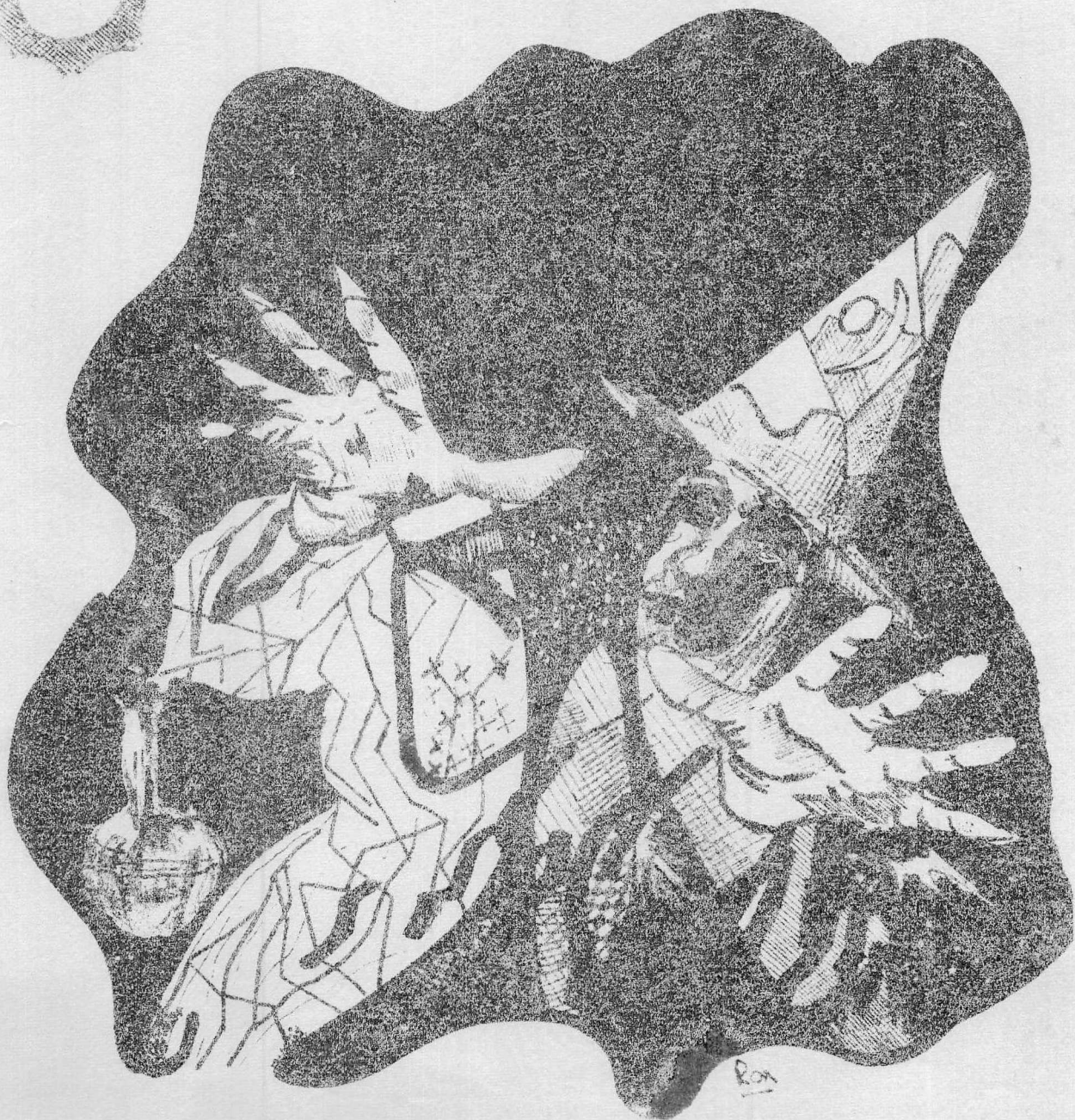


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THIS IS OZ-6, produced for the 49th Mailing of the OFF-TRAIL MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION, December 1966. (Or it may possibly be the 50th Mailing, but since there wasn't one in September, I'll stick at 49).

OZ-6 is compiled, typed, thrown together, etc., by:

BERYL MERCER,

9 Cotswold Road,
Bedminster,
BRISTOL 3,
England.

and it is proof-read and duplicated by ARCHIE MERCER.

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E&OE

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(inclusive)

November 25th 1966

I'm no happier than anyone else about there having been no September Mailing. Nevertheless, that's all the protest I intend to make - doubtless there will be plenty of others - because, as far as I know, no other member is prepared to take on the AE-ship of OMPA. (I mean, of course, no other British member). So there doesn't seem to be much point in hollering.

As most of you probably already know, we've recently changed our abode. Four weeks ago tomorrow, to be exact. Our former flat was a great barn of a place, much too big for us to furnish properly, and it cost a small fortune to heat even the two rooms we mainly occupied. Too, the rent was extravagantly high, so, a few weeks before our year's contract was due to expire, we began hunting for smaller, cosier, cheaper quarters.

Which we are now inhabiting. There are snags, of course, but these can be cheerfully borne in view of the much lower rent. We are, for instance, no longer self-contained; we share the front door and a few yards of hall with the couple who live upstairs. Also, for the time being they are obliged to use our toilet, to reach which they must pass through our kitchen - which is where I do all my typing. For one thing, it's by far the warmest room of our three; there is nobody underneath it to be driven mad by the thunder of the Titan (there's a basement room under our living room, occupied by a young man whom nobody ever sees ...); and anyway, there simply isn't room in the living room for my desk.

