

MOTTA

the
electric
kool-aid
acid
fanzine!

GEE! I'VE
NEVER
TRIPPED AT
A CON
BEFORE!

HEHEHE

PROGRAM
BOOK

Sam STAFFAN / Street Stories '76



:::::::::::
:: POOPADOODLE ::
:::::::::::

STOP! Before you read any further, run and get a sharpened pencil and a clean piece of paper. Don't worry, I'll wait -- in fact I'll put on a record so that we can both listen to some music as you search for your writing impliments. ["I don't know much about la-uv, but I sure think I got it baaad."] Back already? Well all right. As of May 1st, 1976, I will move into a new apartment so please write down the address as I give it to you:

Terry Hughes
4739 Washington Blvd.
(basement)
Arlington, Virginia 22205 USA

For those concerned, the telephone number will remain (703) 243-7250. Okay, you can put down the paper and pencil now and read the rest of the fanzine while I go turn up the volume on the stereo.

BOTTOMS UP DOWN UNDER According to the March 1976 issue of New Zealand News a recently completed survey of four Common-wealth countries produced these results:

"Australia placed first in annual consumption [of beer] at 30.20 gallons per head; New Zealand came next with 27.70 gallons, England was third with 24.70 gallons and Canada came fourth with 18.6 gallons."

It is interesting to note that Canada came in such a distant fourth despite the combined efforts of Will Straw, Norm Clarke, and Mike Glicksohn. England did somewhat better, but its third place finish is bound to make me more skeptical the next time I read pages of boozing boasting from Bob Shaw, Graham Charnock, Leroy Kettle, Eric Bentcliffe, Greg Pickersgill, Dave Piper and the rest.

The article gave no explanation why Australia came in first, but I can't help but believe it was due in large part to the fact that the 1975 world science fiction convention was held there. Similarly, New Zealand probably came in second because it was a stop over point both to and from the convention. Australia got fans from all over the world in addition to their own native drunkards (who, I was told, are called "Bangsunds"). All those fans in one spot must have tipped the scales (not to mention glasses) heavily in Australia's favor.

SOMETIMES A DUMB NOTION Fandom has had a number of worthwhile projects; TAFF, DUFF, and special individual fan funds immediately spring to mind. It has also had some of real merit such as the Fancyclopedia and the Neofan's Guide which are not presently of great interest to me personally although I readily admit their value. To counterbalance these positive efforts, there have been several endeavors which are of such a nature as to make most fans smile and shake their heads.

I recently learned of one fitting snugly into the latter category. In Something called BIFROST BULLETIN #3, Steven Beaty informed me (and every-

one else getting it) that he is planning to compile a directory of fans who are bilingual. He was asking those who read or write more than one language to contact him. Maybe I shouldn't scoff (Scoff! Scoff!) but this conjures up images of a fan who is fluent in Spanish and French corresponding with one who knows only German and Swedish. I wonder if Steven plans to publish the edition in twenty different translations. He also neglected to mention whether or not English, American, Canadian, and Australian count as separate languages -- there are certainly large differences in terms of idioms. If he needs something to consume his time, I guess this project should turn the trick. It's a shame, however, his energies aren't going to something of more obvious merit, like coming up with a sensible idea for recycling used staples and old jokes. (Sending these to MOTAs is not -- repeat NOT -- a sensible solution.) At least this undertaking will keep him off the streets at night . . . which is more than can be said for me.

Such ways of wasting time as drawing up lists of bilingual bipeds are by no means limited solely to the realm of fandom (although at times I do wonder about it). Just the other day, while I was at home ill, I saw one of these mundane time killers advertised on afternoon television. It's a magazine called Soap Opera Digest. (Cross my heart!) As the announcer said, there are times when unexpected situations arise and cause you to miss your favorite soap opera for a day or more. Until now the events which you missed were lost forever -- but no longer! Soap Opera Digest gives a brief summary of what happened each week on all 24 current soap operas.

[After giving the matter some Cosmic Minded thought, I decided that this would be a way to get a handsome return for a minimal amount of time. All one would have to do would be to write, say, 50 different paragraphs of romance and tragedy with blank spaces for names. Then one would simply rotate the paragraphs from show to show, adding the appropriate characters. By doing this one could create a perpetual motion soap opera review. (Hah! and they said I was mad.)]

Besides offering the capsulizations for 24 series, Soap Opera Digest also offers off-camera gossip about the performers' private lives. The advertisement said that if I ordered Right Away I would be sent at no extra charge a book containing 20 years of As The World Turns. Twenty years! What an offer to make. (The fannish equivalent of a book summarizing 20 years of As The World Turns would be a visit from Grant Canfield.)

