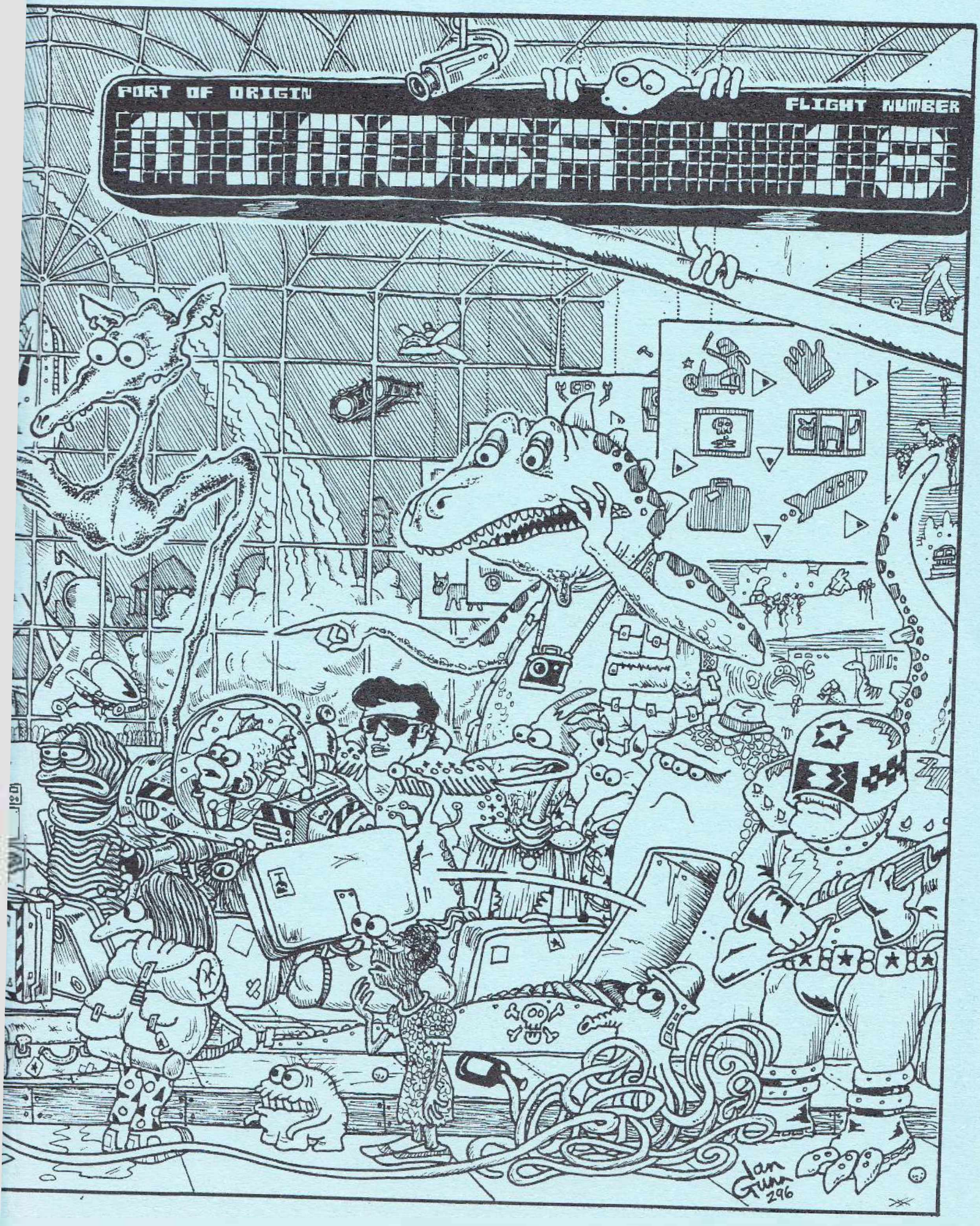
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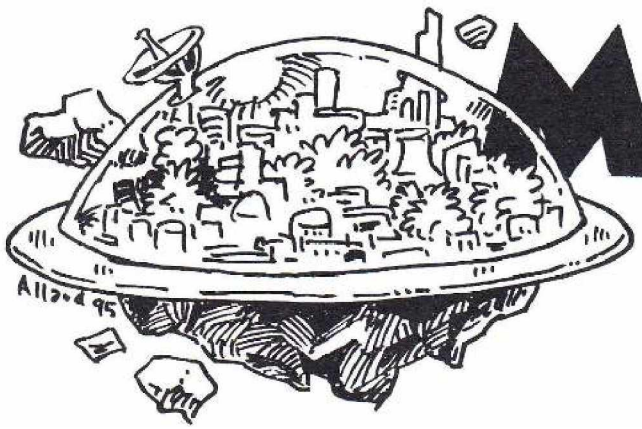


MIMOSA 18

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

Farewell, Bob, we'll miss you...

This eighteenth issue of *Mimosa* was published in May 1996, and is available for the almost trivial price of three dollars (U.S. currency or equivalent). We welcome letters and e-mails of comment; one of those, or a fanzine in trade, will get you a copy of our next issue later this year. (We'll assume all correspondence we receive is intended for publication unless otherwise indicated.) Also, we've now recovered our stock of *Mimosa* back issues; please write us for more info on price and availability.

☐ If this box is checked, we've got to receive a letter of comment or e-mail of comment from you to keep you on our mailing list.

CONTENTS PAGE

Let me tell you about a project I'm working on.

Back in *Mimosa* 10, in 1991, I described how I'd been persuaded to take charge of the *A Wealth of Fable* project. The Los Angeles Worldcon of 1984, it turned out, had been financially successful enough where there was funds available to cover a number of fan-related projects. One of their top priorities was getting Harry Warner, Jr.'s history of science fiction fandom of the 1950s into print in book form.

It turned out to be a bigger project than I thought. When I began, in 1990, all I had to start with was a fuzzy set of photocopies from the three-volume fanzine published in the mid 1970s that had been the manuscript's only other publication. There was much to do, and it took over two years to finish. The result was a hardcover book of nearly 500 pages, complete with index and over 200 photographs.

By far, it's been the biggest publishing project I've ever worked on, and I was more than a little pleased that the book won a Hugo Award for Harry Warner, Jr., at the 1993 Worldcon. But all that happened a few years ago. Now it's time to get started on the 1960s.

Work actually began several years ago. Back at Richard Brandt's El Paso Corflu, the 1991 fanzine fans convention, I put together a one-page chapter outline of a book of the 1960s (mostly because of a challenge by Bruce Pelz), but nothing further happened until the first FanHistoricon, at Hagerstown in May 1994. It was there in Hagerstown that the outline, which had languished as a data file in my computer for three years (the original hand-written outline having vanished into oblivion by then), finally received some comments.

A couple of other things happened at the FanHistoricon that affected the course of events. Forry Ackerman was there, and he contributed $300 towards expenses for any copying and mailing costs. This immediately put the project in the black, so to say. The second was the formation of Peggy Rae Pavlat's brainchild, the Timebinders. Peggy Rae had organized that first FanHistoricon (there have been several since then), and had wanted some kind of umbrella organization created to oversee existing fan history activities, and to come up with ideas for new ones. In fact, FanHistoricon wasn't really a convention at all; it was more of a workshop for hammering out the structure for the new organization, and providing feedback on things that were already going on.

Anyway, the upshot from the FanHistoricon was twofold: the outline quickly expanded to about eight pages, and it officially became my project. So here I am. In the time since FanHistoricon 1, the outline has greatly increased in size, mostly since June of last year. It's now over 170 pages, and growing; the size of the ascii computer file has

passed a half a million bytes. But it's still not nearly detailed enough for any book to be written; there are whole areas where I still have little or no information, and other areas where the information I do have is only enough to bring more questions to mind.

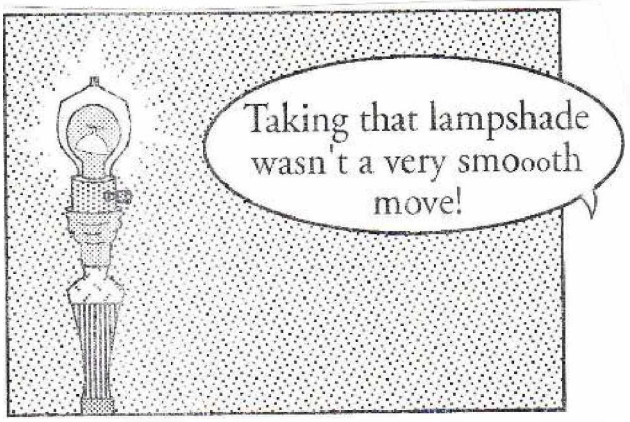
Luckily, there are plenty of people to ask them to. One of the reasons the 1960s Fan History Outline (or FHO, as it's come to be called) has grown so rapidly is because of the Internet. It has connected me with many other fans not only here in North America, but in Europe and Australia as well. And to make things even easier, Dick and Leah Smith, who were also at that first FanHistoricon, have set up an e-mail mailing list (a 'listserv', in computer-talk) exclusively for fan history research and related purposes (if you're interested in joining, the e-mail address is: timebinders@smith.chi.il.us). Using e-mail has allowed me to gather information at a much faster rate than I ever could have if I was limited exclusively to surface mail.

By now, you're probably beginning to believe that the evolution of this 1960s FHO is actually a group effort. You're right. Many, many people have played a role so far, by providing specific bits of information on people and events, or by commenting on information that's been collected in the FHO. Bruce Pelz, in particular, has provided much in the way of reprinted source material, and Rob Hansen has done much of the work on British fandom already in his own fan history project. But I'm still quite a long way from being ready to sit down and start writing — the FHO will have to be about twice as long as it is now before that day will come.

But I'm not really in a hurry; this kind of fact finding takes time, and there's not much you can do about it. It will probably take about another year, at least, before I'm able to fill in most of the gaps in the FHO. Meanwhile, this kind of research is fun, especially when you run across an interesting bit of information or an anecdote that's been lost for decades. Here's an example:

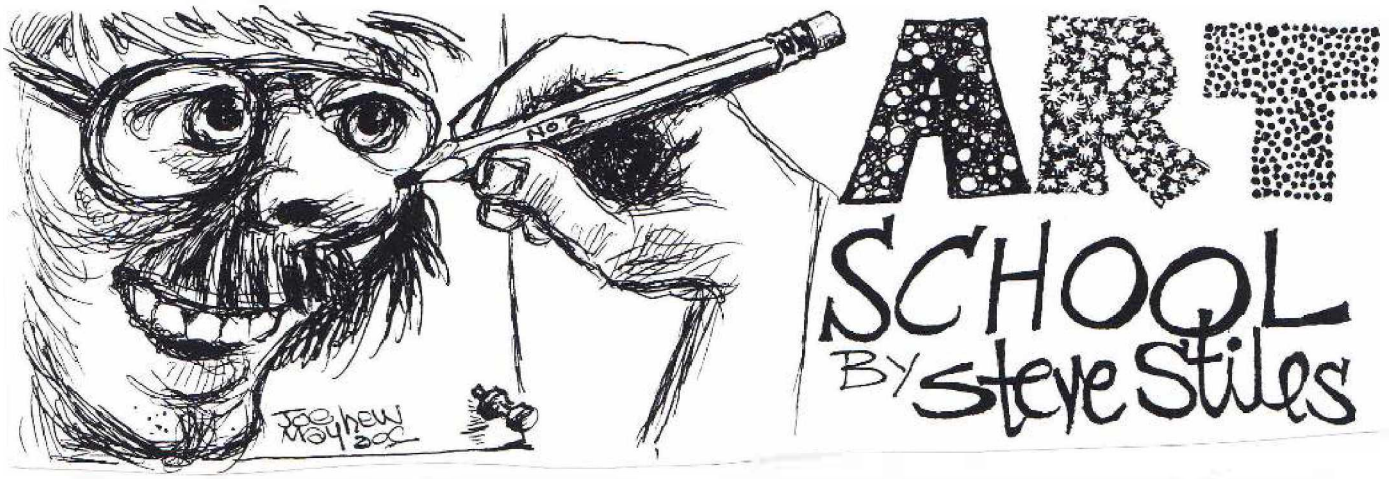
In May 1965, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society had finally got fed up by the performance of their secretary, Jack Harness. Harness, who otherwise had performed exemplary service to LASFS, had become habitually late for the weekly LASFS meetings. So after being late for seven of the previous eight meetings, the club finally, and perhaps reluctantly, decided to hold a vote of impeachment of Harness, on the grounds of non-feasance of his elected duties. At the meeting where his impeachment was voted on, Harness was once again late again — so late, in fact, that both the debate and final vote were over by the time he had arrived. When he asked the outcome of the vote, he was told the bad news: he had been thrown out of office, the first successful impeachment of a LASFS officer in the decade. But there's more: immediately after that, an election was held to fill the now-empty office. The winner? Elected as the new LASFS secretary, by a sizeable majority, was... Jack Harness.

Here's another one: At the 1962 Midwestcon, Bob Tucker brought with him a young fan to the convention, who then proceeded to be a source of embarrassment to Tucker by walking around wearing a lampshade on his head. (At the end of the convention, Tucker went around apologizing for him.) The subject of Tucker's embarrassment was not destined to make much of a name for himself in fandom, and in fact did not stay in organized fandom much longer after that. He *did* have a bit more success in his chosen field of journalism, however, and went on to become much better known as a movie reviewer; he was Roger Ebert.



The 1960s is turning out to be full of entertaining little stories like that, and it wouldn't take much to get lost in it all. The research has been so entertaining, in fact, that I often find I'm ignoring other priorities, such as ~~eating~~ this fanzine. Therefore, I'd better close this essay, with hopes you enjoy this, our 18th issue. I think it's also filled with entertaining little stories; I hope you think so, too! ☼

☞ There were many fans who came to prominence in the 1960s, and we begin our 18th issue by featuring two of them. First up is Steve Stiles, who was the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund delegate to the United Kingdom in 1968, and was a Fan Artist Hugo Award nominee in 1967 and 1968. However, Steve's renown as an artist makes it too easy to overlook that he is also an excellent writer. His latest article for us describes his 'secret origins' as an artist, including his adventures in...



There are those people who know my artwork, have seen it in the fanzines, and there comes a point when they just have to ask, "Steve, have you ever gone to art school?" and, yes, I *have*, and I immediately prove it then and there: "Look! See this? This is a *pencil*!" A thorough knowledge of tools is an unmistakable sign of good training (I particularly excelled in The Eraser, one of my favorite technical implements).

Early on, I didn't need any training, grasping the subtleties of the crayon almost instinctively, often using the pointed end rather than the flat one, seldom going beyond the paper and onto the linoleum — because I used heavy black borders; almost from the very start I was mad about doing comic strips. My pre-teen attempts dealt with masked cowboys, robots with tank treads, Jungle Girls in leopard-skin bikinis, and The Adventures Of Captain Brown (and his flying submarine, also with tank treads). Come to think of it, maybe this last strip was a precursor to "The Adventures Of Professor Thintwhistle And His Incredible Aether Flier," a strip I did with Dick Lupoff for *Heavy Metal* (still available from Fantagraphics Press); our steam-driven spaceship also had tank treads. I get one good concept and drive it into the ground... Captain Brown was an actual hektographed strip of about twenty copies, which ran three issues in 1953 that I distributed at the Yorkville recreation center, so even at age ten I was fumbling towards fanac and paying my dues.

A few years later I became an E.C. fan, fascinated by the exciting (and sometimes horrific) covers displayed in the local candy store. This was about the time when the usual political hacks were holding televised hearings and getting in cheap shots about Violence In The Comics Destroying Our Youth (sound familiar?). So my parents were hep to this filth; there on the screen was E.C. publisher Wm. Gaines whacked out on diet pill speed while some irate Senator held up a copy of *Crime Suspen-Stories* #22, the one with the axe, severed human head, the black dripping blood, all for the camera and the viewing pleasure of my mom and dad.

Which only reinforced my idea that being a comic illustrator was one of the more noble and worthwhile of human pursuits — damn, that cover was *good!* In the course of accumulating every E.C. ever published I learned that some of my favorite artists working for them had attended two schools: The High School of Music and Art and The School Of Visual Arts. Both were located in Manhattan, where I was, and both had excellent reputations. And so, in 1956, at age thirteen, I took the entrance exams at M&A, which partly consisted of drawing an arrangement of old shoes and flowers, as well as a review of my portfolio pieces — which included two issues of my first fanzine, *SAM*; that was a lucky break because my interviewers had never heard of a kid pubbing an ish and thought the whole concept incredibly creative. Four years later, the people over at Visual Arts had the same reaction to some of my other fanzines and awarded me a three year scholarship. I was blown away by the realization that fandom had actually helped me achieve my goals in the Real World! That's the last time *that*

happened...

Music & Art certainly wasn't a full-fledged art school but rather a high school with additional emphasis on art and music classes. Even so, I had more opportunity to familiarize myself with a wider range of materials, from chalks and caseins to oils. And here I was studying in the same school that my heroes Harvey Kurtzman, Bill Elder, and John Severin — the guys at *Mad* — went to, so it was pretty heady. I made a number of friends and had a decent time...except with one particular fellow student who was the Reggie to my Archie, and who seemed to enjoy going out of his way slipping the meat to my delicate personality. I loathed him because he was wealthy (arriving at school in a chauffeured limousine), good-looking, smooth, jump-starting all those genetic impulses of many desirable girls in my class. I loathed him because I was poor, shy, and smelled of Wild Root Creme Oil; a self-imagined Jack Kerouac trapped in a nerd's hang-ups. (From such stuff many a Marxist is made; fortunately for me, our school communist, being an asshole, was a poor role model.) I'll never forget the time my father arrived at a PTA meeting dressed in his carpenter's clothes. My Reggie drifted over, slowly looked us up and down with studied insolence and then drawled, "*Slumming*, Stiles?" *(Argh! To the barricades, comrades!)* I swore then and there that I would become rich and famous. I would someday be a Norman Mailer, a Pablo Picasso! Or at least a Harlan Ellison or Walt Kelly...

Today, after many years of struggling, I'm still struggling. Sometimes my income soars and more times it flops around. Each year about three comics fans ask for my autograph. Few people other than Bill Rotsler knows that I'm the one who coined the "Death Is Nature's Way Of Telling You To Stop" maxim (which I hope to have carved on my tombstone), and once, in 1968, a mere twenty-seven years ago, I was nominated for a Hugo.

As for my nemesis at M&A, he's a millionaire now, the producer of numerous award-winning television shows (I groaned when he won the Emmy over George R.R. Martin's *Beauty and the Beast*). Yes, it was Steven Bocheo... Justice isn't just blind, it's a mangy, sleazy s.o.b. that laughs in the face of Horatio Alger! Maybe I should try harder...

# # #

Visual Arts was and is a full-fledged art school, staffed with instructors of the stature of Milton Glaser and Herb Lubalin. Among the alumni were E.C. greats like Al Williamson, Angelo Torres, Mort Drucker, and Wally Wood. Originally known as The Cartoonists and Illustrators School, it was founded in '47 by Silas Rhodes and Burne Hogarth, two very unique individuals grateful for the G.I. Bill. I saw little of Rhodes, who functioned as administrator, money manager, and publicist for SVA. Hogarth, on the other hand, functioned as the Soul of the school, and taught several classes a day. He was also one of the most aggressively opinionated people I've ever known (outside fandom), with excellent credentials as the *Tarzan* comic strip artist, and author of many first-rate books on anatomy. His ability to whip out exquisite anatomical studies on a large newsprint pad was truly amazing, and I'll never forget his worm's eye perspective drawing of a horse leaping overhead, perfect in every detail.

Inevitably, the very first topic friends would quiz me about, when they learned I was going to art school, was modeling — or naked women, actually. Professional nudity was a constant fact of life at SVA and frequently the models were young, nubile, and female. This seemed to fascinate my friends. Me too, but after a few weeks it became something I took for granted. Those non-art students couldn't quite understand that the voyeuristic impulse could get nudged aside if you were serious about learning to draw; all that nice flesh sublimated away into the *gluteus maximus*, the *vastus externus*, and the ever-popular *pectoralis major*. With constant professional nudity being a fact of life at Visual Arts, I was amazed to read, years later, that Silas Rhodes had expelled several students for streaking. Damned amateurs!

Naturally, there were male models as well. Once, one of them managed to achieve a sheath-bursting woody while posing. I wonder if he got

docked for that, because more and more of the women in the class got uncomfortable and left the class, at first leaving singly and in pairs, until a mass exodus took place. (If I had more smarts I would've taken note of the women who stuck around as he stuck it out.)

# # #

One debate that's been going on for a while is whether or not such things as art schools are necessary. There are a few lucky types who are able to grasp far more in adolescence than artists three times their age. As for the rest of us, art schools at the very least give a grounding in what went on before, the tools, the techniques, the capabilities and drawbacks of various materials, and that alone should justify their existence. There is also a horrendous amount of Art Theory, a lot of it contradicting hot air. But a good teacher tries to make more of an impact than that, and luckily I had a number of them, in particular, Jerome Martin, a popular illustrator for some major magazines in the '60s. Martin, through discussions of Zen, Bessie Smith, Japanese art, bronzed cannons, etc., managed to distill for me an idea of what the essence of art is, what the juice is that differentiates a good picture, or book, or symphony, from a bad one, even though both were created with an equal amount of skill and cleverness. Not that I can put it into words, but the approximation is in my mind in a place I try to go when I'm putting lines on paper. And when I really succeed — not often enough! — the feeling is All Right! It's gotten me through a lot of dark places.

That alone justified my time at SVA, but I almost didn't make it through the full three years due to a dangerous infatuation. Her name was Deborah Howell.

I was crazy about her; I'm sure the feeling wasn't mutual, but it didn't seem to matter. Debbie was a Finishing School Girl from upper New York, and a type of woman you see in fandom: Diana Rigg, Mrs. Emma Peel, was her ideal. One of Deborah's Peelish quirks was to take her lunch on the fifth floor window ledge, and, being an idiot, I'd join her. There actually wasn't that much danger, I thought; the ledge was over two feet wide and you'd have to be spastic to topple off it. With our legs dangling over the street, the seating was comfortable and the view of the rooftops was interesting. One day, I climbed back through the window to get us some cokes from the third floor canteen. When I got back, there were a lot of excited students milling around; there wasn't any blot on the pavement, but Dean Rhodes had spotted her dangling legs from the street, rushed up to the fifth floor, and expelled her on the spot. I had missed the same fate by five minutes, and I never saw Deborah again. She probably went to Europe.

# # #

Eventually I graduated. Meanwhile, the comic book field had been emasculated by the Comics Code Authority; Marvel, DC, and Charleton Comics were all that remained of the field and they were publishing mere handfuls of titles that were mostly drivel, nowhere near the type of stories I was interested in doing. Superheroes were a real crock — it would never last. It was obvious to me that comics would go the way of the pulps, so I got into advertising, sublimating all my creative impulses — and comic strips — in fanzines, making money, working hard, being bored and depressed. It wasn't until I reached my mid-thirties that I started to get involved with comics professionally, and I often regret that I hadn't given it a serious try much earlier during my FIAWOL days.

Visual Arts still continues to thrive (my hero Harvey Kurtzman even taught there for a few years), but sometime in 1970 'my' Visual Arts ceased to exist; it was then that Burne Hogarth was somehow forced out of the school by his co-founder Silas Rhodes, later remarking in an interview in 1995 that it was "My cherished hope is that I live long enough to see [Rhodes] dead and buried... and I'll piss on his grave!" I guess that works if you can't dance, but that hope was not to be. As I was working on revisions for this article, I found out that Hogarthe had died, at age 84, at the 23rd International Comic Strip Festival, in France, where he was the Guest of Honor. There are worse times to go. ☼

Another prominent New York City fan of the 1960s was Fred Lerner, who was largely responsible for the birth of academic-related interest in science fiction that eventually led to the establishment of the Science Fiction Research Association in the early 1970s. However, during the early and middle 1960s, he was active in many of the myriad New York science fiction fan clubs of that time. Here is his remembrance of that era, and some of those organizations.

"*Stranger in a Strange Land* is garbage!"

The Columbia College dormitories were quiet at the end of December 1962, and the desk clerk in Livingston Hall didn't have much to do. So he had plenty of time to talk about science fiction with an otherwise unoccupied freshman. I had been praising a recent Heinlein novel when our conversation was interrupted by an unsolicited comment from a passer-by.

I turned to confront the interloper, but soon found myself listening more than talking. Carl Frederick's opinions of Heinlein may have been misguided, but he knew something that I didn't, something that I very much wanted to know. He was active in Fandom, and I wanted to be.