However, it could be a lot worse; the owner of the house (a conversion job, of course) has arranged for a toilet to be installed upstairs as soon as possible, and the couple who live up there are an inoffensive enough pair, anxious to be friendly and to cause us as little inconvenience as

possible. He, I think, is a Bristolian, and she's from Dublin - as Irish as shamrock ...

It was quite a game, fitting ourselves and our gear into this place. Said gear had been spread depressingly thinly over the Cotham flat, so that we didn't realise how much we had until came the time to cram it all into a much smaller space. However, Archie is an old hand at the game, having spent so many years in a caravan, and he enjoyed himself playing jigsaw puzzles with the furniture and linoleum. He also thought it amusing that, having moved into smaller premises, we should promptly go out and buy more furniture ! Still it was only a small kitchen table, and a folding one at that.

So: the front room, officially dubbed the library, contains Archie's desk and chair, the bed-settee, an armchair; the record-player on its table, all the records, all the books, and all the fanzines - the last-named in their green-painted orange boxes. There are a couple of items of heating apparatus (plus a stuffed stocking pimed to the bottom of the door to keep out the draughts ! Very efficient it is, too - though visitors tend to eye it askance !), sundry pictures on the walls, and two or three more orange-boxes which serve as filing cabinets.

It's a bit crowded in there, but Archie likes it, and he spends more time in there than I do.

The fitted cupboard in the bedroom is a ceiling-to-floor affair, and the top half of it is absolutely crammed with boxes and boxes of duplicating paper. (We get through a hell of a lot of the stuff, what with PADS, and OZ, and the B.S.F.A. Bulletin, and the news-letters for the 1967 Bristol Con, and sundry other publications we put out from time to time.) But there's still plenty of room for our clothes and shoes.

In addition to the bed and a couple of small bedside tables, the bedroom contains no less than three chests of drawers, the largest of which "goes with the place." We keep spare sheets, blankets, etc. in that one. The (folding) frame of the spare bed lies on the floor beneath our bed (and the only place where it could be set up is the kitchen ... !)

And that's the bedroom fairly crammed.

There's a sort of glory-'ole cupboard in the hall, under the stairs, into which Archie has managed to cram, with great ingenuity, about twice as much stuff as it was intended to hold. Trouble is, every time the door of it is opened, I have a wincing vision of the whole lot toppling outwards, as is sometimes seen in slapstick comedy films. Archie insists that it won't, it can't, but ...

So we arrive in the kitchen - my room, really - where we have most of our meals. There's a fitted dresser affair, again floor to ceiling, with sliding-door cupboards to hold our food stocks, shelves for our crockery, a nice big working surface for food-preparation (i.e., opening tins), and

dishing-up. Underneath that are two large drawers for cutlery and similar oddments, and below that again two more large cupboards. One of these holds all my files, fanzines, etc., and the other contains used stencils, newspapers, and other allied impedimenta. Because, besides my desk and typewriter, Caractacus-the-duplicator also lives in the kitchen, on his own trolley, alongside his companion cupboard-on-legs (originally a record cabinet, but never used as such) which holds still more duplicating paper.

There's aforementioned folding table, with an equally folding chair, another trolley with removable trays, our small, ancient electric cooker, and, of course, the sink unit - a reasonably modern one, with yet more cupboards underneath, in which are stowed things like the bucket, dusters, shoe-polish, etc.

Behind the kitchen is our little ablutions room, in which are installed a wash-basin and shower, both served by a gas-operated heater. We've put our kitchen cabinet - a tall, thin affair, not a bit like either of us - in there, mainly because there really isn't room for it in the kitchen, and it serves admirably as a medicine chest (top compartment), a home for all the toilet requisities (middle compartment), and a place to store clean towels and dirty laundry (bottom compartment).

The toilet is next to the back door; any reasonably agile person can, if so minded, swing out of the back door and into the toilet without setting foot in the back yard. The fact that it is an "outside toilet" bothers us not; personally, I spent my childhood in a house where the toilet was considerably further from the back door than this one is.

So here we are, comfortably installed; not particularly looking forward to the coming winter, but knowing that at least we shan't be as cold as we were last year, neither shall we run up such enormous heating bills. We are on good terms with our landlady - postally, anyway, we've not yet actually met her - and at least she doesn't live directly underneath us, as our previous landlord did.

We had a bit of a house-warming party, a week after we moved in; Tony and Simone Walsh gathered up the bods who had arrived early for their Fanfawkes party, and somehow we managed to squeeze about a dozen people into the front room. In deference to our then-unknown co-tenants, we turfed 'em all out at midnight - and in any case, we wanted to reserve some of our energy for said Fanfawkes party, especially as I had to go to work the following morning.

Ken Cheslin was our first visitor - unexpected, but very welcome - and since then Pete Weston and Reg Peyton have called, with a couple of other Brummies, and Don Malcolm popped in one evening when he was in Bristol for a few days on business. Those of our friends who visited us at Cotham were probably relieved when we said that we are now on the ground floor, because the Cotham flat was reached by a rather dizzying iron staircase. We have glad news for them; these houses are built on the side of a hill, and although the kitchen is on ground level, the front room isn't - and our

present front door is reached by a right-angled flight of stone steps, much steeper than the Cotham ones were. Oh, what fun we'll have when they're covered in ice!

There's a small area of back "garden", long untended and badly overgrown - probably because it can only be reached by climbing an almost-vertical flight of broken stone steps.

Weighing all the advantages against the snags, I think we made a wise move. And Archie says he already feels far more "at home" here than he ever did at Cotham. As for me - I should worry about not having a tiger in my tank.

