Ebert — who published a few poems in fanzines in the early '60s is Roger Ebert of *Siskel & Ebert*. I'd have thought he'd have grown up reading *Famous Monsters of Filmland* rather than fanzines.

{{☞ It is the one and same Roger Ebert, who was a fan while he was a college student at the University of Illinois. }}

Dave Kyle's article on this memories and experiences in the SF film world is as informative and entertaining as his two excellent illustrated books on SF history. Dave is one of the small group of SF 'Movers and Shakers' who really ought to write a full autobiography. His smallest anecdotes are fascinating.

Tracy Shannon, 1941 Ellen Avenue,
Madison, Wisconsin 53716

Charlotte Proctor's tale of neighborly woe is one more that could be collected in a great anthology of *Weird Neighbor Tales*. My odd neighbors seem to have a certain synchronicity: at our last apartment, the downstairs resident was a hopeful guitar ace, and the vibrations would reach my ears via my feet. I thought we had escaped when we bought our house, but across the street is another budding Mark Knopfler. He is accompanied on bass by the muffler of the teenager next door, and vocals are provided by the large dogs a house over. (The drumming is me beating my head against the wall.)

Andrew P. Hooper, 4228 Francis Avenue N. #103, Seattle, Washington 98103

Boy, what a *great* issue *Mimosa* #13 is! Lots of excellent material from outside contributors and very entertaining editorial contribution from you guys as well. And that cover by Brad Foster was really *superb* work. I think I was feeling some kind of residual disgruntlement over his winning another fan artist Hugo in Orlando, but looking at this cover, that feeling is completely banished. He really is just about the best; I think only Linda Michaels can touch him on quality of composition and line, and only Stu Shiffman and Ken Fletcher can match the expression and invention of his characters.

I'm not sure why it should be so, but fans from earlier generations seem to have a much more unshakable belief in the fundamental value of fandom and stf than more modern fans do; certainly chroniclers like Kyle and Willis have seen their share of ugly feuds and misanthropy, yet they have not succumbed to the kind of anti-fannish, down-in-the-mouth gafia that so many modern fans seem prone to. Of course, people who felt differently have left the field, and so we have an image of sixth and earlier fandoms as being disproportionately cheerful. The time will come, however, when someone will have to step forward and write a history that includes such things as the Breendoggle {{ a fracas before as well as during the 1964 Worldcon }} and the Topic A war {{ the 1980s TAFF unpleasantness }}, without indicting the whole fannish firmament in the process. And whoever takes on that task would probably appreciate it if certain anecdotes and events were recorded for posterity beforehand.

Speaking of Dave Kyle, his piece was quite good, a kind of counterpart to Forry Ackerman's many accounts of life as a fantasy film fan. I think it's a shame that the Starfire Award and associated activities fell by the wayside; media fandom could really use a scholarly fraternity to recognize and promote serious work in their area of

interest.

Farber and Thayer both contribute strong additions to their respective canons. David's piece {{ "Play Ambushes and Other Surprises" }} in particular appealed to me, as it put me in mind of organized hikes and orienteering exercises of my own youth, where no one knew what they were doing and did their best to hide the fact. And I also admired Charlotte Proctor's piece, and the way she was able to make something very funny out of what was probably a pretty unhappy experience. Charlotte really writes very well; I wish we saw more of her stuff showing up in other editors' fanzines now and again. Walt Willis' exploration of his letter files is inspiring; one of the benefits of publishing a small zine is that I am gradually building up a backlog of unpublished letters of my own, and it will be fun to someday bring them to light as well.

I'm not surprised to see that my comments on Worldcon occasioned a few other Loccers to comment. The real reason that Carrie and I are not planning to go to Winnipeg is that we will need a year off from Worldcon in order to gear up for going to Glasgow. We've been bent on attending the latter since we first saw the bid, and I hope to be able to do it up right. But in general, the business of Worldcon bidding and voting is an ugly one, and I try to stay out of it as much as possible.

{{ Worldcon bidding *has* gotten very ugly and unpleasant lately. Fandom is still a hobby, and it's sad to see that what should be partying and an invitation to a city become a matter of life-and-death to those bidding. The saddest part is that there seems to be little joy to the activity. It's almost like a grim death-march on the part of the committee. }}



Mike Glicksohn, 508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3L6, Canada

Having met Chuck Harris again at MagiCon and greatly enjoyed a few brief 'conversations' with him, I wish I could be there to see his reaction to your reprinting his comments {{☞ in Walt Willis's article }} about expecting "some normal sex life this Sunday." Somehow I doubt that was written with any expectation of it being published in a fanzine almost forty years later and it certainly doesn't do much to augment Chuck's reputation as a lascivious rogue, so carefully constructed over such a long period of time and so completely destroyed by one off-hand remark from the past. One only has to glance at Peggy Ranson's depiction of a younger Chuck in the library to see just how successful he has been in building this image of himself and now...poof...it's completely shot to hell. It's *almost* a shame... (I'm really enjoying these excerpts of actual fan-nish correspondence from the past and hope Walt can continue to being fanhistory alive for us in this way for a good many columns — and a great many past years — to come.)

