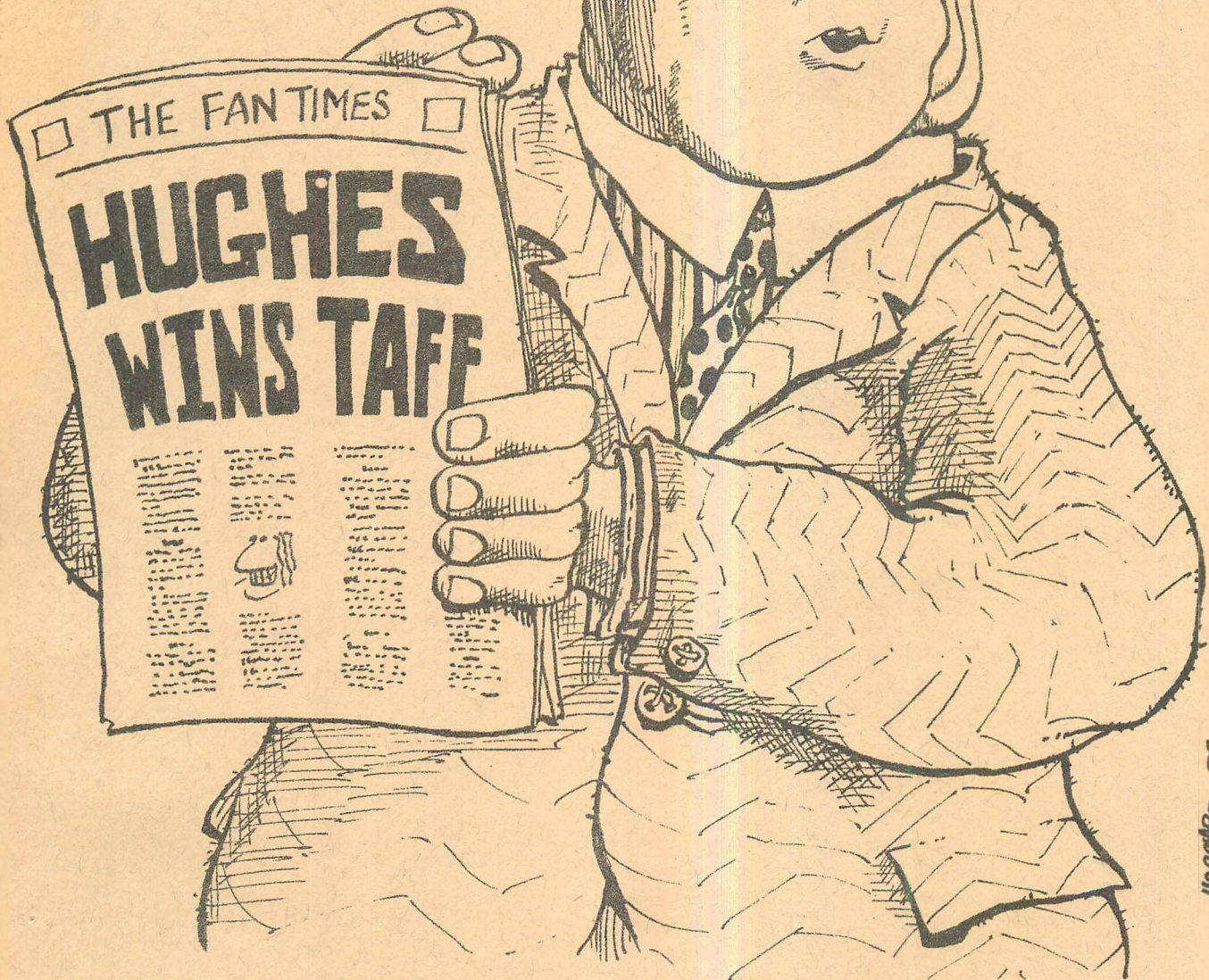


I WONDER IF
DEGLER COULD HAVE
BEEN WRONG....



HUGHES 79

A person can print other people's changes of address for just so long before he feels compelled to change his own address as well . . . so I moved. The new address for the Terry Hughes Publishing Umpire is:

606 N. Jefferson St.
Arlington, VA 22205 (USA)
(telephone: 703/524-4158)

This address will also be valid for Craig "Applecider" Hughes and Steve "Hyper Comics" Stiles. I just hope that you will all change your address files right now. I also hope you don't all come visit the new place on the same day because things could get very crowded. Most of all, however, I hope you believe me about this address change.

It's a sad thing when the readers stop believing in the editor. (Not as sad, say, as when the editor of a fanzine is run over by a garbage truck, but a sad thing none the less. Now I am finding out just how sad a thing it can be.

I fear that I have lost your confidence and trust. Last issue I announced that there would be two name changes effective with this 28th issue: (1) MOTA would become HYPHEN and (2) I would be known as Swami Arjuna Chichirichi. After posting the last copy, I sat back and waited for the letters of comment to start pouring in like molasses. My expectation was that a considerable number of those letters would contain tear-jerking pleas for me to keep things the way they were. I felt certain that at least one fan-historian would write in alerting me to the fact that there had already been one fanzine named HYPHEN. The reality of the situation was that not one letter-writer took me seriously. Not one! (Well, Tom Perry did suggest that I might change the name to QUANDRY instead, which is flattering but I had not been implying any degree of similarity with any other fanzine and, besides, I think Tom had several tongues in his cheek at the time.) Even though I never intended to make those changes,