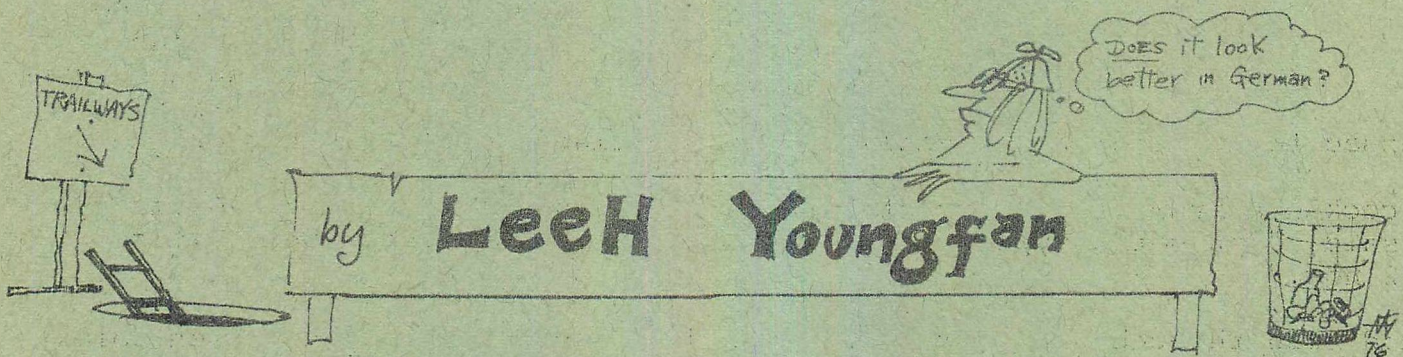
The field is by no means limited to one magazine of this type. While Soap Opera Digest is available by mail, there is a competitor which can be found on at least one local newstand; it's called Soap Bubble. According to its blurb it covers 14 network soap operas in summary format as well as inside gossip. Soap Bubble gives you 14 shows, Soap Opera Digest gives you 24 -- but either one (or both) will give you mental indigestion.

Maybe Steven Beaty will be inspired by this to begin something called Typing Error Digest for those of us who may have missed any in recent fanzines.

Warning: Reading this fanzine may endanger your reputation!

A TRAVELING JANT CALLS

Ich hatte eine Grunch als dem Eggplant uber sein.



[or I HAD ONE GRUNCH BUT THE EGGPLANT OVER THERE]

I sat slumped on the bench in front of the Trailways office, waiting as I had waited so many times before. I would have preferred to wait in the train station, but there isn't any train station in this town.

So I waited in front on the bus station, wearily watching a great behemoth of a bus berth itself. It was an obviously brash and foolhearty bus. The sign above its windshield proclaimed that it intended to go all the way to Los Angeles.

Why, I wondered.

As the bus bumbled to a halt, I rose from the bench and drew out the time-tattered Letter-Of-Authorization that I kept folded in the dog-eared copy of SLANT that I carry next to my heart. (The Autumn 1950 issue.)

Bracing myself to go through the old routine once again, I walked around the bus. As I stood there, letter in hand, the door wheezed open. A man in sunglasses and a bright print shirt, as well as trousers and shoes, descended. He paused and looked me over, from my dusty sun-faded propellor beanie to my air-conditioned tennis shoes. Shaking his head sadly, he pressed a coin into my hand and turned away.

I looked at the coin. A Lincoln penny. He was undoubtedly a Mundane, I thought sarcastically as I pocketed the penny. Or at best a fringe Trek-kie. I returned my attention to the bus.



The driver climbed out. He was a new man on this run. I had never seen him before. That was bad. I hoped to hell he didn't ask me to explain. I was sick and tired of explaining. Did Trailways drivers never read THE HARP STATESIDE? I held out my Letter-Of-Authorization and repeated the question I had asked so many times before. "Do you by any chance happen to have a suitcase on board ad-

ressed to a Mister W. A. Willis at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago?"

He cocked a brow at me, accepted the letter, and peered at it. Gruffly, he said, "You got a typo here. This says 1952. Everybody knows it's 1972 now."

I had been through all that before. I didn't argue. I didn't even point out that it was actually 1976. After all, he had a Trailways time table in hand as evidence for his own opinion.

Behind him, an Elderly Gentleman in a turtleneck sweater and glasses tottered onto the steps of the bus, cupped a hand to his ear, and asked, "Eh?"

Ignoring the Elderly Gentleman, I demanded of the driver, "You got the suitcase or ain't you?"

"Aaaaaaargh!" he replied. Unlatching the possum belly of the bus, he crawled inside. The bus rocked. The Elderly Gentleman fell out.

Since I consider myself as Big-Hearted as the next fan, depending of course on who the next fan might be, I immediately stepped back to give the Elderly Gentleman room enough to drag himself to his feet unimpeded.

Shuffling luggage within the belly of the bus, the driver knocked a suitcase onto the street. It was a straw case held shut with leather straps. Eagerly I dashed over to read the label. Perhaps this was it, I thought. Perhaps my years of waiting and asking were over at last!

As I snatched at the bag, the Elderly Gentleman cried out, "Mind the lorry!"

I jerked back my hand just as a Goodwill Truck zoomed past, crushing the suitcase. The Elderly Gentleman clicked his store teeth. I stared at the shattered suitcase. It was spilling out mimeographed pamphlets. Dare I hope? Fanzines?

Ducking between passing cars, I grabbed the handle of the suitcase. The

case stayed where it was. The handle came up in my hand. An address tag came along with it.

My heart leaped into my throat and my breath locked in my lungs as I brought the tag closer and closer to my eyes. As it touched my glasses, I was able to make out the words penned on it. I read them aloud. "Owner: B. Tucker. Destination: Los Angeles."

My heart went down like the Andrea Doria. Foiled again!

The Elderly Gentleman gave a start as I read the tag. With a noisy gasp of surprise, he looked around. Clicking his store teeth, he said, "Here already? Jet travel certainly is a wonderful thing! I'm glad now that Rusty talked me into flying. Poor Rusty! I must have slept all the way through Texas!"