David Thayer's piece, while undoubtedly autobiographical, reads more like fiction than fact although again I'm absolutely sure that it happened to David in the way he describes. It's just that *nobody* ought to be able to remember such an incredible wealth of detail almost a quarter century after the fact. I'm pretty sure David didn't, but merely embellished the broad strokes on the canvas of his memory with the fine detail that makes this such a well-written article. And, as always when I read or hear of people's activities in the armed forces I am reminded of what a *wonderful* decision my father made when he chose to come to Canada instead of to the United States!

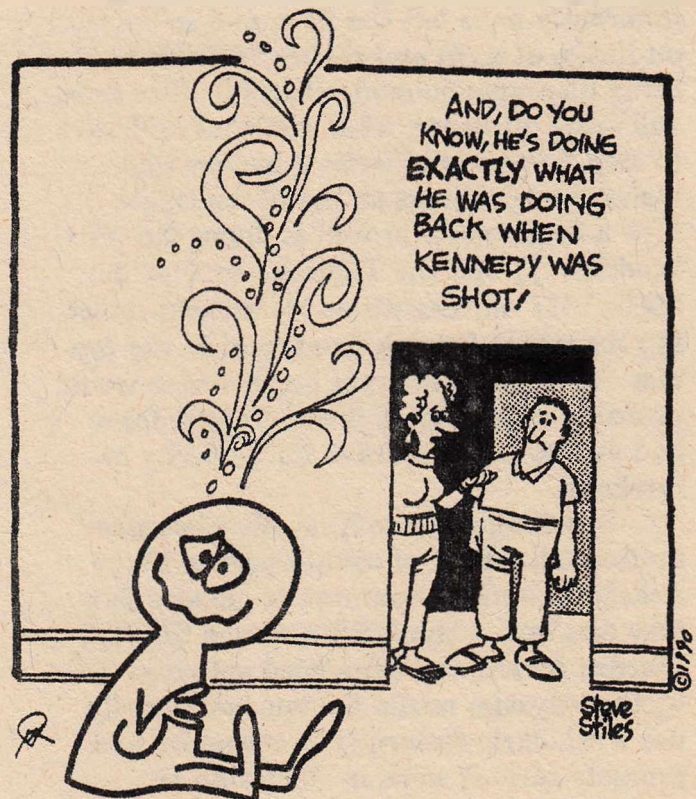
For me, the most interesting and entertaining piece in the issue is Dave Kyle's article about his relationship with science fiction movies. It was probably a wise editorial decision to put this last in the issue before the lettercol because very few fanzine contri-

butions could have followed it successfully. I envy Dave his colourful life and his many adventures but I suppose I'm also glad I'm young enough not to have lived a similar life and can settle for sharing parts of the Kyle mystique vicariously.

Among the reasons that people might choose not to attend the Winnipeg worldcon would undoubtedly be that it is the *Winnipeg* worldcon. This is hardly a city that will seem attractive to people planning their annual vacation around our annual family reunion. (There's also the fact that one of the driving forces behind the con, and one of my oldest friends in fandom, is notoriously undiplomatic and can manage to annoy people even when striving to enlist their help. Sad, but true.) As for the thought that people might stay away out of a sense of sour grapes, I give it little credence: surely you Yanks will have forgiven the Blue Jays by then?

Many people listen to music while they loc their favourite fanzines. I roasted a pigeon. Just thought you'd like to know.

{{☞ There's probably a funny line here, but we can't think of it. }}



Elizabeth Osborne, [address withheld by request]

I love the cover of *Mimosa* 13. Brad Foster certainly earns some sort of award for his work. It was interesting to read of your trip over the South and of the conventions that you have attended {{☞ "A Tale of Two Conventions, Part 2" }}. I'm glad that you liked central Florida so much, though it's not all Disney and Sea World.

{{☞ Actually, this wasn't nearly our first trip to central Florida. Dick's mother lives in Inverness, Florida, and we stopped there for a short visit on the way to the convention. }}

I was surprised by Lloyd Penney's attitude about the Canadian worldcon. I gather that some fans aren't going to the Winnipeg Worldcon but I doubt it is because so some feelings of xenophobia. If there are less people going to Winnipeg (and I *am* planning to go) I think that it has to do more with the fact that Winnipeg doesn't strike people as a tourist center of the universe like Orlando or San Francisco. I also know many dealers are *not* looking forward to try to deal with Canadian customs (though that shouldn't be a problem if the North American Free Trade Act goes through). I think that any group of people who voted for Winnipeg and then for Glasgow deserves to be not called xenophobes. Sure, most people support a convention that is close to them; that's why I supported Orlando, even though I wondered if the local fan groups could pull it off. I think that many fans, however, do take the 'World' in Worldcon very seriously and are willing to give the benefit of doubt to a group that looks like it can pull it off.