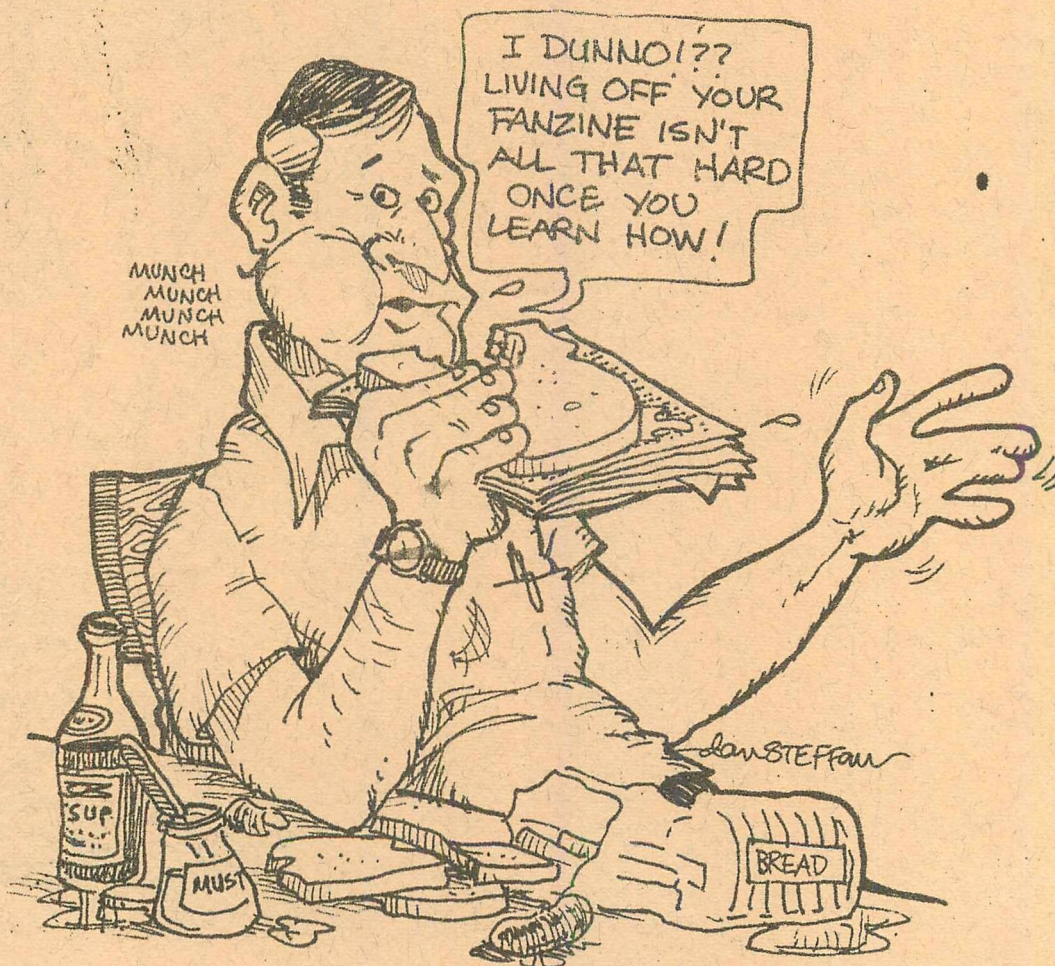


you might have at least pretended you believed me.

I have always been the sort of fan who has unwavering faith in fanzine editors. When he was doing BEABCHEMA, Frank Lunney would indicate that his editorial was continued on, say, page 39 and I would flip through the fanzine only to discover that it only had 38 pages. In an issue of CRY, Buz Busby listed on the contents page that there was a Charles Burbee article (on Laney or watermelons) on, say, pages 31-32 and when I looked page 30 was followed immediately by page 33. Yet I have never grown disillusioned with the truthfulness of fanzine editors (only with their ability to number pages).

Unlike me, however, those of you Out There may be growing disillusioned about the veracity of MOTA's editor. (Quick now: what's his name?) Since last issue's name-change announcement proved to somewhat erroneous, I want to try and make it up to you. Afterall, I don't want to end up like the little boy who cried "Oyster!" once too often.

Perhaps the best way to set matters straight between us is for me to let you in on the secret of my financial success with MOTA. Contrary to conventional fan wisdom, you don't have to publish a "serious magazine about science fiction" in order to live off your fanzine; this I have demonstrated with MOTA. At a hard and firm price of \$1.00 per sample copy I have, from May 1978 to May 1979, raked in \$17.38 in round numbers. This has been in the form of cold cash, personal checks, unused postage stamps, international



reply coupons, empty soft drink bottles, and one night stands. At the same time my fanzine expenses (to produce X number of fanzines in this time period) have run C number of reams of paper (5 reams per issue) at W number of dollars, T number of tubes of ink (1.2 per issue) at S number of dollars, X number of quires of stencils (1 quire per issue) at Y number of dollars, plus Q number of postage stamps at too much per stamp, or a grand total of \$AB.DE. \$17.38 minus \$AB.DE is my profit. (If you replace those letters with numbers, then the small profit looks very much like a big loss, so stick to your alphabet.) As is plain as the nose on my face, the only thing keeping me from being another Hughes (perhaps Howard) is the fact that I only ask for money for the sample copy. Partially this is because I feel that \$1.00 is Too Much to ask for my fanzine. However, the \$1 price eliminates all those 25¢ checks I used to get and it is a one-time only fee (since l.o.c.s insure free copies). If someone was operating under a greater profit motive -- like you for instance -- he could insist on \$1.00 (or maybe \$1.50) for every issue from everyone (including contributors) in advance. The profit margin could be made even larger if you didn't bother to actually publish at all and just used the money to fly away to Akron.

Speaking of High Finance and Editorial Truthfulness, I would not be surprised if you did not believe my announcement last time that this issue would feature Science Fiction for Actuaries. However, the first contribution in this MOTA is precisely that. (Look at the next page if you doubt me.) Well, to be completely forthright (as is our new practice), I'd have to say that it is really Science Fiction for Accountants, but the difference between an accountant and an actuary is statistically (and aesthetically) insignificant.

Trust me.

+ Terry Hughes +



THE HORROR

IN THE VAT

BY 292 6643 31 (formerly Dave Langford)

"What is a VAT number? Bob Shaw and James White have them too so they can't be limited to a certain age group. My first guess was that they referred to the artificial insemination chamber wherein the person developed, but I don't think that is correct. VAT could stand for 'Virile, Attractive and Talented' but I suspect it might mean 'very awful trash'. What does it all mean? Does the UK really license its artists? Or is it merely a permit to commit typing errors?"

--- A MOTA Editor

I'm always surprised when fans prove ignorant of VAT: it's undoubtedly the most science-fictional concept of taxation yet devised; how has it escaped the notice of omniscient Terry "The Shadow Nose" Hughes? In the US, I gather, there's a fuddy-duddy sales tax which is merely slapped like a wet kipper onto purchase prices at the last moment -- a process totally without finesse. We used to have something similar over here, called purchase tax, but it was realized that far too many people understood its workings. When I tell you that the BSFA Committee nearly understood it, you will appreciate Parliament's concern. To remedy this unwholesome situation, our legislators imported a special entropy-boosting package from the Continent; this proved to contain the closely guarded blueprints of the Value Added Tax machinery, as misapplied throughout the E.E.C.