Turning, he squinted through his glasses at me. His face cracked in a smile so wide that it showed the Monkey Ward trademark on his front teeth, as he exclaimed, "Mari Beth!"



"Huh?" I replied wittily.

He opened his arms and toppled toward me. I leaped forward to catch him before he crashed to the ground. He fell against me and his arms closed around me. His nose touched mine. His glasses rested against mine, lens to lens.

"Mari Beth!" he shouted into my shell-like ear. "You been sick or something? You look awful. You look like you've caught a bug!"

"I think I have," I mumbled, trying to pull free of the tangle of his arms.

As I broke away from him, his glasses hooked on mine for an instant and slid down his nose. When he pushed them up again, he was looking past me at the new shopping center under construction across the highway.

"Ghood Ghu!" he exclaimed. "It's slipped already!"



"What slipped?" I asked, hoping he wasn't talking about his truss.

"The San Andreas Fault! Read it right here in the latest Analog it wasn't supposed to slip until '78!" He waved a copy of the April 1943 Astounding at me, as he continued, "I knew it would be sooner than that! Back in '06 I told Bloch that the next time, it would be L.A. instead of S.F. The World Con was in Frisco in '06, you know. Made history in room 770 that year. Bloch was the pro guest of honor. I should have been, but I hadn't sold anything then. They only made me toastmaster. I should have been the GoH, but Bloch's got pull. He's got friends--"

He squinted suspiciously at me. "You ain't one of THEM? You some friend of Bloch's?"

"Who? Me?" I snapped back instantly.

He threw his arms wide and started toward me again. "Mari Beth! It's good to see you again, old girl! Did I tell you about my trip to Australia? Went to Ballarat. Rode the blinds all the way from San Francisco. Hell of a town! Real riproarer! They're all panning for gold and daffodils there now. I told Rusty that damned Fault was going to slip again, but he went anyway. Froze solid. Couldn't get him through the door back onto the train. Sold him to some woman to use as a hitching post for her horse."

I backed away quickly as he lunged for me.

The driver had come out of the luggage compartment. He was standing, watching. He worked his jaw, spat in the dust, and stepped back onto his bus. Softly, as if hoping not to be heard, he called to the Elderly Gentleman, "You coming?"

"Not yet!" the Elderly Gentleman answered.

"Back on the bus!" I shouted as I ducked away from his lunge.

He hesitated and said, "Why? I'm here, ain't I? This is the West Coast, ain't it?"

With a smirk, the driver agreed, "Right you are! This is the West Coast, all right!"

"You've got the wrong West Coast!" I screeched as the Elderly Gentleman continued his lunge.

But the driver slammed the door of the bus and the Elderly Gentleman slammed into me. I sprawled across the ruined suitcase, scattering fanzines in every direction. The Elderly Gentleman landed on top of me. I swung a fist at his face. Barely missing his nose, I knocked his glasses off.

"Mari Beth!" he exclaimed, groping. "How you've changed!"

As I struggled from under him, the bus pulled away. Desperately, I glanced around. The Elderly Gentleman was feeling for his glasses. He was about to find them. Rapidly, I kicked them away from his outstretched hand and dashed off. I hoped to be out of sight before he could locate them.



As I rounded the Dairy Queen, I darted a quick look over my shoulder. He had found them. He held them in front of his face with one hand as he raced after me. He had the April 1943 Astounding in the other hand. Waving it, he shouted joyfully, "Rosebud!"

I ducked into the kitchen of the Chinese restaurant. As I squinched down to hide behind a 55-gallon drum of M.S.G., the Elderly Gentleman burst through the door with a cry of "Hoy Ping Pong!"

A waitress happened to be passing. She was a lovely little thing, a veritable Chinese doll. Politely, she paused to ask him, "On the dinner or ala carte?"

"Anywhere you want it, honey!" he replied.

I took the moment of distraction to dart out the door again. Certain I had lost him, I wended my way home.

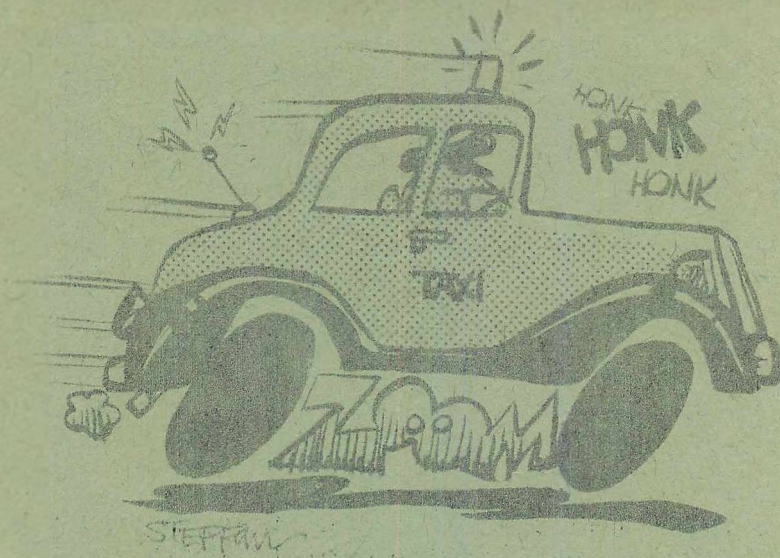
My cat greeted me. Giving her a cheerful kick of greeting, I slammed the door behind me, locked it and put on the burglar chain. With a cup of cabbage juice in one hand and a wheat germ cookie in the other, I slumped into my favorite easy chair. Breath caught at last, I leaned back to relax and contemplate my narrow escape.