Simon Green, 37 St. Laurence Road,
Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts BA15 1JQ,
United Kingdom

Interesting piece of yours on the two conventions. I'm hoping to be at the Worldcon in '95, since it's in Britain. The last one I attended was the '79 Worldcon, where I was in a spillover hotel. My room was a fire exit. I'm not kidding. On my door was a

large sign saying 'Fire Exit', and a hammer was attached to the door by a length of chain. In an emergency, you rushed to my room, smashed the lock with the hammer, ran across the room and onto the fire escape outside. I slept every night with a chair jammed up against the door; no one was getting in without me knowing.

Sharon Farber's piece on strange medical tales {{☞ "Tales of Adventure and Medical Life, Part VIII" }} strikes an echo with me. I recently had to have a wisdom tooth removed. My dentist declined the job as a bit too complicated, and sent me to the local hospital. The first thing I was told was that I shouldn't worry about the extraction. "You'll suffer traumatic amnesia, and won't remember a thing." What this meant was, that the proceedings would be so harrowing that I wouldn't want to remember it. Very comforting. Turns out, what they actually do is dig a trench around the tooth in the gum with a scalpel, so they can get at it, and then they use a hammer and chisel to dig it out bit by bit.

I immediately demanded a total anaesthetic, and a long interview with the tooth fairy. What I got was a megadose of valium, which apparently also helps to rub out short term memory. Result was, I sat in a chair in the hospital, and they gave me an injection in the back of the hand with what looked like a horse needle. I was also somewhat taken aback at where they stuck it. I've had needles in a few funny places in my time, but the back of the hand was a new one on me. The next thing I know, I'm back home sitting in a chair by the fire.

I have no memory for the extraction, getting up and leaving the hospital, or being driven home. Very strange. It feels like my mind's been edited...

Rhodri James, 18 Harvey Goodwin
Avenue, Cambridge CB4 3EU, United
Kingdom

Sharon Farber's piece on hysterics was interesting and did actually provoke some memories of my own. My father used to

work as a Disablement Resettlement Officer, a grand title for someone who is supposed to find jobs for disabled people (and if someone says 'differently abled' to me one more time I shall scream!). Many of the people he had to try to help were, if not hysteric, then at least not as badly disabled as they liked to think. One particular case that he told me about was that of a young man, wheelchair-bound I think, whose mother insisted long and loud that he be found a job. Dad guessed what was coming, and was very dubious about making much of an effort. This rather shocked the social worker on the case with him, so he dug around and come up with a vacancy for a manual job that was well within the young man's capabilities. The mother was horrified. "He can't do that!" she exclaimed, inventing several new spurious disabilities on the spot to prove how a cruel government was mistreating her offspring. The social worker conceded defeat. What the young man's opinion was, or whether he was allowed to have one, I never did discover.

In the letters column, Darroll Pardoe's mention of Arthur Pedrick's orbital weapon and selective catflap patent was a perfect example off synchronicity at work. You see, my (ex) landlord is a trainee patent agent, and one evening he brought home a copy of that patent for our amusement and his study. I smiled, turned to the next loc in the copy of *Mimosa* that had arrived just that morning, which seemed to concern a strangely familiar patent application... My personal favourite of these loopy patents is the mechanism for making it easier to open and close Venetian blinds. The justification paragraphs were positively purple; while closing your blind in a hurry was hardly the greatest problem in this age of the Nuclear Threat, it explained, it was none the less reassuring to know that your eyes could be safely shielded from the nuclear thunderflash while your neighbours were still fumbling for their draw-cords.

Also, I did like Diana Stein's letters column title illo (on page 49). Are all your letters that lively? Your postman must go through hell!

K. Hainsworth, 833 N. Lucia Street,
Redondo Beach, California 90277

My interest in Sharon Farber's medical series keeps growing. From the responses in *Mimosa's* lettercolumn, it's clear that many other readers love this series, too. I suspect that this is because of Sharon's presentation of herself and other doctors not as the usual all-powerful healers, but as humans, who, like everyone else, must at times resort to guesswork, trial-and-error, and deception to get their jobs done. This departure from the traditional mystery and omnipotence that the medical profession shrouds itself in is commendable honest and makes for compelling reading. Sharon's descriptions of the pathetically wacky patients she encounters and her reactions to them make her writing a rare combination of informative and entertaining. I'm really looking forward to future installments.