(Let me pause in this serious discourse for a joke: "Keith Walker". Thank you. Meanwhile, back in the plot---)

The principle is simple, glorious and utopian -- there is the same percentage tax on everything, but you are taxed only on the little bit of everything which you actually do. You also have the tremendous egoboo of being your own (unpaid) tax-collector. For example, let's suppose that you buy raw, uncured beanies and add propellers by a secret process in your workshop: then what you pay out for the beanie is naturally called the input cost and will include VAT at 8% charged by the seller, so that two-twenty-sevenths (as honest accountants and Kev Smith will agree of what you paid is tax. Since you are registered for VAT, you wise and prudent person, you can reclaim this. But when you sell a completed

Chrome-Plated Propellor Bearie With Inbuilt Blog Dispenser to some deserving fan at your normal modest 500% profit (this is not intended as a satire on DNQ, far from it), the majesty of the Law compels you to charge an added 8% on the sale price -- which, being the money you take in, is called the output. In your trusted role as a VAT collector you are graciously permitted to send any output VAT to the same tax office from which you reclaim the input VAT. (If you don't avail yourself of this privilege, you will be awarded sanitary accommodation at Her Majesty's expense.) Mathematicians in the audience will be swift to realize that as a net result, each person in the great chain of production collects 8% VAT on his or her actual profit and dutifully presents it to the Government. How much more just and egalitarian than a tax at point-of-sale!

("But where," you ask, "is the hilarious fannish ambience? The ebullient British wit of which I've heard so much?" Unfortunately, Britain is suffering from industrial disputes and quip-shipments from Leroy Kettle are failing to reach the rest of us. Tough luck.)

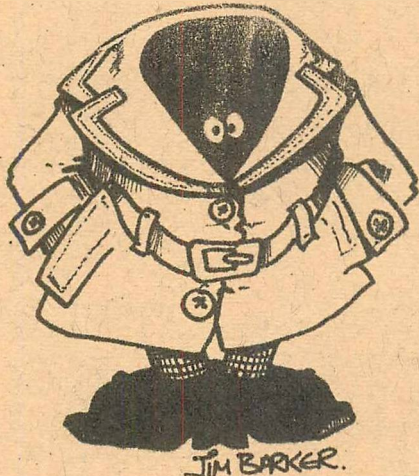
As described, VAT is no real challenge to the mind. It can be grasped as easily as quantum field theory; it lacks the rich complexity so essential to the livelihood of lawyers. Thus we have introduced different rates of VAT: the standard economy rate is currently 8%, but you can go first-class and pay 12½% on luxury goods like petrol and hi-fis. Scientific equipment manufacturers are often found in corners biting their toenails, since much equipment includes some components taxed at standard rate and some which, because they could conceivably be used in a hi-fi system, have the 12½% stamp of luxury. Then there are zero-rated things on which you don't pay any VAT at all, like books and food (though not junk food...), and exempt things on which you don't pay any VAT either, and which differ from zero-rated things for reasons known only to the Great Accountant in the sky. (Kev Smith, ACA, says that I am guilty of oversimplification here, since I have not mentioned a third category of things on which you pay no VAT -- things which are neither zero-rated nor exempt, but "outside the scope of the tax". To mention these things would only confuse you, and so I won't.) The seeming intricacy of the Worldcon constitution pales into insignificance before the labyrinths of VAT, which has now reached the stage where a whole official booklet (one of many) is devoted to the VAT status of second-hand electronic organs...

The fascinating game is refereed by H.M. Customs & Excise Department -- not the happy-go-lucky Ian Maule branch which spends its time fumbling sweatily through naughty magazines and jailing Americans for importation of illicit corflu, but a team of brutal, jackbooted professionals with powers of search and entry (no kidding) should they suspect you of wantonly confusing the outputs you rake in with the inputs you shell out. But they must have a piquant sense of humour, also unlike Ian Maule, to devise some of the regulations they publish. I've been a registered VAT person for a little while now -- it's less painful than a vasectomy -- and have received 388 small-print pages of exciting VAT information. The awesome and terrifying distinctions between crystallized ginger (8%) and ginger preserved in syrup (zero-rated); insoluble grit (8%) and soluble grit (zero-rated); food put up for sale for pet rabbits (8%) and rabbit food (zero-rated); angels dancing on the point of a pin (8%) or of a needle (zero-rated)...

("Look, Mummy, the nasty man is being all unfannish. Make him stop, make him tell a joke about Pete Weston.")

("Hush, darling. Nice Mr. Hughes is embarrassed already, don't you make it worse for him.")

Jolliest of all is the merry-go-round existence of authors registered for VAT (compulsory if they earn over £10,000/year; voluntary if they just want to reclaim VAT on typing paper, etc.). The keen, alert mind of the reader will already have seized on the point that books are zero-rated and that therefore authors shouldn't have any trouble. (Even the editor may be groping dimly towards this conclusion.) Wrong! There's no VAT on mere published books, but the Act of Creation is chargeable at 8%. What actually happens is that after a long week of effort, Joe Hack* knocks off another novel, and submits it to his UK publishers with an invoice for his advance plus 8%. (Foreign earnings aren't subject to VAT, "because foreigners say things like Shucks when invited to pay it" -- A. Pundit.) His publishers, being registered, claim this VAT from Customs & Excise and pass it to Joe, who with a cry of joy sends it to -- guess who? -- Customs & Excise. The Vatman giveth, and the VATman snatcheth it back. Anyone fool enough to buy the (zero-rated) book has the consolation that he pays no VAT; neither do authors and publishers when you work it out, but this solemn exchange of cheques and invoices (under the Janus-like gaze of H.M. Customs & Excise) gives an impression that much is being achieved. As indeed it is: who knows what nasty ideas these authors might get if our wise Government didn't keep them busily filling in their little VAT forms?



There, I've finished; fannishness may recommence and T. Hughes may breathe once more. That's all. You may go now.

+ Dave Langford +

* I would have said Rob Holdstock, but my tact is legendary.