I've got a Renoir in my kitchen.

++ BM

End of domestic interlude. Beginning of Department of Apologies. The fact is that this issue of OZ carries no C-OZ-MENTS (mailing comments). My usual method is to read each Mailing twice - first for uncomplicated enjoyment, then again to pick out such points as I think merit comment.

Goodness knows that I've had enough time to read the last Mailing fifty times, especially as it was so desperately thin. But I haven't, and my first reading was so long ago that I would have to read it again for mailing comments purposes. What with one thing and another - and I won't bore you with a list of excuses, valid though they are - I simply don't have time to do that, and get OZ in by deadline.

Once I have finished SPECIALINK (Vienna-Conrep) and got that out of my hair, I hope to write loc's to everybody who contributed to the last Mailing. Note, I said I hope - that means I'm not promising anything. As well as SPECIALINK, the BAD (Bristol & District) SF Group is planning a fanzine, and when somebody innocently asked, "Who will volunteer to type the stencils?" - guess in whose direction everyone's gaze turned? (Archie got a similar concerted look of imploration - well, dammit, there ought to be such a word, then! - when the question of duplicating came up. I tell you, that Caractacus is becoming a right liability!).

Anyway, I hope that contributors to the last Mailing won't be too disappointed; I did read everything, honest!

Does anybody know if James H. Schmitz's THE TIES OF EARTH has been issued as a pb, or is included in any anthology? Alternatively, does anyone have a copy of GALAXY Vol. 11, No. 3 (U.S. edition, December 1955)? This carries the second half (conclusion) of the Schmitz story, and I'll pay any reasonable price for it, or effect a swop if possible.

And now it's time for me to hand over to DON STUDEBAKER

The
NAKED
PARTICHOKE
Goes West.



1300 Arch Street
Berkeley, California
94708, U. S. A.

Blowups Happen. Not always with big Bombs, not always with guns and fire, but they happen. Sometimes it's in men's heads, and sometimes it's in their hearts: sometimes it's where their hearts ought to be.

There are two men, or at least two shells that look a little like men. They are vile. The first is a fool. He has many other faults, but that is the one that will someday put an end to him. The other is an unmitigated cur. The first is named Leslie R. Zimmer, the second is Leslie R. Zimmer the second. They are father and son. They have each other and they deserve it. They went out and got drunk to cover their native cowardice, and they picked a fight with people smaller than they, and they tried to frighten a woman to death for her property. The wife and the mother, they tried to kill, when she was abed with her poor heart straining. May they be cursed to the lowest depths; but by others than I. For though their blood may deserve to be spilled, I won't soil my hands with it. Suffice to rescue those in danger, and let those in the personal hell of self-contempt remain there. Sic Erint!

Thus it was that the Naked Artichoke, that strong symbol of all that is free and pure and holy (and tired), was once more invoked. With my head still swimming from the blows, and with no sleep for better than three days, I loaded the last of the furniture into the van, what was left into the White Impala, loaded Mom and Paul and the two cats, Numa and Scooter, into the scarce space of the front seat, and bid a distasteful farewell to the lovely old Lovecraftian farmhouse I'd been keeping well fed all winter.

You will remember that in the last instalment I had just cracked up a motor scooter and was recuperating with acute post traumatic diplobia. Well, the diplobia persists, and I am apparently the one in a hundred who will require an operation to see well again. Be that as it may, I rented a car, a lovely white Impala, and the five of us, Paul, Mom, Numa, Scooter and I, set off for Boston. For those of you who wish to trace the distances involved, consider that East Greenbush is about ten miles outside of Albany New York.

We arrived in Boston about ten p.m., and got a restless night's sleep, then unpacked Mom's belongings. She is safe with her sister, who is the wife of a Minister, and is recuperating from the events at the farm. If she had been in better health we would have brought her with us, of course.

With the car unpacked, and all Mom's numerous belongings safely taken out, the trunk was crammed full and the back seat filled just up to the legal limit, which is to say, to the point where I could see through a tiny hole in the conglomeration and out the back window. About dark we started out once more, because the car was costing money, and headed south.

Paul, and Numa, and Scooter, and Me.

The Voyage of the White Impala.

It was dark, and for the first time in a long time, we all felt free. There were certain disadvantages to this, it's true. The lower half of my vision is useless, so I had to drive with my chin on my chest to see the road. This gives you a pain in the neck, but it's perfectly safe. And then, I hadn't driven more than twice since the accident in September, and it was suddenly late March. And before September there was only the driving school. So I was, in effect, starting the cross-country trip as a novice driver.

With two cats who have never been off the farm, much less ridden in a car, driving can be slightly hazardous. The cats had to be held down, and as Paul cannot drive, he got to hold them. This might have been an easy job, but these two cats don't care much for each other, and besides that, one is male and the other female. Poor Paul! In addition to a swollen, bloody mouth received in defense of his mother, he was now to be subject to the indignities of a pair of fighting cats in his lap. There were scratches and scrapes aplenty, rest assured. And whenever a large truck went by, Scooter became a little uneasy and wanted to dart under my seat. Later to emerge as I was trying some difficult maneuver, and try and sleep under my brakes or over my foot, which was on the gas pedal.

The first leg of the journey was to reach Philadelphia, where we planned to leave the stereo set with Richard and Linda, our two closest friends on the East Coast. We traveled the Massachusetts Turnpike west from Boston, turning south finally, and contrary to instructions and intents, wound up on the Merritt Turnpike.