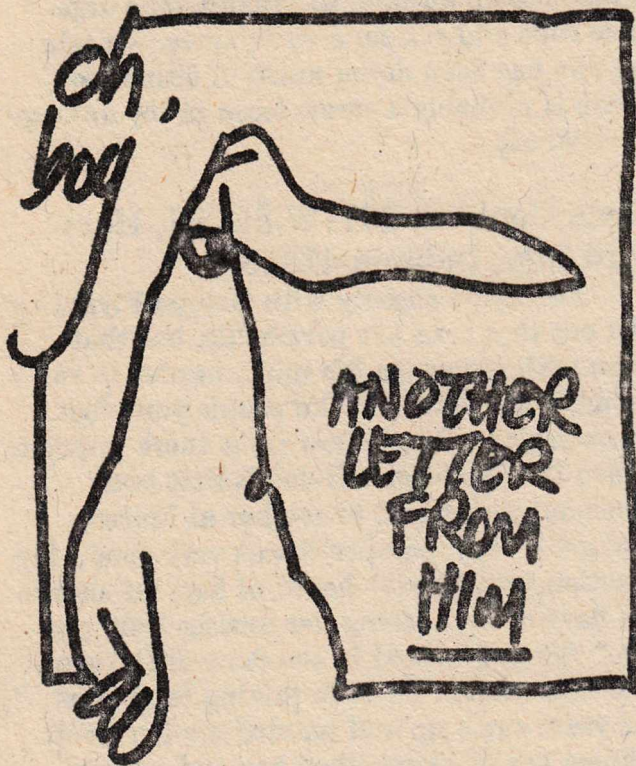
Richard Dengrove, 2651 Arlington
Drive #302, Alexandria, Virginia
22306

I loved your Jophan Family Reunion and the great baked potato rescue. It's just like the hijinks of the '50s fans in Harry Warner's book *A Wealth of Fable*. I'm glad you're trying to keep up some of the vigor of fandom as it ages. On the other hand, aren't you guys getting too old for such shenanigans? ...Eh! Never too old.

Sharon Farber's latest installment is also interesting. However, I thought the Munchausen Syndrome was rarer than that. It appears not: it appears we have fake sick people all about us. Maybe if we have enough of them, they will have the real disease and people with the real disease will be faking it. ...Maybe not.

In the letters column, Sam Long claims that physicians who go into writing often make excellent authors because of their training in close observation, deduction, and the careful and exact use of words. Having a father for a doctor and a brother for a doctor, and knowing a lot of other doctors, I can say that isn't so. Farber is one of the excep-

tions. Usually medical writing is to clear writing as medical music is to music. Ah, you haven't heard of any medical music lately? Well, that's the idea.



Joseph T. Major, 4701 Taylor Boulevard #8, Louisville, Kentucky 40215

That was a neat trick Charlotte Proctor pulled on the motel with the Jophan Family Reunion, but given the spreading interconnection of fandom I could believe a con that genuinely was a family reunion, given the spreading connectivity of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and so on. And the interaction with Roger Weddall has a special poignancy.

"I Remember Me" had a special interest for me this time. Willis is writing about the year I was born. As for James White's stay in the hospital, has this slipped down from Sharon Farber's column? Farber all the time, Brandt in *Mimosa* 12 with toxic shock, and now Willis on iatrogenic ailments...is *Mimosa* becoming the fanzine of medical history? Do you want an article on the diagnosis of Crohn's disease, written by the sump for all those tubes, scopes, needles, et cetera?

{{∞ Thanks, but no... }}

Adrienne Losin, P.O. Box 692, Mornington, Victoria 3931, Australia

Thanks for your wonderful *Mimosa*. Congratulations on a well-deserved award. Your obituary to Roger Weddall {{∞ "Remembering Roger" }} was the finest I've read. Roger and I went to the same high school for several years and before my arrival he'd been the top math student — he didn't like being beaten by a newcomer and a girl. He and a couple of his friends persecuted me, until I'd had enough and I flattened him! His bullying friends ran away. They left me alone after I proved I could defend myself. (I'd started learning judo when I was six.) For years after, Roger tried to rival me — in running conventions, zines, and was really bugged when I ignored him and his efforts weren't always very successful. It was only after he travelled to Africa, and had a few adventures, including breaking his leg and nearly dying, that he matured mentally. Then he became my friend. I miss him.

{{∞ Many other correspondents reacted as we did on learning of the death of Roger Weddall: shock, anger, and sorrow. Perhaps typical of these comments was one from Alan Sullivan, who wrote: "Cherish the memories of the good times. That's the best way to remember someone, when they're gone." Roger's trip to North America and attendance at Magicon made him many friends, but he might be remembered as one of fandom's best correspondents, as this next letter seems to indicate: }}

Ahrvid Engholm, Renstiernas Gata 29, S-116 31 Stockholm, Sweden

I was sad to hear about Roger Weddall. I received many copies of *Thyme* (also after he was no longer personally involved) and occasional letters from him. I sent him my own fanzine in trade, *Fanytt* as it was called then (it's now *SF-Journalen*) — which is in Swedish. I thought that even if he couldn't read it, he should get something in return. I was quite amazed when I then received a letter from Roger where he actually made

comments to details in an issue! Apparently he had found some Swedish-English dictionary and had translated interesting parts for himself, trying to learn some Swedish, not without success. I got at least a couple of letters with comments to different issues.