I knew that Fandom existed. I'd read Sprague de Camp's *Science-Fiction Handbook*, and I'd purchased a copy of Robert Bloch's *The Eighth Stage of Fandom* during a visit to Stephen's Book Service, the shabby storefront a few blocks off Book Row that was the first science fiction bookstore in the world. I had heard some of the speeches from a World Science Fiction Convention on New York's eclectic radio station, WBAI-FM. I knew that there was a subculture of people with a serious interest in science fiction, and I wanted to be a part of it. But I didn't know where to begin.

Well, it was steam engine time. Had I not met Carl, I surely would have learned about local fan clubs and conventions if I continued to visit Stephen's. A chap I knew in high school had a friend who was active in Fandom, and no doubt our paths would eventually have crossed. My primary extracurricular activity was WKCR-FM, the campus radio station, where I was general dogsbody on a book program called "The Printed Word." I was allowed to do an interview of my own, and surely my chosen guest, John Campbell, would have put me in touch with one of the local clubs.

As it happened, Carl steered me to the Evening Session Science Fiction Society at nearby City College, and I soon got into the habit of spending my Friday evenings at its raucous meetings and the convivial post-meeting gatherings in the HiLite Bar a few blocks away on Broadway. Many of the folks I met at my first meetings are still active in Fandom: Elliot Shorter, Jake Waldman, John Boardman, Ed Meskys, Bruce Newrock, and Stu Brownstein. *Locus* wasn't even a gleam in the eye of Charlie Brown, whose interests were concentrated on his forthcoming marriage to Marsha Elkin. Some of the other folk I remember from those days don't seem to have remained in Fandom: Judi Sephton, Barry Greene, and Joan Neufeld (later Serrano) were among the most active members in those days.

The club's cumbersome name was routinely abbreviated to 'Sci-Fi', evidence perhaps of its less-than-sercon attitude toward science fiction. Like other college-based SF clubs of the time, its business meetings were considerably more drawn out than necessary, prolonged by punning, mock parliamentary procedure, and other manifestations of young fans

revelling in their eccentricity. It could get tiresome: I remember the disgust which a typical meeting engendered in an SF-loving friend whom I had brought along. But there was more to the club than fooling around.

The subsidy that Sci-Fi received from the CCNY student government was generous enough to allow inviting the occasional guest speaker. This was more often than not Randall Garrett under one of his many pseudonyms; after his talk he would translate the five dollars allotted to buy him dinner into a few pitchers of beer at the HiLite. I don't remember anything of the talks he gave at Sci-Fi meetings, but I have never forgotten something he told me as we were walking together to the 137th Street subway station late one Friday night: "Anybody can write a story when he's got a story to tell. The true professional is the man who can write a saleable story when he hasn't got a story to tell."

Sometimes the program was a film, usually a Republic serial with a title something like "Flying Disk Men from Mars." We would watch all twelve episodes in one evening, with the bridge fanatics among us scrambling between reels to a makeshift card table to get in a hand or two while the projectionist was getting the next part ready. And toward the end of the school year we would argue passionately how to cast the club's corporate vote for the Hugo awards.

Few of Sci-Fi's members were actually enrolled at the School of General Studies of the College of the City of New York, but there were enough genuine Evening Session students to hold the required offices. This guaranteed meeting space and speaker fees. Otherwise the club had little contact with the college, and less interest in the internal politics of its student government. Our interest was in science fiction, in Fandom, and in each other. Some of the people I met at my first meeting are among my closest friends in Fandom to this day.

It was through Carl Frederick, John Boardman, Jake Waldman, and Elliot Shorter that I was introduced to the rest of the New York fan scene. The Eastern Science Fiction Association met monthly in Newark. Led by the likes of Sam Moskowitz, Lester Mayer, and Julius Postal, it was a sercon group. On the first Sunday afternoon of each month we'd gather in a basement meeting room of the Newark YMCA to hear a guest speaker, usually a prominent writer or editor. Afterwards most of us would walk a couple of blocks down Broad Street to Child's Restaurant to join our guest at dinner.

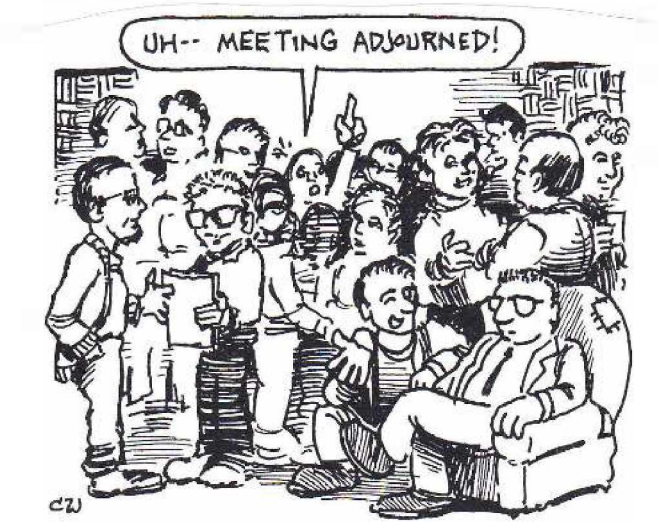
Julie Postal served as Director of the ESFA during much of the early 1960s, but that wasn't the only group he was involved with. He was the leader of a group of cinema buffs that called themselves the Informal Film Society, many of whose members and hangers-on were fans. They met in a shabby office building somewhere south of midtown to look at films: all kinds of films, whatever a member or friend might happen to bring in. At one session we viewed American propaganda films from World War II; at another we saw surreptitious footage of Haitian voudoun rites, smuggled past a disapproving U.S. Customs.

There was no single group that brought all of New York Fandom together, though one club had a name that suggested otherwise. Nobody ever called the New York Science Fiction Society by its official title; it was always the Lunarians. Once a month, on a Saturday night, we gathered at Frank Dietz's apartment in the Bronx. The club's ostensive purpose for existence was to put on the annual LunaCon, and in fact any LunaCon member was thereby deemed a sort of associate member of the Lunarians. But active membership was conferred upon those applicants who had passed the Membership Committee's muster and voted in at a club meeting. This furnished plenty of opportunity for contention at the business meeting with which each monthly gathering began, as did the year-long discussions over how the LunaCon was to be run and who was to run it.

Occasionally the business meeting considered other topics. I remember a weighty discussion as to why Sam Moskowitz failed to appear in costume at the club's Christmas party. There was some question as to whether he had been meant to wear a Santa Claus outfit or his birthday suit, and somehow I was appointed to head a committee to establish the

facts of the case. My motion to table my report to the 227th meeting was passed, establishing by this precedent a convenient repository for unwanted business. (A few years back, the 227th meeting finally arrived. Brian Burley and some other Lunarians tried to get me to attend and help clear up all the old business that I had gotten the club to postpone until then. But by then the idea of leaving Vermont to spend an evening arguing about such matters with a roomful of Lunarians had lost much of its erstwhile appeal. I never did find out the outcome of that meeting.)

The Fanoclasts were the other prominent fan group in New York. A tight-knit group whose meetings were hosted by Ted White, it was strictly invitational. Its membership overlapped little with other New York clubs: John Boardman was about the only person active across the fannish spectrum. This aloofness was less a matter of personal dislike than of lack of shared interests. The ESFA was about as sercon as a club could get. The Lunarians were — if the term can credibly be applied to a fan group of the early 1960s — bourgeois; despite the foolishness of their business meetings, the real purpose of the club was the informal conversation that followed the ritual "adjournment for coffee and cake." The Fanoclasts were the legendary hotbed of fannish Fandom in New York; they were highly conscious of the legends that surrounded their alternate-Friday-night meetings, and worked assiduously at sustaining and increasing them.



What little I knew of the Fanoclasts I knew at second hand, as I was not invited to membership for several years. Most of the members didn't know me, and my active participation in the ESFA and the Lunarians doubtless cast me as too sercon for the group. By the time I began attending Fanoclast meetings I had come to know several members through the Fannish Insurgent Scientifictional Association, an open club founded by Mike McInerney and Earl Evers to meet on the Fridays when there were no Fanoclast meetings.

FISTFA welcomed anyone who cared to attend, and attracted a very mixed crowd. In addition to hardcore fans of many persuasions, and whatever out-of-towners might be in New York for the weekend, there were occasional visitors whose interests barely overlapped those of the regulars. When Dick Plotz placed an ad announcing the formation of the Tolkien Society of America, Mike McInerney invited him to a FISTFA meeting. He only turned up once or twice; I imagine that the shabby apartments in old-law tenements — bathtub in the kitchen, common toilets down the hall — where the club met weren't too inviting. But the scruffiness of the surroundings didn't deter Harold Palmer Piser. An elderly gentleman whose passion was bibliography, he had undertaken to compile an index to fanzines. He had no discernable interest in science fiction or Fandom; but the fanzine literature was virgin territory, save for the Swisher-Pavlat fanzine index from the 1950s that he set about to update. His interests sometimes diverged from the strictly bibliographical; he was an occasional participant in the poker games that usually took place in one corner of Mike's living room. (Piser never completed his bibliography, and upon his death his notes were destroyed; we were told that this had been done at his explicit request.)

It was at FISTFA meetings that APA-F was begun, the first of the weekly apas. It was soon imitated by fans in Los Angeles; soon both APA-F and APA-L had transcontinental memberships. The rapid feedback afforded by weekly apas lured into fanzine writing many New York fans whose activity had until then been limited to clubs and conventions. The idea spread to other regions, and took various permutations. Perhaps its most lasting fruit was MinneApa, a tri-weekly local apa in the Twin Cities in which an entire generation of aspiring professionals began their literary apprenticeships. In June 1966 I graduated from Columbia, and in September of that year enlisted in the U.S. Army. For a couple of years my links with New York Fandom were limited, and when I returned to Columbia to attend library school in July 1968 it was to an entirely different fan scene.

But that's another story... ☼

☞ The history of New York fandom is one of the most complex to follow, not only during the 1960s, but in other decades as well. Next is an article by one of New York's earliest fans, Dave Kyle. Previously, Dave has described some of the intrigues of New York-area fandoms, but this time he writes of an era before there even was a fandom.

I was born in the second month of 1919. I'm a white-haired old man now (1996) and inside my head are swirling mists of memory of my first decade of life. I'm trying today to peer behind those curtains in my brain and to recall and to examine and to write about events of those ten years, not just for *Mimosa* but for me and my children as well. I'm curious to know: when did my science fiction life begin — and how?

Not quite ten years after I appeared on this earth, Buck Rogers awoke from his sleep in the comic pages of America and gave millions of people a vision of the 25th century. And for me, too. But what was my life like before I met Buck?

I was raised in the roaring twenties. Airships and airplanes were evolving, experimental radio broadcasting was developing rapidly beyond the crystal set and pictures which silently moved were sometimes in color and occasionally squawking. I saw maps of the canals on Mars and I played a piano by pumping pedals with my feet. I heard music out of boxes with wax cylinders and/or revolving thick flat platters. And from time to time a good-humored, well-dressed man came to my house with a black bag to give me pills even if it wasn't me who was sick.

Like a coalescing solar system, 'science fiction literature' was being shaped, as the Victorian Age ended and the 1900s began, into a distinctive genre. Its life-sparks had been struck in earlier centuries, but science fiction's heart began to beat in the last century. Now, at the beginning of the end of the second millennium even as I was coming into being in 1919, its spirit was growing everywhere — unnamed but tangible, waiting to be identified and to be baptized by its modern father, Gernsback.

In retrospect it is so very difficult for me to comprehend that the giant in the science fiction magazine field, the one who recognized the unique niche and created scientifiction (scientific fiction) and science fiction with its fandom, Hugo Gernsback, rose and fell within a decade — from 1926 to 1936. This historical fact is almost incomprehensible — only ten years, ten years which shaped my life as well as the lives of so many of my friends.

During that decade when I was a skinny child, from almost the first to the last days of the twenties, my mother and I spent many weeks during the winter in Florida, sent there by my father for our health. Those times were a prelude to my entrance into the worlds of science fiction. My much older brother stayed north in school. The two most important activities while we were there, usually in Indian River, a suburb of Miami, for me were reading and watching the weekly movie program. I very much remember Indian River because I was branded by the sun on my very first day of arrival and spent a week recovering from the burns. Saturday mornings I was permitted to go to the theater for the early matinee which was designed to appeal to the kids — and naturally I was captivated by the exciting serials, adventure films which were the forerunners of the science and fantasy films to come. At other times I was encouraged to buy books, though not magazines. It was in the book department of Burdine's huge department store in downtown Miami that I

found most of my bliss, looking for the latest Tom Swift book.

In home town Monticello, N.Y., as I was learning to read, there was a local 'movie house'. In the early twenties, films were projected on a portable screen in the meeting hall, called The Lyceum. The big, white, rectangular barn of a building was the popular site for all local entertainment, especially for the inter-village basketball rivalry where the court was cleared and the folding chairs pushed back against the walls. I remember the fascination of the prehistoric scenes of *The Lost World* while the piano set an exciting mood. From then on, the cinema for me was a dramatic magic carpet supplementing the printed word. Unfortunately, movies were a rare event for me, as they were for most people. In retrospect I remember longing hopelessly to see Fritz Lang's silent German films, *The Girl in the Moon* and *Metropolis*, about which I read and saw photographs. However, it was the more prevalent themes of adventure which fascinated me — something the cinema could do so well for just five or ten cents. Fantasy films and war stories and aviation films were merely part of all adventure stories for me when my hero on the silver screen was Douglas Fairbanks and his swashbuckling was the rage. Fantasy films were rare and science fiction films were virtually non-existent. Their times would come, so it was the book store and the library which shaped my imaginative life.

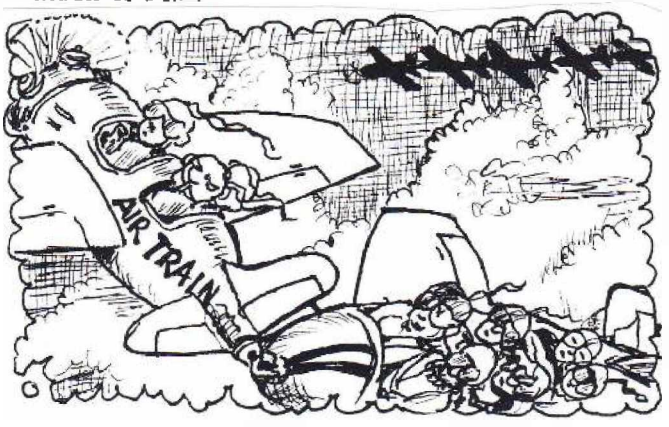
During that decade, as I progressed in learning and my knowledge grew, I was inevitably moving along a track toward the passion of my life — science fiction. But, strange to contemplate in this day and age as our century draws to a close, there was no such thing called 'science fiction', not even in 1926 after Hugo Gernsback started *Amazing Stories*. (My second decade began in 1929 still unaware of 'science fiction'.)

How did I identify this fiction as a boy which would change my pattern of thinking? Many stories I read were more than mere grown-up fairy tales.

When I was little, before I could barely read, the cow jumped over the moon; Dorothy was whirled away into another land; a rabbit fell down a hole in the ground and visited an animated pack of cards; a little girl walked through a mirror to a different place; some tiny people called Brownies were everywhere in our house. These were among fairy tales read to me by my mother. As I grew older, I found that fairy tales were for adults, too. In books I could travel in a vehicle around the moon where the cow once jumped. I could take a trip, not in a pea-green boat, but in a not-yet-invented atomic submarine. Still later, I even found the first men on the moon and learned that Martians were our enemy.

For the most part, quite naturally, my first readings were works of juvenile fiction. However, I was given a book collection which did for me then what Gernsback later did for me — it gave me a sense of wonder and stretched my imagination way, way out to the stars. The collection was the set of *The Books of Knowledge*, a passport to our entire world and far beyond our solar system. I was utterly fascinated by every feature in the books. Every story and poem and article and picture together were in so many ways more important to my education than formal school learning. The fairy tales and magic kingdoms were there, but even more interesting were the stories of reality and the science and the history lessons, about the past and the present and the expected future which left me hungering for answers to new questions and ideas and for the realities-beyond-reality. Inspired by the sections about astronomy, I took from the family attic my father's transit theodolite, his surveying instrument, and pointing it into the night skies like a telescope, saw Saturn and its rings. For the first, awe-inspiring time I was a traveler in space. Over and over, those large, slick, quality-printed pages stimulated me, gifted me with what I would come to know as a Gernsbackian spirit and a sense of wonder.

Those Knowledge books, with their dark blue bindings and silvery embossing, convinced me that the future was even more wondrous than what Tom Swift, juvenile literature's heroic boy inventor, was showing me. Beyond all doubt, I knew that in my future I would travel in flying trains, view lost civilizations, own an electric rifle, see pictures from a wireless box, swallow pills which would keep me from dentists, and perhaps, before my death in the next century, see a real rocket ship and actually shake the hand of a human who had walked on the moon or Mars.



My wide-ranging reading became an amalgam of subjects light and serious, the juvenile and the adult, fiction and non-fiction. Particularly influential in shaping my tastes was newspaper publisher W. R. Hearst's *The American Weekly* which so often had sensational scientific or pseudo-scientific articles about interplanetary speculations and other provocative subjects. The weekly section came with the Sunday papers. My priority was first to devour the comic pages (regrettably before the advent of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon). Many, many years later I was thrilled to learn that A. Merritt had been the principal editor responsible for such subject matter.

When reading became a fixed habit, adventure stories were very much my favorites. I loved the big books with the large type and the full-page, colorful illustrations by the great artists of the day, such as N. C. Wyeth and Arthur Rackham. *Treasure Island* and *Drums*, with artwork glued to the cover, stick in my mind like beautiful literary landmarks along the way. And pointing toward my future were certain fictitious characters such as the Englishman/savage Lord Greystoke and the American John Carter, Virginian aristocrat, both at my elbow steering me into new dimensions. But most of all, there was my contemporary hero, the youth with whom I really could relate, Tom Swift, boy inventor.

At the time, in the late twenties when I was reading a lot, there was a dearth of the early science fiction material. Adventure stories were what interested me the most, and all the unmarked science fiction which I came across were simply special kinds of adventure. I was only just discovering magazines, such as *The American Boy* and *Boy's Life* and *The Open Road for Boys*, with occasional fantasy tales. Yes, girls obviously were considered only customers.

From the family's set of Harvard Classics, I read Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift and other popular writers. There was Jules Verne and his *voyages extraordinaire*. There was H. G. Wells and his *scientific romances*. Like the Tom Swift novels, I didn't know they were 'science fiction' and nobody else did either.

As I've indicated, I had no name for the material I read. I had no one understandable description for my literary dreams until Gernsback invented the term in my second decade. Just as 'Buck Rogers' became the popular label for the uniformed general public in the 1930s and 40s for the as-yet-unacknowledged term of 'science fiction', so did 'Tom Swift' serve that purpose in the earlier decade.

As a boy, I used the label 'like Tom Swift' or 'Roy Rockwood stuff' or 'an Edgar Rice Burroughs kind of adventure'. I'm sure that before my time the names of 'H. Rider Haggard' or 'Edgar Allen Poe', maybe even 'Conan Doyle', were used descriptively like Verne's or Wells'. Incidentally, the Roy Rockwell juvenile novels which dated back almost a decade before my birth were barely known to me, not being contemporary with the Tom Swift books.

However, there was one type of adventure which completely dominated my interests. Anything about airships, airplanes, flying machines. The half dozen years which preceded my puberty were preoccupied with the technological and death-dealing romance of aviation. Charles A. Lindbergh, 'The Lone Eagle', had flown the Atlantic Ocean. The skies were the new frontier! I was utterly captivated by the heroic feats of the flying warriors of the World War (the original) and their incredible machines which were only a few years beyond the days of the flimsy, motorized box kites. I dreamt of those dashing times when the knights of the air met in thrilling combat. I studied the vintage planes. I read the biographies of the aces. I soaked up the lore of that bloody conflict. I built model airplanes and got my picture in the newspaper with my huge model of the NC-4, the Navy's flying boat which flew around the world, a crowd of other kids around me. I made small paper airplanes, decorated them in garish colors, and invented a game with them.

I found the German side somehow more attractive, perhaps because they seemed more romantic, more innovative, and rather more sinister, with their flashy designs and black Maltese Crosses. Von Richtofen was my superman of the day. 'The Red Baron' — what an image he made!

One long week in 1927 or 1928, while staying in the Pennsylvania Hotel in New York City, I was ill with some kind of wintery disease. I was there with my mother on one of our not infrequent visits to Manhattan, a hundred-mile trip by hired car and Erie Railroad out of Middletown, N.Y., which was no easy undertaking. The hotel on 33rd Street — right across from the stone temple which was the Pennsylvania Railroad Station — was not unfamiliar to me (I've previously described, in *Mimosa* 13, my encounter with the stage show *Dracula*, which happened on another of those trips), but we had never stayed so long before. It was in that hotel-cum-hospital ward during that dreary week that I discov-

ered the hotel had a library, and in that library I found a book by Floyd Gibbons entitled *The Red Knight of Germany*. I relished that book. Despite those questionable convalescent days, when my mother never really relented from imposing the sentence of sickness upon me, I took off on dawn patrols anyhow, stalking my prey and returning to camaraderie with coffee and wine and cigarettes and song complete with devil-may-care salutes and medals on tunics.

My aeronautical enchantment led me to build a miniature aerodrome in the back yard with landing lights which I could turn on at night from my back bedroom in our house. I still relive the exciting aerial moments of the motion picture *Wings* which won in 1928 the first Academy Award. I saw it in New York City at the Criterion Theater on Times Square (with my mother). I am still impressed by the dramatic enlargement of the silver screen which unexpectedly doubled in size for the aerial battles, as curtains were drawn back, and the full orchestra, drums rattling away like gunfire, vibrated throughout the huge auditorium and into my chest as I sat in my deep, plush seat. It wasn't until a year later that I saw or heard about the German UFA production of *The Rocket to the Moon (The Girl in the Moon)* and never knew that Gernsback's *Science Wonder Stories* was first appearing on the newsstands in 1929. Otherwise, I wonder, might not my aerodrome have become a space port?

When my second ten years of life began in that historical science fiction year of 1929, I almost made the jump into the genesis of science fiction with Gernsback when *Amazing* bred the *Wonders* and they bred *Astounding*. But that's the second part of my progress into fandom and already partly mentioned in *Mimosa* #7 in my article "A Hugo Gernsback Author."

And so it has come to pass that I have lived a long life and have seen a certain type of literature be identified, popularized and spread throughout our world's culture. I discovered it when it was a seed newly grown and blossoming. I sniffed its fragrance, was intoxicated by its vapors, and showed the unique flower to everyone. I wanted everyone to enjoy and understand. I was derided at first, then reluctantly heard, grudgingly accepted for my enthusiasms, and finally found my beloved science fiction honored by everyone everywhere.

My boyhood mission has been completed: science fiction is acknowledged and respected. It was a long fight and an exciting one, with my side triumphant in the end. I can look back with pleasure and satisfaction to those glorious days when Tom Swift was my brother and Tarzan and John Carter were my companions. Soon to appear were Buck and Flash as my interplanetary comrades, then the two Docs (Savage and Smith) taking me into the jungles and into the stars — soon, too, the awesome worlds of Huxley and Orwell, the visions of Stapleton and van Vogt and Roddenberry. And the personal friendships with Clarke and Asimov and Bradbury.

What do we have today? Too much, yet not enough. Everywhere one turns there is 'sci-fi' — from Saturday morning TV superheros and super monsters to the super special-effects of the movies and television. Science fiction has become indistinguishable from fantasy — on cereal boxes, video games, and the classrooms.

Once I was starved — now I'm overfed. Once I found mental nourishment by careful harvesting in obscure places — now I am stuffed with empty-calories forced upon me from everywhere and every direction.

I don't have to proselytize as I once did — everyone has heard of science fiction nowadays. Instead, I have a new and unhappy task — to explain that not all science fiction is good science fiction, that fireworks without thoughts are not really, truly mentally exciting but deadly dull. Science fiction was once great fun and often profound. In the old days I had to seek out 'science fiction' — good, bad, or indifferent — and the hunt and discovery was absolutely thrilling. Nowadays I have to seek cover, avoiding the overwhelming mass of bad and indifferent stuff and nonsense. Once I defended as worthy that unknown thing called science fiction and strove to make it known — nowadays I have to defend that thing called science fiction as being worthy because it is so well known — so well known as being mostly entertaining, escapist junk.

So, I look back at the past. My first decade was a promising beginning to the glory days. The next decade, my terrific teen years, would be the best of all, and that story is next to be told. In my opening ten years, I only just touched the real romance of science fiction. The orchestra was just tuning up — the thundering music was yet to come.