I am sure that the Merritt Turnpike is named for the great fantasy writer, Abraham Merritt. It certainly seems to have been copied from his mythos. It is very beautiful, with trees and shrubs and such: I wish I had been able to see it by daylight, when there were not so many strange creatures crossing the road, and the stalking mists made driving less of a hazard. But then, by daylight there might have been more of the disturbing signs that line it and are visible even in our headlights. Signs informing us that it is unsafe to drive beyond this (whoops! says Paul, we've missed it again) point.

Down the middle of the Merritt is a divider strip planted with trees and shrubs of a size that indicates the road must have been laid down by the pilgrims. Perfectly huge trees, and massive plantings, all neatly taken care of. It's a pity that the surface of the road isn't so well cared for. It's very bumpy driving, and it seems that no tar has been added to the weather stripping in years. I gather that most departments in charge of building highways decide to build rather than repair, for there is an alternate route to the Merritt, one that runs parallel to it. Both routes, however, are toll roads. (One is astounded at the nerve of a state which charges tolls on a road which it considers unsafe for travel. A road labeled in many places: Proceed at your Own Risk). The Merritt has the single great advantage that it is unfashionable, and therefore traffic in the middle of the night is virtually non-existent.

At some bleak hour of the morning we passed New York City. Just how we don't know. Paul remembers crossing the George Washington Bridge, and I remember going through a tunnel, but as we were both asleep, neither memory is to be trusted.

I remember the Garden State Parkway quite clearly. I've traveled it on many occasions, going and coming from New York, and it is a serviceable road. But on every other occasion it has been choked and crowded with cars. As Paul and I continued into the March night we discovered ourselves to be quite alone. Imagine, if you can, a six lane highway, just outside New York City, that is deserted save for one car: ours.

It was like a scene from Lovecraft, all swirling fog and illusion. Great red glowing things would appear to either side of us and fluoresce for a brief second before fading back into the mists. Neon signs were obscured in such a way that they were unreadable and beautiful. Blue signs were like swamp fire of monstrous proportion. I came fully awake as we passed through this, paying close attention. Snatches of Debussy ran through my head, and some of the atonal pop melodies from Berg's Lulu. For a while we speculated on whether or not we had slipped out of the universe to which we are accustomed and into something lonelier and more beautiful. I remember going under a bridge, one of those modern American type bridges that are reminiscent of Greek temples, and seeing, to our left, a huge globe rotating. It was the kind of globe the World's Fair used, and it was glowing and beautiful. It was as if it were set a little off the ground, like some small, mechanical moon, orbiting sixty feet up, but of course, that was because of the fog.

We had a box of newspapers for the cats, and it smelled foul by the time we got to Philadelphia. We were overjoyed when at last we could get out into the fresh air, and stretch our legs.

Philadelphia at five in the morning has one of two characteristic smells, both pleasant. One is the smell of roasting coffee, the other the smell of strong soy sauce. Where they come from I don't know, but I like them. (Albany, in contrast, smells like the urinal in the men's room of a small town bus station). At night, Philly changes, and methane rises out of the Schuylkill River, but we didn't stay for a Philly night this time.

Richard, at five in the morning, cannot be awakened. Well, that's not fair. He is easier to awake than is Paul. (Hmmm. I guess that is to say that he cannot be awakened). But he did manage, while sleeping, to give me directions for getting to his fraternity house.

There followed a fascinating game of find the house. Rich told me that he lived in a white stucco house, and I expected such a thing would be easy to find. Until I found that there were about seven white stucco houses in the same block, all of them fraternities. At one point I wandered into a place just as a policeman was wandering out. He told me the place was empty, but to look just the same. The way fraternities sometimes operate, I looked, and found nothing.

I found Richard, and some hours later he awoke. He told us to park the car in the back lot of the fraternity house, and offered to do the parking for me. But I, in my pride, figured that I could do it.

In Philly one finds streets designed so that two men on horseback may pass one another with slight comfort, and it was up one of these little cobblestone streets that I had to go to reach the parking lot. I might have made it if there hadn't been a truck parked on one side, and if some silly woman hadn't parked her new Cadillac across the end of it. As it was, with much maneuvering I scratched the left rear fender slightly. And finally parked.

Richard was off to his class in criminology, so I went in search of food, for both humans and cats. There is a little shop just west of the women's residence Hall, specializing in submarine sandwiches, so I went there. Since it's on a back street it's a little cheaper, and money is always scarce in a writer's pockets. There was a very pretty colored girl running the shop, and since her hard roles hadn't arrived that morning I had a chance to strike up a conversation while she was cooking Paul's hamburger. We got around to the fact that I was heading for Berkeley, and you can imagine my surprise when she informed me (this pretty young girl) that she had a son thirty-one years old who was attending the University at Berkeley. I got a container of chocolate milk for Paul, a container of white milk for the cats, and the man with the roles arrived so I got a submarine sandwich for myself. With some disappointment I went back to the car.

Paul was sleeping, a cat on each end, and really wasn't too happy at being awakened, even for chocolate milk. But we ate, and felt better. Much better, in fact. The air was bright and clear, and after the cold winter weather of Albany, Philly seemed like a tropical paradise. Richard came back and told me to get some sleep in his bunk, but after trying I discovered that my nerves were too shot for me to close my eyes for more than ten minutes at a time. Richard had some sort of muscle relaxant, and on his advice I took a dose. After about five minutes more I was fast asleep. Out like a blown bulb.

About five in the evening Richard and Paul waked me, we went out for a drink of the non-alcoholic sort, and we met Linda to say hello. Then it was time to continue on our journey, because rented cars cost money, and ...