He must have been quite talented with languages. More talented than me. I would never be able to learn Australian.

{{☞ You might be interested to know that Roger wrote about this same exchange in the first letter we ever received from him (which was reprinted in the M3 letters column). Until now, though, we didn't know the Swedish fan he had corresponded with was you. }}

Jack Herman, Box 272, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, New South Wales 2006, Australia

In M13, I enjoyed most of all the story of your trip to Magicon, with all its ancillary adventures. I'm glad you got to meet Roger. He was the co-chair of the first National Convention I attended (in 1978), and he was one of the few faces that I could be guaranteed to see at each of the subsequent Natcons I attended. Cath and I are going across the continent to Perth for this year's con at Easter and one of the things I will surely notice is Roger's absence. His energy and joy of life were an integral part of the Natcon experience for so many people and for so many years.

In the letters column, I trust George Flynn is joking when he talks of convention video. If he isn't, then Boston is a long way behind the time. We produced, in very limited numbers, a six hour video, on 2 three-hour tapes, of Syncon 83, a Natcon chaired by me and starring a kid sure to go far in the convention GoH game, Harlan Ellison. Personally, I think the whole idea of cons is that they remain evanescent. Remembered only through (fallible) memories — like Buck's recall of early Midwestcons — or very biased reportage of the contemporary con reports.

Mind you, coming from a small fannish community, I still find it hard to understand

the American fannish culture that distinguishes so much between convention fans and fanzine fans. Out here we haven't enough to go around, so fanzine fans organize cons and con fans write zines. Of late no-one has been doing much of either, so there is probably a screw loose in my analogy somewhere.

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

I disagree slightly with George Flynn. It's not that cons are perishable, but that even with nametags it's much harder to remember the names of the people you meet. Fanzines have the names right there in print. When Lois McMaster Bujold's first book came out, I was told to see her at Marcon and get a copy, because it was very good. My reaction was, "Never heard of her; fat chance I'll have of ever seeing her among 1800 people." Then I walked in the door of the con and this woman I'd been talking to at cons for years came up and handed me her book. I knew her all right; liked her and enjoyed talking with her. But I'd never had an idea of what her name was. I suppose that may be part of what George meant as 'perishable', but I think of it strictly as 'the name problem' and videos won't help much, unless there are a lot of closeups of name-tags.

Also, Don Fitch's letter {{☞ about the life expectancy of older fanzines }} is overly pessimistic. Pulp paper lasts quite a bit longer than 50 years. I have some 1930s fanzines that are in about as good a shape as they were when published. The staples have rusted and stained the paper around them, but they're still holding the pages together. It might depend a bit on where one lives, of course, but barring fires, I should think that copies of *Mimosa* should last into the 22nd Century. (So should *Yandro*.) And yes, the 1930s fanzines I have are on pulp paper; I realize that some of them were on better quality material.

{{☞ That's good news. The timebinding quality of old fanzines is something that future generations of fans should be al-

lowed to experience. But now the question becomes: 'How do we ensure that fan artifacts such as fanzines are kept for future generations?' An answer to that one might not be so easy. }}

Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, United Kingdom

The Brad Foster cover is wonderful!

More so when I realized it was a wraparound to the bacover. By strange coincidence it's almost a spoof version of the Bea John illo we'd planned to use for our next *Inception* cover. It that Brad himself on the bottom left of the back cover, doodling during the magician's demonstration? {{☞ Yes. }} Nice touch by B Ware on the inner cover title. I gather from the black cat, ladder and cracked mirror for *Mimosa* 13 that you're not superstitious (or are you just tempting fate?).

Congratulations on 'Best Fanzine'. I'd heard of the Hugo award mix up before, and while it causes all sort of red faces and confusion at the time, it passes into fanhistory as an event — the Hugo that was awarded twice -- and will doubly fix your name in the listings.

John Berry's recollections of George Charters and Irish fandom {{☞ "Magna Charters" }} have the touch of the surreal humor of the BBC radio *Goon Show* of the time (not, as one confused BBC program planner is supposed to have queried of Sellers and Milligan "What's this 'Go On show', then?"). Sadly this has almost totally gone, and our last experience of the Irish SF convention at Trincon, seemed to be bogged down in bitter disputes over Trekkies wandering about in full nerd regalia (the first, and hopefully last, time I'd seen a Vulcan with a beer gut).

Vinç Clarke has filled me in on more of the background to the Chuch/Willis 'maps' saga, and the 38 year late sequel of Vinç's 'philately' in the last *Mimosa* remains a wonderfully funny postscript {{☞ to Vince's article about map stamps in *M12* }}. (I note that my handwriting slopes severely backwards and wonder if Chuch was also a southpaw.) As a footnote to Terry Jeeves' letter about boring

UK stamps, the GPO have just issued a set commemorating classic Children's comics. A first day cover of Rupert the Bear winged immediately to my father. Guernsey, as Vikki found later in a stamp shop, had already issued a complete set of Rupert stamps.