Olaf Stapleton in 1930 spoke of the music mankind makes, "...a matrix of storms and stars... we may go forward together with laughter in our hearts... thankful for the past..." ☼

From a tale of discovery in New York of the 1920s, it's on to present day United Kingdom. The following is another tale of discovery, and seems to parallel the way that many other fans (ourselves included) became immersed, in stages, into science fiction fandom.

In our first encounters with 'real' writers most of us are probably a little awe-struck, and easily impressed, but fannish Maturity would imply that we grow out of it. Okay, it's easy to get blase about meeting Terry Pratchett (at least over here it is) when he's been GoH at a dozen cons but at the same time there is, as Janice Eisen says in a letter to *Mimosa* 17, a sense of community engendered by the close association of pros and fans. This is still *SF* fandom, after all, and however tenuous the link sometimes gets, it never disappears entirely.

Not only that, but I have had some great times mixing with the pros as much as the fans. Iain Banks is a case in point. Although he wasn't the first big name Skiffy writer I ever met (that was Bob Shaw at a signing session), he was probably the first I got to know. It was my first convention, Novacon 16 in 1986, conveniently held in Coventry where I had just started college, and a gang of us from the recently founded Coventry Polytechnic SF Group turned up on the Friday night expecting...well, I don't know what we were expecting. Simo had been to Hitchhikers Guide cons I think, but the rest of us were all true neos, and didn't know anybody.

Unfortunately the bookroom closed at 6, so we adjourned to the bar, where I met somebody I *did* know: my local SF bookdealer from back home, Peter Pinto, who obviously knew his way around these events. I decided to ask for an introduction, as there was somebody I particularly wanted to meet: Iain Banks, whose *The Bridge* had become my first ever hardcover purchase just a week earlier. Peter didn't know Iain, but he knew a man who did.

"Do you see the guy across there with the beard?" I did. "Well, ask the man with his back to you talking to him. He will know." Okay.

"Excuse me, sorry to interrupt," I said, very politely, "but I've been told that you can introduce me to Iain Banks."

"No, but he can," he replied, indicating the aforementioned guy with a beard. Okay, so I turn to him to be told:

"Hi, I'm Iain Banks and he's John Jarrold."

At this distance I don't know if I behaved like a total neo after that or not, but now I knew somebody and from talking to Iain I got to meet a few more people as they gravitated towards him. I later learned that this was only Iain's second or third convention and he was still very much a newcomer, too.

Something else I remember from that convention is buying some books by authors unknown to me previously simply because they were at the convention and could sign my copies. It sounds like a strange way to discover new writers but I certainly got lucky with a couple of them: Lisa Tuttle and Kim Stanley Robinson.

* * *

The reason I knew about conventions at all was the British Science Fiction Association, so a few years and a couple of fanzines after that debut I became joint editor of its fanzine *Vector* (and later BSFA Co-Ordinator) which gave me new and different opportunities to meet with the pros. I started interviewing authors; the first was Clive Barker published in *Critical Wave*, which is a strange experience in itself. (Interviewing, I mean, not *Critical Wave*, though I'm sure Steve & Martin probably

have a few tales to tell. Like who was behind the spoof *Wavering Criticism*?) It gave me an excuse to approach these people without coming over like a nervous neo. It got me a fascinating two-hour conversation in private with Howard Waldrop, tea at her home with Josephine Saxton, and drunk in several places with Jenny Jones. It worked fine mostly, until the night I saw Chris Priest in The Wellington, and went across to talk to him about our recent correspondence over a certain Mr. Ellison. Chris and I were then joined by his companion, a woman I didn't know, although she looked familiar. Chris introduced her:

"This is Leigh Kennedy."

"Oh." I was stunned and I think I did something stupid like go down on my knees. This woman had written two of the best books I had, and have, ever read (and re-read many times over). Poor Leigh was embarrassed but I don't think anybody else noticed, and we later had a more sensible conversation. As I left she asked me to send her a copy of my fanzine.

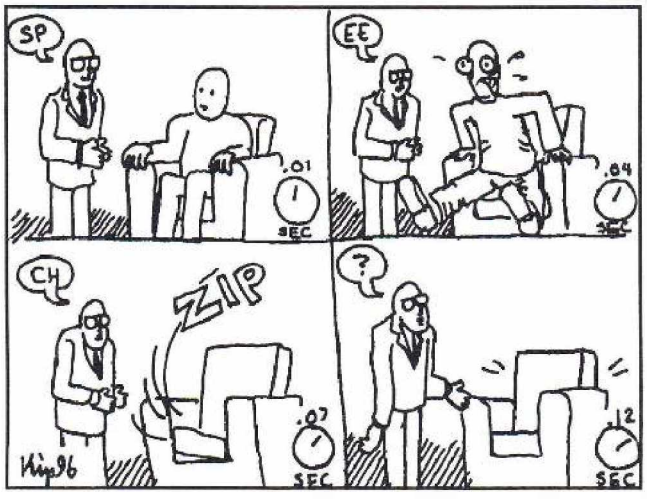
Chris Priest, too, is, in his way, uncomfortable in public. He won't make a speech at a con, though he has consented to a stage interview. So when Paul Kincaid asked him to be his best man, Chris's response was "I won't have to make a speech, will I?" On the day itself, several of us speculated on the Best Man's Interviews:

Paul Kincaid: So how long have you known me, Chris?

Chris Priest: About ten years or so.

Paul: Do you have any embarrassing stories to tell that Maureen hasn't heard yet?

Sadly it wasn't to be, as Chris dived for cover at any hint of the word speech.



* * *

Despite my reaction when I met Leigh Kennedy, I quickly learned that authors are people too. Although I still like having some of my favorite books signed, it is mostly the ones I consider friends who write the crazy dedications, like Mary Gentle. So I persuaded her to be GoH at Chronoclasm by agreeing that she wouldn't have to make a speech; I would interview her instead. (Mary's way of breaking down the fan-pro divide was to make me suffer as well, as if I wasn't having enough trouble with that convention.) And Geoff Ryman, too, who wrote a piece for the Programme Book about another guest, Colin Greenland. Both wrote very personal messages of differing sorts in my books.

Mary's publishers had arranged a bookstore signing on the Friday afternoon of the con, and so I met up with her at the shop to find a local radio crew and a handful of readers. I'd brought the proof of Mary's latest, *Rats & Gargoyles*, sent to me to prepare the interview, and this provoked much fascination amongst those who had never seen a proof. One man, flicking through it, went as far as to comment on the author's inability to spell(!). Mary remained calm, but when she returned the book to me I found it inscribed as 'Drats & Giggles'.

Another advance copy I received was Geoff Ryman's *Was*, which I took to a publisher's party that Geoff attended. He'd just signed it when someone saw and asked for a look. Suddenly my copy was being passed around, and it was a good ten minutes before I was able to discover that Geoff had written:

"Dear Kev,

You Bastard! I Love you, how could you break my heart like that?

Oh well, cordially yours,

Geoff."

I know, Geoff, I should have expected something like that. Okay, maybe not quite like that, but still crazy. What about all these publishing types who don't know Geoff's humour? What about the woman I'd been chatting up, who perhaps knew that Geoff is gay, but didn't know me? Or maybe Geoff had noticed that.....?

* * *

The non-fans I talk to about conventions are often amazed that I mix with these writers, especially the big names like Barker, Pratchett, and Banks, but these are mostly just people who have been around at the cons I attend, that's all. And as with

the Mary Gentle signing it is often when the non-fans enter fannish circles that the funniest incidents occur. Iain Banks was at the centre of one of these when he launched his erotic novel about whisky, *Carnal Drams** (hmm, maybe that would have been a better book?), at the Edinburgh Book Festival a few years ago. A few of us had found our way into his reading and signing, and afterwards convened in the beer tent. Iain's parents had come across for the launch so we left him to entertain them, after arranging to meet again later. I ran into him at the bar, however. He broke off his conversation to greet me.

"Kev! What are ye having?" I declined since I was buying drinks for some of the assembled fans too. "Go on, have a whiskey," he insisted and ordered before I could say anything.

After a brief chat, Iain then took his drinks away and the guy he'd been talking to before my arrival turned to me and asked:

"Do you know him then?"

I still don't know what the best way of dealing with questions that dumb really is.

* * *

It also makes it easier at work to talk about the weekend I've just had at Novacon, very much a relaxacon, in terms of the authors there. Bob Shaw, Harry Harrison, Dave Langford, Brian Aldiss, Chris Evans, Rob Holdstock, Freda Warrington, Iain Banks have all been around Novacons at least for years, but the younger writers were there too: Graham Joyce, Peter Hamilton, and Stephen Baxter.

Of course, there is the down side to knowing these people. At a Fantasycon some years ago I'd been talking in the bar to M John Harrison and his partner, SF editor Jane Johnson, prior to Mike doing a reading from the then unfinished novel *The Course of the Heart*. When Mike began his reading we followed him in, and I naturally sat with Jane. This was a mistake. Mike finished reading and invited questions. Silence, so he looked at me and repeated the question: "Any questions? Kev, you must have a question." Help.

* * *

There are still authors I'd really love to meet, both as an admirer/fan of their work; I'd like to interview them because I think they could be interesting people: Martin Millar, Terry Bisson, Elizabeth Wurtzel. And there are some authors I'd love to meet again. But I don't go to conventions to meet the Guest of Honour, I go to met my friends, and occasionally my friends happen to have been Guests of Honour. I think that's fair.

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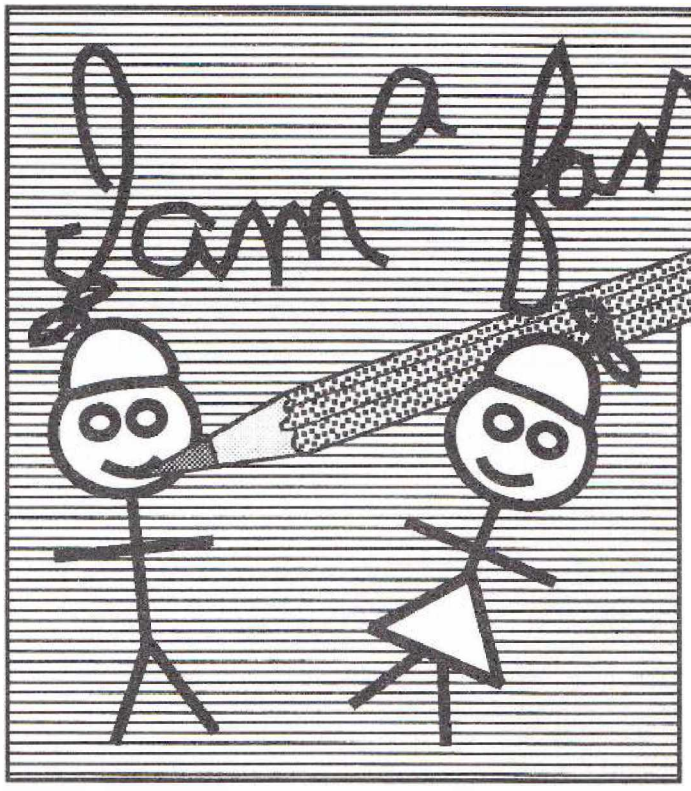
* Actually *Canal Dreams*.

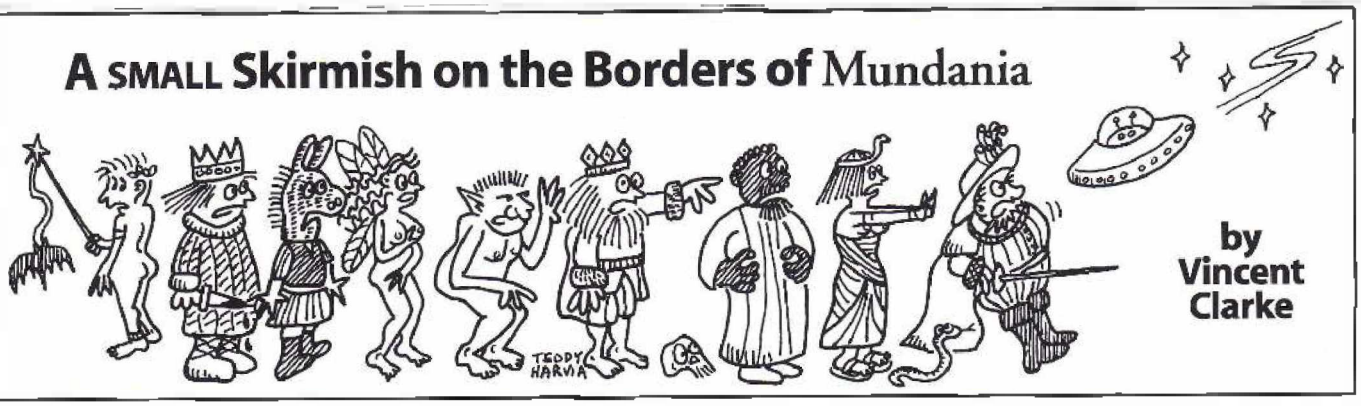


Artist Credits

Ray Allard — pages 2, 32, 33, 34
Sheryl Birkhead — pages 3, 4, 17, 20, 39, 50
Kurt Erichsen — pages 25, 26, 27
Brad Foster — page 40
Alexis Gilliland — page 46
Ian Gunn — front & back covers
Teddy Harvia — pages 18, 19, 22, 24
Joe Mayhew — pages 5, 6, 7, 11, 12
William Rotsler — pages 42, 45, 49
Diana Stein — pages 35, 37, 38
Charlie Williams — pages 8, 9, 10, 29
Kip Williams — pages 15, 16

☞ Here's another story about British fandom, this one from the 1950s. That decade might be considered the Golden Age for British fandom; it featured a large number of hyperactive and very talented fans: Ken Slater, Sandy Sanderson, Ron Bennett, Terry Jeeves, Eric Bentcliffe, Ethel Lindsay, Chuck Harris, Arthur Thomson... One of the most active of all was Vincent Clarke, who among his other accomplishments, was one of the driving forces behind the founding in 1958 of the British Science Fiction Association. Vincent's new article for *Mimosa* remembers an incident that just *may* have influenced that event.

A SMALL Skirmish on the Borders of Mundania



by Vincent Clarke

It all happened just before Xmas, 1957, and why it happened at that late date I just don't know. It had been years since I'd had any passionate regard for science fiction. Fandom was a Way of Life. And yet, this paragraph in the prestigious Sunday newspaper, *The Observer*, irritated me.

It was in a column by a very respected film critic, C.A. Lejeune, and mentioned in passing details of the policy of the New Shakespeare Theatre in Liverpool. I don't know if the NST gave performances of Shakespeare and Ibsen and Tennessee Williams, but Miss Lejeune mentioned that on Sunday nights, they let their hair down and showed films to the New Shakespeare Film Society.

They retained, though, a strong sense of propriety. A brochure was issued giving policy and general rules, and one was quoted:

> "*There will be no war films in the present Hollywood-Pinewood sense of the word — or films of violence, horror, science-fiction or exaggerated sex.*"

I don't remember if I had a mental query or two about 'exaggerated sex', but the thought of SF being included amongst the damned gave me, inexplicably, a sudden passionate desire to *do something*. So I hauled out the old typewriter, inserted a stencil, and wrote a general letter to a dozen or so friends. I quoted the pertinent paragraphs, said "this obviously calls for indignant letters," and advised sending them to the NST via Miss Lejeune at the *Observer*.

I then spat on my palms, and did my own little bit. "...I am not, of course, acquainted with the personnel of your Society. It may, for instance, consist exclusively of old ladies with strongly religious views, who would naturally tend to be critical of this particular sub-section of the Arts.

"Given, however, that your Society comprises a normal cross-section of those interested in the Cinema as an Art, like myself, I must say that I can see nothing irreconcilable between this and an interest in science fiction, in print or on the screen. Your classification of science fiction with distasteful sensationalism is insulting. ... Do you really imagine that the stuff Hollywood (and, alas, this country) so often issues under the label of science fiction is unreservedly welcome..." etc., etc.

I then sat back and awaited results. I didn't have long to wait. John Brunner sent a copy of his letter virtually by return:

> "...I am disturbed and annoyed to see that yet one more wholesale generalisation has been made about science-fiction. At the time of the purge of obscene literature in pocket-books a few years back, one grew accustomed to this sort of thing from back-street newsagents; to find it perpetuated in the leading Sunday newspaper is altogether another question..." etc., etc.

Archie Mercer, an active fan from the early 1950s to — as it turned out — the early 1980s, also contributed:

> "...And then there are classics, such as *Things to Come*, which one would have thought was just the type of film to deserve showing to a serious cinematic society — surely to ban this sort of thing on the strength of 'The Vampire from Umpteen Thousand Megacycles' is absurd..."

Sid Birchby, a pre-War fan, also had his say:

> "...As one who has for thirty years been

reading science fiction with no marked crumbling of morals, I find the association [with horror, etc.] odd. ... After all, the mere fact that a film deals with, say, a monster emerging from a flying saucer, does not make it 'science fiction', any more than a handful of classic allusions make *Titus Andronicus* a great play..." etc., etc.

Sid was sufficiently moved by the occasion to sign his letter to these snobs 'B.Sc.Tech., A.M.I.C.E.'

And there was distant thunder from Northern Ireland, from one Walter A. Willis:

"It is sad when Hollywood producers bill cheap horror films as 'science fiction', but it is alarming when a film society lets itself be taken in. Your attitude is all too reminiscent of that of literary snobs to the film itself, twenty years ago..."

Other fans rallied around, including Ron Bennett and Manchester's Dave Cohen. Ron was the only fan to get a direct reply from Miss Lejeune, possibly because he addressed her as 'Mr.':

"...Although the subject [of SF films] doesn't fascinate me myself (perhaps because I'm a woman), I know what very wide appeal it has, and feel that the Wanamaker people [huh??] are misguided in putting a tabu (if in fact they *have* done so) on all films of this kind..." etc., etc.

And finally, there was a reply from the New Shakespeare Theatre Club itself, to all of the individuals who'd written to them via. Miss Lejeune:

"...appreciate your kindness in making suggestions... The first General Meeting of the New Shakespeare Film Society was held yesterday, when the question of the content of films was briefly referred to and it was clearly the feeling of the meeting that each film would be judged on its merits ... any serious science fiction film of good quality would not be excluded solely on account of its subject matter..."

# # # #

So that was the end of a tempest in a tea-cup. But — looking at the old APAzine from which most of the above was taken, I've had a few thoughts.

Sid's use of those letters after his name...

John Brunner wrote on World Science Fiction Society-headed notepaper...

The triumphant result, puny though the struggle was, of concerted action...

And the fact that this occurred in November 1957.

It was the very next month that I wrote a rabble-rousing piece so stirring that at the next Convention, mid-1958, various fans, principally Terry Jeeves and Eric Bentcliffe, got together and formed the BSFA — the British Science Fiction Association. British fans then had the headed note-paper, the voice to represent them, the works. The BSFA is still going, after 37 years.

Is it possible that the original source, the straw which did the damage, that eventually led to formation of the BSFA, was the collective fuddy-duddies of the New Shakespeare Film Society?

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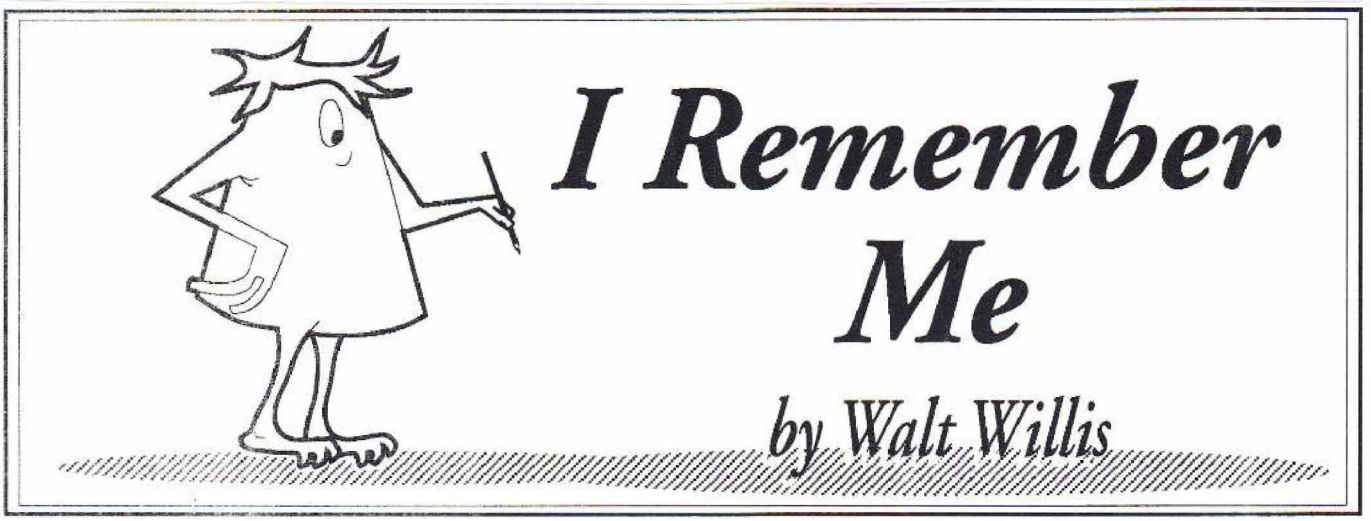
☞ Another reason that the 1950s could be considered as fandom's Golden Age is because of Irish Fandom. Some people believe that Irish Fandom was really just a segment of British Fandom, but it had its own unique characteristics, as well as characters: James White, George Charters, John Berry, and Bob Shaw. The centrum of Irish Fandom was located at Oblique House, the home of Walter and Madeleine Willis in Belfast. Walt returns now, with another installment of the best from his correspondence file, this time about the discovery of an amazing art talent and a revelation from John Brunner.



I Remember Me

by Walt Willis

I discovered Arthur Thomson the way the Law of Gravity discovered Isaac Newton. One day in October 1954, as I was sitting under a deadline for *Hyphen* #11, the apple fell on me in the shape of a handwritten letter from a strange address in London. There was, as I remember, nothing particularly striking about the letter itself, just a subscription to *Hyphen*, but the writer had, as a mere afterthought apparently, scribbled a little drawing at the bottom, and another on the back of the envelope.

I can at least claim the credit for recognising genius when it comes up and hits me in the eye. After years of headshaking over the laboured drawing and threadbare ideas of most fan artists, my old eyes popped out of their worn sockets at the sight of this easy fluent style and the original sense of humour that it seemed so perfectly to express. I replied by return of post, full of enthusiasm; I didn't even wait to get home from work, but wrote from the office, so I don't have a copy of the letter. And I don't even have Arthur's letter, either, because I sent it back to him to do the cartoon properly; it appeared in *Hyphen* 11 — page 23, if anyone wants to gaze in awe at the first explosion of ATom in fandom.

Arthur's second letter arrived in an enormous envelope containing two big drawing books filled with cartoons, and great sheaves of loose pages. He told me later that when he got my letter, he sat down and did about 30 drawings straight off, thereby proving that for generating energy in fans, egoboo has carbohydrates beaten to a frazzle.

I also learned (from six handwritten pages of ruled foolscap) that he was already experimenting with stencils, which a friend at work had run off for him, and that...

> I'm Scotch myself, born and bred. Came to London about 1931. So I'm not a mercurial unworldly crazy Scotchman (wife's English, a steadying influence) and whiskey is my Ghod (scotch of course). But my grandfather came from Northern Ireland (could we be related, huh?). Not me and my grandfather...oh, you've got it.

Later, on 29th November, Arthur wrote to report his first meeting with Chuck Harris.

> Well, I think the visit to Chuck's was a success. We hit it off together from the word go. Chuck is one of the nicest fellows I've met and I think we can become firm friends. I'll say again, we really got on well. Going to meet him in London Saturday and have a look at Gestetners.
>
> When Chuck found out that I can write and draw with either hand, he almost chained me up to the Gestetner with a pile of stencils to work on.

Later:

> Met Chuck up London Saturday morn-

ing, and we tromped round town, gazing in Gestetner office windows; that was all we could do as the damn places were closed. So we went and had something to eat and a good natter. We got on terrifically. We just seemed to blend in with each other. I think we shall probably combine and become a 'gestalt'.

Through reading most fanzines for the past year in a few months, I've sort of caught up with fandom and now I seem to be waiting with my tongue hanging out, for things happening. Can't wait for 'Ketcon', can't wait to do more stuff for *Hyphen*, can't wait to meet other fans. I must be bitten pretty badly by the virus.

Notice how my writing gets worse. I am doing this at work, and keeping my head swivelling about for the foreman.

It can't have been long after this that Arthur was deputed by his mates to approach the management about some dispute. He was so impressive that the management put him in charge. This is one of the episodes I had in mind when writing *The Enchanted Convention*, which is basically about how fannish skills can help in the mundane world.