It was raining gently and we needed supplies. We drove into west Philly and found a super market, and I indulged my tastes, so long dormant. I bought fourteen dollars worth of delicacies, a loaf of bread, some cans of juice, and we dined in luxury in the parking lot of the market. Imported Swiss cheeses, pickled artichoke hearts (remember that I subscribe to Heinlein's Stranger philosophy), guava juice and Smithfield ham spread.

Philadelphia has changed a lot since I lived there. It's only been a couple of years, but oh, how it has changed. Broad boulevards, plantings ... There is a John F. Kennedy boulevard in front of Constitution Hall, there is a second women's dormitory at the college. (It's big and black, and everybody calls it Sauron's Tower, because suddenly, everybody knows Tolkien). I think of all the cities I know I like Philadelphia best.

New York is a horror beyond all horrors. Even the flowers in the little parks are dirty. It's all heat or cold and concrete. Washington is a city of the dead: dead ideals, ideas, and full of false people who are only transients trying (for a while) to bolster up the myth of governmental permanency. (That doesn't mean I'm a revolutionary, only that I recognize certain basics, i.e., that a government must grow to survive, and that once it reaches certain monstrous proportions it will collapse under its own weight, its own need to consume more than it may utilize). Albany was once a nice town, but Governor Rockefeller has put an end to that. Paul very aptly describes the acres of flattened buildings as 'The Desolation of Smug'.

We drove to Thirtieth Street Station, past, and on to the Schuylkill Expressway. Once we took a wrong turn off and back into the city, but eventually we followed the correct sequence of signs and got to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. It was dark, and somewhere along the way things started to get muddy. The muscle relaxant Richard had given me started to work again, and I got sleepy. Now my nerves were starting to go as well, and though we'd put Kitty Litter in the box for the cats, they had already befouled the thing.

We had planned on sleeping in the car all the way across the continent, but it was too cold to do that as yet, and I didn't want to risk leaving the motor running to get heat. I decided to find a motel, despite the extra cost.

About this time Paul and I started to disagree on things. To the non-driver, driving looks very simple, and Paul couldn't see any reason why we shouldn't make it at least out of Pennsylvania before we stopped. After all: all I had to do was sit in a comfortable seat and keep my foot gently pressed on a pedal, unless we came to a stop. I even had power steering and power brakes, in addition to the automatic drive. (I hate power steering, and though I can tolerate power brakes, they make me feel as if I have lost half my control and 'feel' for the car). I had to put my foot down, and Paul got a little angry with me, and I with him. But eventually we found an exit and a small town decked with motels.

The first motel wouldn't let us stay because of the cats. The second motel had no objections to cats, but I was so sleepy at this point that I can't remember anything about the place.

And thus went the trip.

The second day brought us, bright and early (and starting about twelve a.m.) to the beautiful mountains of Pennsylvania. I'd crossed them on the way to the Pitcon, with Bob Pavlat and Bob Madle, and remembered them as pleasant. I'd crossed them again, on the way to the Chicon, on a bus that kept breaking down. It eventually had to be replaced twice before the trip was completed. This time I got to drive at my own speed and really look at the mountains: they are breathtaking. I may or may not have taken pictures. I don't remember, and I haven't been able to afford the cost of developing the film as yet.

We ran into a little snowstorm high up, on the eastern side of the peaks, and were afraid for a while that we wouldn't be able to go on. But the snow only served to make the scene more picturesque, and keep some of the people off the highway, safely tucked inside the Howard Johnson's along the way. This made driving a little easier for me. I don't mind any kind of road conditions; after all, I can slow down. It's the people behind and in front, and to either side, who annoy me. The ones who drive with their horns rather than their heads.

That night we had the same trouble finding a motel. The first one rejected us, but the second one opened its arms and welcomed us in.

And what arms:

They belonged to a little woman with frizzy red hair and the most innocent and engaging manner you can imagine. I was exhausted and looking for a place to sleep, and she was concerned with whether or not I would be comfortable. She would show me a room, and ask whether or not it would be comfortable, and when I tiredly said yes, she would escort me to another and ask again. When I convinced her that one of the rooms was adequate, and I thought I would get some rest, she informed me that it was time to park the car, and that she would have to give me some instructions.

There was a thirty degree hill beside the motel, and that was where her parking lot was located. Not on top of it, but on the side. And I had to maneuver back and forth a dozen times before I was located in just the right place. She explained that the lot next to the one on which I was parked was reserved for a very respectable business man who drove a Lincoln and for whom one of the motel rooms was permanently reserved.

Once we were parked she checked over our room to make sure that we were comfortable, and ... finally ... we got to sleep.

The next morning the little woman was gone. I pounded on her door to return the key and get a cup of the instant coffee she had for sale in the office, but there wasn't any answer. I assume that she was either at the grocery store or had been murdered, but in any case we had to be moving on, so I left the key in our room. We had breakfast in the car, some canned tomato juice and more imported cheese, and we got back on the Turnpike. We hoped to find a Howard Johnson's soon, because I needed coffee, but by the time we did I was awake.

That night we hit West Virginia: and West Virginia hit back. It's a pretty horrible, vivid memory. You see, the roads in West Virginia were all built by the Romans, ripped up by the Visigoths, and reassembled there by the W.P.A. under the Roosevelt Administration. That is the last thing anyone did in regard to West Virginia roads. From the examples of architecture we saw, and the conditions along the roadside, that is probably the best thing the natives could have done!