Suddenly I was startled from my reverie by a knock at the door. I froze as I became aware of another sound. Faint but unmistakable, from beyond the closed door, came the clicking of store teeth.

+ Lee Hoffman +

(Equal time will be made available to a certain Elderly Gentleman.)

It's easy: I could make typing errors while blindfolded.



"Take me to the nearest brothel."

This request -- issuing from the lips of a thin, beer-flushed, slightly disreputable-looking Canadian -- shattered the easy confidence with which I had been regarding the world from the driving seat of my taxi.

It was the summer of 1957, I was working in Calgary, Alberta, on the design of steel-framed buildings, and there was a recession in the construction industry that year. Although my job was secure, there was no overtime being worked in the office and I had been counting on the extra money to help with saving the deposit for a house. These circumstances had prompted me to take a part-time job driving taxis.

The choice of job had been influenced by memories of an old BBC radio series about the adventures of a London cabbie. Something strange or romantic or exciting happened to the hero of the series every night and, as I was trying to broaden my experience of the world to help with my writing, I decided the life of a taxi driver in a Canadian city was just the sort of thing I needed.

A man who decides to become a cabbie finds his path less strewn with obstacles than, say, an aspiring architect or surgeon, but in the event it turned out to be far from easy to get myself established behind the wheel. For a start, there was the PSV examination, which is a really tough driving test. I went along for it, saw that my examiner was a crabby individual, and decided to be ultra careful in everything I did. His first instruction to me was to pull out into the traffic stream. I knew they were very hot on good hand signals during this manoeuvre, so I rolled down the window, gave the proper signal, then -- to show how safe a driver I was -- also put on the off-side flashers. The examiner made a little note on his pad and I thought: Ah, I've really impressed him with that one.

Encouraged by this good start, I took him 'round the city centre a few times, dutifully obeying all his orders. A few minutes later I was slowly trundling around the corner of 4th and 7th behind a bus when the bus's trolley came off the overhead wire, bringing the vehicle to a halt right on the intersection. I stopped too. My car was on the pedestrian crossing, and other cars were jammed up behind me, so I had to sit there while the lights changed. I looked at the examiner and shrugged philosophically.



a case study of the
fannish mind at bay



by Bob Shaw

He made another note on his pad, and I thought: No doubt I've impressed him with my calmness under pressure.

Presently we got back to the testing centre, parked the car and got out. I looked at the examiner questioningly.

He stared at me for a moment, getting ready to sign his name at the bottom of a sheet, then said, "I'm going to pass you -- but you did a couple of things wrong."

"Oh?" I put on the expression of someone who is eager to pick up a few wrinkles from an older and more experienced hand.

"Yeah. When I told you to pull out into the traffic you only signalled with your flashers and you should have used your hand."

"But..." I choked off my protest, reminding myself he had said he was passing me. His pen was still hovering over the paper, but as yet no signature had appeared.

"Well?" he said coldly.

"Nothing." I tried to smile. "What was the other thing I did wrong?"

He looked me straight in the eye. "At the corner of 4th and 7th you stopped on the pedestrian crossing." His gaze hunted over my face, eager for a reaction. "You got in everybody's way."

"I..." It was strangely difficult to speak. "I'm sorry about that," I eventually ground out.

Unexpectedly, the examiner gave a brief smile and signed his name, leaving me with a feeling that the hardest part of the PSV test had begun only after we got out of the car. I paid a small fee and was issued with an engraved elliptical badge which told the world I was licensed to drive a taxi in Calgary. Next came the weird experience of actually getting myself accepted into the profession.

I went to the headquarters garage of the taxi company which had a virtual monopoly in Calgary and was interviewed by an elderly man who was intensely

proud of his position as foreman driver. He looked at my brand-new badge without much enthusiasm and asked me how long I had lived in Calgary.

"Year and a half," I said.

"Know the city well, do you, Pat?" I noted the doubt implied by his reference to my "foreign" extraction. Several drivers standing nearby moved a little closer to hear what was going on.

"Oh yes -- I've been all over Calgary," I said.

He nodded. "Where's Elbow Crescent?"

I gaped at him, thunderstruck. This wasn't fair. Calgary was mostly laid out on a very simple grid and the numbering system was such that as soon as you heard somebody's address you could tell the exact location of his house. There were, however, several districts in which -- as a kind of reaction to uniformity -- the streets had been put down in a crazy series of curls and squiggles, and had been given names instead of numbers. Only one passenger in ten would want to go into those areas and I was certain those passengers wouldn't mind giving me a few directions.

The foreman driver had a different point of view. After asking me about several more named streets, none of which I could place, he told me I wasn't up to the job. The listening drivers snickered their amusement as I hurried out of the garage, humbled and rejected.