I was going to go on about the arrival on the scene of John Berry, but I came across this letter from John Brunner, which seems timely in view of John's sudden death at Intersection. It sets out his relationship with fandom. The story to which he refers, "The Watchers," had appeared in my fanzine, *Slant*. It was John's first published work.

- - - - -

Pilot Officer J.K.H Brunner
Royal Air Force Bletchley

Dear Walt,

Nice to see you again, even if it was only at odd moments [at the convention] throughout the day and night. I meant to say quite a lot of things to you, chiefly apologies for not writing in such a long time, and inquiries as to whether this Aussie publication was going to use "The Watchers" after all, but still more mostly to say the hell with that letter of mine to you a while ago which got into *Hyphen* where it had no real reason to be, because it'll take me months to live that down.

I seem to recall that in it I was arguing that the divorcing of sf and fandom was a Bad Thing. Walt, I was nuts. Sf is a good excuse and that's all. I've seen the light, I'm saved. I can only blame the Air Force and a bad attack of rationalization for my earlier and indiscreet statements.

This weekend has reminded me of what I'd forgotten — that there are people in the world who are sane enough to be crazy. I wish to Ghod I could find the time and the money to get right up to my neck in fandom and then duck my head. It's like finding a friend after hating the world for twenty years; it just feels *right* — and it took this weekend to wake me up to it.

In '52, when I was dabbling my toe in fandom, I was a kid fresh out of school. I'd written "Thou Good and Faithful" and hadn't got to worry about selling something else for pocket money until it ran out. But fresh out of school and missing my few close friends, I was feeling unsociable more than somewhat. The Air Force has made me hate the world more still. In between, I've tried to find a niche I could fit into in jazz fandom — but there's nothing in jazz fandom that I can find that even approximates to Fandom with a capital F. I've been called an intellectual masquerading as a lowbrow. Not true: I know my erudition shows sometimes, but it's part of me as I am and not an acquired, deliberate gloss, and nowhere, barring fandom, is there a place where I believe I can be me.

I think I ought to fit after all, despite everything; I think I've been trying to exist in my intellect too long, and it can't be done. Next January, I get out of this insane rat-race, and then I am going to spend a year at home writing (if I make 500 pounds out of it that year I shall go on) and *fanning*. I like fans. I feel that for too long I've been trying to live on an intellectual level way beyond my years. But that's bound to be a pretense any way you look at it. I'm tired of it, and I know it, and I think that at long last I may really be starting to grow up. Congratulate me on my first birthday.

You know, this is rapidly becoming a soul-searching expose ('The Truth About Brunner'). Hell with it *all* — and fen, you have been warned. I'm getting in.

# # #

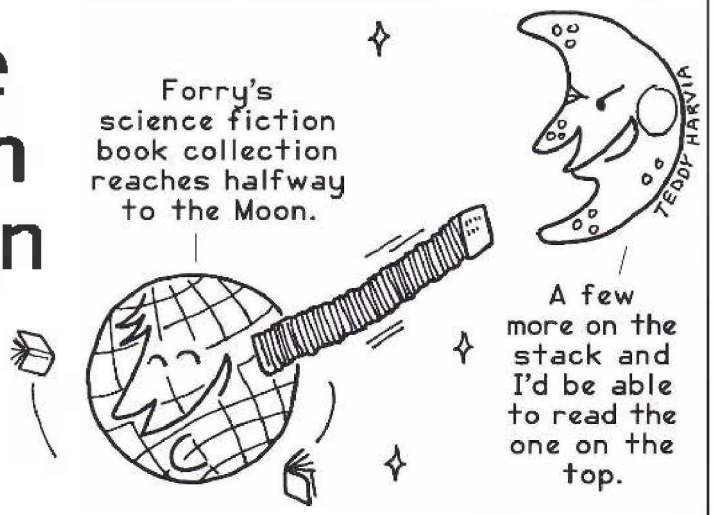
Next: John Berry and Irish Fandom

☞ Time now for the third in Forry Ackerman's mini-autobiographical series. In *Mimosa* 17, Forry described the early 1940s, from the second World Science Fiction Convention through his science fictional activities during the second world war. This time it's on to the post-war 1940s and the early 1950s, including the beginnings of Forry's famous science fiction collection, international fan activities, the very first Hugo Award, and more...

Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman

PART III

by Forrest J. Ackerman



People often ask me about my collection. Back in the 1940s, it was a bit smaller than it is now, but I still had 1,300 books. And when I went off to war, the question arose: What's to become of my collection? Well, when I entered the military, it looked to me like E. Everett Evans and some of the other elderly fans around town would never be called up unless there was an actual invasion of America. So I said, "In case I don't make it back, why don't you take my collection, and rent some little store front and put it in there?" When the war ended, they seemed kind of disappointed that I survived, because they were sort of looking forward to having the collection on display. At that point I said. "We don't really have to wait for me to die, you know. We can still exhibit it." And that's basically what happened. The collection became known as The Fantasy Foundation, and it was publicized at the next year's worldcon, which was in Los Angeles.

Prior to the 4th World Science Fiction Convention, the Pacificon, which was the last worldcon I ever nicknamed, we had one of the pre-con meetings up in my apartment. It was then that the question arose of who we should have as a Guest of Honor. I don't think I've ever told this tale — it's one that made me very unhappy at the time, but I guess it made me a great hero with the feminists of the day. I said, "Well, what do you say if we have our Guest of Honor for the first time be a female?" The leading lady writer of the time was Catherine Moore, who lived right there in L.A. "You know, we might also have a female editor, Mary Gnaedinger, who edited *Fantastic Mysteries*. And maybe we could get Margaret Brundage, the great artist."

But right away, somebody complained: "No, you can't! Henry Kuttner is going to be very upset — you have to have Kuttner along with his wife."

I objected loudly. "No! That would destroy the whole notion! Kuttner should be proud, that of all the women possibilities, his wife is the one that's honored. We're not saying that she is better than he is, we're just saying she's the best woman writer of the time." But everybody hollered me down. We did have a nice substitution, though — A. E. van Vogt and his writer wife, Edna Mayne Hull. But I always felt kind of cheated, that they couldn't see it my way. And we never have had an all-female Worldcon Guest of Honor list.

But back to The Fantasy Foundation... I thought we wanted to have something to show the fans rather than just the name, so I knocked myself out — I recorded information on all 1,300 books I had at the time. I got kind of wrapped up in that, and I thought, I don't want to just enter '*The Man Who Mastered Time* by Ray Cummings' — I should tell whether it was a first edition, then I should say

who drew the cover, and then I should mention its subject matter if it's a title where you'd have no idea what the book is about, and so on. I was really going all-out. My listing got called *I Bequeath* — I said, "All these books I freely give to the world, for posterity."

Well, when the great day dawned on the day the convention began, I was the first one at the convention halls, about 8 o'clock in the morning, but I had so knocked myself out prior to the convention, that by 4 o'clock that afternoon I absolutely collapsed. I lasted just long enough to tell them, with a very halting, husky voice, about the idea of The Fantasy Foundation. After I collapsed, they took me upstairs. I was trembling all over; I was icy cold. They covered me up, and I think I passed out for a little while. That evening, at 8 o'clock, I heard Robert Bloch arriving downstairs. Over the microphone he said, "Well, folks, here I am in Los Angeles, all the way from Milwaukee. Before I left, I made three sales, that made it possible for me to be here — my overcoat, my typewriter, and my car."

It was the first time, I believe, that we had a four-day science fiction convention. Well, they carried me home, and I thought, I'll have a good night's sleep, you know, and I'll be up. But the second day of the convention went by, and the third, and the fourth... I was in bed for 19 days! It was a total physical collapse...

At about that time, it occurred to me that the term 'Worldcon' was actually a misnomer. We had been calling it the World Science Fiction Convention, but actually nobody had yet come from outside the continental U.S.A. So I proposed creating what I called the 'Big Pond Fund'. It was evident who the greatest fan in England was at the time — it was Ted Carnell. It was also evident that it would be a good idea to find a way to bring him to the next year's worldcon. You know, I honestly believed that I had only to mention it and the dollar bills would appear all over the place — we'd have a thousand bucks, and he would come.

Well, at the end of a year, I had a measly one hundred and two dollars or something like that, and I saw that altruism wasn't going to work. So I went after greed, and got a raffle going. I got Arkham House and the various magazines of the day to offer free subscriptions. I also personally put in a lot of stuff; for one dollar you had an opportunity to get the whole thing. I even disappointed a lot of my friends at Christmas; instead of giving them some kind of present, I bought five chances on their behalf. But even after the second year, I still wasn't much further ahead. We had three hundred bucks, or so, and it still wasn't enough to get Carnell over. So in the third year, I gave up on everybody else. I put in enough money, I think, out of my own pocket to get Carnell over. He finally came in 1949. And that was the end of organized fan funds, at least temporarily; the idea lay fallow for several years until the Walt Willis Fund, and then the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund started up. The second time around, it all worked!

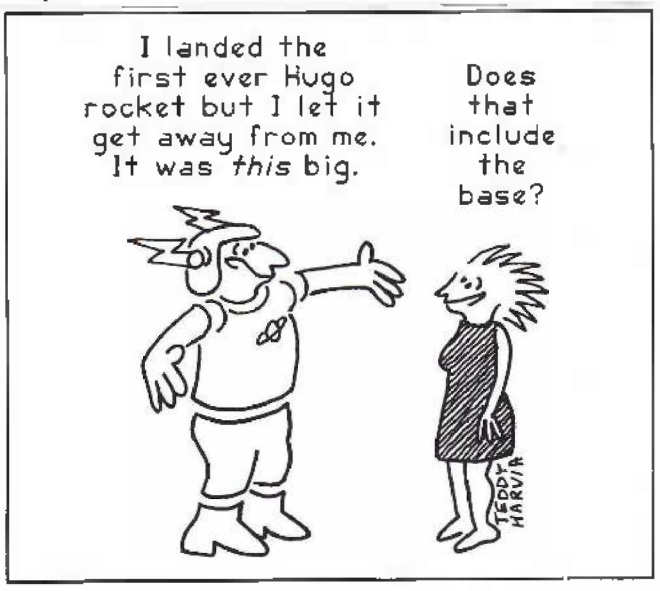
I should say at this point that not all international fan visits were the result of fan funds. In 1953, a Japanese fan named Tetsu Yano came over, using his own resources.

After the second world war, the G.I.'s stationed in Japan had been burning a lot of paperbacks. Tetsu happened by one of the times this was going on, saw a science fiction book, and grabbed it out of the flames. And then, by Japanese standards, he did a rather daring thing — he wrote a letter that was published in *Thrilling Wonder*, in which he said, 'I'm just a poor know-nothing Japanese boy bitten by the science fiction bug. Could anybody conceivably send me an old cast-off magazine?' So I sent him over some care packages, we started a correspondence, and finally I mentioned that in 1953 we were about to have what we called a Westercon. I got back quite an excited letter, in which he wrote, 'Gee, if I could manage to get there, would I be permitted to attend?' And I wrote back, '*Permitted*! Oh, my god, you would be the Guest of Honor! This would be grand! You could stay at my home; we'd be thrilled to have you!' So, somewhat later, I got a telegram that read, 'Tetsu have bought ticket, come and go. Please be waiting 29 days from now.' He had gotten on a cattle boat, I think — with just six human beings aboard. Twenty-nine days later, we were down at the dock when he arrived. The first day he was with us he was so excited — he couldn't sleep all night long. Well, he'd only planned to stay two weeks, but we kept him here six months.

He had some adventures while he was here in the U.S.A. Besides the Westercon, we also brought him to that year's World Science Fiction Convention, the 1953 Philcon. He, Wendy and I, and H. J. Campbell, the editor of the British magazine *Authen-*

tic Science Fiction, made some kind of sight as we were driving cross-country to Philadelphia. Campbell had a big, black beard, and sitting beside him was this little oriental chap. There was a time or two that I wasn't sure we were even going to make it to Philadelphia. I remember we got up to the top of a high mountain pass. My wife Wendy was driving, and our car couldn't quite make it over the top. So the three of us guys got out and pushed it to the top, and when it started going down the hill on the other side, we were all running after the car!

Another reason I'll remember that 1953 Philcon is because, at the hands of Isaac Asimov, I received the first of all Hugo Awards. And then I gave it away. What actually happened there was mis-reported, so let me use this opportunity to clear it up.



When I received the Hugo, I felt that my best years of fanning were behind me. If they only had said it was a career award, I would have felt comfortable in accepting it. But it was supposed to be for the Best Fan of the preceding year, and I was convinced that Best Fan was actually Ken Slater, over in England. I didn't really feel worthy of it. It was like giving a guy a check that doesn't belong to him, so I sort of endorsed it. I said, "I certainly appreciate this, folks, but I really believe that Ken Slater should have it." And with that, I left the stage. I really don't know who took possession of the trophy; if my life depended on it, I couldn't say. The most obvious individual would have been H. J. Campbell, who was going back home to England after the convention, and would have been in a position to deliver it to Ken Slater.

Well, when I sat back down, Wendy was *furious*. She said, "What have you *done*, Forry? You've insulted the entire convention! They voted this to you — how could you give it away??"

What can I say? When I got up there, I had said what I felt — that I didn't really deserve the award. But Wendy managed to so convince me that everybody was going to clobber Forry Ackerman, that for the only time in my life, I didn't go to the masquerade. I was just too embarrassed and upset. The next day, I crept down early because I didn't want to see anybody. I went down about six o'clock to have breakfast, and I bumped into Robert Bloch. He came over, grabbed me, and said, "Oh, Forry, what a magnificent gesture! Why, you did more for international fandom..." and so on. It did make me feel better. But I all the time I was thinking, "I'll kill her! I'll *kill* her!!"

Some years later, the award was returned to me. People had kept asking me over the years, 'Didn't you get the first Hugo? If so, where is it?' Well, that eventually got me wondering about Ken Slater. I finally wrote him and said, "I gave it to you, it's yours, fair and square. I'm not an Indian giver. I'm not asking for it back, but I'm just wondering if you've given any thought what is to eventually become of that award. If you have a son or daughter who would appreciate it, fine, think nothing more about it. But if not, I'd like to preserve it."

Well, I understood he might have taken that the wrong way. So Dave Kyle went to bat on my behalf, and explained to him I wanted it back only if he hadn't anybody to pass it on to. The next time I saw him in England, he very generously gave it to me then and there.

But back to the Philcon... I don't remember that my speech endorsing Ken Slater was very long at all. But one of the people up on the dais must have thought otherwise. One photo, apparently, was taken at the moment I received the award and was accepting it. It showed Isaac Asimov, the rascal, standing behind me looking at his watch, as if I had been talking on for too long! ☼

#

Next: The series concludes with more about Asimov and Robert Heinlein, and even a visit to Northern Ireland. ☼

☞ Forry Ackerman also makes an appearance in this next article, as seen through the eyes of someone who was then relatively new to fandom. It's interesting to realize that fandom is old enough now, that there are quite a few second-generation fans (and even some third-generation fans), but yet still young enough that many of the First Fandom, like Forry, are still very much active.

I suppose it was inevitable that one day I would write something like this. It's in the blood.

My parents both became involved in fandom shortly before I was born. My mother, Ginger Smith (now Ginger Borden) was mainly active in con-going and fan-being, while my father was mostly concerned with the activities of the newly-formed Society for Creative Anachronism.

In fact (the little girl, proud of her daddy, declared) my father was the first prince of Caid (Southern California) when it initially separated from the kingdom of the West. His SCA name was Christian of Orange, and I remember how proud and lucky I felt when the crown was placed on his head and he sat before his first court!

Other kids had fathers who were firemen or doctors or policemen, but I didn't know any other kid whose father was a prince!

#

My parents separated (and eventually divorced) when I was quite young. As you might expect from the above, Mom got custody of fandom, and Dad got custody of the SCA.

What *I* got was the most wonderful, special, magical and memorable childhood a kid could ask for outside a book of fairy tales. Though, come to think of it, much of it did read like a fairy tale at that...

#

A Night to Remember

The first story I remember falling in love with was Ray Bradbury's "The Fog Horn".

The first two 'grown-up' books I chose to own and read again and again were *The October Country* (basically an illustrated version of *The Autumn People*), and *The Golden Apples of the Sun*, also authored by Bradbury.

My first trip to Mars was with the family in "Dark They Were, And Golden Eyed".

And my first hero, the first idol of my childhood dreams, was Bradbury himself.

So it was only natural that when my mother came home one night and told me that Ray Bradbury had asked to meet me, I was certain I was hearing things. I'd been home with a fever for several days, and chalked it up to delirium.

Grinning at my obvious confusion, my mother sat down and explained to me how she had met Bradbury at a LASFS party or meeting earlier that very evening. Hoping to bring home an autograph and brighten the glum mood I had been in, mom mentioned to him that her daughter was a devoted fan of his. Bradbury galantly replied that she wasn't old enough to have a daughter that was a fan of his fiction. After whatever editorial response she may have had to his remark, mom went on to assure him that she did, indeed, have a ten-year-old daughter who had read everything of his she could get her

little hands on. I suppose, at the time, it was somewhat rare to come across a child of my age who had such interests... and understood them.

For whatever reason, Bradbury announced that he had to meet me in person, at the earliest convenient opportunity. (Well, let me assure you, had I known about this conversation when it was actually taking place, I would've started hiking that very instant!) I don't think there was any other person in the world that I cared about meeting when I was ten.

Once I finally accepted the fact that my mother was not playing a part in one of my father's evil jokes, and that what she said was fact and not fiction, I couldn't imagine how life could ever get any better.

I closed my eyes and tried to picture what it would be like. In my minds eye, Bradbury was larger than life and surrounded by an enormous, glowing aura that warmed the entire room and seemed to reach out towards me...

As ill as I was, my mother let me make up my mind whether or not to go into L.A. that weekend and meet him at some college where he was doing a lecturer/guest speaker event. I remember the drive up to L.A., vividly, because I was throwing up out the car window the entire journey. But it would have taken hospital restraints and sedatives to keep me from leaping at the opportunity. After all, he *might* have changed his mind!

Now, wouldn't you think, with that kind of build-up, that I'd be able to give you a pretty detailed description of that encounter? You probably expect me be able to tell you what I wore, the color of his tie, and what furniture was in the room. But I can't. I don't remember a single, concrete detail about that moment other than the fact that my mother and Sandy Cohen were there. (Sandy's an ol' LASFS regular who could often be found capturing moments of various historical importance on film. The only reason I can tell you Sandy was there is because he took the photograph of me sitting on Bradbury's lap that remains one of the most cherished pictures in my collection.)

As soon as my mother and I walked through the door behind which Bradbury waited, all pain vanished. I remember the feeling with crystal clarity. I entered warily, paranoid at the last minute that this would all turn out to be some cruel joke. Then I looked down at the end of the room, a million miles away.

There he was.

You know that camera effect they use in the movies, the one where something far away suddenly looms closer without either party moving? That's what it was like. The entire world, every last scrap of reality that lay beyond my line of sight, utterly vanished — sucked into some nameless void so quickly that I swear I could hear a sharp 'crack' as air rushed in to fill the vacuum.

Regardless of what other people (or myself, for that matter) may think of Bradbury today, that timeless, magic moment is, without question, one of the most memorable moments in my entire life. I can't image that even meeting God would be more awesome, because to the 10-year-old who walked into that room — he *was* God.

#

"But You're Not Him!"

I was at IguanaCon in 1978 on my way from some silly thing to another silly thing, passing by the tent where Harlan Ellison was writing a story while the rest of the convention gazed on. I was with a newly-made friend, and we had just left the Harlan crowd behind us when I noticed a tall gentleman walking towards (and eventually past) us. I glanced at his name tag.

Step...Step. *Blink* Something, my brain said, is wrong with this picture.

Halting abruptly, I backpedaled til I caught up with the man in question and, without giving a thought to manners or politeness or any of that sort of thing, put my hand out to stop him. He stopped.

I hadn't backpedaled quite far enough, so it was necessary for me to push his shoulder around so that I could peer up at his name tag. He put up with the whole thing quite patiently, and quietly. I read the tag, looked up at his face, leaned closer and read the tag again.

'Forrest J. Ackerman', it said.

I looked at the man again, this time stepping back to get a clearer view of him. He must have sensed some of what was going on in my head, because he just smiled and stood there waiting.

Finally, I shook my head and stated flatly, "You're not him!"

At this point, I noticed there were several people watching us, and more headed our way. Whether they were the people he had been on his way to meet — or even traveling with in the first place (I hadn't noticed) — or simply people coming to see what the strange child was doing bothering the convention guest, I don't know, but a crowd was gathering.

The man smiled, glanced down at his chest, twisted the badge in question upside down to read, then chuckled. "Yes, I am!"

"No!" I shook my head and spoke, perhaps, a bit too loudly. "You can't be Forry Ackerman!" Peripherally, I noticed a few chuckles amongst the onlookers, but my young, infallible ego ignored them all. My new friend stepped forward, then, and gently took me by the arm, suggesting we be on our way and leave the gentleman alone.

"No!" I pulled away from him, just in time to block the path of the fugitive in question who seemed to be trying to continue about his business. "You can't be Forry Ackerman!"

At this point, several do-gooders stepped forward to attest that, yes, he *was* in fact Forrest J. Ackerman... and did my parents know where I was?

Not being *terminally* dense, it began to occur to me that something was wrong with this picture. Obviously, this man wouldn't be wandering around a convention impersonating Forry Ackerman... and certainly not with so many handy witnesses to attest to his identity. So, for a few *long* moments, I just stood there trying to solve the puzzle.

For some reason, despite all the evidence before and around me, this face was rejected by my brain when associated with this name.

I thought, fumed, pondered....

The man, and the crowd, watched silently.

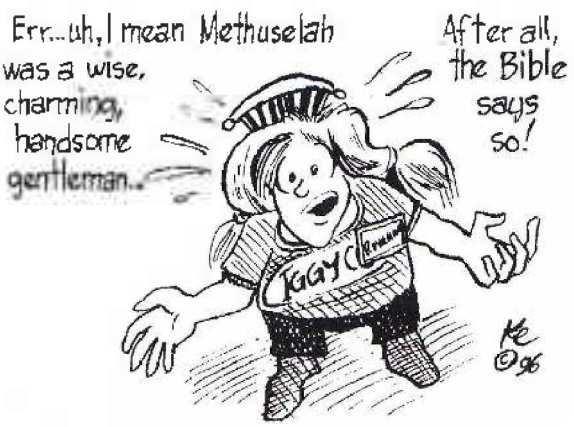
Eventually, I got it.

You see, one of the first of my mothers fannish possession that I laid claim to as a youth was her copy of the album *Music for Robots* by Forry Ackerman. It had a picture of him on the front, spliced into a Robby-the-Robot-ish figure. I loved that album, both the synthesized music and the wonderful 'journey' that Forry narrated on the flip-side. I used to play it almost daily, and, as a result, felt very 'familiar' with and 'protective' of its creator... which is why I reacted to strongly to this apparent impersonator.

You must understand, *this was the **only** picture of Forry I had ever seen.*

Now, I didn't think he was a robot, or even that he wandered around all the time in a robot outfit, but the photo on that album jacket had to be at least 20 years old. While the face I was so unquestionably familiar with was smooth and still youthful, the man before me was... well... gray haired and wrinkled.

Ding! Finally the light came on, and I realized that what was wrong was not his name tag but my extremely out-dated frame of reference. Snapping my fingers and shouting "Of course!" with a gleam in my eye, I loudly declared, "I get it! You're old now!"



My hand was already on its way to cover my mouth as soon as the words escaped, but it was too late. I didn't need to see the looks on the backpedaling faces to realize I had just committed a heinous crime.

"I mean," I tried to explain around my foot, "that is, you're not young now. No! I mean, you were young then..."

I (thankfully) don't recall all of the ways I managed to point out the fact that he was no longer the young man on that album cover, but I do know that I struggled fearfully for several minutes until eventually I just gave up and sank down to the lobby floor, hanging my head in shame.

Of course, Forry laughed. Somehow, he managed to get the gist of what I was saying. He was delighted that someone was still getting use out of *Music for Robots*, especially someone of a generation other than the one it was aimed at.

By the time we went our separate ways, we

had sat and talked for nearly an hour and he had invited me to come see the Ackermansion if I ever got the chance. He even gave me a key chain to commemorate our meeting.

Three years later, while trying to decide whether or not to get in line to see the masquerade at a 'Dougie' con at the L.A. Airport Marriott, I noticed Forry (and others with him) up near the front of the line. I thought of waving, then decided against it — even if he did remember me (which I figured was unlikely — after all, how many hundreds, if not thousands, of other people had he met in the three years since IguanaCon) I wasn't so sure I *wanted* him to remember me. Especially not if it meant that I had to remind him by way of retelling my 'episode' to his friends.