Not all that long ago Roy Tackett telephoned and informed me that I had been selected as TAFF delegate to the 1979 Worldcon in Brighton. My immediate reaction was one of elation combined with a nagging doubt that something this wonderful for me was indeed the truth. Harry Bell surprised me with a cover and I am using it this issue in place of the one I had already prepared, since it was something I could not resist. I want to thank all of you who voted for me and gave their support to TAFF -- you have made it possible for me to go over to Britain and meet many of my friends for the first time. Along with the thrill of going to Brighton comes the responsibility of being North American TAFF Administrator. It is my hope that even greater numbers of fanzine fans will support TAFF through voting and contributing and spreading the word. I would appreciate receiving any suggestions you may have concerning TAFF and I'd like to remind you that contributions are always welcomed (please make checks payable to me or to Peter Roberts if you are sending it to him). Materials intended for auction are also needed all year long. I will be issuing TAFF bulletins in the months to come in an effort to keep everyone up to date and involved.

SON OF B*A*R*F

DAVE PIPER

I was putting up this tongued & grooved pine on one wall of the kitchen.

(I should explain, briefly, that Do-It-Yourself is not exactly my bag, not me favorite occupation like, I'm a bodger, and the only D-I-Y activity I enjoy is that carried out by my trusty right hand...and even then I'm not always successful.)

39 bits of wood...3½" wide...3'11½" long...tongued on one edge and grooved on the other...on two battens...on one wall.

I started from the left, near the window, and worked along.

1st bit up. 2nd bit up. 3rd bit up.

"Why is that third bit a different colour, Dear Heart?"

"Oh, that's OK, luv, different bits of wood will be of different colours. It'll be OK when I varnish it."

"Oh.....(?)"

4th bit up. 5th bit up. 6th. 7th.

"Those last two are different as well!"

"Mmmmmmmmm."

8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th.

"Right, Dave, I'm off...see you later."

"Mmmmmmmmm."

15th. 16th. 17th. 18th.....etc.

After each bit was carefully tongued into place and nailed to the two battens, I stood back and surveyed me handywork...and each time my eyes were drawn irresistably to the 3rd, 6th & 7th.

"Mmmmmmmmm."

32nd. 33rd. 34th. 35th. 36th. 37th. 38th.....I cut, tongued, and nailed the 39th bit into position and it was finished.

I'd never put up any wood on a wall before. All the bits were nicely planed, smooth, of the same colour, and formed an attractive seam with its neighbour. Except for the 3rd, 6th & 7th which were rough, a different colour, and didn't form an attractive seam with their neighbours.

They looked wrong.

But, as the tongue is on one edge, how can I have put them up wrong? I turned the remaining bits around, laterally, and each time the tongue was on the wrong edge to fit into it's neighbour. They must be up right, I muttered to meself, otherwise they just wouldn't fit.

It was at this stage that my unpetyumpteen years of reading SF came to my rescue as my finely honed mental equipment came into full gear and operation and I realised that if I turned the bloody wood over, vertically, I could get the tongue on whichever side/edge I required.

Oh NO!

I'd put 'em up wrong.. Back to front. I hadn't even realised that tongued and grooved wood had a back and a front. But I couldn't turn 'em round, because they were all fitted/tongued together and nailed, unless...

I...
stripped...
them...
all...
off!!!

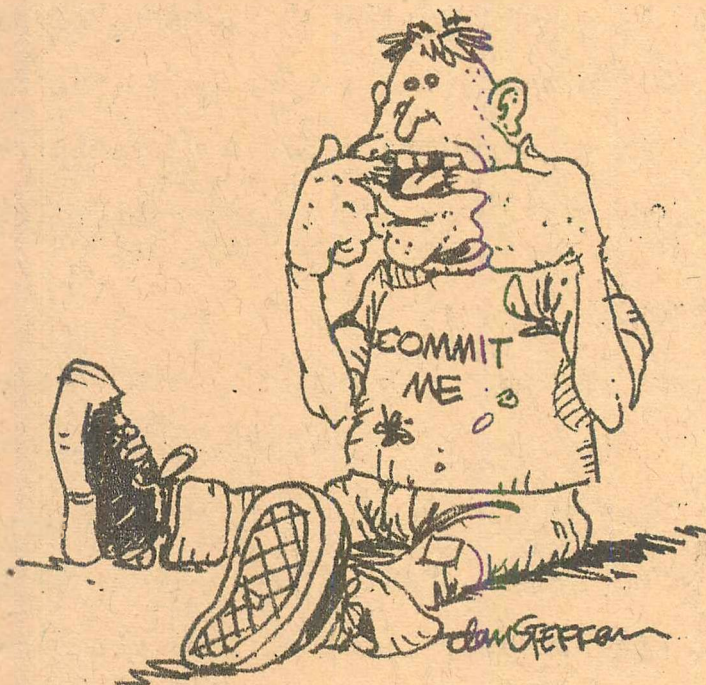
So what did you do at Easter?

I wood panelled me kitchen wall.

Twice.

+ Dave Piper +

Ken Fletcher for DUFF!



If this issue is completed in time, DUFF ballots will be included with the copies. However, time is very short since ballots must reach the administrators by June 4th so I hope you all will have voted before you read these lines. All the candidates are worthy people, but Ken Fletcher is a special fannish treasure that should be shared.

The time problems that came up in this DUFF contest have prompted me to remind all of you that a European fan will be chosen as TAFF delegate to the 1980 Worldcon in Boston. So it is time for North American fans to think about which fan each one might most want to see as TAFF representative and then write to him or her and suggest he or she stands. It is also time for European fans to think about who they would most like to see stand and perhaps think about entering the race themselves. Details about the dates for nominations to be entered will be announced later, but it is not too early to be giving the matter some serious thought.

A final news note is that Gale Burnick has announced that the Tucker Transfer has been successful and Bob Tucker will be going to Seacon '79!



There was a time when I welcomed the sight of a cat. I would "puss-puss-puss" at it, stroke it, tickle it under the chin, sit with it on my knee. Most animals produced this kind of reaction (though I have yet to discover the charms of spiders or sit with a horse on my knee) until we moved into 9 Lincoln Street. The houses in Lincoln Street are in terraces and have no garden back or front, only a concrete backyard. When the builders who had our house before us did the modernisation (indoor bog, bathroom, etc.) they thought they'd be clever and, by replacing the wall separating the yard from the back-lane with two low gates, produce what estate agents like to call a "car-port".