We passed through lots of primitive villages, and at least one big ~~city~~ town. There were endless nightmarish traffic jams in which our shiny white Impala was surrounded by garish red convertibles with their radios

turned up to full volume. All these radios were tuned to stations which played slightly varied forms of that one dismal tune that is known, in the United States, as country-western music. (In case some masochist may be in my audience, I will tell you the best way to identify this sort of cacophony: It bears no relation to either country music, i.e., that of the farmers and country folk, or western music, that is, the sadly haunting tunes of the cowboys. It is ground out by a few beseequined dainties who possess thick, usually phony, accents, and is constructed by the perverts of tin-pan alley from a handful of thematic trademarks considerably less original and interesting than the quarter tone flatness of Elvis Presley's early recordings). West Virginia was hell. Well, no. Not hell, purgatory. We were only there about six hours, and it only seemed like eternity. Imagine our delight when we looked up and saw a sign that read Freedom Way. We took it, and it got us out.

There was another motel, one of those I don't remember, and somehow we passed through Missouri and Ohio. I have relatives in Ohio, but they live far to the north, and it would have added a couple of days to the journey to see them, so I couldn't. I haven't seen them since I was very young, so I don't have too many memories about Ohio. Both the times I've been through in my adult life it has been dark. Come to think of it, I wonder if it ever gets light there any more? In Missouri it was light, so things were different.

There were a lot of signs along the road advertising various caverns, and as neither Paul nor I had ever been in a cavern of any size we decided to see some of them. Onandaga Caverns was the biggest, and was discovered by Daniel Boone when he was quite old, so we decided to see that one. Unfortunately, as we got closer to the caverns, the sun went lower and lower, and we only made it in time to see Meremac Caverns instead.

The advertisements for Meremac Caverns told us that it was Josse James' hideout, and indeed it was. But only for a few minutes it seems, and only once. After a robbery he went there to blow open the strong box, then escaped down an underground river route. A few years ago they found the strong box and a few old rifles, and now these lie on the cavern floor, guarded from the tourists by a couple of wooden mannikins representing James and his cohorts. The river route whence he escaped is well lit, and far off down the tunnel one sees two mounted figures making their (wooden) escape.

There are about eight levels to the cave, if I recall, but most of them are still closed to the public. The world's largest, still growing deposit of alabaster is contained therein, and on the upper side of it a beautiful, well lit miniature lake. But the most impressive item is the largest and oldest growing thing in the world: a great stalactite-stalagmite curtain. It is thirty million years old! And still growing.

It is in this little chamber, the amphitheater with seats that is used to show off the thirty million year old stone growth, that Man, the irrepressible, goofs again. It took God thirty million years to build this fragile curtain of colored stone: it took Man only thirty seconds to

improve it. Or so Man thinks. Or so some men think.

We sat in this lovely amphitheater, the lights dimmed, and we were 'treated' to a particularly soupy rendition of America the Beautiful while a 'specially constructed' spotlight projected a badly tinted picture of the waving American flag on the sum total of thirty million years of God's handiwork.

The blasted thing was put there at the end of the war, and I can understand how a thing like that could be done in the relief of the great Peace that followed man's greatest carnage. But other than a crass, and probably misguided, commercialism, I can see no reason for this travesty of patriotism to remain. Can the government of the State really believe this to be a fitting tribute? Is marring God's work a just means of commemorating the heroic dead of a nation, when those deaths themselves are such a great crime against His work? I think not. A plaque, a statue, might be considered appropriate, but certainly not this kind of misguided kitch. It's just bad taste.

When we came out of the cavern proper, and into the large mouth of the cavern, in which the tourist traps have been constructed, we were disappointed to find all the booths closed. They have a large and especially attractive variety of mineral samples available for purchase, including polished Tiger's Eyes that are the finest I have seen anywhere in this country. Alas, we left with only the bad taste of commercialism for a souvenir. (Yes, I play the tourist to the hilt, when and if I see something that I like).

I was a little uneasy about St. Louis, since I seemed to recall a really iiiiiiiggg river running through it. I don't like driving across big rivers, because they build such small, narrow bridges over them these days. As it turned out, I didn't even see the river. There is something a lot more impressive in St. Louis, even though it isn't finished as yet.

As we approached the city across a plain we caught sight of the Arch. I think they call it something like The Gateway to the West. It's an appropriate title. I'm not sure how far we were away when we saw it, but it must have been a long way. You see, it's B+I+G! You get closer and closer, and it keeps getting bigger and bigger, and you still aren't anywhere near it.

When we got into the city, I nearly got us killed by craning my neck around to keep my eyes on the thing; completely against my will. It's the kind of thing that rivets the attention. How can I describe it to you? Well ...

I think that it's probably taller than the Washington Monument. The Monument stands straight up, and its beauty is the kind Schopenhauer talks about in architecture. The struggle between form and gravity, the solid pylon that stands self-contained on itself. But the Arch ... It defies gravity. Not in fact, perhaps. There are, I know, structural materials from which such a thing can be built. But the impression it makes on the

mind is that of a thing too huge and graceful to exist. Rather like the incredible buildings in Sturgeon's Venus Plus X. I think it's made of metal, which they seem to be coating with stone or marble. It's not finished yet, and still it's the most impressive monument I've seen in America. Maybe calling it a monument is inappropriate: I think it's a venture of the chamber of commerce, or some such body: but, by God, it's beautiful! Simple, sure ... beautiful!

I can truly say it is the most impressive man-made thing I've seen in America.

Oklahoma is Flat.

Flat.

Flat. Flat. Flat.

I'm told that it is not as flat as Kansas, but I would find anything any flatter hard to conceive.

Oklahoma has an arch too, but it's not the same thing at all. The one in Oklahoma is quite functional. It is, in fact, a restaurant. It spans the Will Rogers Highway, and one may, if one gets there at the right time of day, and if one has sufficient funds, sit in its luxurious accommodations and look down as the cars zip past underneath. The speed limit is about 70 miles per hour, and it's fun.