I wasn't to get off so easily, though.

Forry saw me! And he waved. Twice. A hello wave, followed by a 'come here a second' wave. Eager to please, I rushed over.

When I got to where they were standing, Forry put a firm but kind arm around my shoulder and turned to his group saying, "This is the little girl I told you about at IguanaCon!"

The sound of the blood rushing to my face prevented me from hearing what else he had to say for the next several minutes. "God," I mumbled, "I was hoping you'd forget."

"Forget?" He cried cheerfully. "Why, I've only been insulted that well once before in my life, and that was over 30 years ago — long before you were born!"

Great, I thought, my distinguished place in Forry's memories is as one of two — count them, *two* — people to have ever insulted him to his face like that. What a way to be remembered! Sheesh.

On the up side, however, Forry and I did strike up a pretty good friendship, which has gone through its active and inactive periods as fannish friendships are wont to do.

#

How Wrong Can a Kid Be?

My 'first' con was when I was 10 years old; it was a WorldCon — the 1976 MidAmeriCon, to be precise. My mother, who did not go, packed me into an already overstuffed car with three strange adults and one other 10-year-old. When I say strange, here, I don't just mean fannish strange. To me, these people were all strangers — even though one of them, Lewis Grey (a LASFS member from way back when), was a friend of my mother and the uncle of my friend and fellow mischief-maker, Melinda (the aforementioned other 10-year-old).

Actually, I *had* been to countless other cons before this one, but this was the *first* convention I attended without the company of my mother or father, hence my thinking of it as my 'first' con. I don't remember much of that convention, except that I had a rousing a good time and, more specifically, a certain pizza parlor I and my friends will probably never be welcome at during this or any subsequent lifetimes. (I'm not proud of it, but have come to accept the fact that I was/could be an uncontrollable monster when I was a snot-nosed brat.)

I do remember Kelly Freas paying/bribing the kids at the con to go around selling his 'Gremlins Do Not Exist' buttons. And I remember that we wore hospital-type wrist bands instead of name tags by way of convention identification. I found them harder to lose than clip or pin on badges, but apparently they were easy to pass-around (as if pin-ons aren't?) and share one membership between several people.

My most distinct memory of MidAmeriCon also happens to be one of the times I was about as wrong about something as you can get. Lewis Grey was trying to control Melinda and I (as I recall, we were hiding under a covered table at the top of the escalators, then pouncing out upon any fan-looking ankles that passed our way), and had been suggesting we go listen to a presentation some guy was giving about a movie he was trying to make. Well, when we accidentally pounced on a policeman's leg, we decided to let Lewis drag us away.

We sat in the back of the room and watched as this typically nerdy-looking fan-type (glasses, pocket protector, acne, *et al.*) showed us drawings (storyboards) of characters and tried to explain — sans microphone — about this movie he was trying to make. Melinda and I fidgeted for a bit, and tried to feign interest... but, I mean, to a 10-year old, this guy was, well, *dorky*. His character names were dorky, the bells and whistles of the film all had dorky names, and the movie title itself was the dorkiest of them all. After about 15 or 20 minutes, our juvenile little brains passed sentence and we snuck out the back door.

"That's one movie that'll never get made!" we laughed as we scooted down the hall.

"Or, if it does, no one will ever go see it!"

Of course, the 'dork' was George Lucas, and the movie was *Star Wars*.

Youth. Sigh. ☼

☞ Time marches on. It doesn't really seem that long, but for the past eight years, we've been pleased to publish installments of Sharon Farber's 'Tales of Adventure and Medical Life' series, our longest running continuing feature. It's also been our most popular feature, at least from the amount of readers' comments we've received. Every article in the series has been humorous and entertaining to read, but this is the first installment that deals with humor itself as its main topic.

A doctor, a lawyer and a rabbi walk into a bar... Stop me if you've heard it before...

There are two kinds of ethnic jokes. The ones told by outsiders — usually prejudiced and harsh — and those told inside — usually incomprehensible to the outsider, and not very funny even when explained.

Last time I promised to tell the unfortunate tale of my rotation on obstetrics. But for the past year and a half — thanks to a vicious stab in the back by people I had considered friends — I've been having to work 12 to 16 hours a day and have been stressed to the max. (The scoundrels' actions backfired and actually improved my practice. A Pyrrhic victory, at best.) The last thing I want to do today is remember County Hospital and the insane resident who wanted to hurt medical students.

So instead, I'm going to tell some of the jokes that doctors tell about each other.

#

Every culture has its subclass of fools and innocents. Growing up in San Francisco, we deplored Oakland or Chico (where they sold Velveeta in the gourmet aisle). Los Angeles made fun of Pasadena. New York scorns everyone. In Tennessee (with it's motto "Thank God for Arkansas and Mississippi" — the states that keep it from being fiftieth in everything) we snicker at our neighbor Alabama. (What has 40 teeth and 80 legs? An Alabama family reunion... Why did O. J. Simpson move to Alabama? Because everyone has the same DNA there.)

In medicine, most jokes traditionally are at the expense of the surgeons, a practice probably dating back to the times when doctors had clean hands and surgeons cut hair on the side. Surgeons are portrayed as, well, less than intellectually gifted. Or as an orthopedic surgeon I once dated bragged, "I'm as strong as an ox and twice as smart."

An internist and a surgeon come to an elevator. The door is closing, so the internist inserts his hand.

"Why'd you do that?" asks the surgeon.

"Well," the internist answers, "you use the least important part of your body to stop an elevator door."

They go into another wing, and approach another elevator. It's closing. So the surgeon sticks his head in.

This joke has had less play locally since a woman tried this downtown. Unsuccessfully.

#

The classical doctor joke, from which infinite variations spring, is The Duck Joke.

A general practitioner, an internist, and a surgeon go duck hunting. A duck flies overhead, and the GP says, "Gee, kinda looks like a duck," and shoots it.

Another duck flies overhead, and the internist sights it. "Duck, rule out pheasant, rule out goose," he says, and shoots it.

A third bird flies overheard. The surgeon raises his gun. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Then he looks at the others. "What was that?" he asks.

Variations usually feature other specialties. One I recall has an internist calling, "Duck, duck, come back! I want to examine you!" then the psychiatrist yelling, "Duck, duck, I want to talk to you!" and then BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

My surgical chief resident, Frank Psychosis, told me his version of The Duck Joke once. "There's this room," he said, "and the internist goes in and after an hour he comes out with a bunch of notes. Then the surgeon walks in and turns around and comes out and says, "That's a duck."

He laughed uproariously. When I realized that that must have been the punchline, I said, "Good one, Frank."

My favorite version of The Duck Joke makes fun of radiologists. (Nowadays most radiologists work long hours, do all sorts of procedures, and contribute to patient care. But twenty years ago they came in late, read a few films, and left. There are still a couple of hospitals I know where they disappear early and get very upset if you ask them to do something out of the ordinary, like look at an emergency scan and call you if there's a hemorrhage.)

An internist, a surgeon and a radiologist go duck hunting. There aren't any ducks, so they start bragging about their dogs. Finally they decide to have a contest.

They put down a chocolate chip cake. The internist points to the cake and says to his dog, "Sic it, Osler!"

Osler trots to the cake, takes out a notebook, and writes down all the ingredients, in descending order by concentration. Then he carries the note back to his master and wags his tail.

"Good boy, Osler! Impressive, huh?"

The surgeon snarls and says to his dog, "Get it, Halsted!"

Halsted runs over, takes out a scalpel, divides the cake into equal sections, dissects out all the chocolate chips and puts them in a container to sent to pathology. Then he goes back to his master.

"Good dog, Halsted," the surgeon says smugly.

"You haven't seen anything yet," says the radiologist. "Okay, Roentgen!"

Roentgen runs over, eats the cake, screws the other two dogs, and gets home by 3 o'clock.

Usually after I tell that joke to a radiologist (who always starts to protest "But we aren't like that anymore!") I defuse the situation by telling the only neurologist joke I know.

(Before the advent of CAT Scans and MRI — and often even with them — a neurologist would perform a lengthy physical examination in order to tell what part of the nervous system was involved, 'localizing the lesion'. Of course, most conditions were — and still are — untreatable. A famous neurologist in the fifties once described his job as "Diagnose, adios.")

Two neurologists are hot air ballooning when clouds come up and they realize they're lost. They go lower, and suddenly the clouds part and they see that they're passing over a field where a man is on a tractor.

One of the neurologists leans out and yells, "Hey! Where are we?"

The man on the tractor looks up and shouts back. "In a balloon!"

Then the clouds swallow them up again. The first neurologist smiles. "This has been a great day! We saw good scenery, we put back some brewskies, and now to make the day complete, the first guy we meet is a neurologist too."

"Wait a minute!" interjects his friend. "That looked like a farmer to me. What makes you say he's a neurologist?"

"Well, think about how he answered our question. He gave us precise localization and it didn't help a bit."

#

In recent years medical care has been become the hostage of insurance companies. They decide if tests and treatments are appropriate, who can do them, and where. My office staff spends half the day trying to get basic tests approved, and more time arguing when they decide not to pay for it anyway. And few things can be more infuriating, in the middle of a busy day, than to receive a phone call saying you have to send a patient home because he isn't approved for further in-hospital days.

I met a new patient in the emergency room with a cervical spinal cord lesion — paralysed legs, bowel, and bladder. After treatment he was able to walk again. Six months later he came to my office with difficulty breathing and inability to urinate. Fearing his disease was flaring — fearing he would become totally paralyzed and die — I admitted him to the hospital. Luckily it was a false alarm.

The insurance reviewer called me up to complain. "You shouldn't have admitted him. In fact,"

she went on, "you shouldn't have admitted him last time."

"Last time... But he was paralyzed!" I protested in disbelief.

"Paralysis." she sneered. "You could have handled that outpatient."

So you can imagine how much we all love this joke.

Three doctors die and go to heaven. "Why do you think I should let you in?" asks Saint Peter.

"I was in medical research," the first doctor replies. "I worked on vaccines, and I saved millions of lives."

"Go on in," Saint Peter says.

The next doctor says, "I didn't save millions of lives, but I was a rural family practioner and I helped a lot of people with little reward."

"Go on in, it's a pleasure to have you with us."

The third doctor smiles proudly, "I was medical director for an insurance company."

"Go on in," says St. Peter. "But you're only approved for three days."

If you think insurance companies are bad, managed care and HMOs are worse. I heard this while rounding Christmas week.

Why did Mary come to Bethlehem?
That's where the nearest obstetrics provider was.

Why did she give birth in a manager?
She wasn't approved for in-patient days.

#

I'll end with my favorite joke from residency. I suspect it was adapted from an army joke — I can just hear the roles being taken by a captain, a sergeant and a private — but I like it anyway.

The resident and the attending are talking while the intern charts orders. "I dunno," says the attending. "Lately it seems like sex is 90% work and only 10% pleasure."

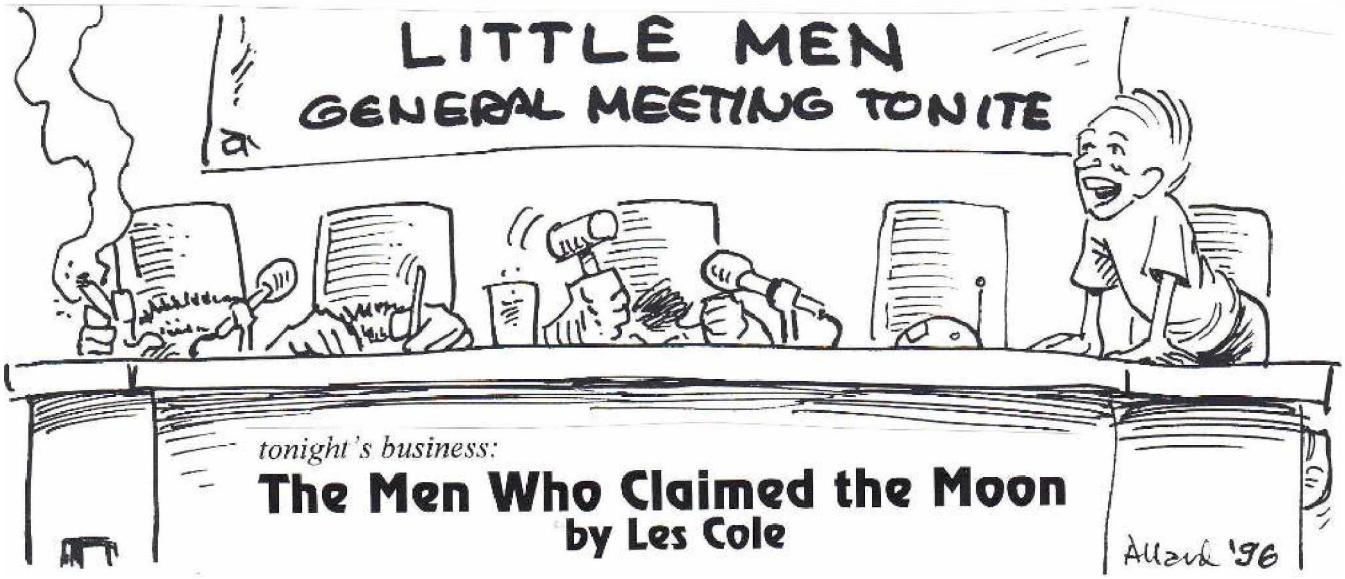
They argue for a while and, unable to reach a consensus, decide to ask the intern.

"What I think," replies the intern, "is that it must be 100% pleasure. Because if there was any work involved, you'd have me doing it." ☼

CONTRIBUTORS

Forrest J Ackerman, 2495 Glendower Avenue, Hollywood, California 90027
Ray Allard, 3603 South Taylor Street, Arlington, Virginia 22206
Sheryl Birkhead, 23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882
Richard Brandt, 4740 North Mesa #111, El Paso, Texas 79912
Vincent Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN, United Kingdom
Les Cole, 756 Opal Avenue, Ventura, California 93004
Kurt Erichsen, 2539 Scottwood Avenue, Toledo, Ohio 43610
Sharon Farber, 1000 Panorama Drive, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37421
Brad Foster, P.O. Box 165246, Irving, Texas 75016
Alexis Gilliland, 4030 8th Street South, Arlington, Virginia 22204
Ian Gunn, P.O. Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia
Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas 76054
Dave Kyle, Route 4, Potsdam, New York 13676
Fred Lerner, 5 Worcester Avenue, White River Junction, Vermont 05001
Joe Mayhew, 7-S Research Road, Greenbelt, Maryland 20770
Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF, United Kingdom
William Rotsler, 17909 Lull Street, Reseda, California 91355
Roxanne Smith-Graham, 14081 Magnolia, Space 145, Westminster, California 92683-4750
Diana Stein, 1325 Key West, Troy, Michigan 48083
Steve Stiles, 8631 Lucerne Road, Randallstown, Maryland 21133
Charlie Williams, 1200 Woodcrest Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee 37918
Kip Williams, 118 Terrell Road, Newport News, Virginia 23606
Walt Willis, 32 Warren Road, Donaghadee BT21 0PD, Northern Ireland

☞ A bit of historical context for this next article. In the early 1950s, one of the most renown fan clubs in the world was the Little Mens' club of the San Francisco area. It wasn't as big as its neighbor LASFS to the south, or as friendly as its other neighbor, the Nameless Ones, to its north, but it had a special claim to fame that the others couldn't match — it was featured in a news story that made headlines in newspapers all around the world. The writer of the following later became one of the co-chairs of the 1954 Worldcon, and we're happy to publish his first fanzine article in *decades*; it's the inside story of...



There's been an overwhelming request — my wife Es standing in my office doorway, tapping her foot — to preserve for posterity the story of the Moon Claim of 1951. I undertake this with no few qualms, partly because there are a number of interrelated threads that you must be aware of. I'll try to be as brief as possible.

There's one other caveat. (It must be age creeping in on little cat feet: I find I can't make a statement without finding several counters to it.) I don't know about your memory, but mine is tricky, constantly betraying me. So I'll only set down here the things I'm sure of. Mostly. I think.

First, I must mention the Elves', Gnomes', and Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder, and Marching Society, known familiarly as the Little Men. Don't ask where we got the name; it's too long to explain about the comic strip, *Barnaby*. The Little Men were an extraordinary group, based in Berkeley, with the resources of the University of California to call on. More, we were talented across a broad range of disciplines. We were known as being contentious, and that's true, but those on the outside never knew we hammered on each other far harder than strangers. It was a necessary part of the Little Men's mystique.

I had just been forced to be chairman — a knowledgeable Little Man didn't *run* for that office; he usually ran out the door — and knew what facing a pit of hungry tigers felt like. So when Don Fabun discussed his idea with me, I quickly agreed. Working on it gave me a chance to forget the horror of chairmanship.

Let me digress here to talk about the Fabuns. Don's wife, Gladys, a refreshingly intelligent and humorous lady, owned a circulating rental library where the Little Men met. Don was never a club officer, but he had a printing press and was definitely of the power-behind-the-throne ilk. He also had enough gray matter between his ears to replace three ordinary mortals.

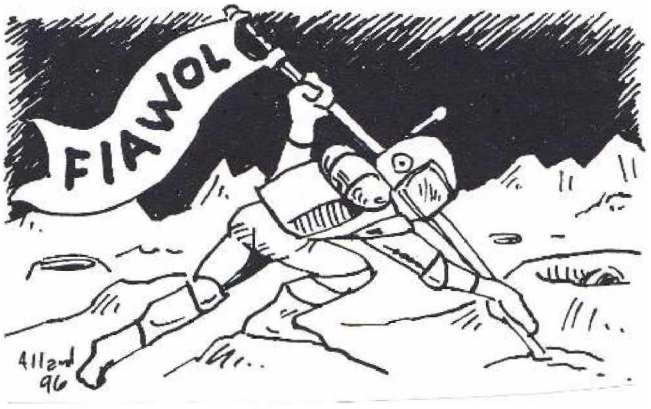
Don's idea? A publicity campaign to claim a piece of the moon. I guess it represented a challenge to him, to see if he could pull it off. He'd tried with other Little Men chairs, but I was the first taker.

Try to remember what the world was like in 1951. No missiles, no lasers, no computers, and John Campbell referred to in a national article as the 'Chief Slan'! *Destination Moon*, released about a year earlier, was the only sf entertainment around. (However, *The Thing* was due to be released soon.

One day perhaps I'll tell about Es' and my visit to the studio, but I didn't consider *The Thing* as good sf.) It was the Little Men's mission to stir up the sf pot a little, and here was an ideal vehicle that might have gotten some publicity as far as San Jose, some fifty miles south.

Don, who owned the multilith press on which the club's fanzine, *The Rhodomagnetic Digest*, was printed... What lousy syntax! Let me begin again: Don never claimed the idea as his. He got most of it from Heinlein's "The Man Who Owned the Moon." But what Don brought was big knowledge about publicity. I worked with him because I wanted to know about publicity. I found out.

It was a long effort, something more than six months. I don't know who in the Little Men it was who'd found a wedge for us in U.S. mining law. The way it worked in the rough, tough West was a man staked out a claim, described it, and buried that description in a tin can on his claim. So long as it was never challenged, he did not have to *prove* he'd been on the land. Incidentally, filing a claim on the moon was old hat; the Bureau of Mines had hundreds of claims on file. But the Little Men's claim was different in two ways: we would file before the U.N. — anyone of any sense could see that the U.S. Bureau of Mines had *no* jurisdiction on the moon — and we would file for a very small piece, not all of the moon; we weren't greedy. Of course, we ran in parallel to U.S. mining law about actually being on the claim — but no one ever challenged us.



I began by finding an astronomer. This was, after all, Berkeley, and the more exotic professions would drop like ripe fruit when the tree was shaken. The astronomer laid out a survey of an area containing the craters Ritter, Manners, and Sabine (a rough triangular shape) in the Sea of Tranquillity. It was pretty accurate, more than could have been done by a party actually walking the surface because of the moon's extreme curvature.

Given our triangle, I started with a great dollop of imagination, figuring that if this had happened and then that, we'd all be rich. Or smart. I plotted the geology, both areal and in cross-section, coming up with subsurface faulting, a few deposits of lead-silver telluride, and a lot of theory.

My father, who was taking law on the GI bill at the University of San Francisco, did a fairly comprehensive claim statement, writing it in nifty legalese. Just to check Dad, I also got a mining engineer to approve the wording.

We were getting close now. Don Fabun had been a journalism major at Cal and had worked in the profession; he wrote the basic story, the 'who what where & why' that seems to have disappeared in news stories today. Don gave me the job of 'slanting' — writing a lead paragraph to appeal to the particular slant of the local papers. As examples, the Hearst papers got leads that told about the horrible death and strangulation of someone caught on the moon without a space suit; the *Berkeley Gazette* learned that this claim was executed on behalf of a Berkeley science-fiction group, a homegrown product. Somewhere I must have gotten a little sex into it, but I'm darned if I remember for what paper. Don and his multilith printed a four-page foldover that included the map of the area and the mining claim.

And then came The Letter. Don and I worked on that one at some length. It was to be sent to the head of the U.N. Legal Department, and in it, we offered to cede back 85% of the mineral rights, all of any radioactives found (this was 1951, remember, and the romance with them had not yet fizzled), and perpetual U.N. rights to a presence in the triangular area. All the U.N. had to do was recognize our claim.

Since I, as chairman, acted on behalf of the Little Men, I had to prepare the packages and mail them. Plural packages there: one to Oscar Schacter (of the U.N.) with the letter and the claim, one to Harry Truman (of the U.S.) with the letter and the claim, and ten or so to Bay Area papers with the

slanted story and the claim. I think we sent one to the *San Jose Mercury*, figuring if news was slack, it might run a story on a Bay Area event.

One thing Don cautioned about: we needed luck. If a juicy axe murder happened at the same time, our story would simply disappear. And it looked like the axe murder cameth — the day after I mailed the stories, nothing.

But the day after that ... !! I worked for a San Francisco oil company in the drafting department, and about 10 AM (February 17, if I recall, 1952), I got called to the phone. It was the *Berkeley Gazette*, and did I know the story had appeared on the 'A' wire of United Press? They were tearing up their front page and substituting the moon claim. They interviewed me about the Little Men and the claim.

The phone started ringing like there's no tomorrow, and my boss, who'd originally enjoyed what I was doing, got testy. But it kept going and going and going...

I can't remember all the calls. One that sticks in my mind came from New York, and in those days, a long-distance call was pretty hot stuff. The call was from the American correspondent of the *London Daily Mail*, and he asked intelligent questions. Why, for instance, had we filed before the U.N. instead of the U.S.? (We'd discussed this but never seriously, and not even in our wildest dreams: what would we do if they actually *granted* the claim? But we weren't interested in land grabs. At the time, everyone and his brother who ever landed in Antarctica had claimed it. This brought about lots of disputes and very little scientific progress. Given the mess, we hoped the U.N. would grant the claim and immediately revoke it; it would show that the U.N., and not a welter of earth nations, had jurisdiction over the moon. We had not the slightest doubt that a moon landing was coming.)

It was a feeling of the roof falling in. The afternoon papers, the morning papers, Atherton, and yes, San Jose, L.A., St. Louis, Chicago, New York, Boston, South America, Paris, Sydney — we even heard it was treated fairly in Moscow.

I remember one other neat occurrence: I was still more than two years away from my first professional sale. And *Startling Stories* ran an editorial called "Les and Es Claim the Moon." It was my first appearance on a contents page, and if that appearance were a little outre, it'd have to do until the real thing came along.

In those days remember, radio was the big medium, and we got three minutes on a national news program, *ahead* of Winston Churchill's latest pronouncement. TV too: an eastern chain sent a crew to film one of our meetings; we hastily set one up, and Tony Boucher did the speaking honors (I was too nervous), pitching for a space program. (When the cameras weren't shooting, the Little Men jumped all over each other, one faction supporting the claim and the other indignant about it!) The film did not show on the west coast, but someone in the east wrote they'd seen us.

Oh, yes, the claim and the U.N.? It took me two or three letters to Oscar Schacter to get a reply. By then, the news was old hat, but he did mention that the U.N. had no jurisdiction and therefore couldn't do what we asked. A couple of months later, *Collier's* magazine had a lead article that discussed ownership of the moon in terms of terrestrial nations. Its author was one Oscar Schacter, head of the U.N. legal division. After we got through cursing and laughing, we decided that he probably didn't crib the idea; but it also seemed likely that he had already written his article and must have sweated mightily when our story broke.

