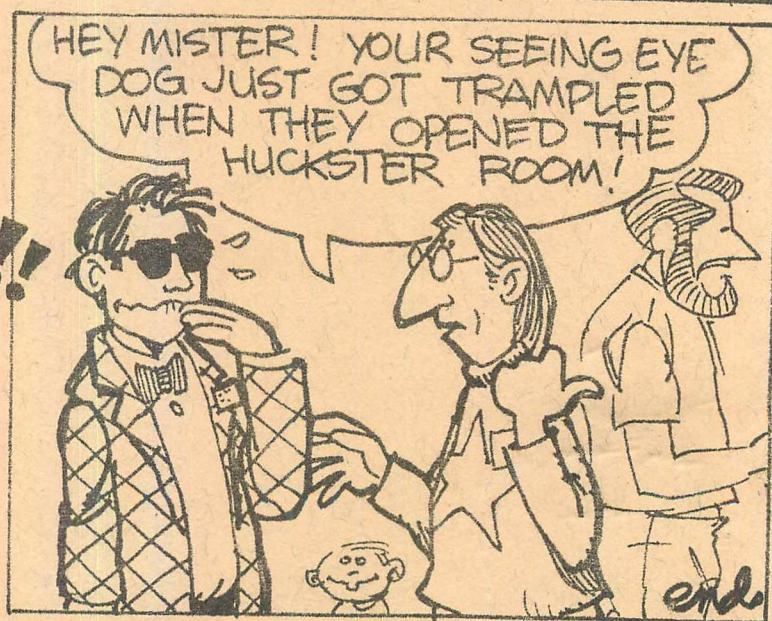
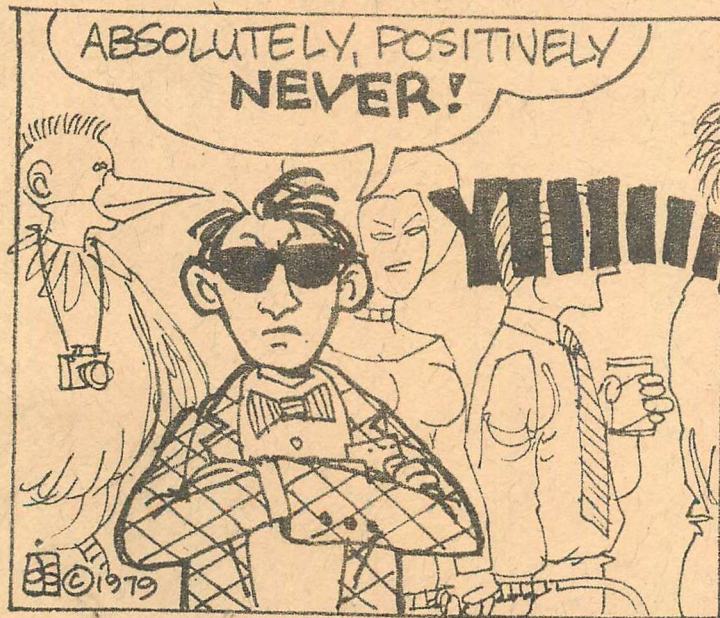
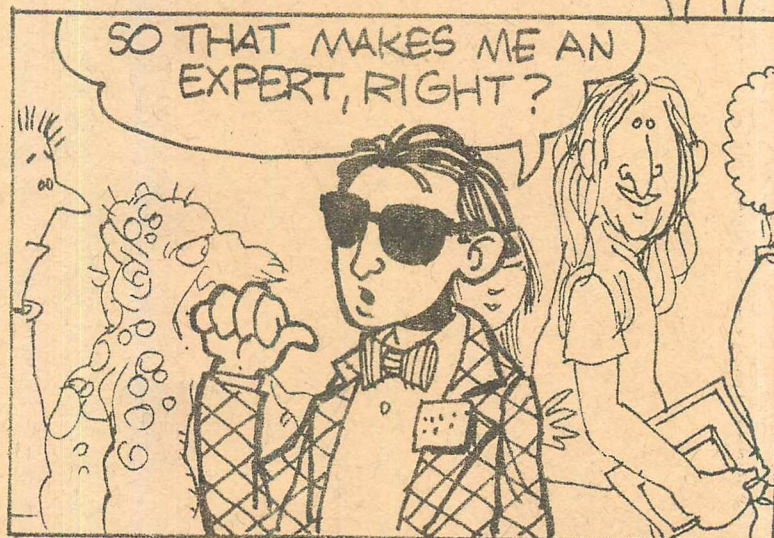
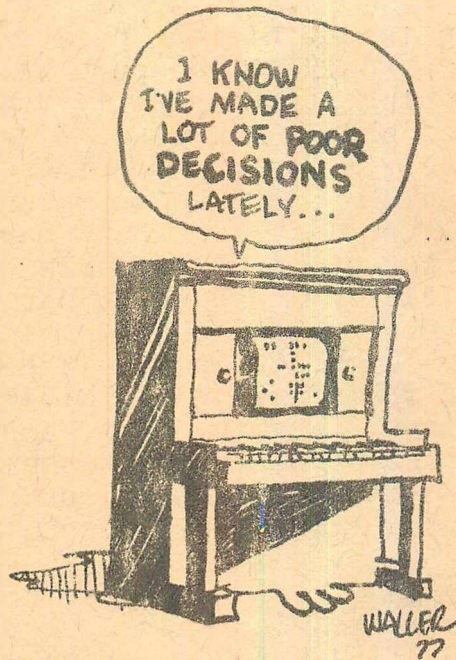


MOTTA





This issue was to have been completed by the middle of July so that I could hand out copies at ARCHON III in St. Louis and surprise everyone. As it turned out, delays reared their tardy heads and MOTA 29 is coming out weeks later than when I had planned, which should surprise no one. At least I made it to ARCHON.

While I wanted very much to see many of my old friends who were bound to turn up at a convention where both Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell were the fan guests of honor, I had a number of doubts about going to St. Louis. For one thing, going from Washington, D.C., to St. Louis in July is like going from one kiln to another. (As it turned out St. Louis was even hotter than Washington.) Then there was the matter of having to fly out there. Due to financial considerations I booked the cheapest flight I could get and this turned out to be on Alleghany Airlines -- the airline that took its name from the mountain range into which its planes are famous for crashing. Then too Skylab was due to come down to earth around that time and I had a pretty good idea who the loser would be if that mass of space junk and my airplane decided to crash into each other, especially since airplanes belonging to Alleghany have a tough enough time staying in the air even when they're not being bombarded from outer space. Finally, my flight was scheduled for Friday the 13th which, as you might imagine, was a great comfort to me in light of my other worries.