Cats, as I'm sure you're all aware, like to prowl at night, and much of their prowling in Gateshead is done along the tops of back-yard walls. These walls are generally some 10 to 12 feet high and, presumably, put the cats to considerable trouble getting to the top. Not so in Lincoln Street's back-lane: they have those nice low gates at No. 9 to jump onto before the final leap to the top of the wall. But wait! While we're balanced on these lovely dirty yellow gates, why don't we jump down into the yard and have a quick crap? Mmmm...yes, others have had the same idea. What a delightful pong! Such ecstasy!

My insides heaving, one of the first jobs I had to do when we moved into Lincoln Street was to shovel out, brush out, wash out a small mountain of reeking, fly-covered cat shit. There was more the next day, so I shoveled that away. Again the next day. It became a ritual, but even as it became a part of everyday life, so did my listening for the perpetrators of those feline faeces. The slightest rattle of the gates, or clunk of the coal bunker (occasionally they would use the bunker for low level aerial shots at the yard) was enough to send me roaring into the back-yard.

I put down cat pepper which is fine until it rains or is windy. I put down disinfectant, which kills the smell and discouraged them a little; but the disinfectant bill was growing, and after a heavy rain the yard was again so much virgin territory for tabby turds and smells. I hatched elaborate plans involving attempts to discover the owners of the ill-trained cats, then furtive sorties in the dead of night to fling showers of cat-muck over their back-yard walls. (Revenge does not have to smell sweet!)

I discovered the Final Solution about six months ago. Or rather, I remembered a method used by my grandmother, a woman wise in the ways of the ancients, to discourage cats from her back-yard. The Secret handed down from generation to generation is a Squezy bottle of water.

At the sound of possible pussy pollution there is no hesitation: through the kitchen on tip-toe (no noise now - don't switch on the light!), snatch from the window sill the plastic bottle, reassuringly weighted with cold, cold water. Draw back the bolt (easy now!), flip back the bottle cap, then....OUT into the yard, soundless, a water-spurting demon, the Bane of Cats. I even fling open the back gate sometimes and pursue my victims up the lane, squirting, squirting.....the fine spray from the nozzle cooling my fury as it drifts into my face.

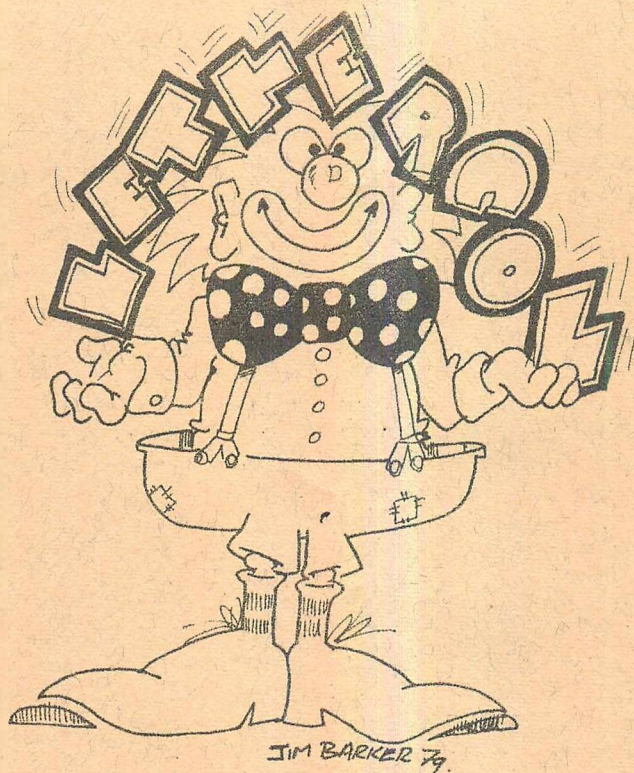
The method works. It may have transformed me from a placid animal-lover to -- occasionally -- a cat-hunting fiend, but it does work. Now and again some cat which has yet to learn the ropes will leave its calling card, but in the next evening or so, I'll get it.

Don't get me wrong, most of the time I like cats; when I meet them in friends' houses I still "puss-puss-puss" at them, stroke them, tickle then under the chin. But when I'm in my back-yard, I'd subscribe to any scheme to shove corks up their arses.

+ Harry Bell +

Those fans chosen Most Likely To Move Between Issues of MOTA are listed below. (Don't forget the change of address notice for Craig Hughes, Steve Stiles and your stencil filling editor which is on page 3 of this issue.)

Alan Bostick, 2 Hernandez, San Francisco, CA 94127
Lee & Vicky Carson, 1639 W. Touhy, #1, Chicago, IL 60626
David Emerson, 1930 Aldrich Ave. S., #17, Minneapolis, MN 55403
Gary Farber, 602, 12th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98102
Carey Handfield, PO Box A491, Sydney South, NSW 2000, Australia
Jerry Kaufman & Suzle Tompkins, 4326 Winslow Ave. N., Seattle, WA 98103
Ian & Janice Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd., New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY, U.K.
Jim Meadows III, 606 Jackson, Apt. 2, Peoria, IL 61603
Joyce Scrivner & Denny Lien, 2528 15 Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55404
Jim Turner, 8203 8th Ave. NW, Seattle, WA 98117
Bridget Dziedzic, 20 Avenue A, #21, New York, NY 10009 (who got confused and moved out of alphabetical order)
Swami Arjuna Chichirichi, 606 N. Jefferson St., Arlington, VA 22205



DAVE PIPER
7 Cranley Drive
Ruislip, Middx. HA4 6BZ
U.K.

Come on, now, Terry. I can understand you keeping MOTA thin to save on postage, but to try and save more weight on the ink is just ridiculous. I'm sure that the extra weight incurred in making, at least, every 4th word legible by the simple expedient of putting just a little ink in your duplicator wouldn't bust the Hughes Trust & Finance Checking Accountwould it? Shape up now, lad.

((In order to please our many subscribers we here at the Hughes Publishing Empire and Fruit Drink Stand have made a big change. The stencils for this issue are being typed with a different typewriter and we have high hopes that this will greatly increase legibility (and maybe spelling). If this fails, we may have to resort to buying our second tube of ink, but that strikes us as being a rather drastic step. After all, MOTA is aimed at those readers who enjoy a certain challenge.))