Also in the lettercol, I agree with Matthias Hofmann that *Mimosa* tends to gloss over the later decades of fandom (you only counted up to the 60s in your reply; what happened to the 70s and 80s?). The 70s (at least in the UK) seem to have been associated with the rise of RatFandom (fandom red in tooth and claw) but until Rob Hansen's *Then* reaches this decade I only know it by reputation. I wonder if this is a similar disillusioned reaction to the souring of the end of the sixties. I would be interesting to put fannish cycles into a broader historical context (or are we that isolated from the real world?) from what seems the enthusiastic lunacy of the fifties to the inward looking nostalgia (navel gazing, if you want to be cruel) that seems prevalent since I joined the scene in the late eighties.

Vincent Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2EN, United Kingdom

It was weird reading John Berry's '93 style, as I've just been engaged in helping Ken Cheslin to start on reprinting John's mid-to-late '50s fiction. This was popular enough in its day for John to be the recipient of a special fund for getting him across the Atlantic to meet U.S. fans {{☞ in 1959 }}; but the stories are thick with contemporary references. It'll be very interesting to see how '90s fans react to them.

And yes, that was a good answer to Terry Jeeves {{☞ about the founding of the British Science Fiction Association }}; after setting the ball rolling, I couldn't get to the Convention where BSFA was formed, but was happy to leave it in the capable hands of contemporary administrators...at the time, I was heavily involved in non-fan affairs, anyway. Alas, the BSFA was originally intended to direct the reader into fandom, but in 5

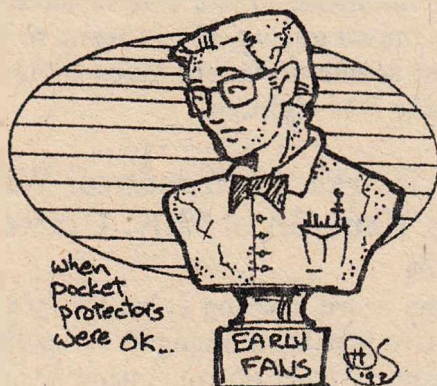
years this origin was being decried, and sf for its own sake was the aim. Sercon ruled. Thus, virtually a waste area for new faans in the '60s in Britain.

In his LoC, Don Fitch comments on the durability of fanzines. Here's a word of cheer. I have them stretching back to the '30s, and aside from the odd few done with jelly hektographs which fade alarmingly, they all, printed or duplicated or whatever, sneer at the Ravages of Time.

Except for one.

Every time I remove Lee Hoffman's early '50s *Quandrys* from their envelope, the carpet gets dandruff. Tiny fragments of paper all over. Years before those TV heroes had self-destructive audio cassettes, Lee had the self-destructive fanzine.

Thank Ghu Joe Siclari reprinted *some* (hint) of those early issues.



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

John Berry is back in his old form as a fanzine writer in his reminiscences of George Charters. A few of his recent fanzine contributions have seemed just a trifle strained, as if he were attempting to reconcile his present writing style with that which he made famous a third of a century ago. But this time he's writing freely and wonderfully just as he used to do. It's nice to have George immortalized in print in this manner, since he must be one of the lesser known stars in the Irish Fandom constellation of mid-century.

Once again, I'm immensely impressed by David Thayer's writing when he does it at length, and that seems to be only when he

writes for *Mimosa*. We associate him mostly with postcards of comment and captions to his cartoons as a writer, and I wish he would do more extended pieces on any subject at all more frequently, like the military reminiscences he's been providing for you.

Bill Bodden, 1113 Banister Lane #401, Austin, Texas 78704

John Berry's piece on Irish Fandom was delightful. In the past, I've often been less than charitable towards fanzine fandom's attitude of treasuring the past writers while largely ignoring those of the present. This piece fairly clearly illustrates the value of the former. There are no shortages of stories recounting the exploits of Walter Willis, Chuck Harris, Arthur Thomson, Vince Clarke and James White; indeed their exploits seem to form the basis for many of Fandom's most cherished traditions. However, a piece like this one reminds us that there are a good many fans out there who aren't such big names, but still deserve tribute. George Charters is well remembered.

{{∞ As is Nancy Moore in this issue. }}

David Thayer's piece on his experiences during basic training was enlightening. Often I've known pranksters such as he, but rarely have I known them to get away with so much, especially in the Army. Very entertaining.

Finally, Dave Kyle's article reminded me how much more fantastic SF films used to be when I didn't know a thing about how they were made. In spite of this jaded attitude, his reminiscences were a stroll down memory lane that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Naomi Fisher, Box 332, UK Medical Center, Lexington, Kentucky 40536

Re Matthias Hofman's letter: there just isn't the same urgency yet about describing fandom in the nineties as there is for the 40s, 50s and 60s. There are, simply, fewer people left who can tell of the way things were then than there are those who can speak of the way things are now. Don't worry about being too 'yesterday-oriented' —

you're doing what needs to be done, the sooner, the better. Let those who don't *have* the old memories record their actions — heaven knows, they will anyway, probably on camcorder.