Fortunately for my mental (and physical) well being, a couple of days before my date of departure Skylab went to pieces and crashed into Australia. (His Down Under Disaster caused a number of aborigines and neofans from the Perth area to form a new religion based on the notion that Skylab was cast down on Australia by a Powerful Force From Above who was expressing displeasure at the news that John Bangsund had abandoned the principles of excessive alcoholic consumption.) So far no mimeographs have been reported damaged by this impact.

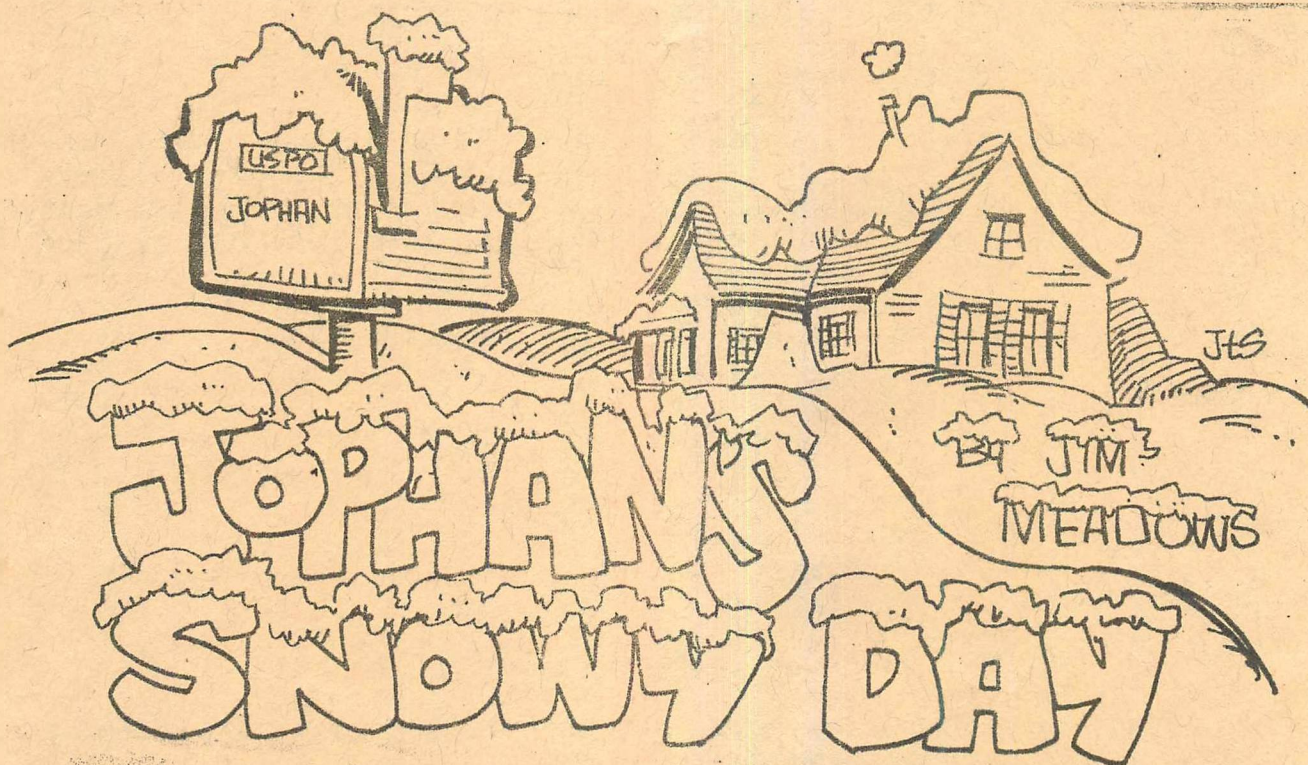
My actual flight involved taking a Beechcraft 99, which holds 20 people uncomfortably, to Baltimore during a rain storm with huge lightning bolts flashing on all sides and more bumps and shakes than an experienced belly-dancer could provide. The little kid sitting across the aisle from me

spent most of the flight throwing up his lunch into the air-sick bag. Much to my relief, the flight lasted only long enough to get me to Baltimore where I switched to a DC-9, which is numerically too close to a DC-10 to suit me but at least I figured that a big plane like this would not be bothered by the air turbulence. I was wrong. The aircraft encountered a big storm over the midwest and the plane began making like a yo-yo while constantly vibrating like a....er, well, Graham Charnock fanzine. The fact that the flight attendants fell down a couple of times did not reassure me, nor did the joker sitting next to me who worked for McDonnell-Douglas and kept looking out the port hole and saying things like: "I think part of the wing just fell off!" Despite the racket the storm was causing, I could clearly hear the voice of the elderly woman sitting behind me as she was saying her prayers. Drawing upon the secret reserve of raw courage that all fanzine editors possess, I sat there colmly and tried to think of the best way to improvise a parachute out of a paperback book, three shirts and a slightly used tissue, but before I came up with a solution the plane landed in St. Louis.

The convention itself was worth the minor adventures of my trip out there. The special purpose of ARCHON III was to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the 1969 Worldcon (ST. LOUISCON -- the only St. Louis worldcon) and the first moon-walk. Hank Luttrell and Lesleigh Couch Luttrell were both ST. LOUISCON committee members and were, therefore, great choices for fan guests of honor. The pro goh was Joe Haldeman who is perhaps the only sf author who took a few steps towards becoming an astronaut. In tune with this looking-backwards theme of the convention, Rick Stoker did a special fanzine that was a history of St. Louis fandom with articles by various fans from the different eras. It's a fine publication and Rick deserves to be praised for the work he put into this effort. (I can't help hoping that this means he might soon do another issue of MUNDAC even though that does not seem too likely.)

The convention was quite successful in just about every way. I was told that there were more people at the con than at any previous ARCHON and there were certainly a number of fine parties each evening. Barb Fitzsimmons and the rest of the local club made sure that things ran smoothly and everyone I talked with seemed to be having a fine time.