ED SMITH
1315 Lexington Ave.
Charlotte, NC 28203

I had invited my longtime friend Harold Wilson (known in fringeandom eons ago as Wierd Harold) over to dinner. I had time only to notice that the day's mail was the new MOTA, and to appreciate Dan's absurdist cover (Has anyone else noticed that Dan

Steffan is reviving the spirit of the 30's surrealists all by himself?) when I went into the kitchen to start dinner. I heard, in between the good healthy gales of laughter (occasioned no doubt by Bob Shaw's article and your convention report) and the gaacks of stupefied stupefication (which must have arisen from all those reports of pissing on peoples' shoes and other delightful hobbies of MOTA readers), some fiendish chuckles.

I found out their cause when I re-entered the room, and my friend started to read, without preamble, my 1965 letter to Herbie. You can imagine my surprise and embarrassment to hear that after all those years. All I can say in my defense is that I haven't written any letters to Herbie lately (within the last several months anyway), and it has been said of me that I'm an

agnostic -- yes, I have even been known to doubt the existence of Herbie altogether. But now it has at least been documented that I do exist, which you said some of your readers doubted. It is reassuring, as I pointed out to Harold over dinner, to know you exist.

"It is good you're not a hoax," Harold replied between bites, "otherwise I wouldn't really be eating this steak."

Which all goes to show -- something or other.

As to M. Dobson's "biography" of me, all I can say is that reports of my death (though not of my accomplishments) have been greatly exaggerated.

Consider this a letter of comment on MOTA. As such, it is my first in eight years. Since I doubt that I'll have as much free time in the next decade, the 80s may see a definite cutback in my hyper fan activity of the 70s, and my burst of letterhacking to Herbie in the 60s. And if you should complain of not getting a more frequent response to your fanzine --

You want I should bop you with this here lollipop?

ROY TACKETT

915 Green Valley Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107

Bob Shaw's item about the view from the window was fine. Reminds me, though, that I have not, with one brief exception, worked in a building with windows since 1962. Pretty rough since I had spent the previous 20 years living and

working outdoors. The exception was a couple of months while I was working at Sandia Base. That particular lab was located on a corner of the building with magnificent windows facing south and east. Ah, I observed many things while working there: a couple in a car across the street having a peculiar lunch; Jack Speer, once, walking determinedly along the sidewalk bent, undoubtedly, on some slippery lawyerish business. But the most strange thing was the men who chased each other up the street in their underwear. Every day at noon. I called this to the attention of the lab supervisor who assured me that those were joggers running for their health. If some clown in his underwear was chasing me, I'd probably run for my health too.

MIKE GLICKSOHN

141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ont. M6P 2S3
Canada

Just when I'd just about given up on you and felt ready to place your ~~rose~~ name in my "Gafiated" file you fool me once again and publish another issue and it's even remotely like your earlier efforts. I guess some people will do anything to win TAFF...even going as far as to spend five or six years publishing the best fannish fanzine around before running.

Say, this is really the all-Canadian issue of MOTA, isn't it? First you mention Derek Carter and I several times, then Sir Sanford Fleming, and then Bob Shaw writes all about the wonders of working in Calgary. At this rate you'll soon replace Eli Cohen as best faneditor in Canada.

Eric Mayer comes close to unravelling the threads that bind the tapestry of the universe together when he suggests that Bob Shaw might have fabricated even a part of one of his finely-crafted articles. One might as well question the magnificence of Terry Hughes's nose, the wonderfulness of Meyer's thing or the validity of the Best Fan Artist Hugo. Some things one has to accept as cornerstones upon which to build a stable and lasting life and the truthfulness of Bob Shaw is prime among them. If one couldn't believe in the concept of the beer-powered spaceship, then what would there be in life worth holding onto?

BOB SHAW
3 Braddyll Terrace
Ulverston, Cumbria
LA 12 0DH, U.K.

Eric Mayer raises some interesting points in his comment on my last MOTA piece. I would like to assure him that everything I write in articles like that is absolutely true. It would be easy to start making up bits and slipping them in for effect, but to do so would be to break a pact with myself and

to admit failure as a writer. Eric gets to the heart of the matter when he complains about an abundance of "unstructured" material in his own zine -- because structure, or pattern, is probably the most important element in the sort of writing we're talking about. One of the few advantages in growing older (I'm 47 now) is that when you look back through your memory in search of usable material for articles there is an increasing amount to choose from and that gives you a better chance to see patterns or to find bits that will fit into structures you devise. It's a bit like being asked to make designs with coloured beads -- a bigger sample of beads gives you a better chance. It is easy to stretch an analogy like that too far, but with the passage of time it's as if the light shining down on your tray of beads shifts like the sun, producing colour changes in the beads and enabling you to see patterns that weren't discernible before. I'm in danger of sounding all pedagogic now, but this business of form in any kind of writing -- and especially in humorous writing -- can hardly be over-emphasised. You can take a collection of trivia as the basis for an article as long as you ensure that you arrange and interconnect them in such a way that the underlying form is well made and aesthetically right. I still do it by, before I begin an article, making a list of all the available components, staring at them until I can devise a satisfactory sequence, and actually numbering them in the order in which they are to be used. Only when that is done will I start to write the article itself, but by then most of the vital work has already been done. The method may sound terribly cold and calculating, a recipe for doing away with spontaneity, but in writing it's the pieces on which the author has worked hardest at his craft which appear most like an effortless flow of words.

((If making lists is one of the key factors in being able to write like Bob Shaw, then this is one person who intends to be making a lot of lists in the months ahead... Now if only Bob would let me know what things to put in my lists and how to present them in an entertaining and witty way ---but I fear that comes from having a keen sense of humor and knowing how best to use it.))

ERIC BENTCLIFFE
17, Riverside Crescent
Holmes Chapel,
Cheshire CW4 7NR, U.K.

Was amused by your musings on MOTA as a title, but still remain unconvinced (what true fan won't) that there isn't somewhere a devious, esoteric, meaning behind the name, like My Own True Adventures. And I thoroughly enjoyed Peter Roberts' trip episode in the same issue -- some-

how his trip account evokes memories of my own TAFF journeyings more than any others have done...whether this is because he also had the stomach to eat (and mention having done so) at a Howard Johnson's or two whilst lesser mortals didn't (How's your indigestion, Peter? Mine is almost okay now, but then it's been 18 years...) I don't know, but it certainly, er, brings it all back. A fine report, and Dan Steffan's illos do nicely compliment it.

HARRY WARNER, JR.
423 Summit Ave.
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Peter's trip report continues to be splendid, perhaps the closest in general impression to the famous Berry and Willis travelogs that anyone in fandom has done in recent years.