We drove in about three in the morning, and most of the facilities were closed. There was a coffee shop open, so we had some pie and coffee, or maybe it was cake. The food is okay, and there is a charming little woman there with whom we talked for a couple of hours. In a planter in the upper hall there is a huge night-blooming cirrus, and someday it will bloom. These things only bloom rarely, and someone is going to be very surprised. We got some gas, and took off again.

Somewhere in Oklahoma I got interested in Amerind silver work. This is unusual, because the Indians one finds in Oklahoma are the Cherokees, and the Cherokees who live in Oklahoma are R+I+C+H. This means that they don't have to do silverwork for a living.

Of course, simply because you don't have to do something is no excuse for not doing it; especially when there may be a few extra dollars in it. The Cherokees of Oklahoma, however, have solved this problem most admirably. They are rich, and they enjoy the profits from their oil wells to the utmost. And for the sake of the tourist who wants genuine Indian silverwork, they have gone to the trouble of subcontracting various companies to manufacture dies and stamp out genuine Indian silverwork. The silver is real, (you can tell because there is a neat stamp inside saying Sterling), the patterns are authentic, and the stones are exquisite. Since the Indians own the companies, or at least have the things made under their auspices, it can be said to be real Indian work.

It's a shame I didn't know this, because I would have preferred a piece of hand-made Navajo work. The Navajo do magnificent jewelry, as

one may readily tell by the copies of their work the Cherokees sell. At any rate, the copies are so beautiful, and the forked tongue of the white man so effective in convincing the unwary buyer that this stuff is genuine, that I bought a gorgeous silver ring with the best turquoise I have seen outside a museum. The stone is perfect, with lots of good gold to it, rich color, and it wasn't expensive. I also got Paul a ring, of silver, with a smaller turquoise in it. I'm satisfied with the ring, but ... When I got to New Mexico and saw the real Navajo and Zuni work, with elaborate scrolling and turquoise and coral insets, I was a little put out.

In warning then, when you go through Oklahoma please remember that the laws there protect the Indians, but not the buyers. Sellers are not obligated to be honest about which items in the store are real Indian work, or for that matter, about which are real gemstones and which are good paste. With turquoise and coral it's possible to get a good imitation, and with turquoise there are two very different grades, one being a soft stone that is artificially hardened.

We went through Texas. There was a long detour there, and after driving for a long while through what is possibly the world's dreariest landscape, we came to the conclusion that in addition to more of everything than anywhere else, Texas also has more of nothing than anywhere else. The steak is quite good, and the Mexican food is both ample and cheap. The roads were so bad that we were overjoyed when we got back to route 66, which, if not in good shape, is at least being improved.

Speaking of Texas, and a lot of nothing, I neglected to mention that somewhere earlier we passed through Illinois. It's easy to neglect Illinois. Having produced Lincoln, it used up its potential, and hasn't produced anything since but a profligation of Lincoln Museums. Such museums are actually tourist traps whose claim to historicity is no more than a few civil war bullets.

After Texas came New Mexico.

New Mexico bills itself as the Land of Enchantment, and I think that for once the publicity campaign is understated. It's everything it claims to be, and more. The country all across the state looks just like the postcards they sell, and the people are genuinely friendly.

And they have very strict laws to guard the tourist in the purchase of Indian goods. This is the land of the Navajo, the Zuni, the Apache, and many more talented peoples.

We stopped the night at a motel that was also a Stucky's (an exotic chain of souvenir and food stores that one can find in most southerly states. We lived in them when we could find one. I have a passion for Papaya juice), and an Indian Trading Post. If you ever go through, stop there. It's called Bowlin's Running Indian, and the commercialism on the outside is quite at odds with the fine people inside. We must have spent four hours learning the finer points of various Amerind art forms from the proprietor, and everything in the place was an esthetic joy to see.

These people really love the work they sell. I wish I could have afforded more than the beautiful little Navajo cross with a rough turquoise that we bought for Mom Zimmer. If you have never seen the finer work in Navajo blankets you cannot possibly understand why four hundred dollars is dirt cheap for a four by eight wool rug. It's not at all like the complex Persians we are all used to. No complexity, just simple, strong statement. Symbols that are so potent you know something about them, even though they are the product of a highly developed cultural attitude that stems from the nature of the complex polysynthetic languages. Whole trains of thought, idea patterns, all reduced to a single sound or sight pattern that is not a word at all, or in the case of the art work, a symbol, but a phrase with sets of connotations that revolve around context. Simply beautiful!

The Navajo don't cut stones if they can help it. They polish and build the setting around the natural shape of the thing. This gives their work an almost futuristic look, with rough free form shapes contrasted with delicate formal patterns in the silver.

The Zuni like silver well enough, but for them it is the stone that is to be considered. They cut very carefully and set in patterns; and the result is very much like fine stained glass, but made with turquoise, coral, obsidian, and we even saw a piece made with Arizona green serpentine. The effect one would expect in working with jewelry would be that of mosaic, but somehow the Zuni work looks like stained glass.

Hopi silverwork uses no stones, or if it does we haven't seen any examples of it. They lay down two layers of silver and cut the design through the top layer. Where they got this technique I don't know, but it is interesting to note that the Peruvian Indians of today use the same technique on occasion. The bottom layer of silver becomes black, and the contrast is quite beautiful.

We tried to stop in one of the Indian villages along the way, but we managed to pass all of them in the dark, except for one with a minor tribe that has become disgustingly civilized. We did, however, have the good fortune to find a piece of silver, a bola tie, made by the great Navajo artist Platero, and this we bought.