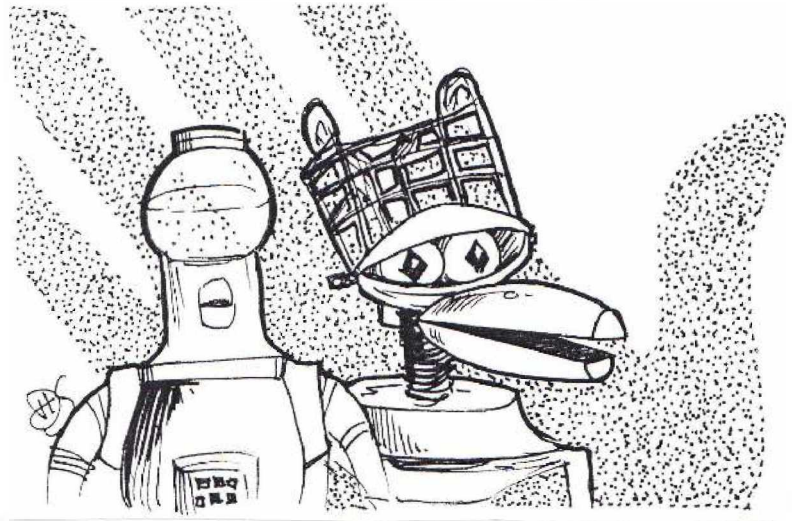
In retrospect, it was an incredible three days; Es and I got our 15 minutes of fame. More important, I learned how difficult it is to do a publicity campaign and how one *must* be lucky enough to have the cooperation of all axe murderers. I'll never cease being grateful to Don Fabun and the Little Men! ☼

#

P.S. Harry Truman never did answer.

P.P.S. When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, Es wanted to bill NASA $0.90/hour for parking... ☼

☞ We close this issue with something a bit different. Some of you may be familiar with *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, which appears on the cable television network Comedy Central. It's a show about bad movies, mad scientists, bad movies, an intrepid space-faring janitor and his wise-cracking robot sidekicks, bad movies, and of course, bad movies. Anyway, it's all greatly amusing to watch, and yes, we're *big* fans. In a recent viewer's poll, the best episode of the entire series was *MST*'s lampooning of a low-budget movie titled *Manos: The Hands of Fate*, a movie so awful that it easily rivals the worst productions of Edward D. Wood, Jr. So why (and how) are movies like *Manos* made? You are about to find out!



The Hand That Time Forgot

by Richard Brandt

"What kind of movie would a fertilizer salesman from El Paso, Texas make?"
-- Michael Weldon,
The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film

#

For many years, *Manos: The Hands of Fate* must have been the Holy Grail for aficionados of obscure, low-budget, really godawful cinema: seldom mentioned, hardly ever seen, exactly the kind of movie that, yes, a fertilizer salesman named Hal P. Warren would decide to make, one fine summer in 1966.

That all changed when the grandmeisters of *la cinema du fromage* at *Mystery Science Theater 3000* delved into the bottom of the barrel and found this epic lying in ambush. For those without access to Comedy Central or some other clue, *MST3K* (for short) is about two scientists who torture a space-bound employee and his robot pals by force-feeding them movies, into which they interject their own snide remarks and alternative dialogue. Bad movies. Really bad. Really, really, *really* bad.

As one of the scientists confided when *Manos* came up for its turn, "I think even we may have gone a little too far this time."

So, instant cult phenomenon. Even if 'admirers' is not quite the word, *Manos* has been embraced by legions of 'MSTies' and cult film fans who passionately argue its demerits over the Internet. Even Roger Ebert's forum on Compuserve isn't safe.

And yet, as we shall see, there very nearly wasn't a *Manos: The Hands of Fate* at all.

How to describe *Manos* fairly? I tell locals that it's about a couple who take a wrong turn on Scenic Drive (that being the one landmark in the film still recognizable after three decades) and wind up at a 'Lodge' managed by a cult leader, his wobbly-kneed sidekick, and his harem of lingerie-clad wives. Wow; a cult movie that's *really* a cult movie!

"So, Richard," my fellow film buff Craig tells me over the phone, "for the next Amigocon you should really round up some of the cast and have a reunion panel."

"Hmmm," I said, the gears in my brain starting to grind away implacably. Problem is, how to locate some of these folks thirty years after? Assuming they're not dead, who would have hung around after perpetrating something like *Manos* upon the townfolk?

Suddenly my dreams are haunted by the spectre of *Manos*. In my sleep I can see myself after grueling detective work uncovering a fugitive cast member; hey, that little girl who played the daughter must still be alive by now eh? Only why hasn't she aged any by now....*Agggggggh!* Time to wake up, eh?

To the rescue: my old pal Roy, who springs on

me the revelation that two of his poker buddies had fessed up to being in the cast and crew. What's more, it turns out I had met both of these guys. Bob Guidry, the 'Director of Cinematography' as he insisted on being billed, had been doing public relations work while I was in the TV news business. Bernie Rosenblum (stunt coordinator and featured player, now a noted Southwestern photographer) I had met one night when Roy had been misinformed that a poker party was underway at his house.

So I begged and pleaded and cajoled for Roy to be our intermediary with these two legends of the cinema, and he brought back these terms: they'd come to a panel on *Manos* in return for free con memberships and dinner at La Hacienda Cafe.

Deal!

We ended up shifting the panel to late Sunday afternoon, as a big finale to wrap up the convention. Of course, throughout the weekend and especially as Sunday began to wane I kept a watchful eye out for Roy and his pals, to no avail. Finally, as we were knocking down some of the last items in the Sunday afternoon art auction, Roy breezed in with Bob and Bernie in tow. Craig and I sat them down, popped in a tape of the *MST3K* rendition of *Manos* for reference, and laid into "the *Manos* Guys."

One of the first questions I asked was how they reacted to all the newfound public clamor for their work, what with *MST3K* picking it up and, I even hear rumors of, a laserdisc edition.

"Well," said Bob, "we'd be extremely interested, because we're still owed a piece of the picture."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah. Hal only raised $19,000 to rent the cameras and pay for the film and processing, and so he couldn't afford to actually pay any of us. So we were all working for a percentage of the profits. Like Mel Brooks in *The Producers*, I think he gave away several hundred percent of the picture...."

"So whatever possessed Hal to make something like *Manos* anyway?"

"Well, Hal met Stirling Silliphant [the Oscar-winning screenwriter of *In the Heat of the Night*] when he was scouting locations for *Route 66*, and the two of them got to be friends. Hal had a lot of conversations with Stirling about filmmaking, and became convinced he could make a movie himself."

So Hal wrote a screenplay — a copy of which Bob whipped out of his satchel; Bernie produced the original shooting script, studded with Bob's camera-angle diagrams — which he called *The Lodge of Sins*. (At some point during production, Hal decided to change the title to *Manos: The Hands of Fate*. Why? No man can say...Although as time wore on and tempers frayed, the crew began referring to the project as *Mangos: Cans of Fruit*.)

And then it was time to round up a crew and "A Cast of Local Stars!" as the poster would say.

"I was the grand old man of the bunch at thirty," Bob said.

"The rest of us were all in our twenties," said Bernie, "because if we'd been any older we couldn't have pulled it off. We were shooting the whole night through, then running home, showering and changing, and going to work."

"We all had day jobs," said Bob. "And it was a good thing!"

In fact, two of the cast, Stephanie Nielson and Joyce Molleur, lived in Las Cruces, about an hours' drive away. After Joyce broke her leg while performing a stunt early in the shoot, new parts were written for her and stunt-man-turned-actor Bernie, as a couple of kids who are perpetually hassled by the cops as they neck in their car. They start at dusk and are found still at it by dawn — a moment which drew Bernie a rousing ovation from our audience — but Bernie noted that the two of them were crammed into a convertible with her leg in a cast. "Not as fun as it looks," he concluded.

With Hal typecast as the hero 'Hal', the rest of the cast was largely recruited from the local community theater: Diane Mahree, as the damsel in distress; Tom Neyman, as the Master, who wears a black cape lined with red-embroidered fingers; and the tragic figure of John Reynolds, whose creepy Confederate-uniformed character of Torgo so endeared himself to *MST3K* that they incorporated him into their act.

"I heard a rumor on the 'net," I said, "that John had committed suicide."

"That's no rumor," said Bob. "He killed himself about six months after the movie was finished. John was a troubled kid; he didn't really get along with his dad, who was an Air Force colonel, and he got into experimenting with LSD. It's a shame, because he was really a talented young actor."

Bob explained that John Reynolds had built himself the metallic rigging underneath his costume which produced his ungainly, knobby-kneed walk. One of the reasons he hates the *Mystery Science Theater* version, he said, is the silhouettes of the *MST* cast which block the bottom portion of the screen throughout the film. They obscure the few shots where you can see that Torgo actually does

have cloven-hoofed feet. The subtle explanation for Torgo's awkward gait: he's a satyr.

As for the Master's 'wives', they were recruited from a local modeling agency, Fran Simon's Mannequin Manor.

"And they gave poor Hal fits," said Bob. "They kept doing little turns every time they walked. 'This is not a runway!' he would scream at them."

Bob then pulled out a script and read where the wives' attire was described as "flowing, white tight robes." Hal evidently had something sheer and diaphanous in mind, but Fran Simon wasn't having *her* girls parading around in some flimsy bit of nothing. So the wives' uniform onscreen is a translucent white nightgown over a girdle and a sports bra, with a red strip of cloth trailing from the back that we assume is supposed to represent a tail. Aside from the last, it's uncomfortably like watching your mother getting dressed. Not that the crew ever gave up hope, though:

"We kept asking ourselves, 'And when do we start shooting the European version?'"

So, armed with nineteen grand worth of equipment and film stock, Hal and his troupe headed for County Judge Colbert Coldwell's ranch in El Paso's lower valley (where the exteriors for *Manos* still stand), and commenced a grueling two-and-a-half-month shoot.

Some of the crew soon chafed under the prima-donnish hand of self-made *auteur*-and-star Warren.

"One day," Bob said, "just to show Hal up, I showed up on the set wearing a beret and a safari outfit and carrying a riding crop, and barking out orders like Erich von Stroheim."

"I remember," said Bernie. "That's the day he threw the slate at you."

Bob also got back by slipping in some decent camerawork against Hal's express orders.

"See that?" he says as we watch a shot of the setting sun reflected from a rear-view mirror onto Diane's face. "Art. Hal would hate it when I did that."

Certain technical limitations of a $19,000 budget also soon revealed themselves.

"We had a spring-wound 16-millimeter Bell & Howell," said Bob. "Now, the maximum wind of the Bell & Howell was 32 seconds, so that was the maximum length of any shot."

...which explains away one of the film's first mysteries: why a lengthy driving montage is patched together from a series of choppy takes.

"We also shot the whole thing wild track" — meaning no sound recorded on the set — "then Hal, his wife, and Tom and Diane went to a sound studio in Dallas to do their voices. Everybody else in the film was dubbed in by two people."

"Wait a minute!" I said, incredulously. "You mean Torgo's voice was *dubbed*?!" — the quavery quality of Torgo's voice being his most imitated trait — and Bob confirmed this, yet another reason why John Reynolds' performance can't be properly appreciated.

Bob also explained away a scene in which two cops hear a gunshot, get out of their cars, take about three steps, look around and wave their flashlights, then without a word turn around, get back in their car and drive off.

"That's as far as our lights would illuminate," Bob said.

With limited lighting and a wide aperture, Bob had to apologize for the photography in some spots, which was, to put it politely, not quite in focus.

"At first," he said, "when we saw the dailies and I spotted any shots that were out of focus, we would do retakes. But as the film stock started to dwindle, Hal made it clear that our $19,000 worth would only go so far, so after a certain point we had to just leave the shots in."

The crew's motto became: "We'll Fix It in the Lab."

Bernie was especially disgruntled about the setup for his big stunt, when he goes rolling down a dangerously precipitous slope; it was shot from back of the crest of the hill, and so you can't see any of him as he goes rolling merrily away.

We asked if Bob had shot a cutaway of a rattlesnake that threatens our heroes.

"No," said Bernie, "that was a clip from a Disney nature film, I think."

"You can tell," said Bob. "You'll notice the snake was in focus."

So after a couple of months of ordeal in the desert, it was time for the grand premiere at the Capri Theater in downtown El Paso. Hal managed to attract a lot of local media attention. "Reputedly based on an old Mexican legend," quoted one reporter, "the tale has a surprise climax and people will not be admitted during the last 10 minutes of the program!"

Bob and Bernie and the rest of the cast and crew rented tuxedoes for the occasion; Hal outdid them and rented a searchlight to sweep the skies on opening night. He also rented one 1955 Cadillac limousine which would arrive at the door of the theater, unload a couple of the stars, then drive around the block to where the rest of the cast and crew were waiting, pick up two more, and make another run.

The theater was packed to the balcony with local dignitaries, they recalled, and the suspense was unbearable; you had the trailers of coming attractions, a cartoon, a twenty-minute True Life Nature Adventure set in the Antarctic, and then finally, the feature.

"And then," said Bob, "as soon as Hal opened his mouth, you heard it from the balcony: a little..." and then he mimicked the small snorting sound of a suppressed guffaw.

"And as the film unreeled, and you heard more and more laughs and catcalls, I started to slide down further and further in my seat. All my life, I had lived for one thing: to see my name in the credits of a motion picture. Well, the credits for *Manos* aren't until the end of the picture, and I sneaked out before then."

Betty Pierce, the movie reviewer for the El Paso *Times*, was particularly taken with the climax, in which, she headlined, Torgo is "Massaged to Death," although she also claimed to see Torgo as the film's Existential Hero. (Torgo does in fact eventually rebel against the Master, a parallel no doubt to the relationship between Hal Warren and his crew.)

"For an amateur production," she went on, "the color came out very well, however, and perhaps by scrapping the soundtrack and running it with subtitles or dubbing it in Esperanto, it could be promoted as a foreign art film of some sort or other."

In spite of all this, Hal managed to find a distributor — Emerson Releasing Corporation — who gave the film its shadowy half-life of a theatrical run.

"You have to give Hal credit," Bob said. "If you have any idea, even in Hollywood, how difficult it is let alone to get a film made, but to get it finished, and get it through post-production, and then get it distributed...well what he did was something of a miracle."

On which note it was time to adjourn and escort the celebrities from the stage ("You two were glowing," Craig's lady friend said accusingly) and on to La Hacienda. Roy pulled out some replicas of the *Manos* poster art he had produced with his Mac, scanner and laserprinter so that we might get the local heroes' autographs ("Recognition at last!"). Outside the cafe, Bob and Bernie let us know that the adjacent road had actually been part of the driving-montage shoot, which prompted us all to pose for Craig's camera with a full moon overhead and genuine *Manos* scenery in the background.

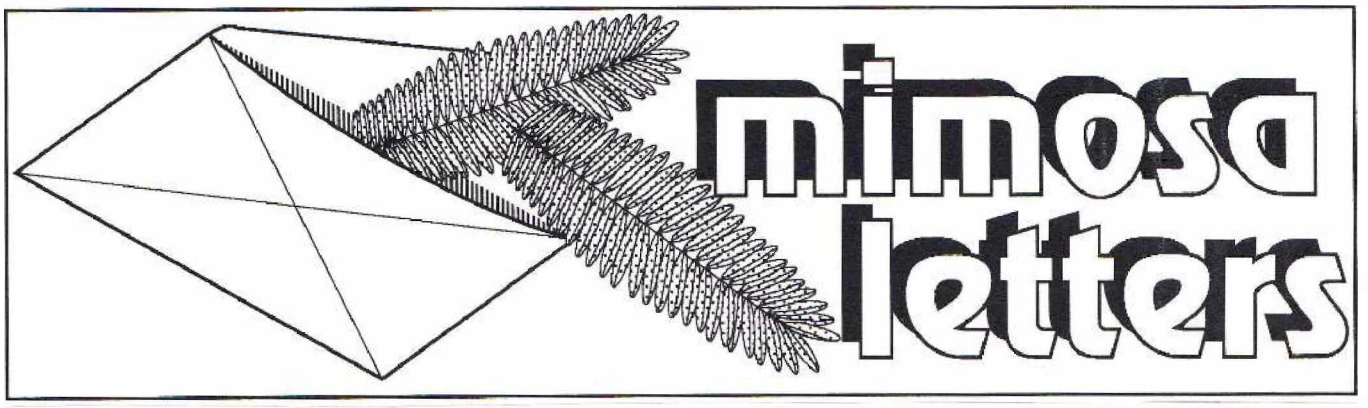
"You know," I told them, reflecting on the genesis of this meeting, "this really is like a dream come true."

What about the rest of the *Manos* gang? One of the 'wives', Robin Redd, went on to a career as a genuine honest-to-God movie and TV actress. Tom 'The Master' Neyman dropped out of sight. The production's still photographer, a young Allied German soldier from Fort Bliss, discovered Susan Blakely on the campus of the University of Texas at El Paso, and went on to shoot for Vogue. Hal is long gone and his widow lives now in Colorado.

But Bob had one last word in defense of Hal's peculiar genius.

"Although I sneaked out of the premiere, I did go to the cast and crew party afterwards, at Bernie's parents' house. At one point Hal said to us, 'You know, maybe if we took it back and re-dubbed the dialogue, we could market it as a comedy.'"

"Well, look what happened," I said. "The son of a bitch was right!"



{{☞ And now comes the difficult part in fanzine editing: finding a way to fit as many letters as possible into the lettercol's available space. We're ***always*** gratified by the number of letters we receive. It's not possible to print all of them, but we ***do*** want you to know that your comments are passed on to the contributors, whether or not they see print here.

We received quite a few e-mails of comment this time, so we're including the e-mail addresses for those who wrote us that way. Our opening and closing comments last time, describing the fire that forced us into apartment living for a year, was a very popular topic for most of our correspondents. We'll start there. }}

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William Rotsler, 17909 Lull Street, Reseda, California 91355

Sorry to hear about your fire. One happened to me in the early 1980s. I was across Sunset Boulevard from my apartment house, at a TV studio with Marv Wolfman and Len Wein (Big Time Comic Book Writers) looking at the taping of a show written by a mutual friend, Mark Evanier. We quit to go eat. "Hmm," I thought, "there's a fire engine in the street outside my apartment house." I looked up to the 4th floor to see a fireman come out onto the balcony of one of the two apartments I lived in with a girl friend, and dump something into the street.

We went inside, and I looked it over. The apartment which had burned was my 'office' apartment, filled with bookcases. The fire had singed hundreds of books; one shelf looked like a world-class collection of burnt toast. Lots of other stuff had also burned, the result of an overloaded electric line.

What prompted this letter was that my entire Hugo fleet of the time (one) was blackened with soot, the front seal glue melted off. I have never cleaned it, even after 15 years, as it looks like it had a rugged re-entry.

"Okay," I said, "let's go eat." My friends were stunned at how calmly I took it all. But there was nothing I could do right then, so why get upset? All that remained was two weeks of salvage.

So I know a *bit* of how you felt.

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Dennis Caswell, 2424 Maryvale Court, Burlington, Ontario L7P 2P2, Canada

Your article about the fire was interesting and chilling. I also live in a townhouse, and am likely subject to the same potential problems. When I moved in, I checked the wiring in the basement, and *quickly* rewired the basement lights. Under no circumstances would I accept using an appliance cord as household wiring. However, when I added some wiring in the garage so that I could use the automatic garage door opener, the next-door neighbor wanted to know why I was going through all the trouble. He suggested that I could staple an appliance cord from the outlet up to the ceiling, and plug the opener into that. I didn't bother to answer the question. Stupidity does not deserve comment.

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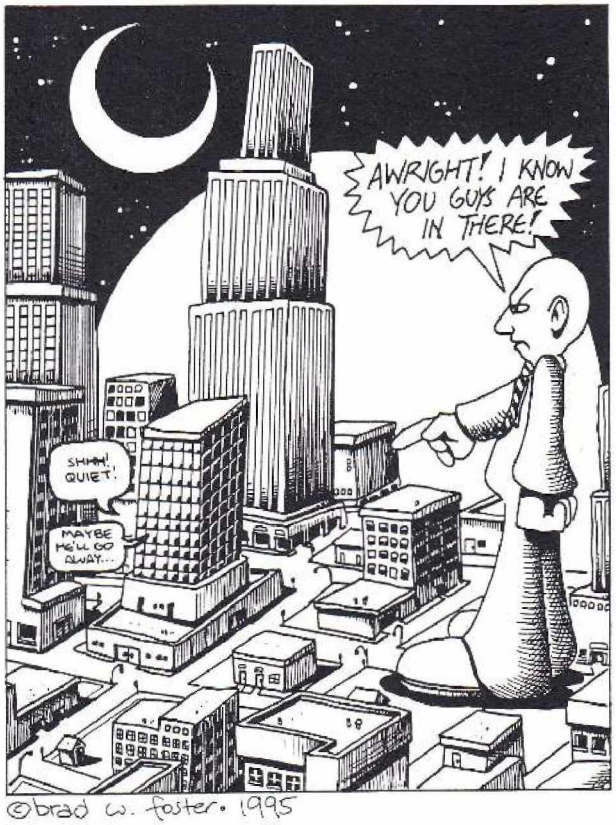
Elliot 'Elst' Weinstein, 2717 San Angelo Drive, Claremont, California 91711 <ElstCHOMP@eworld.com>

Mimosa 17 arrived at my office today and it looks great as usual. It still is one of my favorite zines and your production values have not diminished despite your conflagration woes. Speaking of which, I hope you have recovered as best as possible. These tragedies are difficult to get through, but you have lots of well-wishers and friends in fandom to help lessen the misery.

A comment on Dave Kyle's Banquet story

{{☞ "I Miss the Banquets" }}. Since the 1970's, the only consistent worldcon banquet has been the Hogu Ranquet. We started this as a protest to the high price of banquets (at the 1972 LACon the banquet was $8, outrageously high). One year the ranquet outdrew a Westercon banquet, and further ranquets were held at times that did not conflict with the official banquet. Ironically, LACon 2 in 1984 did not even have a banquet, and the ranquet had grown so large it was held at a regular restaurant with the average tab being about $8.



John Boston, 195 Kane Street, Brooklyn, New York 11231

<JBOSTON@delphi.com>

I read the back issues of *Mimosa* you sent with great enjoyment, though I confess I was a little disappointed by the lack of burn marks and the smell of smoke. If you ever get the rest of your inventory out of hock, I'd be interested, if only to avoid missing any of Sharon Farber's "Tales of Adventure and Medical Life." These remind me of some of the letters I have received in my career as a Legal Aid lawyer, including one from an incarcerated person who said that correction officers had murdered his family and concealed their misdeeds by means of the resurrection of the dead. Perfect crime, huh?

The supposed decline of fanzine fandom may have something to do with changing attitudes toward SF and the kind of speculation associated with it. Years ago, most people thought we were nuts; now watered-down versions of what we were reading are commonplace on TV and in the movies, and most people these days seem to have accepted that the future will be different and that the possibilities are worth discussing. As a result, people who are particularly attracted to SF are not so isolated as they were in past decades. I think that intellectual isolation had a lot to do with breeding the kind of solitary obsessiveness that motivated a lot of fanzine publishers. Not that fanzines were ever that devoted to the subject matter of science fiction, but people who read SF tended to have attitudes about a lot of things that were at odds with Mr./Ms. Average American (for example, a willingness to stop and appreciate the absurdity of a great deal of daily life).

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Elizabeth Osborne, 137 Emerald Lane, Lima, Ohio 45802

David Kyle's article on Worldcon banquets was very interesting, but fails to note another reason for their end: the generally poor quality of food and the overall loss of the elegance for the casual. I did not attend Worldcon conventions when banquets were popular, but I have watched a slide show put on by members of First Fandom that had pictures of early worldcons. One of the most interesting things was the lack of casual clothing in all places, not just at the banquets. From these pictures, everyone (male, that is) wore suits and ties all day. Now, even the editors wear shorts and polo shirts. Also, at First Fandom panels, I have heard horror stories of terrible meals, buffets that ran out of food before half of the people had gotten anything, and of plaster falling from the ceilings into the soup. None of these stories encourages the return of the Worldcon banquets.

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

Yvonne and I were among the attendees of the Hugo Crab Feast at ConStellation in Baltimore in 1983. The mountains of food were simple and decadent, which added to the appeal...a whole bayfull of crabs, and the chicken, hot dogs and burgers formed Alps on the Serving tables. Admission was relatively cheap, if I recall, and we all ate until we hurt. After this group gluttony, we were asked by the Hugo organizers not to show our appreciation and

applaud with our crab mallets. Real bad move... many of us had headaches from nearly a thousand mallets hitting the banquet tables like machine gun fire. The con lost its collective shirt on this banquet, but it was reminiscent of Hugo banquets I'd read about in the past.