At this stage in the venture it would have been in character for me to give up -- I'm inclined to quit things easily unless I'm an immediate success -- but the treatment had uncovered a layer of obstinacy somewhere. I brooded over the matter for the rest of the evening, drinking Molson's Ale at a ferocious rate while studying a street map of the city. Next morning in work I traced all the squiggly areas, leaving out the street names, and ran off a couple of dozen copies on the firm's dyeline printer. I then practised filling in the street names from memory. This was a technique I had discovered years earlier when cramming for geography examinations, and it works well because it clearly pinpoints your areas of ignorance and lets you wipe them out. Within 24 hours I could identify all the different areas of Calgary immediately, just by glancing at the street patterns, and could fill in the names as quickly as I could write. I had also taken a special delight in spotting all the extra-difficult out-of-the-way nooks which a Smart Alec examiner would be likely to try tripping me up with. The knowledge was of a transient and superficial nature, of course, but for the time being it was there, right behind my eyes, as clear and sharp as the maps themselves.

The foreman driver looked surprised to see me again and he seemed sceptical about my explanation that I hadn't been feeling too well when I had spoken to him a couple of days earlier. He had spent thirty or so years perfecting his knowledge of Calgary; he was a professional, and he knew that I was unfit for the job. What he didn't know was that this was a confrontation between the mundane modes of thought, just like in a null-A story, and that I was ready for him.

He started asking me about tricky streets, and each time I rattled off precise details of how to get there, sometimes saying how to do it from a couple of different directions, just for good measure. This went on for quite a long time, during which he became more and more uneasy and suspi-

cious. Finally, however, he checked out my driving, issued me with a peaked cap on which to pin my badge, installed me in a current model Dodge, and sent me off to join a taxi rank. He was still shaking his head as I drove away. (This whole episode was used later in one of my novels, THE GROUND ZERO MAN, which you should dash out and order from your nearest bookseller.)



My first customer on that summer evening wanted to be taken to the Canadian Pacific rail station. I whisked him 'round to it, collected the sum shown on the meter -- there was no wage for the job; you got a third of your take -- received a small tip, and took up position in the station rank. I was feeling cool, mature, worldly, and confident that my fan-nish/van Vogt extra brain could cope with just about any situation which could arise. That was the precise moment at which the character came along and demanded to be taken to a brothel.

I stared at him, reproachfully, shaking my head -- I had no idea where to find such an amenity.

He spoke more slowly this time, obviously thinking he had encountered the village idiot. "Take me to the nearest brothel."

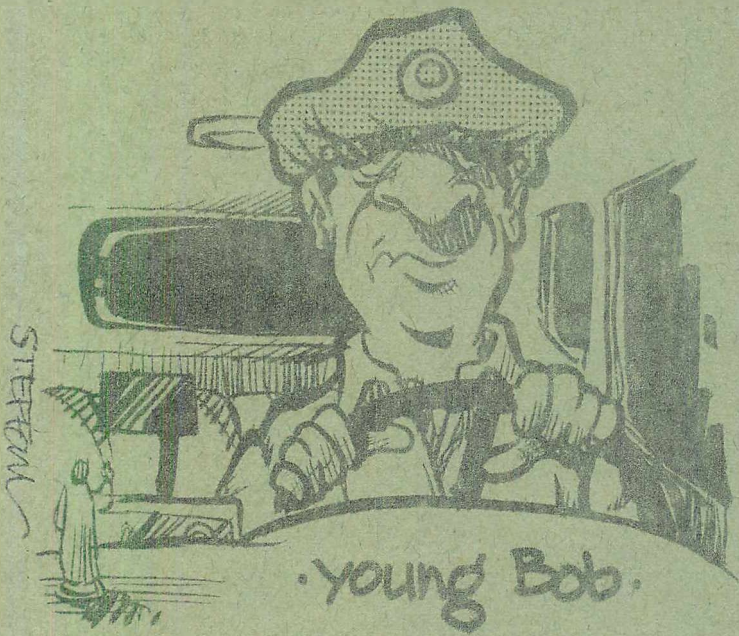
"Sorry," I managed to say, "I don't know any."

He looked startled, then gave a knowing smile and tapped a pocket which I presumed to contain his wallet. "Don't worry," he throatied, "there's something in it for you."

I called in desperation upon my extra brain, but the cursed thing seemed to have shrivelled up inside my skull. I considered taking the stranger to a street I had noticed, where several of the houses looked just like the brothel where James Dean discovered his mother in East of Eden, dumping him outside one of them, collecting my money and getting the hell out of there as fast as I could. But my nerve failed when I thought of the weird scenes which might ensue, and the possible repercussions.

"Honest to God," I assured him. "I don't know any brothels."

"Call yourself a taxi driver!" he snarled, and stumped off to the car behind. There was a brief conversation with its driver, during which both men kept glancing in my direction, and I wondered if I would be reported and drummed out of my new profession on the first night. A moment later the second taxi roared off and as soon as it had gone I went back to the third car and obtained from its driver the addresses of three brothels, which I committed to memory. One of them had the marvellous name of Japanese Mary's, and another -- strangely enough -- was in the actual street where I had considered dropping my client.



Somewhat shaken by the experience, I returned to my car and sat in it, glumly wondering if I would be able to stand the pace of this new career. I needn't have worried. What followed was three months of utter boredom in which not one incident of note took place. Nobody else wanted taken to a brothel, and the nearest I ever came to Calgary's underworld was when I took people to an illegal liquor store which was open on Sundays.