Of course I must admit that my opinion of the convention is biased by the fact that it served as a place for me to see many dear old friends, some of whom I hadn't seen since Big MAC in 1976. Leigh & Norbert Couch (who were fan guests of honor at the first ARCHON) were there with their son Mike (who had a holographic eyeball as a medallion). Leigh was active on a number of program items as of course were guests of honor Lesleigh and Hank who live entirely too far away from my house to suit me. (I think Congress should enact legislation to move Madison, Wisconsin closer to Arlington, Virginia.) Chris Couch took a break from his summer job in Arizona to come to the con and entertained everyone with stories about the joys of Phoenix and the quasi-legal goings on in the pre-Columbian art world. Doug Carroll came up from Arkansas and every time I asked him when the next issue of COWBOY ANGEL was coming out he would flash his shit-eating grin and begin a new topic of conversation. Jake Schumacher was there from Columbia, Missouri with stories about the old town. It was good seeing Rick Stoker again but he still looks too athletic to be a fan. Hank Luttrell had videotapes of the tv shows he is doing in Madison which were very interesting and Lesleigh Luttrell would frequently burst into a dance in the hallways. Since I was around good friends like these, the convention could have been hit by a bomb and I still would have had a grand old time.



The Great Midwest Blizzard of '79 was destined to go down in history as one of the most boring snowstorms ever endured by a sullen American populace. The usual drama of the white stuff falling, and man's battle against the elements was getting to be old hat. It was truly a tacky natural disaster. Mother Nature had given the world quantity instead of quality, and while that might be enough for a Hugo, it didn't make for memorable snowstorms.

"It's the same old thing," Jophan complained over the phone to Jim Turner. "The same old snowdrifts, the same closed off streets. The usual cocky jokers in their four wheel drive trucks offering to tow your car out for high prices. They go through the motions, but no one seems to have the elan for it anymore."

Jim's voice slurred and crackled over the miles of telephone wire. "Kid," he said, "you expect too much outta real life. Ain't you never read your Conrad Aiken?"

"I mean it, Jim," said Jophan, "if I read about one more old man getting a heart attack while shoveling his walk, I'll puke."

"Aw, shit," said Jim, "there's plenty better reasons for puking than that. You sure all the liquor stores are snoed in where you are?"

"I haven't counted them all," said Jophan sarcastically.

"Well, you should keep a supply around like I do. I'm so well stocked I can't even tell if it's snowing around here or not."

"And the worst thing," complained Jophan, "the worst thing is, it's disrupting my private life."

"What, you're not getting enough? This'd be a perfect time for it."

"Not that sort," said Jophan, blushing. "I mean my fanac."

"Oh," said Jim, immediately bored.

"No mail, no cleared roads," lamented Jophan. "I can't get to any conventions, I can't send off my locs, I can't get fanzines, I can't mail off my apazine. I have a 30,000 word historical treatise on Michelism waiting for Brian Earl Brown, but I can't get it to him. I've read all my fanzines over, twice. Even my bound volumes of Locus."

"You should do what I do at times like this," suggested Jim.

"What's that?"

"Get zonkered."

"You have a crude mind, Jim."

"You're jealous."

"What do you do when you can't get altered, Jim?"

"That never happens with me, my boy. But when life gets a little mundane, I can always catch up on my reading."

"I told you I read everything twice."

"Not them fucking fanzines, son!" cried Jim in consternation. "Books!"

"Like The Immortal Storm? I've gone over it 4 times. My copy of A Wealth of Fable is still in the mail."

"Kid," said Jim Turner mournfully, "you need a little dose of that old senzawunder. Now, if you got a good supply of Columbian, there's nothing like a Star Trek novel to get you giggling----"

"Jim!" said Jophan, shocked. "Bite your tongue!"

"Oh, all right. But you must have a good selection hanging around your place. Some old Heinlein, I bet."

"Neo-fascist," said Jophan primly. "Never read him on principle."

"Ah, yeah. Well, how about Asimov?"

"Conceited journeyman masquerading as a good writer. Creative typing, pure and simple."

"Well then how about----"

"And the same thing holds for David Gerrold."

Jim sighed. "Well, Ellison maybe."

"Ingrate. Aging boy wonder."

"Van vogt?"

"Well he might have been good once..."

"Joanna Russ."

"Penis envy on paper."

"Oh, Jesus."

"Fantasy disguised as legend."

"I wasn't suggesting him," said Turner. "Don't you like science fiction at all?"

"Like science fiction!" said Jophan. "Of course I like science fiction! I'm a fan!"

"Well, that's it then! Now why don't you be a good little pup and curl up with a Lafferty novel somewhere?"

"What, subject myself to that papist paranoia for pleasure? Are you crazy?!"

"Well, how about a little H.G. Wells then? I heard he's good."

"Pompous technocrat. Another neo-fascist."

"Bester?"

"Has been."

"Allen Dean Foster?"

"Never was."

"LeGuin?"

"Overrated."

"Avram Davidson?"

"Overwritten."

"Tolkein?"

"Overexposed."

"Campbell, Weinbaum, Doc Smith."

"Going, going, gone."

"You never read any of these people?"

"Why should I? I know they're not worth it," said Jophan.

"Holy shit, boy," said Jim in near-total exasperation. "What kind of SF do you read?"

"Well, all kinds. C'mon, Jim, you know how eclectic I am!"

"Yeah, but what have you read lately?"

"Well..." Jophan was stammering. "I, well, I haven't had the time to devote to it. You know, all this fanac and everything."

"Well, when you were reading it, what were you reading?"

"Well, a little of everything, I mean..."

"Name a title, I dare you."

"Well," said Jophan, "there's quite a lot to choose from. Why, when I was in junior high school, I thought this one was the greatest writer in the world. Now what could his name have been?"

"Have you read any SF at all, boy?" hissed Turner.

"Now just a minute, Jim," said Jophan angrily. "I don't like the tone of your voice."

"Just answer the question, son. You're running up my phone bill."

"Well, I always keep up with the book reviews."

"Book reviews!" Jim Turner let out a whoop. "Book reviews!! You read book reviews?"

"Well, if they're concise," said Jophan, blushing a little.

"Son," said Jim, "I'm afraid you've got Arnie Katz's disease."

"What do you mean?"

"You've withdrawn from science fiction, son. You can't take it no more."

"Don't say that, Jim. Science fiction is a great medium for dramatic development. The room for socio-speculation is incredibly vast. Haven't you ever read Billion Year Spree?"

"That's by Aldiss, ain't it. Ever read his fiction?"

"Oh, I haven't bothered with him since I saw the reviews of Frankenstein Unbound."

"Oh, you did see the reviews, didn't you."

"Jim, are you trying to make a point?"

Jim Turner sighed. Life just wasn't easy for him. He desperately needed to take a piss, but the phone cord



just wasn't long enough to reach all the way to the bathroom, let alone the side of the garage. This conversation would have to end soon.

"Okay, son, just listen to your uncle Jim here. It's time we induced a little fania on you. And a snowstorm is the perfect time for it."

"What are you getting at?"