A question to Sharon Farber...if you've ever been to a barbecue staged by some of your medical peers, have you ever wondered if they were using a Hibachi or a bovey? I knew what a bovey was, and I've compared it to some modern kitchen items. A few years ago, Yvonne and I were asked to operate a hospitality area for a one-day con. The organizers anticipated a large demand for food, so they provided a gadget that held six wieners, and cooked them by literally electrocuting them. The wieners were impaled on electrodes, and you threw the switch, and after a few minutes of BZZZZT!, the hot dogs were presumably cooked. There are a few fans in Toronto who work at local hospitals, and when I told them the hot dogs were prepared by Dr. Bovey, they almost hurled their lunch.

Finally, all the Mr. Peanut cartoons in the issue remind me of a *New Yorker* cartoon Murray Moore sent me recently...Mr. Peanut is sitting in a bar, keeping company of a comely young lady, she asks, "So...is there a Mrs. Peanut?"

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Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, Michigan 48224

Sharon Farber's tales from the medical dark-side are always a delight and one of the few fannish things my wife Denice still reads. As an LPN, Sharon's tales cut close to home. I've heard that some people complain that they're not fannish, so she shouldn't be nominated for a Fan Writer Hugo, but what a load of @#$%. *Ansible*s may come and go, but I intend to hang on to these *Mimosa*s with Sharon's tales in them.

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Karen Pender-Gunn, P.O. Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia

<k.pender-gunn@bl1.lib.latrobe.edu.au>

I just loved the 'Chat' cartoon this time, I just laughed and laughed. It made more sense having met you in Glasgow and knowing the characters looked a little like you.

I am amazed that Sharon Farber made it through medical school; so many people putting so many obstacles in her way! I congratulate her for her persistence. It really makes me mad when people display the 'women shouldn't do this' attitude — it makes me boil! Apart from the obvious sexual things (and those can be substituted in some cases), women can do what they like and are usually better at some things. It's all a matter of training. In medical areas, I know of nurses who tell the visiting doctors what the patient needs as the nurses have the experience and the doctors don't have a clue.

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Irv Koch, 5465 N. Morgan Street #106, Alexandria, Virginia 22312

<irv_koch@f629.n109.z1.fidonet.org>

Some nitpicking on Teddy Harvia's 'Chat' cartoon on page 36. First off, the drawing of Nicki is pretty good but Dick is *much* taller and thinner (at least in comparison). Were that fixed, the cartoon is still *totally* bogus. The ghod Chat would never allow itself to be confined to a cage.

And, yes, I like the pro printed version of the zine. I still predict you'll eventually shift to an online version on the web (which I can't get at) with scanned-in replicas of twiltone.

{{☞ Not until flatbed scanners become a little more affordable. Even web page space is a bit pricy; the annual cost for enough website storage for just one issue of *Mimosa* is the better part of $100. We've got a couple issues there now only because we were offered a deal we just couldn't refuse. }}

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Henry L. Welch, 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017

<welch@warp.msoe.edu>

Thanks for sending me a copy of *Mimosa* 17. This may be sacrilegious to say, but I prefer the 'professionally done' look to the 'mimeo' look. I realize that from an economic standpoint mimeo is much cheaper and I cannot fault you if you choose to return to that method once your living arrangements return to some resemblance of normality. I cannot begin to understand the fallout should I be forced to vacate my home for over nine months. The two young children are problem enough when they have a whole house to run rampant in, and the energy it would take to maintain the yard (at a distance) would be phenomenal.

{{☞ Luckily, there wasn't any yard to maintain. It was a townhouse, so the only thing resembling a 'yard' was a semi-wild area

under the deck in the back. And since the place was under reconstruction, that whole area was in a continual trampled-down state. The only constant chore was to pick up what little mail came there. }}

The fan anecdotes are up to the usual high quality. Many of them stir the longing of "I wish I was there" which is the hallmark of a good piece of this type.

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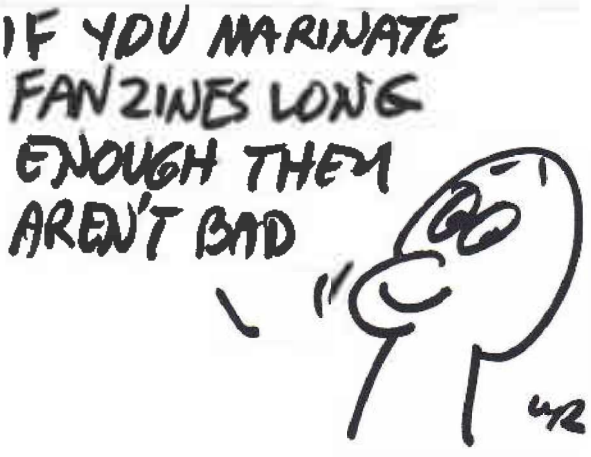
Rodney Leighton. R.R. #3, Pugwash, Nova Scotia B0K 1L0, Canada

Regarding the printing process: to me, if you can afford it, it would be more sensible to go with the printer and retire the mimeo to its proper place in history and antiquity. this saving yourself lots of work. Some people will doubtlessly point out that a mimeographed fanzine is perfect for the format of *Mimosa*, which is true. But the quality of the writing does not change with the form of reproduction.

{{☞ Okay, okay, we get the message! Most of the people who commented on our switch from mimeo to a commercial printer were supportive of the change. Also, it really *does* save a lot of work, even though it's more expensive to print the fanzine this way. Anybody in the market for a couple of used mimeos? }}

After reading John Berry's article {{☞ "Brides and Groomesport" }}, I believe he is a horny old goat! But he sure can write! Anything I've ever seen by him has been highly enjoyable. And Peggy Ranson sure knows how to draw sexy broads, doesn't she! I thought all the art in this issue was good although the only thing which really got my attention was the above mentioned drawing and Charlie Williams's peanut on page 24 which got a big laugh.



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

I have been bemoaning of late the scarcity of artists and artwork in fanzines. I am so pleased to have my argument so well refuted. Eleven artists and thirty-four items of artwork, every one apt and a delight!

{{☞ One of the things we had wanted to do when we started this fanzine was to feature fan art as well as fan writing. We're happy to pass your compliments along to the artists. }}

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Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas 76054-2307

I love Joe Mayhew's rumpled-looking cartoon illustrations. His fire-breathing bespeckled idol flamed me, his 'name that bug' sent me into spirochetes of laughter, and his naked hairy legs ripped my shorts off.

I don't understand Steve Stiles's cover art, but then I'd hate to have to explain all the stuff I've drawn either. It just isn't fun or funny if one has to do that.

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

Nice cover on *M*17, though I always have an uneasy feeling about Steve Stiles's stuff. He seems to work in some sort of trufan environment from which I'm excluded.

Anyway, the pieces about The Fire were very good indeed — they satisfy all the queries that have been stirring restlessly under the surface. Looks as though you have a good insurance company.

Also, Es Cole and Dean Grennell's twin tributes to Bloch were very well done, and Charlie Williams was exceptional on the heading and illo on Dag's piece — exactly suited to the subject.

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Steve George, 642 Ingersoll Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 1J5, Canada
<steve.george.951@mwcs.mb.ca>

The remembrances of Robert Bloch were touching, and I thought I'd toss in my own. Back in 1977 when I first met fandom and started to publish my own fanzine (*Zosma*), I acquired an extensive mailing list from another local fan. I remember seeing Bloch's name and address, and debating whe-

ther I should send him my dingy little zine. I knew he was the author of *Psycho*, a contemporary of Lovecraft's, and an author whose work I had read and admired. It seemed presumptuous, arrogant, even disrespectful to send him a crappy little fanzine run off on a hand-cranked mimeograph by a 17-year-old kid. There were also addresses for Heinlein in that list, as well as Asimov, and a few others. I removed most of them. I just couldn't bring myself to inflict upon these writers, who were my heroes at the time, my own first efforts. Somehow or other, Bloch's name stayed in the list.

When my first Letters of Comment arrived I was, as any faned who can tell you who receives a LoC for the first time, ecstatic. What put me over the top was the small, canary yellow postcard from Robert Bloch. He said he'd read my fanzine and liked it. He said what had prompted him to write was the return address. His wife, he said, was from Winnipeg, and so he knew good things could come from this place. I took that postcard to show the other fellows in Decadent Winnipeg Fandom. I must have carried it in my back pocket for a week. Over the years I collected a few more, and whenever I tried to explain to people why I published a fanzine and gave it away for free, I would tell them about my postcards from Robert Bloch. After a couple of years, I stopped sending my fanzine to pros. It seemed like the fannish thing to do. Filthy Pros and all that <sigh>. But thinking back, it always amazes me to think that one of my first LoCs was from 'the guy who wrote Psycho'.

I moved on from publishing fanzines to making a living writing horror novels. This also amazes me when I think back on it, because I always wanted to write Science Fiction. Perhaps Robert Bloch had more of an influence on me than I admit. But I know that isn't true. Robert Bloch was not my mentor. He was just a generous professional writer who sent some nice postcards to a wide eyed seventeen year-old faned.

{{☞ We too miss those canary yellow postcards. Bloch had a knack for being witty and succinct at the same time, something not many people are good at. }}

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

Good Grennell article, but then he doesn't write bad ones. We have a fair number of Bloch postcards around here somewhere; he used to write to *Yandro*. I recall when our son was born, he sent us some advice for parents: "Never feed the baby liquids. Dry food, dry baby." And other such examples of Bloch logic.

Lovely article by Sharon Farber. I think I'll run a copy and present it to our family doctor, who should love it. (He's the one who excerpted my acid comments on a hospital stay from *Yandro* and taped them up on the hospital bulletin board. Next time I went into the hospital, the people I'd complained about weren't there. He's also the doctor who listened to my symptoms, asked if I knew what disease they pointed to, and when I said no, told me I had my choice, tetanus or rabies. I think I said "Oh!" Then he said he didn't think I had either one, or I couldn't have walked into his office, but he didn't know what the hell I *did* have. "Here's a broad-spectrum antibiotic; if that doesn't work, come back and I'll try something different." It worked, and I decided this was my kind of doctor.)

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Sam Long, P.O. Box 7423, Springfield, Illinois 62791-7423

I much enjoyed Dean Grennell's memoir of Bob Bloch {{☞ "Chips Off the Old Bloch" }}. I read Bloch's own 'unauthorized autobiography', *Once Around the Bloch*, and a funnier, more entertaining book I've not read in a long time. And yet, there was seriousness in it, and a frank appraisal of himself and his milieu(x), that give the book depth. It is a curious fact that the Bates Motel, in Bates, Illinois (a wide spot in the road a few miles from Springfield on old Route 36) burned to the ground shortly after Bob died. The motel was built back in the '50s, I think, and had a precarious existence for some decades. Its business no doubt increased somewhat in the wake of the movie *Psycho*, but in the '70s a new Route 36 (now I-72) was built between Springfield and Jacksonville which took away all but local traffic, and the Bates Motel closed its doors for lack of business. It had been abandoned and in ruins for years before it burned. I don't know whether Bloch ever saw or visited the Bates [Illinois] Motel, though it's likely he did, during one of his visits to Bob Tucker, who lived in Jacksonville, Illinois, for many years.

I was very interested to learn the origin of the Spayed Gerbil (or, knowing the Glicksohnian propensity for card games, '♠' Gerbil) in Ben Zuhl's article {{☞ "The Canadian, the Myth, and the Chambanacon Bar" }}. I was croggled to see my own name in Ben's article, for in the 17 years since

Chambanacon '77 I'd completely forgotten about knee fandom. Actually, Glicksohn's knees are no hairier than mine or anyone else's, because Mike habitually wears trousers, not kilts. The hair that would otherwise obscure the knee is worn away by the rubbing of the fabric on the skin covering the patella. Scots traditionally have hairy knees because the kilt doesn't rub there. Of course, the sight of Glicksohn in full Highland gear is...well...need I say more?

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Bernard Peek, 129 Colegrave Road, Stratford, London E15, United Kingdom
<bap@intersec.demon.co.uk>

The articles about Robert Bloch reminds me of John Brunner, also an inveterate Punster. I suppose most people know by now that Brunner died during the Worldcon this year. I didn't know him well, but we have run into each other at countless UK conventions. I always enjoyed his company. He was the first SF pro I ever spoke to, and very much a fan.

Concerning Dave Kyle's article about the disappearance of worldcon banquets, the convention banquet has also gone from large British conventions. It would just be possible to run one but there are several reasons not to try. Firstly there is the problem of predicting numbers. Asking people to pay in advance seems to be the only way of avoiding expensive mistakes. Secondly there was a lot of resentment after the 1987 Hugo ceremony. Quite a number of people didn't want to pay for an expensive meal, and didn't see why those that did should have privileged seating for the Hugo awards.

We did try it for one convention. For some years we have been holding a regular Christmas dinner for a few fans (traditionally 13) — held at some randomly selected weekend during the year. The last one was a few weeks after this years's Worldcon and I couldn't make it.

We decided that the best chance of getting a hotel to cook a reasonably good banquet was to ask for something they had done before. Which meal have they cooked most often? Right, Christmas Dinner — chicken, roast potatoes, brussel sprouts. Followed by Christmas Pudding, mince pies, brandy butter, custard.

So we asked the hotel and they made a creditable attempt. It wasn't the best con banquet that I've had, but nobody got food-poisoning either.

Sharon Farber's descriptions of the medical profession don't surprise me at all. I was taking evening classes last year and we had to write some assignments about the places we worked. Several of the others on the course were working in hospitals. It sounds as if medicine is the same the world over. Doctors seem to believe that having got their consultancy they never need to learn anything, ever again.

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Joseph Major, 3307-H River Chase Court, Louisville, Kentucky 40218-1832
<jtmajor@iglou.com>

Though like everyone else I read and enjoyed Robert Bloch's unauthorized autobiography (and having to explain that to an entirely uncomprehending letter-writer was something else, let me tell you) *Once Around the Bloch*, I found Dean A. Grennell's memoir fascinating. Almost like the time I was reading the autobio in a restaurant, got to the point where Bloch described "Doc" Smith and his wonderful daughter, and Verna Smith Trestrail herself came in and sat down a couple of tables over.

I doubt Dave Kyle arranged the banquet at MidAmeriCon, or at least after reading his article I hope that he was not responsible. Eleven members of FOSFA bought tickets. The tables seated ten each. Cliff Amos later told me he had thought the place-setters would break the group up six and five. Instead, there was one FOSFA table and one singleton with nine other fen. Guess who the lone guy was? I did not spend that much time at my seat, either.

A couple of years ago when I bought Robert Conquest's *Stalin and the Kirov Murder* at Carmichael's Books here in Louisville, our fannish contact there (Bob Roehm) commented that there was an old fan from England of the same name. Not quite, he was informed. Since then I have added to my Conquest collection, even his SF novel *A World of Difference* (Harry Turtledove has no reason to fear the competition). Nevertheless, the Willis article {{☞ "I Remember Me"}} is a welcome addition to knowledge.

You know, after reading 4E's revelation {{☞ "Through Time and Space with Forry Ackerman, Part 2" }} about making up the news, I feel this immense sense of relief. All that stuff about a football player and two murders and several stupid lawyers and a gang of kooks was just made up. It was, wasn't it? His dedication to recording the immortal words of Heinlein at the Denvention is likewise to be commended, and I cannot wait to hear of the twentieth anniversary.

In the letters column, Martin Morse Wooster

ought to be aware that there is a radio station in California that jealously clings to its old three-letter call sign. Yakov Smirnoff told of how he nearly had an accident when he tuned to it while driving. Well, I suppose any Soviet refugee would be upset upon hearing from the radio "This is KGB — and we know where you are!"

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

I'm really glad you're running Forry Ackerman's fan reminiscences. He's a charming writer who's always a treat to read, and I hope I'm as enthusiastic and eager about sf as Forry is when I'm his age.

Also, Ben Zuhl's article was pretty funny, but there's one problem — its events are too recent. I wasn't at the two Chambanacons that Zuhl describes, but I was at the 1978 Chambanacon, and remember Mike Glicksohn well from midwest conventions of that era. (I actually was one of the few fans, for example, ever to *win* money from Glicksohn at a poker game.) But fanhistory can't have happened at conventions I attended — I'm too young! Fanhistory always takes place in the mystical past, where everything (hotel rooms, banquets, Heinlein manuscripts) never costs more than a dollar, and where no one is over 30. I suppose the sign of being an old and tired fan these days is remembering mimeoed fanzines. Or corflu. Or Twiltone paper. Or typewriters...

Vicki Rozensweig, 33 Indian Road 6-R, New York City, New York 10034

Both Dean Grennell and Es Cole write a good memoir. I never had the pleasure of meeting Robert Bloch, but they make me feel almost as if I had — a feeling promoted, of course, by Bloch's writing, both professional and fannish.

Sharon Farber's medical memoirs continue to be a delight to experience. The latest episode is a classic example of the story that is amusing afterwards, but for which "at least I'll get an article out of it" is cold comfort for having to live through it. The whole leaves me with little faith in American medical education, which may be unfortunate since believing in one's doctor seems to be an important element in many cures.

John Berry and Walt Willis are their usual entertaining selves. Unlike Sharon's article, John's makes me think he enjoyed the events he's relating, though his daughter may have been disappointed by the results. And the idea of a self-employed full-time writer being able to claim paid sick leave from the government is delightful, though I doubt it would fly in these mean-spirited days.

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William Bains, 101 Beechwood Avenue, Melbourn, Royston, Herts SG8 6BW, United Kingdom

<William.Bains@pa-consulting.com>

The Robert Bloch reminiscences had a fine mix of trivial humanity and insight. Michael Burstein's report on Clarion {{☞ "The Clarion Call" }} was clearer than most 'report' writing in fanzines, and also kept that wonderful mix of tight focus detail in broad context. Of course, as a Clarion graduate, he should be able to write well. I would never dare. I am a pretty good writer, for a scientist, and do not want to flip over into being a bloody awful writer, for a writer.

Sharon Farber's medical life articles are always what I read first in *Mimosa*, and usually what I read last, and again one or two times in-between. She is a terrific writer with material that makes the most bizarre excesses of fandom look like merchant banking. If she has not considered assembling the "Tales of Adventure and Medical Life" for professional publication, she should do so. I mean it. A whole world of people out there vaguely suspect that medicine is not an infallible science performed by near-omniscient supermen, and would buy a book that promised to tell it like it really is. And they would then discover that, in fact, medicine is beyond the wildest dreams of anyone who has not actually seen doctors in action after the anaesthetic has taken the civilians out.

{{☞ Actually, there is such a book, *The House of God* by Samuel Shem, M.D., and a collection of Sharon's articles would also be welcome. }}

Ben Zuhl's stuff on Knees was, maybe, just a

bit too in-groupish to make good writing. It fell into the 'well, you just had to be there' school of reminiscence, which is pretty pointless to the large majority of your readers who by definition were not there. Similarly, another instalment from Ahrvid Engholm on Swedish fandom {{☞ "Silly Fan Games" }}. Now, I have nothing against Sweden. As I write this, there is a small but significant chance I will move there soon, and I spent a couple of weeks in the Stockholm area this year already. I like Sweden, I like most of the Swedes I meet (which is more than I can say for the British, after all). But some of this got to be a bit 'WYJHTBT'.

{{☞ One could say that of any reminisces, but these vignettes are what fannish legend are made of. How many times has a small happening made a big impact on fandom, such as preferring staples over glue or wearing a costume to an SF con. Knees fandom could have taken over! }}

Some of the games sounded fun, though. Some sounded pretty stupid, but then games usually do when described sober. The Norwegian cards-without-rules game I had predated with the game of 'Gingham', I think at the 1979 Worldcon. (Gingham is the name of a particular type of check-patterned tablecloth.) It is played on a check-patterned table top with sugar cubes, according to strict rules. However, each side makes up their own rules at the start of the game, and does not tell anyone else what they are. Hence the two sides (it can be three, of course) are playing by different rules. The wise player makes rules about what he can do to the opponent if they break one of *his* rules. Then you play, until the audience agrees that one side has won. Winning therefore involves making a bold move, for example, picking up one of your opponents sugar cubes and dropping it in his beer, and then sitting back and looking smug. The only other rule is that it is *not* permissible to play Gingham sober.

Storra Mossen. Ah, I knew it was here. The Swedish version of the underground station naming game. Ye Gods, 10-to-the-18th people must by now have pointed out to you that Finchley Central *does* exist on the London Underground. What about the song, Ahrvid: "Finchley Central, Finchley Central/ is two-and-sixpence/ from Camden Town on the Northern Line." (Beatles, I think, circa 1965). (Two and Sixpence, incidentally, is 12.25 pence, or almost exactly one Swedish Kroner, so Ahrvid *ought* to know!) There *are* many tube stations on the London Underground that are not there, such as Marlborough Road (between Swiss Cottage and St. John's Wood), Trafalgar Square (between Piccadilly Circus and Charing Cross) and so on, both of which were there in 1932 maps of the Underground but *have now disappeared*! (I had to take hours off in the Bodlein Library in Oxford to find this stuff out, you know. Fannish trivia takes time.) Curiously, the most common British version of this game is called 'Mornington Crescent', not Finchley Central, and although Mornington Crescent exists on the London Underground, it is never open. Trains whizz past its dimly lit, dust-strewn platforms and *never* stop!

Actually, I think that the London Underground is a B-movie waiting to happen.

My favourite fannish game was invented by a non-fan. It is underwater cycle-skating, and really I do not need to say any more than that. Dry ice hockey is a real game, played on any flat surface with a lump of dry ice (solid CO_2). The gas evaporating off the CO_2 makes it skate over the surface. Soon it wears flat on the base, and acts like a frictionless puck. You must not hit it too hard or it smashes (and you lose) or pick it up — at least, not for very long — as otherwise you lose the skin on your hand. Pretty much anything else goes, I think. You can play a table-top version with a small lump of dry ice too, except those are small enough to be picked up and, in extremis, dropped into someone's drink.

On the topic of printed letters vs. e-mail, personally, I very much prefer printed magazines, fanzines, letters, etc. to e-mail. I can read them wherever I want, they have permanence, and my fading eyesight can scan them quickly rather than decoding a tiny square of poorly resolved squiggles. But it must be so much easier for editors. So this goes to your e-mail, if I can get it to work.

{{☞ It did. E-mails can have permanence if you download them, then print them out (which we do). We haven't noticed that e-mails are any better (or less-well) composed and written than surface mail, but for some reason people seem more apt to send us comments on *Mimosa* if they have access to e-mail. }}

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

Clarion has always been a dubious concept to me because I fear its *modus operandi* may have ruined the potential careers of as many aspiring science fiction writers as the number of beginners it has helped to become professionals. I doubt if a person's ability to withstand harsh criticism is necessarily linked to his potential as a good writer, and some individuals must have emerged from the course determined to become plumbers or electricians because training in those fields is less hectic. But obviously, Michael Burstein is tough enough to have benefited, and I hope his weeks at East Lansing will prove to have turned him into a first-rate writer in the near future.

As for Ahrvid Engholm's article about Swedish fandom, it's astonishing to find my name was being used in almost a mythic sense over there years ago. It's just the way Confederate and Union soldiers might feel if they returned to life today and found their diaries and letters selling for enormous prices or in contemporary books about the Civil War.

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Rachel Russell, 2695 Glengyle Drive, Vienna, Virginia 22181

<76600.2605@compuserve.com>

Mimosa 17 is great! I especially enjoyed "The Clarion Call" by Michael A. Burstein. A part of me regrets that I learned about Clarion "too late" in life — i.e. I am stuck on the wheel of paychecks/bills too hard to escape for six weeks of bliss. And my husband Eric, a Clarion grad, shakes his head and says stuff like, "No wife of mine is going to a Clarion" with an odd, tense look in his eye.

It was also really interesting to read about Howard Waldrop. Having just got back from World Fantasy Con, I was eager to learn more about this man. Ed Bryant at his reading had said not to miss Waldrop's reading, because he (Waldrop) has a great voice. Eric and I obey well but we'd never heard of Howard Waldrop (sorry) and had no idea what to expect. Well, Burstein described Waldrop's accent extremely well, but left out the fact that he's a fairly short, stocky man, with twinkling elf eyes. He climbs up on the table, crosses his legs tailor-fashion, which reveals bright red socks, and warns the packed room: "I read fast." It was a rollercoaster of readings, especially because the speed combined with the accent, made it completely incomprehensible to me, but nonetheless entertaining! Howard Waldrop made quite an impression, and I'm eagerly going to search out his stories now. And no one should miss an opportunity to hear Waldrop read!

Finally, though Clarion seems out of reach, I've been a member of a local science fiction and fantasy writing group for several years now. I'm going to suggest a manuscript sacrifice to my gang. Actually, this is my second group. I feel sure a tale lies in this madness, and I'll work on that for you!