There was an occasional verbal skirmish with Norman, the foreman driver, who -- after the shaky start to our relationship -- had begun to take me under his wing, partly because I was more neatly dressed than the other drivers and this made him feel I

was trying to live up to his high standards in the profession. Every night when I handed in my fare sheet he brought it back, explained that I didn't know how to write numerals properly, and -- with great patience and a stubby pencil -- showed me his "correct" way to write a 2 and a 4 and a 9. My protestations that I was a qualified engineer, a professional writer-downer of accurate clear figures, made no impression on Norman. The weeks dragged by and I learned that the life of a taxi driver is very, very dull.

The only thing which relieved the boredom was that every now and again I would see somebody who worked in the same engineering firm as I did, and this meant I had to keep out of sight to avoid being reported. The management had a strict rule against moonlighting and I, being on the design staff, was particularly vulnerable. It was a peculiarity of the Albertan educational system that it simply did not turn out young men who were qualified, or even suitable, to learn engineering design. The apprenticeship system seemed to be unknown there. This left a yawning gap for people like me who had begun work in a drawing office at 16 for the sum of 15 shillings a week and had progressed to a princely six quid a week at 21, but who had received a hard and superbly thorough grounding in the trade. Canada drew us like a magnet, and on arrival we were thrilled to find ourselves regarded as key employees and paid salaries which started at twice as much as the native Canadians were getting for general office work.

Every member of the drawing office I was in had been recruited from the United Kingdom or Europe, and we were fiercely resented by the firm's clerical staff, especially when overtime work at enhanced rates used to send our salaries up to four and five times a clerk's take-home pay. On paydays, when the cheques were brought 'round, the atmosphere was charged with antagonism, mostly directed at a Scot called Dave Rhodes, the only bachelor among us, who worked prodigious hours and was so keen on saving that he went around in a clapped-out old car he had bought for 100 dollars. This really rankled with the car-conscious young Albertans who were putting as much as half their pay in some cases into late-model vehicles. I remember one occasion when the salaries clerk -- who was normally as quiet

and mild-mannered as they come -- had a kind of a brainstorm when he saw Dave's latest giant cheque, came running into the drawing office, threw the cheque in Dave's face and shouted, "Why the fuck don't you get yourself a decent car?" That was all great fun, but it meant I had to be careful that none of the underpaid general office people saw me in my taxi at nights.

One evening, late on, I got a call to pick up a passenger at the Copper Kettle restaurant. It was one of those places with a floor-to-ceiling window in front and on pulling up outside it I noticed a girl from the office and her soldier husband at one of the tables. Beryl was a skinny blonde who always wore tight-fitting tubular dresses of flowery material which made her look like a roll of wallpaper. Her main pasttime in the office was moaning loudly about how little money a good Canadian soldier boy was paid in comparison to the amounts heaped on worthless foreigners who slept over drawing boards all day. It wasn't hard to work out who she was getting at, so when I sounded the horn outside the restaurant I prayed my passengers wouldn't be Beryl and her husband.

They got up immediately and came out to the car.

Normally, if you want to get a tip, you jump out and open the door for your passengers as they approach, but on this occasion I sank down in the seat, hunched up my shoulders and pulled my cap (which was a little large) down to meet my collar. Beryl and her hubby got in, gave me the destination and I drove them there as unobtrusively as possible, hoping to remain unrecognised in the darkness. The fare came to 90 cents on the clock. Hubby handed me a dollar bill and said grandly, "There you are, cabbie -- keep the change."

I remained slumped in the front seat and signalled my gratitude by raising one finger to the back of my neck in what I hoped would be an acceptable salute. We sat there and the seconds ticked past, and nobody moved. Finally the horrible truth dawned on me. Having handed out the magnificent gift of ten cents from his soldier's pittance, Hubby was not going to get out until I opened the door for him.

I left my seat, shambled 'round the back of the taxi, opened the door and stood there, cap resting on my humped-up shoulders. Beryl peered up at me curiously as she got out and, just at that moment, some fool in her house switched on the porch light. Beryl and I stared into each other's faces, aghast, and her jaw sagged. I think she was more aghast than I was. Here, suddenly illuminated by her own porch light, was one of those foreigners who was now revealed as not being content with lying over a drawing board all day and receiving multiples of a good Canadian soldier boy's pay, but who was actually moonlighting as well, and who had just conned her husband into handing over part of the miserable wage for which he might someday be called upon to give up his life. Her jaw closed with an audible click and she swept into the house, leaving me with a distinct feeling it would soon be time to hang up my fare sheet for good.

There was very little finesse about what happened next.

Five minutes after I got to work the following morning I was summoned to the office of the general manager, a humourless toughie by the name of George Pillbrow. He was not on good terms with me at the best of times because Dave Rhodes had a habit of putting up fake company directives on the firm's notice board and signing them "George Capsule-Forehead", and

as I was known to have a weakness for puns the blame for them was being tentatively laid at my door.

"It has come to my attention," George said, "that you drive a taxi at night. We don't permit that sort of thing."

"Why not?" I asked reasonably.

"Because you couldn't do your work for us properly and hold down another job at the same time."

"It doesn't take anything out of me," I said. "Tootling around in a car for a few hours in the evening." This was an outright lie, because I wasn't getting home until about one o'clock every morning and I felt exhausted most of the time.

"Bob..." George paused to give me one of his rare smiles, "make up your mind which you prefer to be: a taxi driver or a draughtsman."