"Kid, your problem is that you're in love with the idea of sf existing, but you're out of touch with the real article. All you do is read fanzines."

"What's wrong with fanzines?"

"They're bad for you, son. All that mimeo ink, gets all over your clothes, grows hair on your palms. Look at Claude Degler."

Jophan stiffened. "I don't think this is a polite conversation any more."

"You just take my advice and get into some SF. I don't care what it is. An old Perry Rhodan novel. Reruns of Lost in Space. Jerry Pournelle. Anything."

"Jim, you don't understand. I liked that stuff once. But I'm a fannish fan, now. This is an alternative lifestyle for me."

"Fannish fan," chuckled Jim. He yelled away from the phone, "Hey, Junior Lee! The guy says he's a fannish fan!"

"I'm not ashamed of it," said Jophan nobly.

"Yeah, well look. You gotta get some SF somewhere. Take Terry Hughes for instance."

"What about him?"

"Fannish as they come, right? Wouldn't think about mentioning science fiction in that fanzine of his. But I came over to his hotel room at a con, and what do I find him doing but actually reading Dhalgren! I mean he really likes that stuff. Why do you think he got that job reading slush piles for Amazing? He's gotta have that weekly fix."

Jophan for once was speechless.

"It's high time you got in touch with your roots, son. Now I bet you got a lot of first editions hanging around your place. Now's the time to crack one of them open and find out what all those dumb little fanzines are for anyway. Now I hope you'll excuse me, but I want to pass out."

Jophan hung up the phone. Could Jim Turner be right? Had he forgotten what it was like to read science fiction? To feel that sense of wonder coursing through his veins like cocaine? The feeling that there were new vistas, tantalizingly unknown paths of knowledge waiting to be challenged, and all that other tripe? Yeah, sure. It was tripe. But it was important tripe. It was the reason he ground out his apazine, signed up for conventions. It was his tripe.

What's wrong with me, thought Jophan as he wandered over to his bookshelves,

Am I turning into a fakefan? He perused the books, old volumes, dogeared and gathering dust, new review copies, untouched and also gathering dust. None of it looked very appetizing. I don't want to read any of this stuff, thought Jophan. I read the blurb for a Dean Koontz novel concerning a mad scientist. Ugh, thought Jophan, this is entertainment? I'd rather have my Proust. His eyes dully scanned the fading spines until they rested on an old Simon & Schuster edition of Slan.

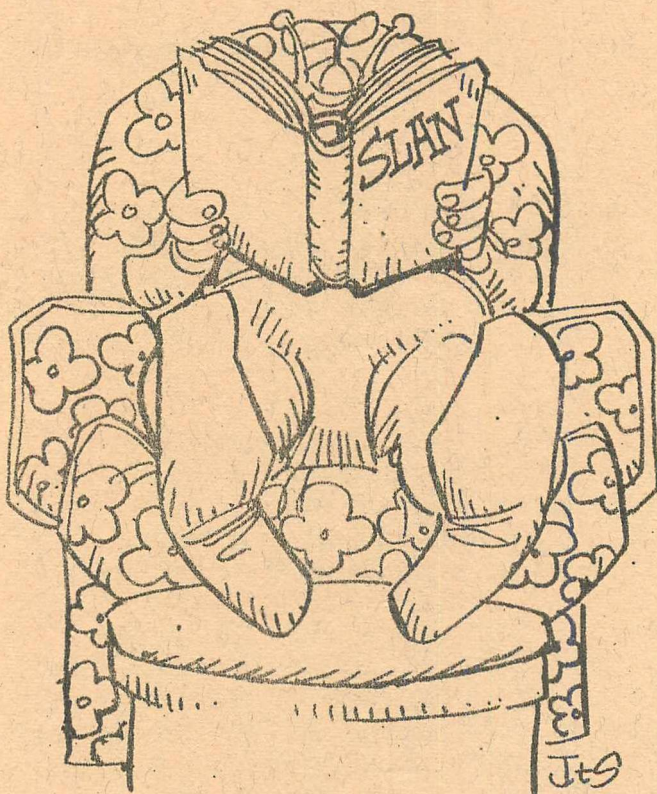
Van Vogt. Never mastered the English language. Dramatic impact succeeds through brute force.

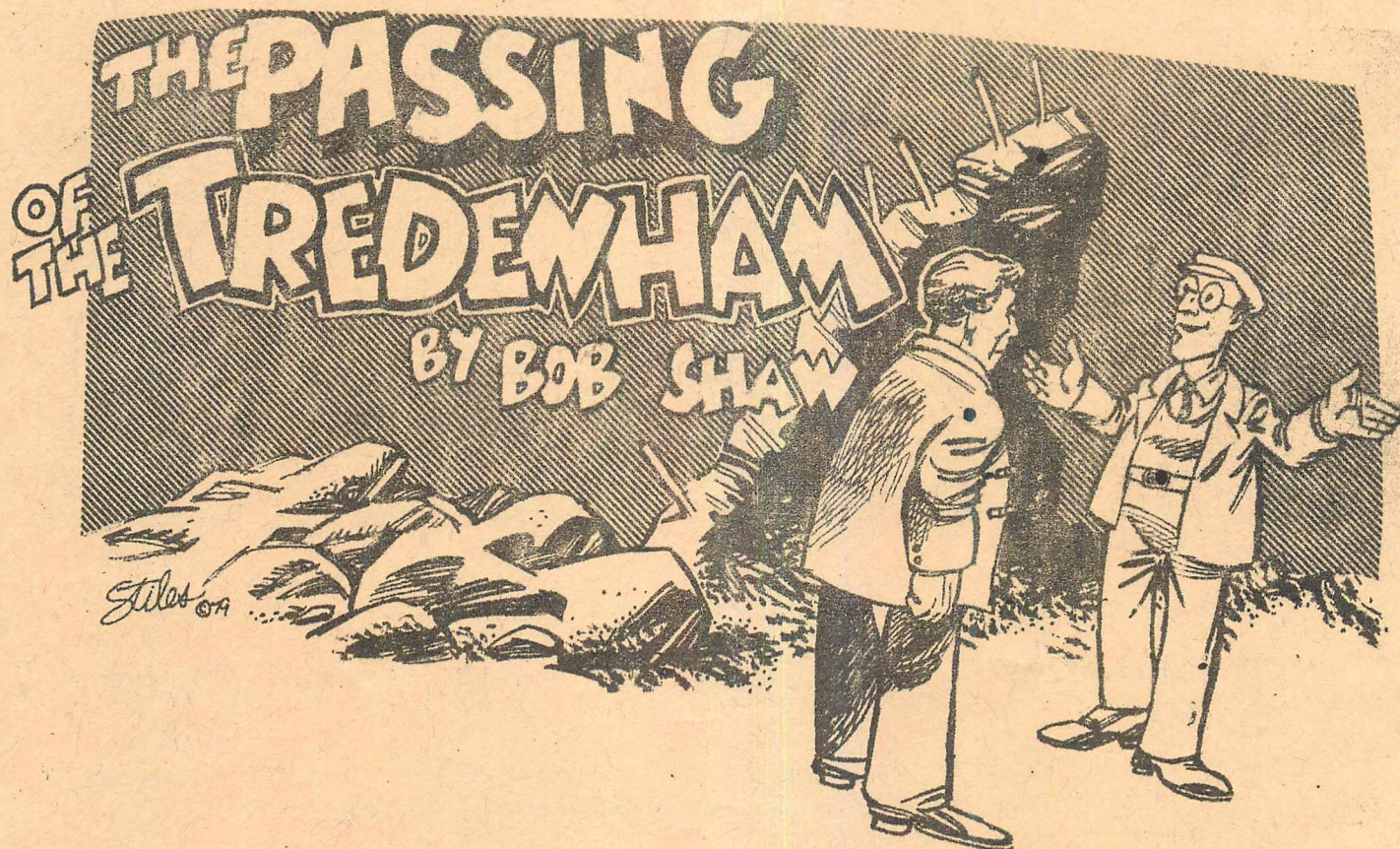
Fans are slans, Jophan giggled. Yeah, he heard about that one. Okay, he thought, I'll give it a try.