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David Bratman, 1161 Huntingdon Drive, San Jose, California 95129-3124

<d.bratman@genie.com>

The item which most directly caught my attention in *Mimosa* 17 was Walt Willis's revelation that he is mentioned in the letters of Philip Larkin. This pleased me because I am a fan of the writings of both Willis and Larkin, and the idea that the great poet might have come across some of Willis's clerihews or his exercise in comparative pronunciation "I'm rather fogged / about Van Vogt" was vaguely thrilling. However, I was a little mystified by the quotation in "I Remember Me," since it seems to quote Larkin talking about his published letters in the third person, which doesn't make any sense. So I consulted a copy of the book, and found that the letter to Robert Conquest, which is dated 14 April 1955 (not 19 April 1954 as "I Remember Me" states), says "I never came across Willis, I'm afraid, though several times I heard *Slant* mentioned." The rest of what the article gives as an indented quotation must be from Bob Leman's letter to Willis.

I have to agree with Bob, then, that it's unfortunate that the editor of the letters didn't include a footnote explaining who this Willis and *Slant* were, especially since Robert Conquest is (or at least was then) still around and could elucidate. However, that wouldn't be as bad as supplying a footnote and getting it wrong. In Philip K. Dick's *Exegesis* there's an enthusiastic if cryptic reference to three performers he names only as Kate, Anna, and Loudon. The book's editor provides a footnote describing them as three unidentified women. But I'm not

the only reader who instantly recognized them as the folk musicians Kate and Anna McGarrigle, and Loudon Wainwright III, one of whom is not a woman, you have one guess which.

There are a few references to sf scattered through Larkin's letters, I see. I can't tell if he was much of a reader of it, but he associated with people — not just Conquest, but Edmund Crispin and Kingsley Amis — who certainly were, so maybe a little of their enthusiasm rubbed off. I don't know what prompted Conquest to ask Larkin if he'd heard of Willis, but it's too bad Conquest didn't ask Willis to send Larkin a fanzine or two — we might have made yet another distinguished recruit.

I too, like Dave Kyle, miss the Worldcon banquet, even though unlike him I've never been to any. They seemed to disappear in the mid-70s, just as I was getting involved, and I was not at those few Worldcons that sponsored revivals of the tradition. But I've been to other conventions, such as Mythcons and World Fantasy Cons, which still do have banquets, and even if I skip the meal and just show up for the show afterwards, I appreciate the unifying effect they have on the con. If other cons, including Worldcons, seem vague and diffuse these days, it's probably because they have no communal event that brings everybody together. (Sitting in a darkened auditorium for the masquerade doesn't count, and at most local cons I attend not everybody goes to the masquerade anyway.)

Don't tell Ahrvid Engholm, but there is indeed a station on the London underground called 'Finchley Central'. If an American can know that, why not a Swede?

I'm very sorry indeed that January 3rd is a date that will live in infamy, and not just because it has a happier connotation for me: it's Tolkien's birthday. If your neighbor's home had a shared wall with yours, it's fortunate that the fire damage wasn't even worse, if that's any small comfort.

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Kristin Thorrud, Fänkålsgatan 1, S-754 47 Uppsala, Sweden

I guess I shouldn't bother to meddle with Ahrvid's fan mythology — it's neither very important nor rewarding to squabble about petty details (and anyway, mythology's not what it is if it's all historically correct); but it's the first time I ever heard tell of the 'Norwegian card game without rules' that he mentions in his article on "Silly Fan Games." Being a Norwegian fan myself and knowing both the 'originators' he mentions, and having been fanactive during the same period, I can't recall that we ever touched a deck of cards, either within fandom or out of it. And we used to socialize around the clock.

An actual game which this selfsame group of Norwegian fans did invent several years ago as an amusement at Kringcon in 1987 or 1988 was typewriter throwing. Somebody had donated an aged typewriter, and the participants were simply to throw it as far as possible, to the cheers of the public. I think they even gave points for style. A huge amount of tape was needed to keep the poor machine together so that all the participants could get a chance to throw it, since it started disintegrating quite early on.

I see in your letters column that Martin Morse Wooster suffers under the misconception that the Swedes are the only ones here in the cold North to have "...produced fannishness." I don't believe that either the Danes, the Norwegians, of the Finns would entirely agree. I just don't think we/they care enough to pronounce ourselves 'fannish' or not. We shall let the Swedes keep the claim to 'true fannishness' if it make them happy.

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Pär Nilsson, Dr. Bex gata 2-110, S-413 24 Göteborg, Sweden

Steve Stiles's cover for *Mimosa* 17 was great, but the articles were not quite up to the usual standard this issue — which, considering just how high that standard is, nevertheless means that it was an interesting read. (Perhaps your fire reports put a damper on the entire fanzine.)

Ahrvid Engholm's description of the 'bheer hewing' contest contained a few oversights, which I now will attempt to rectify. First of all, there's the translation of the Swedish word 'ölhärning'; 'beer heaving' seems more appropriate. Secondly, you're not supposed to drink the beer, you're supposed to get it out of the bottle (we'll stick to bottle heaving for the moment) as quickly as possible. To achieve this you close your mouth around the bottleneck, tilt your head backwards and shake the bottle, thereby creating a high pressure in the bottle. If you allow the beer free passage down your throat, all will be well; if not, a powerful recoil known as a 'sprut' will occur. Ahrvid also failed to mention that you must not spill beer over a surface larger than a Swedish 5 SEK coin; if you do, you are disqualified due to 'dräll'. And you must not touch the bottle with any part of your body before the referee gives the signal to heave. Similar rules apply for beer heaving from half-litre and one-litre tankards. In

these cases, the beer is swallowed in huge gulps.

In his letter, Martin Morse Wooster asks for a Swedish-English fannish lexicon; a suitable subject for Ahrvid's next *Mimosa* contribution, perhaps? In the meantime, yes, there are English terms that we use without translation, including 'egoboo' and 'fugghead'.

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John-Henri Holmberg, P.O. Box 94, S-260 40 Viken, Sweden

As far as Swedish fannish word usage goes, we're all speaking English. 'Fanzine' is fanzine; the same goes for things like 'egoboo', 'fugghead', 'con', 'gafia', 'fiawol', 'fanne', 'neo', and what have you. In a couple of instances, I and one or two other linguistic purists have suggested that we might deviate from normal English fanspeak — for instance, I don't think the word 'personalzine' comes across well in Swedish, since the word 'personal' in English actually translates as 'personlig', while the Swedish word 'personal' means 'hired staff'. Thus, in Swedish, 'personaltidning' is a corporate in-house magazine published for the company staff, and 'personalzine' would suggest a 'zine aimed at ones hirelings. But I guess if we can live with 'apa', which in Swedish actually means 'monkey', we can survive this too.

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

I thought you were through with theme issues in *Mimosa*, but #17 seemed to be a theme issue. The theme was 'fans are crazy'. The only one who was sane there was Robert Bloch. He seems to have sublimated all his problems into gory fiction. On the other hand, Michael Burstein paid a lot of money at Clarion to learn how to play practical jokes. Ben Zuhl is fixated on knees and spayed gerbils. Ahrvid Engholm has written another article to prove that Swedish fandom is suffering from an advanced case of infantilism. About Ahrvid, how besides infantilism can you explain the Peanut Defense Initiative, Frozen Menthane Hockey and games known for their total purposelessness? Then there is John Berry who has delusions of grandeur that he is a famous designer, and Forrest J. Ackerman who seems to have a case of obsessive compulsion when it comes to science fiction. How else could he think up "Sergeant Ray Bradbury seen in the company of Captain A. E. Van Vogt" for his fake zine?

In short, they are my kind of people!

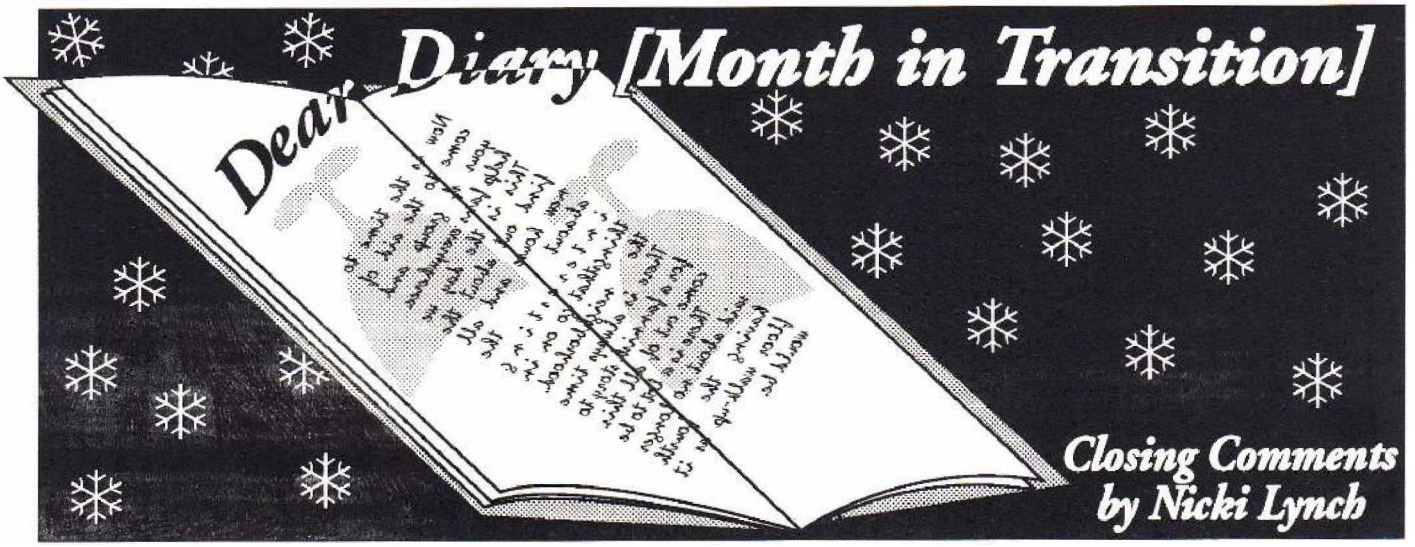
{{☞ Ours too. But it really wasn't a fake zine, it actually appeared in print that way! }}

By the way, we Americans have a homemade game, 'Pontificating on Politics'. Unlike Ahrvid's games, it has rules: the one who spouts the most cliches wins. One pontificator says things like 'Compassion', 'Balancing the budget on the backs of the poor', 'Some of my best friends are --'

Another says things like 'We have to stop spending our children's inheritance', 'Tough love', 'Welfare cadillacs'. Doesn't Pontificating sound like a fun game? I see people playing it everywhere.

We Also Heard From

Forrest J Ackerman, Ray Allard, Harry Andruschak, William Breiding, Ned Brooks, Michael Burstein, Mike Cheater, Lester Cole, Lindsay Crawford, Chester Cuthbert, Gary Deindorfer, Nick DiChario, Carolyn Doyle, Cathy Doyle, Tom Feller, George Flynn, Jenny Glover, Ben Indick, Terry Jeeves, Steve Jeffery, Kenneth Lake, David Langford, David Levine, Ethel Lindsay, Adrienne Losin, Miguel L. Martinez, Patrick McGuire, Kev McVeigh, Catherine Mintz, Murray Moore, Janice Murray, Joseph Nicholas, Bruce Pelz, Sarah Prince, Dave Romm, Dave Rowe, Skel, Roxanne Smith-Graham, Noreen Shaw, Steve Sneyd, Steve Stiles, Alan Sullivan, Roy Tackett, Bob Tucker, Ron Trout, R Laurraine Tutihasi, Michael Waite, and Walt Willis.



Dec. 20, 1995, Wednesday. Dear Diary — Finally, we have a house, a real detached house! After the fire last January destroyed the townhouse next to ours and badly damaged ours, it's been a year-long hassle of living in an apartment while the damage was repaired. But now we finally have a place to call our own again! Deciding to sell the rebuilt townhouse rather than return to it was a good idea; it didn't take long to find a buyer. The downside is we don't take possession of our new house until January 15th. The sellers say they need the time to pack for a move to El Salvador. Oh, well, moving over the Christmas holiday would not be fun anyway.

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Jan. 7, 1996, Sunday. Dear Diary — Uh, oh...it's snowing and it looks like it's going to be the *big one* all the weather people have been saying we'd get this winter. I'll make the calls to change all the services over next week. Hope the snow won't be a problem!

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Jan. 8, 1996, Monday. Dear Diary — The snow *will* be a problem — a *big* problem. We got about two feet of it! It finally stopped this afternoon and we dug out both cars. After we finished, we took a stroll around the apartment complex parking lot to check out how our neighbors were doing/had done — kind of a critique on digging cars out. People had done a good job with a variety of implements, shovels being almost a rarity. Buckets and recycling bins (which are about bucket size) were very popular as were brooms, dustpans, and wastepaper baskets. One cleared space left us in admiration; the only implements in evidence were a broom and a spackling knife! On the other hand, there were cars that will probably not be driven until spring. Some of them had so much snow piled on and in front of them, they became part of the snowy landscape. At every 'snow sculpture', we speculated as to if there was a car beneath it. It may take some time to find out.

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Jan. 16, 1996, Tuesday. Dear Diary — We didn't get the house yesterday as planned due to snow complications; the sellers didn't finish up until late, so we did final inspection this morning. At the end, they presented us with their keys — front door, garage door, and master bedroom — labeled in Spanish. The first service to be connected was the phone, so we put ours in. But when no one showed by late afternoon, I tried the connection and found it still active; it turned out that the former owners had asked to be disconnected on the 17th rather than today. When I told Richard, he reply was, "Hello, South Africa!" A few minutes later the phone rang and when I answered a woman said, "I'm having trouble with my five-minute yogi." Yes, she gave the right phone number — the former owners.

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Jan. 17, 1996, Wednesday. Dear Diary — Today we were scheduled to be re-united with all of our possessions, which have been in storage for over a year. The movers were scheduled to arrive at 10 this morning, but at 9 we got a call at our apartment from the movers; they were already at our house! When we got there, there was a huge van and a dump truck in our driveway (did I mention that our street is still only one lane wide due to the snow?), so we parked in a snow bank and rushed in. It's a

good thing we got there when we did. They were going to just leave things in the garage and take off. We protested, so they moved all the boxes into the house and basement, then left to go after the rest. Before they went, I asked why they brought a dump truck; it's just one of the workers usual transportation, that's all.

It wasn't until late afternoon when our furniture appeared, and we weren't happy with what we saw. Our oak dining room table had a large gash across the top, the coffee table was also gouged and had some kind of black stain, two of our dressers had drawers damaged from careless handling, the mattress and box springs were wet and smelled bad, and everything was a bit grimy. We were not pleased, but it was too late to do anything but go back to the apartment and continue packing so we could leave there by Saturday. Before they left, the movers said they would be back tomorrow morning by 10 with all remaining 'odds and ends' (i.e., televisions, VCRs, the stereo; you know, things like that).

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Jan. 18, 1996, Thursday. Dear Diary — Well, what else can happen? We arrived at the house this morning, and the doorbell ran just after 10. It was a policeman. About fifteen minutes earlier, there had been an incident where a red car had almost hit a kid at the middle school just down the block from here. Someone had witnessed it, and the car's license plate was traced to the people who used to own our house. (Luckily for us, our car is blue.) We gave the police officer their forwarding address, and as he sauntered off, we could only shake our heads in wonder.

So, with that excitement over with, we settled in to wait for the movers and the cable television installer. Well, the cable guy showed up, but the movers didn't. When I finally called the company, they said, "Oh, didn't we call you? They couldn't get a truck today." No, we *didn't* get a call, they must have called our now-disconnected number at the apartment instead. Sheesh! Anyway, they promised to deliver the next day.

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Jan. 19, 1996, Friday. Dear Diary — I cleaned the apartment while Richard went to the house to meet the movers. They did manage to show up on time with the rest of our stuff. The old mattress and box springs are totally unusable, so until the new ones arrive tomorrow we're sacking out in sleeping bags tonight. The cats will be intrigued, I'm sure.

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Jan. 20, 1996, Saturday. Dear Diary — We got our new mattress and box springs and the old smelly ones got hauled away. Good riddance! We finished cleaning the apartment and moved out the last of our things except for a bookcase too big to get into the car. A friend with a station wagon will help out tomorrow. By late afternoon, we were finally out of the apartment for good, and in to our house. Home at last!

# # #

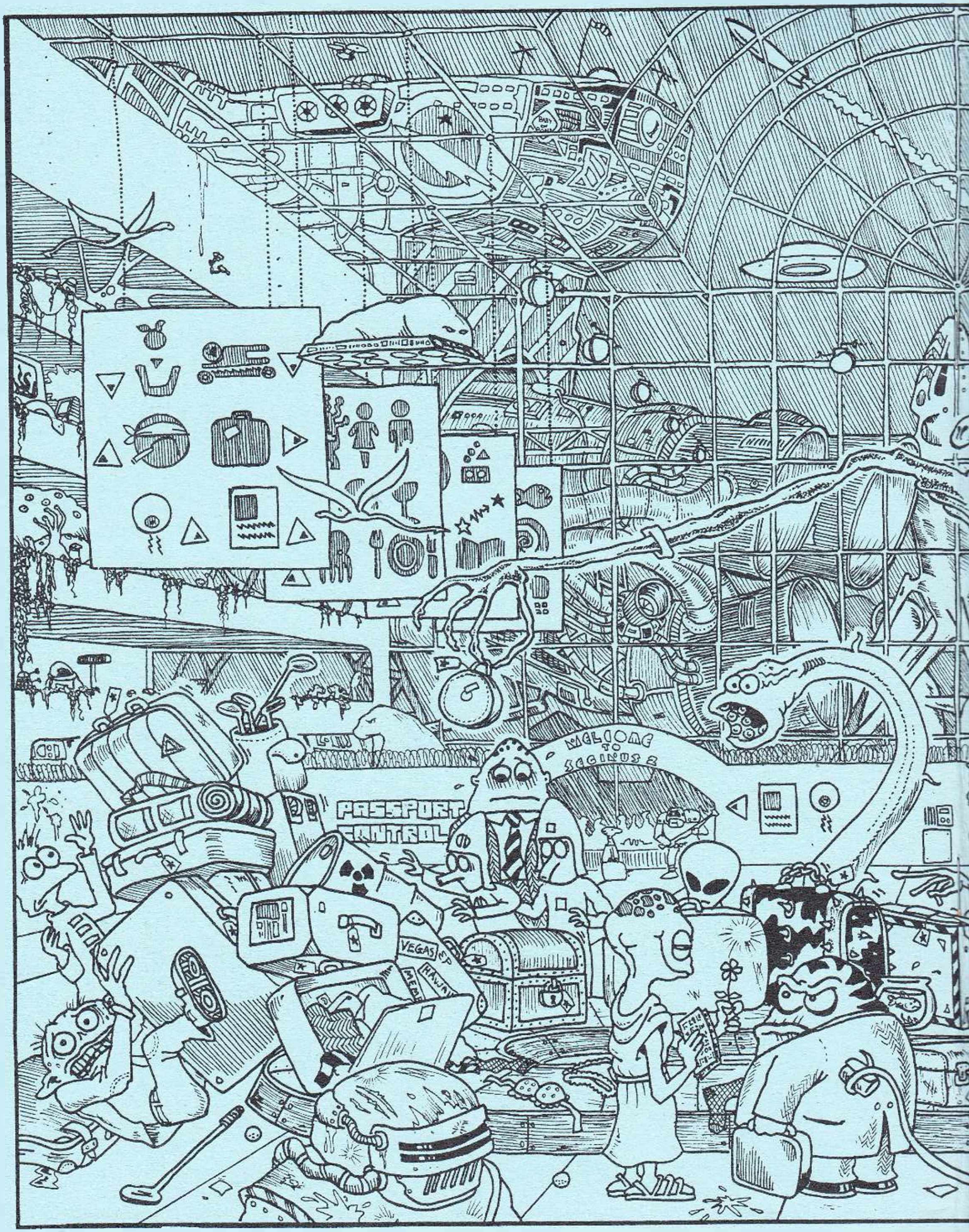
April 1996, Postscript — We're still settling in. We still don't have much furniture; most of the old was given away, and some of the new is on back order. The oak table and some of the other damaged items (including three Hugo Awards) were repaired by an expert furniture restoration company, much to our relief. Meanwhile, we're still emptying boxes. We never did find two sets of dinnerware and had to buy new ones, and there are other things missing as well that we will want reimbursement for. We still have most of our fannish stuff, such as the mimeos and back issues of *Mimosa*. But life goes on, as this issue proves, and we'll see you next issue!

Mimosa on the World Wide Web

We do have back issues of *Mimosa* available for purchase, but now, thanks to some hard work by Roxanne Smith-Graham (to whom we owe a big debt of gratitude), *Mimosa* is also visible on the World Wide Web part of the Internet. You can find it at this address.

`http://www.fentonnet.com/smithway/fstuff/other.html`

Two issues are available on the Web so far: *Mimosa* 17, which has been there for a few months, and *Mimosa* 14, which may be there by the time you read this. Thanks again, Roc!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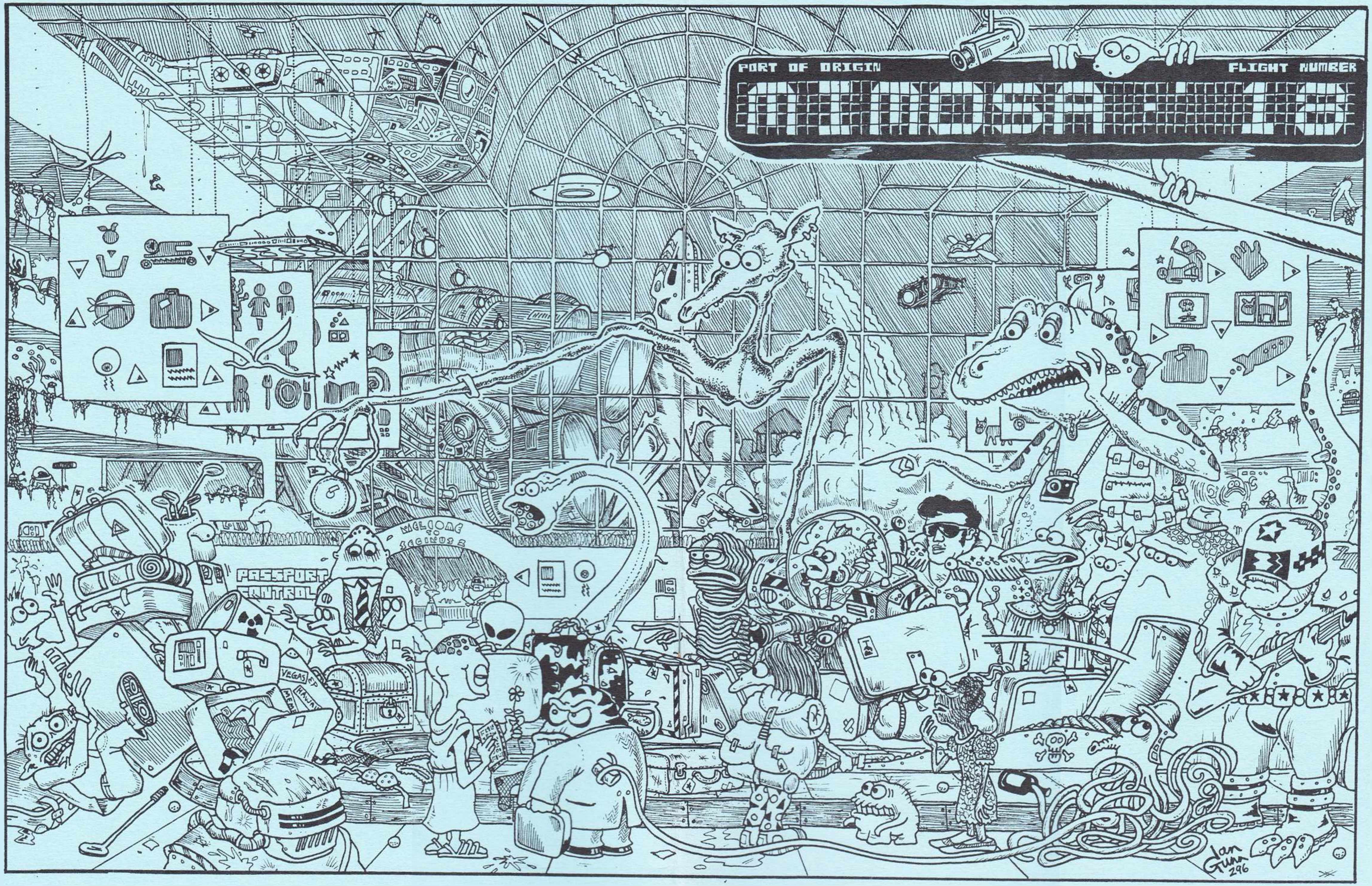
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