Even in my exhausted condition I had no trouble getting his drift -- my days as a taxi driver were over. Beryl and I exchanged thin-lipped smiles as I went back out through the general office, and I vowed hideous revenge on her. In the event, all animosity faded before I had dreamed up a suitable retribution. The taxi business had been a deathly grind and it was a relief to be out of it.

When I went back to the garage a few days later to pick up my final money, I told old Norman I was quitting and was surprised to note that he seemed genuinely sorry.

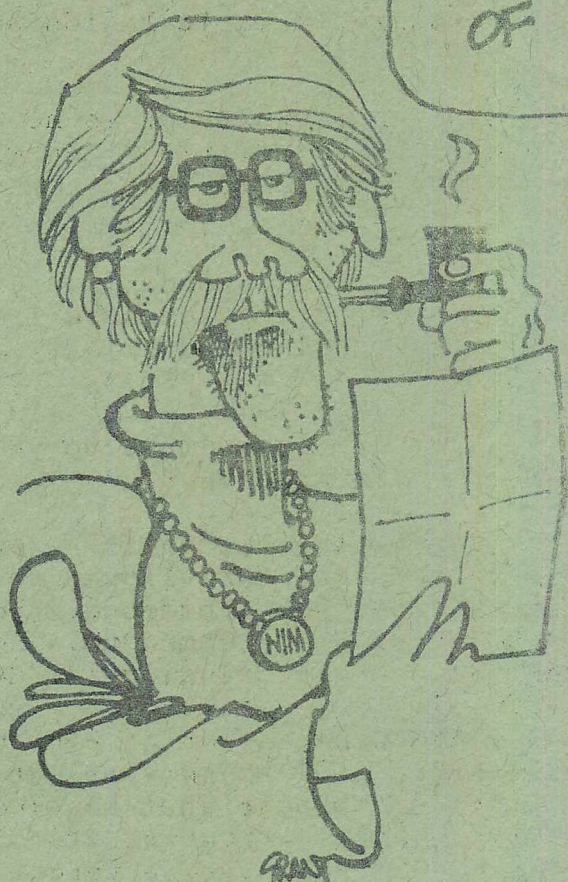
"That's a pity," he said, shaking my hand. "Just as you were learning to write, too!"

+ Bob Shaw +

(This article is also appearing in the British fanzine MAYA. Please let me know if you get MAYA regularly in addition to MOTA.)

The following fans sent letters of comment which I could not use this time because of space limitations: David Emerson; Harry Warner, Jr.; Sam Long; Grant Canfield; Dave Burton (coa: 404 Ash Dr., Carmel, Indiana 46032); David Dyer-Bennet; Jay Kinney; Bruce Arthurs; Andy Porter; Ron Bennett; Eric Bentcliffe; Jodie Offutt; Arnie Katz; Roger Vanous; Neil Ballantyne; Jim Barker; Leigh Edmonds; John Thiel; Dave Piper; Steven Carlberg; Lee Hoffman; Harry Bell; Rob Jackson; Paul Di Filippo; Jim Meadows III ("As for the cover -- well as editor/publisher of a trekzine, all I can say about the cover of MOTA #15 is: can I reprint it (serious)?") (Dan Steffan says "NO!"); Larry Brommer (coa: 1036 Front Ave., #2, St. Paul, MN 55103); M. Keith Digre ("I was interested to know that 'Aljo Svaboda was working in a cheese gactory in Wisconsin.' Clever people, those Wisconsinians."); and whoever's letters arrive after I type this.

Now for our regularly scheduled letter column...



ROBERT BLOCH
2111 Sunset Crest Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90046

What a pleasure it is to see a letter from the genuine

original authentic Chuck Harris! And how heartening to know that he has at last come to the realization of Tucker's true nature ... a dirty old man who lures children into the bushes with promises of candy; God only knows what he promises the diabetics. That phony railroad article is typical -- Tucker's only interested in railroads because he's a voyeur who likes to watch the freight-cars coupling.

(Choo-choo trains don't really do stuff like that, do they, Mr. Bloch?)

Brace yourself for the return of Mr. Harris....)

CHUCK HARRIS
32 Lake Crescent
Daventry
Northamptonshire
United Kingdom NN11 5EB

Thank you for MOTA, and would you please tell Mr. Tucker that my wife has a message for him...

"Do you know," she said, (at 1 a.m. yesterday morning, waking me from a fairly sound sleep,) "Do you know 'Sirrah' is 'Harris' spelt backwards?"

"No," I said, "I did not know Sirrah was Harris spelt backwards, but thank you for the information, and I will always treasure it in my memory banks."

"I meant for that space-ship," she said. "The one Tucker never called after you. I thought that Sirrah! might be a better name for a space-ship than Harris. After all, Chuck Harris isn't a very spacey name."

"What the bloody hell do you mean, -- spacey?? You might just as well say that Queen Elizabeth II isn't nautical."

"Anyway," she said, "you could tell Terry Hughes and he could tell Tucker. Remember our Eric Bentcliffe got fobbed off with a crummy barkeep named after him. Tucker gets a bit weird sometimes and you're likely to discover that the Chuck Harris Eructation is a scholarly name for the Martian Clap and how would you like that for immorality?"

"And you could ask Terry about Eric Bentcliffe too. Is his Eric Bentcliffe our Eric Bentcliffe who used to live in Stockport?"