Harry Warner, Jr.'s incident with the Army officer {{☞ in "When Fanac Was a Four Letter Word" }} was surreal. I think the man's behavior was sufficient explanation for why he lost his security clearance — he stepped off into the deep end without benefit of water wings. 'Fanac You!' could become a new expletive, suitable for accompanying rude gestures toward Nashville drivers.

{{☞ As well as the ones here in Maryland... }}

Donald L. Franson, 6543 Babcock Avenue, North Hollywood, California 91606-2308

I have never put out a fanzine. (Yes, I know, this is an unbelievable first line, on a par with another one I saw in a recent *Mimosa*: 'I certainly agree with Joseph Nicholas.') Some call *Trash Barrel* a fanzine, but I consider it a fanzine review column {{☞ It also appears as part of *The National Fantasy Fan*, a publication of the N3F }} , which I send to faneds reviewed and others. I could qualify this to say that I edited beaucoup N3F zines, had an apazine of my own, and did special publications, but I didn't do the actual publishing.

In these depression days, conventions cost too much, but I've seen it countered, publishing fanzines cost too much (I know). Nevertheless, newcomers should be told that they don't have to actually publish a fanzine (at least right away) and that they can become a fanzine fan on the cheap by just sending letters, costing the stationery and maybe a sheet of stamps (\$29) or less. With 100 letters, not all at once, or mass-produced of course, you could certainly get started on our hobby quite quickly. Of course, you have to find out about fanzines, and that's where fanzine reviews come in.

I'm glad to see more fanzine reviews in fanzines, which might attract curious outsid-

ers. One fanzine leads to another, and before you know it, presto, you're a fanzine fan.

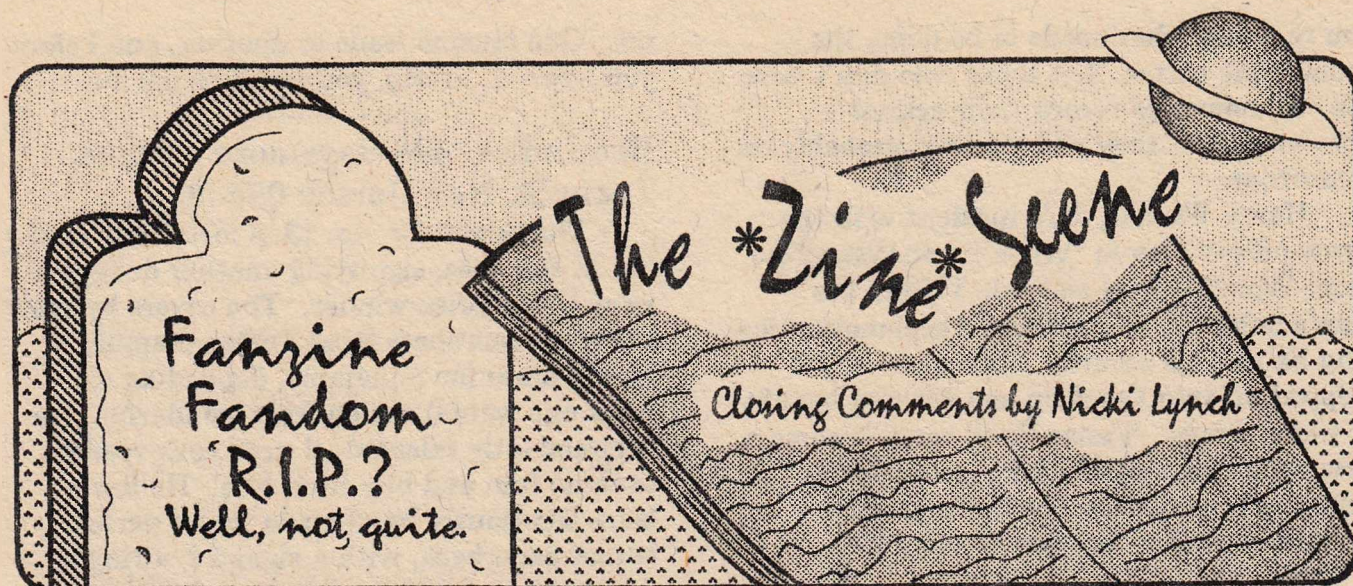
Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Avenue, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666

Thank you for No. 13, a fortuitous number in this case, signifying another delightful issue of the prize-winner. The covers by that reformed reprobate Brad Foster (happily chaste here) (or unhappily, depending on what one wants) are entirely wonderful. He is abundantly talented. I urge your readers to write him and buy from him! He has a book laboriously hand-made into a perfect bound paperback, with a signed drawing as dedication for the purchaser, and every fan should have a copy. It is, furthermore, G-rated!