"His mother's hand felt cold, clutching his..." I don't think I'm going to like this, thought Jophan as he began, but I'll plough through the first two chapters at least.

When the mail finally came through later that day, he was up to the part where Jommy confronts Joanna Hillory. The four fanzines and the two convention newsletters made a loud plop when they dropped through his mail slot, but Jophan was too absorbed to notice.

+ Jim Meadows +





The Tredenham Club -- in spite of having an imposing name -- was never patronised by people like Beau Brummel or Bertie Wooster. In fact, hardly anybody knew of its existence, even the residents of Farnborough, Hants, where it occupied a discreet location just off one of the lesser streets. The building itself had once been the spacious two-storey residence of some wealthy merchant, and when I discovered it in 1961 it was serving as a small private hotel and drinking club for people in the immediate area. It was tucked away behind huge banks of foliage and even at the height of Air Show week, during which the population of Farnborough trebled, there were never more than about six or eight people at the cosy little bar. In other words, it was exactly the sort of place I like.

When I first set eyes on the place I didn't realise I was going to have a love affair with it, but that's the way these things go. Somehow the aircraft firm I worked for had found out about the Tredenham and had booked me in for ten days during which I was to carry out various publicity duties at the big show. As I walked up the gravel drive with my suitcase I was feeling a bit miffed at not having been booked into one of the posher hotels near Ascot, and my first brush with the landlady didn't improve my spirits.

She led me upstairs to a bedroom which was pleasant enough in most respects, except that -- for some reason I never quite fathomed -- a large plank, part of a house painter's scaffold, had been left lying across the floor. As the landlady was declaiming all the house rules I kept waiting for her to explain the presence of this object, which was an unwelcome addition to the usual fitments, but she made no mention of it.

Finally, as she was leaving, I said, "By the way, am I booked in for bed and breakfast?"

She blinked. "Yes. Why?"

I gestured at the object. "This looks more like room and board."

She gazed at me with the utter incomprehension of the person who is totally devoid of any sense of humour, and said nothing. I gave a self-conscious snigger and she departed in stony silence, leaving me wondering if it was too late to apply to the nearest YMCA. It was about four in the afternoon of a very hot day and I had been travelling since early morning. I washed away most of the sweat and set off for a preliminary look at the company stand which was in the course of construction at the air field. In the hall I encountered the landlord, who introduced himself to me as Jack. He was a small man of about sixty, an Arthur Askey type complete with horn-rimmed glasses. He had one of those largish noses the first quarter-inch of which goes at right angles to the forehead, forming a kind of little shelf which looks as though it has been specifically designed to support a pair of spectacles. I gazed at him warily, trying to judge if he was anything like his wife.

"You look a bit hot, son," he said. "Fancy a pint?"

"It isn't opening time," I replied, glancing into the darkened room which housed the bar.

"If you fancy a drink, it's opening time." He slapped me on the shoulder. "I don't hold with these bloody silly drinking regulations."

My heart warmed to Jack on the instant. I followed him into the bar and as we sat there in the companionable dimness, lowering tankards of cool ale, he pointed out the room's principal amenities, which consisted of a wide selection of draught beers, a dartboard and a full-sized snooker table.

"Hardly anybody comes here at night," he said, "so you can have all this to yourself."

I thanked him, but privately decided that after a hard day's work I would prefer to seek out a more lively spot. A few minutes later I left and made my way to the company exhibition stand, which was in the state of chaos which usually prevails on the day before a show opens. Stand fitters were rushing around in an atmosphere of noise and paint fumes, there was the customary gaggle of middle management types criticising everything and getting in the way. In the midst of all this there was a group of four trainee engineers who had been seconded to the publicity department for their first ever spell of stand duty. They were togged up in their best suits and looked as helpless and bewildered as a neofan attending his first SF convention.

Remembering how lost I had felt at my first Farnborough (only a year earlier) I began explaining how easy the stand duties were going to be for them. They responded gratefully and I was quite tickled when it dawned on me that somehow -- naturally I would never contrive at such a thing -- they had come to regard me as a sophisticated veteran of air shows, a man who was accustomed to hobnobbing with the chairman and directors. The very worst thing for a novice at affairs like that is having to stand around with nothing to do, so I gave them minor jobs and assignments which enabled them to bustle around and make as much noise as anybody else, and in no time at all we had become a happy, close-knit little team.

They had just got into the swing of things when, about seven o'clock, work ended for the day. Within a matter of minutes the crew of stand fitters

disappeared in their van in the direction of London, all the executives got into their rented Cortinas and sped off towards their hotels, and a heavy cottonwool silence descended over our stand. The huge exhibition marquee suddenly seemed the loneliest place in the world. My little band of helpers turned to me, trustingly, and asked for advice about the best pubs in the area. That put me on an awkward spot, because the truth of the matter was that I didn't know any of the Farnborough pubs -- the previous year I had been cooped up every evening with my boss in a hotel that was miles away, and I couldn't even suggest going there because we had no transport of our own. I hedged for a moment, wondering if I was about to lose my standing as a cosmopolitan, then inspiration came.