"I don't think so," I said. "Our Eric Bentcliffe quit fandom to become a French Polisher but he had to give it up because the accent was too much of a strain. Last time I heard of him he was running a marital aids shop in Tunbridge Wells."

"You sure?" she said, "I thought that was George Charters -- or is he the one who rows around the North Sea selling dipsticks to oil-rigs? Anyway, you ask Terry ..."

And I am.

(Mr. Tucker, did you know that 'Sirrah' is Harris spelled backwards? Do you still have time to change the name for the Martian Clap?

To continue with this Special Tucker Depreciation Lettercolumn here's the besotted, bearded wonder...)

MIKE GLICKSOHN
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M6P 2S3

There are slight factual inaccuracies in Bob's recollection of Ballarat, but I'll leave it until I publish my own Aussiecon report (in time to take to Sydney Cove, and that's a promise) to correct them. Besides, others will doubtless do it for Bob. He has captured the fannish flavour of the outing delightfully. I really think he did a masterful job of creating the whole episode to match the cartoons that Alexis did and it's a sign of your burgeoning editorial acumen (there's an operation the doctor can do right in his own office if you're tired of the shots) that you instinctively knew who to send the artwork to in order to get it properly illustrated by the written material. It's insight like this which, coupled with a three thousand circulation and four-colour offset, might win you a Hugo nomination some day.

I was there on that hill in Ballarat, where the boys became men and girls became pregnant and history was made by a small band of gallant men who didn't know the meaning of the word "illiterate", and I can report that the snowflakes Bob claims to have seen were mere illusions of a brain tortured beyond the breaking point by the death and gore and carnage it had seen that dreadful day. (Then again it might have been dandruff.) Bob is correct that he called to Sheryl and Don and I to verify his claim: what he doesn't say is that we hooted and howled and hollered with mirth and glee, slapping our knees, rolling on the ground already baked to a crisp under the blazing sun, jumping in the air to give vent to the humour of the situation, in the manner of all legally-certified, card-carrying claim jumpers, before leading Bob away from the sawmill.

MALCOLM EDWARDS
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Harrow, Middx
United Kingdom HA1 1UQ

I wonder why the idea of tape correspondence has died out in fandom? You would think that in these days of the cheap, lightweight cassette it would be widespread. Wouldn't it be nice for you to hear at first hand such marvels as John Piggott's refined, effeminate tones, Ian

Maule's high-pitched squeak, Greg Pickersgill's threatening rumble, my lisp... The nearest thing to that which I've encountered was when Mervyn Barrett used to bring a tape recorder to Globe meetings to make recordings

which he sent to Australia. Late in the evening he would come up to you, stick the microphone under your swaying nose, and ask you to say something to the folks over in Australia. It's the best conversation-stopper I've ever met. I imagine he ended up with several dozen variants on "Bloody hell, what do you expect me to say? Hello, Bruce!" (Following a classic Monty Python sketch, we always used to refer to all Australians as Bruce. Still do, come to that. When Bruce Gillespie came over here, life was very difficult.)

PAUL WALKER
128 Montgomery St.
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

(Talking about Eric Mayer's wrestling piece...)
The Channel 13 sports events were reported by "Uncle Fred" Sales who also did the most popular kids show in my neighborhood which was "Junior Frolics", a daily half-hour program of ancient, silent cartoons that was as popular as "Howdy Doody". The cartoons were short, the commercials numerous. Uncle Fred sold Costa's Ice Cream. Unfortunately we could not get Costa's Ice Cream in my neck of the woods. I used to sit and watch him and the pack of unruly kids that served as a studio audience lapping it up every day, sure it was the best of all possible ice creams. Then one day when I was out in some remote part of Jersey with my family, sitting stoned with boredom in the backseat of the car, I suddenly saw it -- a candystore with a great sign that read: Costa's Ice Cream. "STOP THE CAR!" I screamed.

It did not stop but my father almost drove us into a tree. "What is it?" my mother cried, sure it could be nothing less than an attack of appendicitis. "Costa's ice cream!" I pleaded. "Uncle Fred....Junior Frolics... We've got to go back!" I don't remember what my mother said, but from the way my father gripped the wheel as if it was my throat I did not press the point. Instead I stood on the backseat, watching my one and only chance to taste the best ice cream in the world fading into the distance. To this day, I don't know what Costa's Ice Cream tastes like.

GARY DEINDORFER
447 Bellevue Ave.
Trenton, NJ 08618

Those shipmates of Mr. Spock from the Enterprise look like they're having fun "beaming down" in the elevator. But who are those two depraved-looking bearded weirdos? Could this be Steffan and Stiles depicting -- horrors! -- faanish fans? If so, I am glad that I have always been an impeccably straight and square sercon fan. I may have a crewcut and wear green and yellow polkdot bowties and make guidance systems for thermonuclear missiles at my engineering job and read ANALOG religiously, but, by slipstick, I am glad I am not one of those beatnik faanish fans who stand in elevators at conventions and molest innocent young Trekkies.

I too am writing a book. It is about a race of unimaginably advanced beings who come upon the suspension bridge from the earth to the moon described in your moving book, A CANTILEVER FOR LIEBOWITZ, and, demonstrating their vastly superior social evolution, proceed to blast it into smithereens. The title: THE DEMOLISHED SPAN.

(MOTA, the magazine of science fiction bridge puns. Go to the nearest mailbox and burn your copy today!)

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