TOM PERRY
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The Steffan illos for Peter's trip report are beauties especially that delightful one of Pedros -- you can feel the heat. The report itself has the flavor of a nineteenth-century travelogue through America by some wordy Briton like Dickens; so much so, indeed, that I suggested that the family sojourn in the parlor while I read aloud the drolleries of your Mr. Roberts. I'm sorry to have to report that I encountered enthusiasm from no quarter, the other members of the family preferring their accustomed fare of television melodrama.

But I want you to know that I enjoyed Peter's monograph on our highways and the strange culture that grows like mold at the exits; "brash little villages with no names" says it very nicely. I don't quite believe the part where he mistakes the meaning of "restrooms", but still it's a clever device for counterpointing the different euphemisms we use. (The word TOILET on public signs in England strikes American eyes with all the force of a Dirty Word, but of course it's just another, if older, euphemism.) Those unavailable cigarette papers resound with the insistence of a bass note in a Bach fugue; I suppose there is a scene coming where Peter finds cigarette papers, and in flavors yet. I look forward with anticipation.

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Let's see now, if Gary Deindorfer is correct, I have to come up with an ~~antidote~~ antidote to get on to the MOTA letter column. The trouble is that I have never encountered an antidote. I've never been bitten by a killer spider or snake and lived to tell the horrible tale of how a tooth of the spider broke away from its mouth and got stuck so deep into my skin, and how they had to per-

form major surgery to take that tooth out, just in case it had a tiny amount of poison on it which would ever so slowly and painfully kill me, (presuming I hadn't died earlier). And as such, I can't tell the name of the antidote they didn't give me. Oh well, there goes my chance to be in the MOTA letter column. (Here, spider, here, spider, here's a nice juicy finger to sink your teeth into -- I need an antidote.)

((Dear Irwin, one need not endure great pain and danger from the mouth of a spider in order to be quoted in my letter column, although it does help. There are times when the proper sort of persuasion can be just as effective as any antidote.))

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Quote from one of my letters sometime, Hughes, or I won't vote for you in TAFF.

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You've probably heard something about out (Greg Pickersgill, Simone Walsh, Rob Hansen and me) eighteen hour journey back from Silicon by courtesy of the AA Relay service; but as yet nobody seems to have given it the write-up it really deserves. I mean, it was bloody amazing! And, despite the hassles, bloody enjoyable (as long as we don't have to undergo it a second time, because then we'll know what to expect and it'll be very boring). It was like being trapped in a novel by Philip K. Dick; there we were, being driven through the night from one collection point to another, completely unable to secure any objective proof that we were actually going somewhere. How did we know that they weren't just driving us around in a circle while a hand-picked crew sworn to eternal secrecy (or, better, lobotomised into a state of terminal zombiedom) dismantled the prefab station we'd just left and then reassembled

the bits into a completely different-looking station? It was so dark that couldn't see any road signs, even when we were actually awake. My own incipient paranoia only ebbed once we reached the high-security compound at Northampton because it was distinctly different from the other Relay stations (which, for the most part, seemed to have been constructed in the back end of nowhere). Not that we actually knew that it was in Northampton, of course; it wasn't until Greg picked up the telephone directory and looked at the cover that we knew that. Caught in the grip of an uncommunicative authority, indeed!

It was all due to the oil-leak that developed while we were doing about seventy miles an hour in the fast lane of the A1(M). Greg's incredibly calm screech of "Smoke!" alerted our eyes to something that our nostrils had been trying to tell us for the past few minutes, and suddenly we were heading for the hard shoulder at about ten miles an hour with all the other traffic weaving around us and the Harveys' car vanishing into the distance, its passengers oblivious to our fate. But then we were really too tired to worry anyway; the police patrol car that suddenly appeared in front of us with its STOP light doing its best to burn out our retinas evoked little more from us than a grunt or two. Not even the policeman's admonition for us not to play on the motorway while we waited for the AA service van to arrive provoked nothing more than a yawn or three.

And thus began our Great Adventure. "Relay" means exactly what it says --- one recovery vehicle transports you and the car to a station and then leaves you to be collected by another recovery vehicle which takes you on to another station before leaving you for collection by another recovery vehicle...and so on until you eventually reach your destination. Our particular journey was broken down into four stages; and, despite what I said above about the paranoia of it all, perhaps it was just as well that we made the journey at night because it gave us the chance to fall asleep and not get too bored with the scenery.

We had to spend a fair amount of time at each station waiting for our lift to the next one, of course; the system isn't that efficient (and this is Britain, after all). The longest wait was at the car compound in Northampton, the passenger lounge of which was almost empty at the time we arrived (at about half past four on the Tuesday morning, having left Newcastle at about the same time on the Monday afternoon) but which gradually filled up with elderly couples and young-parents-with-screaming-kids; and while these people made a vast number of either irate phone calls to the AA hierarchs who had stranded them there or pleading phone calls to the RAC (Britain's other motoring organisation) for its hierarchs to come out and sign them up as new members and thus rescue them, all we did was sit around and make jokes about the situation. (Perhaps this has something to do with the much-vaunted fannish mentality; the unstated conviction that everything will turn out right in the end regardless of whatever goes wrong in the meantime.) With our pallid skins, poached-egg eyes, shambling gait and steadily disappearing convention hangovers, we must have looked quite a sight to all those people. Perhaps they thought we were junkies coming down off our most recent high; I remember one old woman in particular giving us a series of covert glances as though she was wondering just what was wrong with us; perhaps I should have done my impersonation of a heart attack victim just to see what else she might do.

We finally reached London at about half past ten on the Tuesday morning, having been help up on the last leg of the journey down the M1 by -- of course! -- the rush hour traffic on its way into the city. And we later found out that the oil leak was due to the failure of the most insignificant

component possible -- a rubber washer that cost (I think) all of 27p to replace. Well, what else can you expect from a British Leyland car?

Ian and Janice Maule and I are working on a fanthology of the best British fanwriting of the seventies (called BY BRITISH -- A FANTHOLGY OF THE SEVENTIES) for publication in time for Seacon, the profits of which will be split between TAFF and GUFF. It will be duplicated, about 100 pages long, have card covers, will sell for somewhere in the region of 75p-£1.00, and will contain contributions by Bob Shaw, Rob Holdstock, Chris Priest, Andrew Stephenson, John Brosnan, John Piggott, Dave Langford, Dave Pringle, Roy Kettle, Kevin Smith, Dave Bridges, Harry Turner, Graham Charnock, Rob Hansen, Peter Roberts and doubtless more if I could only remember their names. Poot. Production work is currently proceeding on schedule and we expect to publish in June in a limited, numbered edition of about 350 copies. Send no money now, but just let us know how many millions you require.