We Also Heard From:

Eve Ackerman; Barbara Adams; Harry Andruschak; Lon Atkins; Mark Blackman; Linda Blanchard; Robert Bloch; David Bratman; Ned Brooks; Terry Broome; Gary Brown; Russ Chauvenet; Ken Cheslin; Chester Cuthbert; Cathy Doyle; Allison Dyar; Leigh Edmonds; Walter Ernsting; Tom Feller; George Flynn; Meade Frierson III; Tom Fulopp; Tim Gatewood; Steve Green; John Guidry; Lynn Hickman; Craig Hilton; Kovacic Josip; Irv Koch; Dave Kyle; Ken Lake; Dave Langford; Fred Lerner; Fred Liddle; Eric Lindsay; Sam Long; J. R. Madden; Shinji Maki; Janice Murray; Pär Nilsson; Mark Olson; Lloyd Penney; Derek Pickles; Charlotte Proctor; Dave Rowe; Joy Sanderson; Ben Schilling; Michael Shannon; Robert Whitaker Sirignano; Steve Sneyd; Els Somers; Dale Speirs; David Thayer; Ron Trout; R Laurraine Tutihasi; Shelby Vick; Roger Waddington; Michael Waite; Taral Wayne; Beryl and Brandon Weddall; Henry Welch; Walt Willis; Taras Wolansky; Link Yaco.

{{☞ This also seems like a good place to belatedly acknowledge our crack team of collators for M13: Sheryl Birkhead, Rusty Burke, Mark and Vanessa Loney, and Barry and Judy Newton. Our thanks to one and all. }}



I keep reading in apas and LoCs that "young (that is people in their teens and 20s) fans aren't doing fanzines." There's a great deal of weeping and wailing about the 'death' of fanzine fandom as there are no younger fans coming up to keep the tradition going.

At this point, the discussion invariably points toward computers and how they (a) "make pubbing an ish too easy" or (b) "stop young fans from doing a fanzine" by turning them into games addicts or by drawing them into the computer net and away from traditional fandom. The discussion usually dies out at this point with participants shaking their heads over the situation.

However, if you feel that the 20some-things are forsaking print media for electronic, then you haven't heard about their latest discovery - *zines*. The world of alternative press publications has been covered in depth by Mike Gunderloy when he was publishing *Factsheet Five*, as many of you undoubtedly know. Lately, however, I've seen articles in mundane magazines and newspapers on the alternative press and at least one story on NPR's *All Things Considered* has covered this *hot* topic.

Dick and I even played a small part in an article that appeared in *The Washington Post* on the subject.

A few months ago we were contacted by a *Post* staff writer who said he was preparing an article on fanzines and would like to talk to us. We were non-committal, since we

value our anonymity here, but Dick talked to him for a few minutes and sent him a copy of *Mimosa*.

A few weeks went by and we hadn't heard back from the reporter. Dick called the fellow back and was told that he really like *Mimosa*, but he wasn't going to include anything from their discussion in his article. However, he *was* interested in SF fandom in the area and would be getting back in touch. (The reporter also expressed interest in attending a meeting of WSFA, the local fan group, but has yet to show up.)

So a few more weeks went by and a Friday rolled around. On Fridays, *The Washington Post's* Weekend section runs a feature story usually about something that's happening in the area, such as where to find dinosaur exhibits. This particular Friday, however, the feature story was "The Zine Scene." The cover of the Weekend section was small reproductions of covers of some of the local fanzines and there on the bottom of the page — between *Teenage Gang Debs* and *The Shattered Wig* — was *Mimosa*!

Profiled inside were a number of people in their twenties who produce zines. Their zines covered, among other things, the punk rock movement, *The Brady Bunch* TV show, and writings on everyday life. I especially enjoyed the article's definition of zine: "...a small-circulation periodical produced mainly for kicks and almost always at a loss to the publisher." Stressed throughout the article

was how these zines are done on the cheap with "...excellent writing and tight editing *not* the hallmarks of the genre..." (emphasis mine). The article went on to say that this 'independent-press boom' began in 1982; it concluded with a description of how to get started and how to circulate a zine. All in all, it was a light-hearted article that provided useful information about producing a zine yet trivialized the editing and writing of one.

At the very end of the article was a list of local zines, with a brief description of each and how to get them. Included in the list was *Mimosa*, even though it (and we) had not been mentioned.

On reading the article, I could see how

Dick and I (and *Mimosa*) didn't fit the feature writer's idea of zine editors or of a zine. We were beyond our twenties, had a tightly edited zine with well-written articles, and had been doing this for about 15 years. The story was about the 20-year-old people who were 'radical' enough to be part of this *new* movement, who started pubbing in their teens, and who were mining topics, such as how they felt about *The Brady Bunch* or the latest music trend. *Mimosa* just didn't seem to fit the 'grunge' profile evident in many of the zines.

Nevertheless, we *did* get inquiries from two people who wanted copies of *Mimosa*. Haven't heard back yet from any of them, though... *

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