"Pubs!" I said. "Around here in Farnborough week! You can't even see the bar for the handlebar moustaches."

Their faces registered despair.

"Of course," I said carelessly, "if you fancy a quiet drink and a game of snooker or darts, you could come down to the little club where I stay in Farnborough."

A fresh glow was kindled in their eyes.

"It's a bit off the beaten track, so not too many people know about it -- but I think that's all to the good."

"So do we," my disciples chorused, delighted that they had been lucky enough to fall in with somebody who knew his way around. We set off for the Tredenham, and the whole thing worked out like a dream. There was nobody but the landlord in the bar when we arrived and he greeted me by my first name and we had a knowledgeable little talk about which of the beers was in best condition that evening. (That bit was the greatest hypocrisy of all on my part because at that stage of my life, having spent my entire boozing career in Ireland and Canada, I could hardly tell good ale from lentil soup.) The five of us went to work on the beer and the snooker and the darts, and as it happened we melded.

That's the way it goes sometimes. A group of people get together to while away a few hours, their individual chemistries interact in a certain way, and all at once they've got something special going. The camaraderie we developed on that occasion kept us in a state of elation till about three in the morning, and next day we could hardly wait for the air show to close so that we could get back to the Tredenham for another session. As the week progressed, we accepted some new members into the circle, but only after careful screening to make sure they came up to our standards.

Luck was always with us. Not one discordant element crept in, and the nightly sessions in the Tredenham got better and better, and we came to regard Jack's quiet little bar as something superior to a mere home away from home. After all, home couldn't offer a selection of draught beers, a dart board and a full-size snooker table and the companionship of a group of the nicest, wittiest and most intelligent souls in the entire universe. That club was our own private, custom-built heaven, and we loved it.

Thus it was that when Sunday -- the last day of the show -- came round we were genuinely sad at the prospect of having only one more night there. It was a hot day and the fact that Sunday was the cheap day for admission tickets meant that the marquees were jammed to the eaves with visitors, most of whom seemed to be juvenile delinquents with a burning desire to

strip the stand of anything that could possibly be lifted. Our group sweated grimly through every discomfort the day had to offer, and as the conditions got worse the more determined we became that the final night in our club would be a night to remember all our lives.

At last the show closed down and we took our leave of the grounds. Exhausted, footsore and thirsty -- but buoyed up by the thought of the hours of pure enjoyment that were to come -- we made our way to the Tredenham, trudged up the shady drive and went into the hall. We paused for a moment at the door to the bar itself, anticipating Jack's smile of welcome and the ambience of cool tranquility that had become so dear to us, then we became aware of something rather strange. The air was filled with a muted roar such as might be emitted by a football crowd imprisoned in a giant pressure cooker. Even stranger, this sound seemed to be coming from the bar.

Intrigued but not unduly alarmed, I opened the door and reeled back under the impact of a blast of noise.

The room was filled to capacity with very large men, all of them swilling beer and talking at the tops of their voices. Even as a veteran of convention room parties I was appalled by the press of bodies and the sheer volume of sound. The men all seemed to be giants and to have sergeant major voices. I fought my way to the bar. Jack and his wife were there, pulling pints so quickly that it was about five minutes before either of them noticed me and another five before Jack had time to explain what was going on.

"One of the local bobbies got word he's being awarded a medal," he said, "and his chums have come from miles around to celebrate. They'll be drinking like maniacs till all hours."

I thanked him, struggled back to my little group and broke the news to them. We filed out of the building in silence and went looking for an ordinary pub in which to drown our sorrows.

If this were a work of fiction I would be tempted to round it off with a heart-tugging description of how miserable we were stuck in the corner of an unfamiliar bar with none of the comforts we had come to expect, but in fact we had quite a pleasant time of it for a few hours.. It shows how resilient the human spirit is. Next day the members of our group returned to their various departments throughout the firm, and I knew that an enjoyable little episode in my life had ended.

But had it?

Many months later I was in London on company business and found myself spending the evening alone in an impersonal hotel. I had tried to contact various people in the SF world, but none of them were available and it looked as though I would have to endure the famous loneliness of the big city. I was sitting dejectedly in my room, trying to think of a way out of the situation, when suddenly -- like a ray of sunlight breaking through clouds -- there came this happy little idea. Why not pop down to Farnborough and visit the old Tredenham? My air show circle had broken up in a rather unsatisfactory manner, but here was a chance to make up for that. There was a hired car sitting outside, so it wasn't even going to cost me bus fare to call in at the Tredenham and heft a few pints with Jack. There was no air show going on and it was a night in the middle of the week, so it was quite likely that we would have the place to ourselves and would be able to sit there yarning and smoking and sipping fine ale and reminiscing about what

I had come to think of as the good old days. What a prospect!

Determined not to waste another minute, I went down to the car and set off for Farnborough. The drive was longer, tougher and more tiring than I had anticipated, but I felt that was no bad thing -- it's the weary traveller who really enjoys his stay at the inn. It was well past nine o'clock when I parked near the Tredenham, hurried eagerly up the winding drive, went through the hall and threw open the door of the bar.

Boom!

The same incredible blast of sound. The same suffocating press of very large bodies. For a moment I was unable to believe it was real -- surely it was only in SF stories that people blundered through time faults and found themselves back in the past. Suppressing a sense of nightmare, I battled my way through to the bar and again had to wait for ages before Jack even noticed my presence.

He paused for a moment in his labours. "What are you doing here, son?"

"Never mind that," I hissed. "What are they doing here?"

"One of the local bobbies was up at the Palace today being awarded a medal, and his chums have come from miles around to celebrate," he explained. "They'll be drinking like maniacs till all hours."

I gave him a numb smile, forced down one uncomfortable drink in the midst of all the pressure and pandemonium, and took my leave. Jack was too busy to do more than wave when I left for the drive back to London and a lonely hotel room.