((Joseph old man, I really hope you aren't putting me on about that British towtruck relay system because it has given my sense of wonder one hell of a boost.

Those fans reading this issue who have truly cosmic minds should enquire about the fanthology Joseph mentions; I certainly intend to get a copy.))

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That Rotsler and his big mouth! If the Trade Practices Commission reads your fanzine, I'm done for. I should never have told him about my private business activities, I can see that now, but we were exchanging confidences there one night in Adelaide -- Bill was a bit tanked as usual -- and his confidences seemed a bit

mundane and boring to me, so I thought I should just tell him a little about the private life of one ordinary, retiring, dull-looking Australian fan. What I told him about Leigh Edmonds shocked him so much that I couldn't resist telling him a little about my private life, just to see how he took that. To say that he was absolutely stunned, in a whimpering kind of way, would probably be an exaggeration. I understand he's like that when he gets on the grog anyway. And now he's blown it. I thought I could trust Bill Rotsler. A lot of people have told me, "Whatever you can't do, you can always trust Bill Rotsler." Terry Carr said that very thing to me recently when I was thrashing him at table tennis at Foyster's place. "Waal, Jahn," he said, as I picked him up off the floor for the twenty-first time, "some of us can play this silly game and some can't, and some of us can keep up FAPA minac and some can't, but one thing we can all do is trust Bill Rotsler." I dropped him while I was genuflecting -- I mean, that's the way we feel about Rotsler. But not any more. Where did I go wrong? Was it refusing to renew my sub to his fanzine? Not letting him have those photos back? Is it possible that since June 1977 he has been quietly seething about my laughing at him over that silly little story about the big-busted lesbian and the peanut butter? Whatever the reason, it's obvious now, and very sad, that you can't trust Rotsler. I refer, of course, to his snide aside about my "pink sheep".

It all started some years ago on my property in the Western District, next door to Mal Fraser's little place, which I'd bought with the profits from Australian SF Review. I was running fifty-odd-thousand sheep in those days, far more than now. No money in it these days, as I keep telling Mal whenever he drops in from overseas. One day, it must have been towards the end of 1972, come to think of it, the ladies of the house were dyeing all our curtains red to celebrate Labor's victory at the elections and annoy hell

out of the neighbours, and a couple of pet lambs we had in the house paddock came nosing around the vats of dye, and one of them fell in. This is probably where Rotsler got his "pink sheep" from, by the way. By god, we've come a long way since then! Eventually we put the red ewe with the rest of the sheep, as she got older, and more or less forgot about her. But one day, sure as I'm standing here, this flash-looking city cove comes tearing up to the house in his Mercedes and wants to buy the red ewe he's seen from the road. Always one for a laugh, I looked downcast like and said I'd want a thousand dollars for her because she was the only red one we'd had for a while, and he peeled off twenty fifties there and then, made me promise I'd let him know the moment we got any more, and roared off before I could set him straight.

The silly bugger obviously thought the ewe had been born with coloured wool and he could make a fortune with a product like that. He must have told his mates, because soon we were getting inquiries from all over the country about our coloured sheep. We even had a letter from CSIRO, congratulating us on finding an alternative to unnatural, chemically coloured wool -- a real breakthrough that would find us new markets in Asia, they said. Well, I'd got too far into it by then to back out, so I supplied all the orders we got, every colour you can think of, and I must say we've done very nicely out of it -- to the point where we no longer have to put up with the inane chatter of the Prime Minister and his snooty wife next door, because we can afford to fly in the more interesting overseas science fiction writers and fans any old time we feel like being diverted. Not that we meet them at Bonnie Doon, of course! Dear me, no! We have these ratty little tenements in the capital cities where we entertain our overseas guests. They feel at home there, most of them, and sorry for us and our tattered sci-fi collection. (If only they could see the library at the farm! The sf catalogue alone runs to some 40,000 items -- all mint and pre-1950. It would break their hearts.)

I told Rotsler just a little of this the night he disgraced himself. "Bill," I said, "fandom doesn't know about it, and praise the lord! the government doesn't either, but I reckon right now that I am the biggest lamb dyer in Australia."

That's the truth of it, Terry. If I didn't have bigger irons in the fire I would be worried about Rotsler's petty disclosures, but what's fandom for if you can't all be friends and own up to things before you're dobbled in completely, eh?

(((*sigh* Australia used to be such a sensible place.))

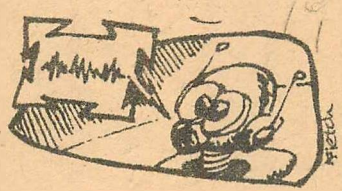
- - - - - I ALSO HEARD FROM:
a great many people who sent a great many letters that were Really Keen and I have every intention of quoting from some of them next issue. There will be Neville Angove and Joseph Nicholas (again) for sure and maybe bits by: Gary Deindorfer, Joyce Scrivner, Gary Farber, Jon Singer, Rich Coad, Lee Pelton, Ed Cagle, Jim Meadows III, Luke McGuff, Ron Salomon, John Purcell ("You know how much people are missing when they can't read red letters in so many zines?"), J. Owen Hanner ("I wonder if this is proof of life after death."), George Flynn, Joe D Siclari, Don Fitch, Denice Hudspeth, Jodie Offutt, Jerry Kaufman, Terry Carr, Erica Aaronssen, Leanne Frahm, and several other people whose letters I remember but at the moment those letters are determined to stay hidden until after this issue is mailed out. It would certainly be a wonderful thing to have some letters of this issue to run in next issue's lettercolumn, if you get my drift.



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MOTA is published according to the strict requirements of a truly unbelievable schedule by Terry Hughes, who now lives at 606 North Jefferson St., Arlington, Virginia 22205, U.S.A. Copies are available for contributions of words or art, letters of comment, trades, or one sample for \$1.00 (the latter being a one-time only charge unless you insist of shoving money at me). We reserve the right to misspell your name and all words of more than one syllable or definition. Fanzines devoted exclusively to Star Trek, Star Wars, Close Encounters of the 3rd Kind, etc. should continue to be mailed to the old address.

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Please do not confuse the editor.