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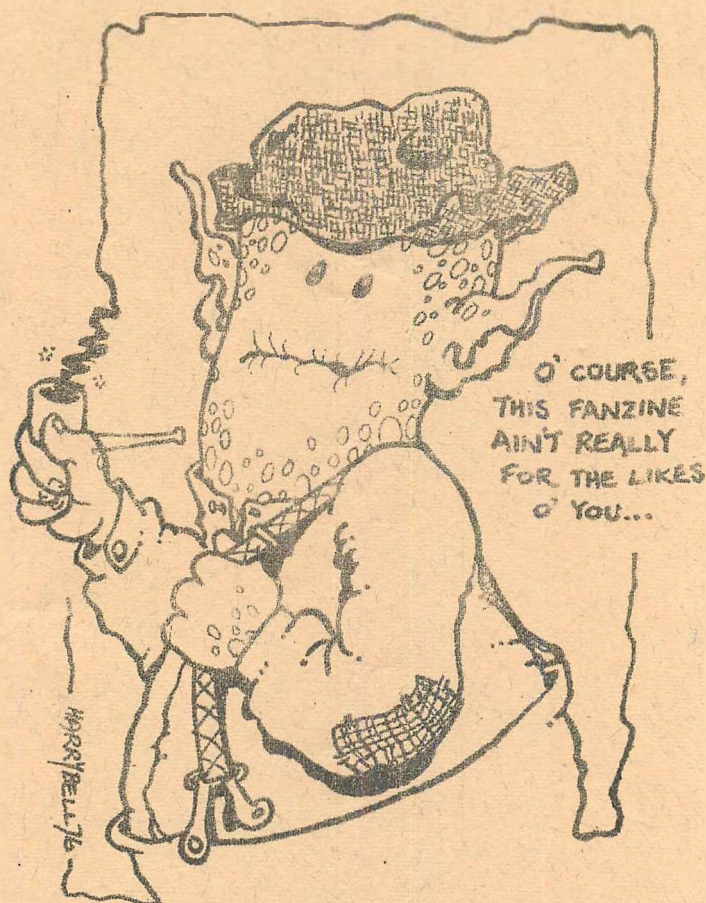
You know that old saying which states that "you can't go back"? Well, I don't like that saying, so I stubbornly kept the Tredenham in mind for month after month until air show time came round again and I found myself back in Farnborough. I was staying at a hotel outside the town that year, but one afternoon before the show got underway I had some time to spare and -- being very careful not to build up my expectations too much -- strolled round to have a nostalgic look at the Tredenham.

And there was nothing there.

The building had been demolished, probably to make way for an apartment block, and the bulldozers had been so thorough that I couldn't even see a trace of the Tredenham's foundations. It was exactly as though it had never existed except in my imagination.

It's a trivial little story, of course -- and it is likely that I have taken up too much space in the telling of it -- but I still think they shouldn't have pulled down the Tredenham. You see, I'd like to go back.

+ Bob Shaw +



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'Twas a surprising day! I drove up to the Post Office at West Ryde, did an illegal U-turn into the official mail-van parking space, leaped from my white-and-red van into the blessed coolness of the 40 degrees C outside temperature (it was over 50 degrees C in the van), and sauntered across to the private boxes. I had just opened the little door to my box when I felt a light tapping on my shoulder: a Little Old Lady wanted to know if I was going to clear the outward mailbox. I made a near-fatal mistake: I turned my back on my private box while I attempted to explain to the LOL that it was a red-and-white van (a subtle difference from my own white-and-red van) that cleared the outward mails. I saw her eyes widen in disbelief (I couldn't quite understand why she would react so), and some sixth sense caused me to turn towards my box, just as a copy of MOTA #26 leaped from its confines and savagely sought my throat. I raised my arm, and felt a crushing blow as the MOTA struck it aside and fastened itself to my unprotected back. I could feel the staples tearing into my flesh as the zine clawed its way to my jugular vein. I fell the the foot-path and thrashed around futilely, knowing that the end was near. My very life-force was draining from me when I heard the commanding, but gentle voice, speaking as if it were coming from the depths of my soul: "Have no fear, my son, The Ghodfan will protect you, just as I have protected all other trufen!"

I felt renewed courage and strength at those words, and I continued my struggle. Suddenly, the vicious clawing stopped, and I rolled to one side, to see my MOTA #26 flailing at some invisible presence. I leaped back into the fray, stomping the MOTA with my Australia Post issue shoes (size 9½, if you are recording this for future fan historians). Still it fought, with the viciousness and tenacity of a cornered agent, but to no avail against my telling blows. Finally, when it was near torn apart, page by page, its struggles ceased, and I could rest my weary body. A soul-shaking shudder passed through me when I realized how close I had come to the ultimate Gafia.

I tried to find my mysterious helper, but there was no sign of him, except for a scrap of paper obviously torn from a book catalogue. 'The Ghodfan', I mused. 'Must have been an hallucination,' I decided confidently.

I collected the remains of the MOTA #26, carefully avoiding the fangs in case it was only shamming death, found where the rest of my mail had been cowering in fear of the MOTA, and continued on my way.

Apart from that one incident, MOTA #26 was quite enjoyable, especially the parts about that Hughes character and his troubles with iron tablets and dogs, and Shaw's experiences as a GoH.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS
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United Kingdom

Chapters 5 and 6 of Peter Roberts' TAFF Report were a joy to read, although I must admit that the second of the two so named seems to me to be better than the first. Perhaps it's all due to that illo of Dan Steffan's on page 12 -- the first time I saw

it I laughed so hard that I nearly fell off my chair. And since I was in the middle of breakfast at the time, that would indeed have been rather disastrous; as it was I managed to cover myself and my surroundings in mushy corn flakes, some of which fell in my coffee and made it consequently undrinkable. Poot.

I don't know what you did over Easter, but I (of course) went to the Eastercon (I mean, what else would any self-respecting fan do at Easter?) and had a great time. In my opinion it was the best British Eastercon I've experienced since my first, way back in the dim mists of prehistory (all right, I'm exaggerating: it was only 1975...but it does seem longer. Blame the humdrum tedium of Civil Service life), and it could well be some time before we get another like it since next year's is being run by a bunch of enthusiasts -- not fans, but enthusiasts -- from Glasgow; and, to put it bluntly, Glasgow is just too bloody far away for most of us in the south. Travel by car and we'd need to add an extra two days to the weekend in order to get both there and back; travel by train and we'd be broke before we could register. And thus the spectre of a totally fannish Eastercon that takes no cognisance of SF has reared its head...and if that goes through then the Eastercon-as-we-know-it could well disappear forever. (I'm conscious of an ambivalence in my attitude here -- have a soft spot for the Eastercon because it was my first introduction to fandom, but at the same time I wouldn't bother attending one if the people on whose company I normally spend my convention time were to attend an alternate Eastercon.) Never mind the fact that by so hiving itself off from the rest of fandom, fannish fandom could well find that the charges of elitism and incest customarily laid against it begin to double or treble in intensity -- and then there would finally be some justification for those charges.

• Anyway: Eastercon, codenamed Yorcon (because Leeds, where it was held, is in Yorkshire, but then what else is new?). I had a great time, but even now -- less than a week after it's all over -- only isolated incidents remain in my memory. (I have this problem with all conventions, actually; unless I go knowing in advance that I've got to do a conrep for someone, I tend not to pay attention to everything that goes on -- not even when it directly involves me! Can you believe that? Now that I've written it down, it seems even more ludicrous than I first imagined. Heigh-ho.) Like being drafted in to appear on the "Call My Bluff" panel (in which a team of fans competed with a team of pros to define grotesquely obscure SF words and convince each other that they're all lying) at the last moment because Dave Langford developed a sudden nosebleed and had to withdraw, and then spending the first two minutes in a blue funk because I couldn't decipher his notes; or being so drunk when I finally staggered off to bed in the early hours of Saturday morning that I spent damn near five minutes trying to open the door to my room before realising that it wasn't the hotel key that I had in my hand, it was my own front door key; or spending the last night of the convention sprwled on the floor outside the fifth floor elevators listening to John Collick doing Bee Gees impersonations in such an incredibly high -- and, considering his state, incredibly tuneful! -- falsetto that I was convinced that sympathetic vibrations would cause the ceiling to cave in on us at any moment; or experiencing a sense of anticlimatic disappointment when The Conspiracy to snatch control of the BSFA from the then-present bunch of lackwits and cretins went through without the slightest hitch; or being so totally nervewracked and so disorientated on the Monday morning that I had to buy a newspaper in order to determine that, yes, indeed, it really was Monday morning; or watching Don West stand up straight for what must surely be the first time in his life; or listening to Greg Pickersgill tell me all about an American magazine called The Mercenary (apparently designed for all those budding soldiers-of-fortune who wish to learn the finer points of field-stripping an Amarlite rifle or unjamming the magazine of a 9mm Parabellum Luger) that he apparently got from USAF Major (?) Cathy Ball, only to realise that he was actually complaining about how he'd managed to lose it; or accepting a bet of a drink from Paul Kincaid that I wouldn't get out there on the disco floor and boogie with Alan Dorey, and then winning the bet to cries of horror and disbelief from the assembled multitudes; or finding at the end of it all that I actually had some money left; or sitting here bashing away at this typewriter wishing that it wasn't all over bar the reminiscences. In fact, it was so damn good that at several points during the weekend I experienced a completely irrational fear that it was all not much more than a peculiarly vivid hallucination, and that at any moment I would suddenly awake to find myself slumped over my civil service desk with some clown of a senior officer asking me why my in-tray was so full. God forbid that such should ever happen!

((It's no surprise to me that Yorcon turned out to be so much fun for you and others: any convention that has enough taste to have Patti Charnock as a Guest of Honor is a convention worth attending. The con sounds far more fun than spending the weekend in an Easter Bunny suit.))

JOHN A. PURCELL
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St. Louis Park, MN 55426

Someday you'll have to explain VAT to me; I'm not sure if I understand what Dave Langford was writing about. Does he understand? If so, why does he insist on confusing all us colonials? We're confused enough already. Just slap a

surcharge on his next contribution and let the International Monetary Council haggle it out.

((For the benefit of John and the thousands of other readers who have expressed some ????? with regard to Dave Langford's Value Added Tax contribution in MOTA #28, the following flash announcement may clarify this matter.))

DAVID LANGFORD
22 Northumberland Avenue
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United Kingdom

Since I wrote this contribution to world under--
standing, the British government has cleverly
taken advantage of its annual opportunity to
alter the VAT rates. Please, therefore, sub-
stitute 15% wherever I said 12½%; also, the
figure 8% should be altered throughout to 15%.

"Two twenty-sevenths" naturally becomes "three-elevenths" as a result of
this new simplification. The next change will be introduced whenever
people show signs of becoming accustomed to this one.

GARY DEINDORFER
447 Bellevue Ave., #9-B
Trenton, NJ 08618

The Dave Langford article is up to his usual
high standard. It is nice to know, finally,
what a VAT number is. Without realizing it, I
think I also had vague ideas relating to arti-
ficial insemination tanks, or tubes, or whatever.

I don't think the average American would ever be able to figure this system
out. Very clever article, but then, Ghawd knows, cleverness is something
we regard as more or less inseparable from the Mind of Langford.

Dave Piper's stuff always strikes me as funny as hell, whether it's the
couple of articles he's done for MOTA (the other one being about being
Short) or his locs. The man is hilarious. I mean, there is something
about the way he puts words together that is beyond artifice, beyond in-
tentions to try to be funny. He just has a naturally wild and crazy way
of looking at the world. I think what is most clever about this new Piper
delight is that it is based upon something so slight. Barely an idea, barely
an incident, even. But he tells about it with the perfect kind of slight-
ness and looseness.

HARRY WARNER, JR.
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Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

I tried to buy mothballs at a local drug store
the other day. There was virtually nothing on
the shelves where moth-blighting substances
were normally kept. I asked a clerk if they'd
all been recalled because the Food and Drug

Administration had found they contained a chemical which was harmful to
roaches. No, she told me, residents of suburban areas have bought up the
entire stock because there's a big rush to get mothballs and similar sub-
stances on lawns and gardens to keep cats and dogs off residential proper-
ties. So maybe Harry Bell would like to try this method of discouraging
cats in a less strenuous manner than the one he is using. Incidentally, last
winter the Hagerstown supply of kitty litter was virtually wiped out when
senior citizens discovered that it's cheaper than rock salt or other chem-
icals for spreading on icy sidewalks and steps. Some elderly people were
even carrying little bags of kitty litter when they went for walks on icy
days, tossing it in front of them to step on. If any cats were out in that
bad weather, they must have been awfully confused and perhaps exhausted by
efforts to utilize the stuff in the way nature intended it to be used.

((There are, of course, lots more letters to quote from but they will be
held over until next issue, which will be hot on the heels of this one. It
should have a nice, big letter column....maybe even one by you if you act
quickly. Even the WAHFs will have to wait before being announced.))

MOTA #29 - August 1979 issue. The contents of this publication are copyright 1979 by Terry Hughes, with all relevant rights assigned to the respective contributors. The staples, however, are in the public domain.

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MOTA is the journal of ecdysiology enthusiasts and whippet fanciers. MOTA is published every a new Nick Lowe album comes out. I would like to dedicate this issue's page numbers to the B-52s (you know who you are and so do we). MOTA is available for contributions of funny stories and silly art, in exchange for other publications which may or may not mention sf, for letters of comment running 30 pages or less, and for pieces of Skylab that have been formed into boomerangs.

Next question?

 "Vote for Teddy,
 he can swim."

- Dan Steffan

Coming next issue:

Jonestown Kool-aid recipes!



VIA 22c



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