In Arizona there were two things to see. My mother saw them when she went west and the impression her recounting of their glories made on my mind was long lasting. To the right of route 66 in the Painted Desert.

And just how should I go about describing that? A lot of people have tried, but it really can't be done in print. You have to see the look in the eyes of someone who's seen it, the funny heated awe that creeps into the voice. It is a hot, brilliant canvas of colors that are too large to be really of this world: and that's reasonable, because they aren't. It's from a past filled with giants, from an age so primitive the mind can't conceive it. These colors of mountains, of hills, of eroded arroyos, are not the colors of Man, but the basic colors from which life was springing up in swamps and learning to walk and fly. They are primitive and stronger than Man, and it's a privilege that men are

transiently here to watch their washing away to the sea bottoms. There may never be another Painted Desert, and this one will be gone in a few short centuries, so to see it is more than to see an ocean or a temple that at best is made for Man's kind of time. To see the Painted Desert is to look back on a billion years, to see them dead and glorious, and to realize that even the heart of a mountain or the bottom of a sea is not a safe receptacle from Earth Changes.

The Colors !

I bought some slides of the Desert, and took some pictures of my own. You can remember how it feels, how it is, but you can't remember it all.

We crossed route 66 and entered the Petrified Forest. There it is a little closer to us, for we can imagine trees, and ancient people, and it's only a stop with the stimulation of the great stone trunks lying about you, and you are back there, in the swamps with the giant dragon flies and the funny trees.

There are too many things in the Petrified Forest for me to talk about here. I could go on for hours, and because we had only a day to spend there, we didn't get to walk the crystal forest trail. There are several forests in the park, and one of them, at the Blue Mesa Trail, is only now being uncovered by erosion. There are a million stories in that place, and I don't mean Humphrey Bogart vehicles. There is enough drama in the stone trees, in the little house that's been reconstructed where someone once lived in a small hut of amethyst and jasper. In the ruins of a village that banded together in a hundred year drought. In the undecipherable pictographs on the wall of stone canyons, where someone just had to write something, even if no-one would ever understand it. Oh, the Petrified Forest has stories all right, in addition to everything else.

It took us a full day to see the Forest and the Desert, and then we continued west. Somewhere along the way we stopped at a huge motel where we were short-changed and didn't notice it until the next morning because I was too tired to care. The motel was an annex of Dinosaur Caverns, and I wanted to see the caverns, so, against Paul's wishes, we saw them.

They don't have a dinosaur, and at the moment, they don't have the critter that gave them their name. The caverns were discovered by the Indians, who looked on them as a holy place because there were two Indians buried there. A long time later they were discovered by cowboys, the cowboys opened a tourist trap, the Indians got mad, and so on for a while. I may not have the facts in the proper order here, because it was very early in the morning when we took the tour, but essentially: the Indians are now friendly because the bodies are buried elsewhere and the old, holy entrance sealed off.

The name of the caverns stems from the point of major interest, which they do not have to show. The caverns are very dry, and sometime, a long time ago, a giant ground sloth wandered in and died. On one wall you can see the huge claw marks where he tried to climb back out, and failed. The body was mummified, by natural drying, and was in a pretty darned good state of preservation when found.

The owners of the cavern made a mistake when they discovered it. They let people know. The local University asked if they could borrow the ground sloth, to run tests and discover things, and, as is the way with many American Institutions, never bothered to return it. The owners of the cave have been trying for years to get it back.

Now I realize that science is more important than tourism, but the people who own the cave have a legal right to their property, and are being treated rather shabbily. I'm not used to that in academic circles. The Government is noted for that kind of thing, but really, for scientists to do it ... It's liable to give the whole profession a bad name; not to mention causing people not to allow their specimens to be examined at all, for fear of just such a theft.

Paul is a northern boy, and the cats were northern cats. Both Paul and the cats were melting as we went further south and west with each hour. But the worst was yet to come.

We looped north through the Navasuppi Reservation, then south through the Rockies. Or maybe it was the High Sierras, I didn't have the right kind of map to tell. I'd been warned that this section of the trip was dangerous and difficult, because of the high mountain driving, and I was prepared to slow down to ten miles an hour if necessary. Remember that the only mountain driving I'd done was on the early part of the trip, through the relatively low mountains of Massachusetts, and the Appalachians. The Rockies are accounted to be BIG mountains.

The road, for me, was some of the easiest and best driving I found in the country. It wound in and out of the mountains, and we never really got close to the grand peaks we saw to either side. Which is a sensible way to build a road, if you stop to think about it. We shot through with no trouble at all.

Then came the Heat. More than we hit anywhere, and enough for everybody. It was like the inside of a blast furnace, but without the comforting flicker of the flames licking at you. Numa was panting so terribly that we were afraid he might die, and Scooter just sat there. Paul was in pretty bad shape himself.

We stopped in Needles for some cold milk, hoping that would revive the cats. The mighty Colorado river runs through Needles, yet it doesn't seem like a river at all. It's too hot for the water to look like anything but chips of green fire thrown down between a couple of sandy peaks.

The service station-cum-grocery store was a scene of chaos, with the attendant up to his sweaty armpits in work enough for ten men, and up to even further with sweaty customers. The walls of the place were actually hot to the touch, the way a frying pan gets hot on a flame. The road was under construction, so in addition to the blazing heat there was a thick cloud of dust over everything.

Paul and I chocked through our clothes to see if we had Bermuda shorts, or for that matter, tennis shorts. Anything cool to wear! But we seem to have lost all that sort of thing in the packing, so we just put on light shirts. Numa wouldn't even touch the cold milk. About ten minutes at the service station and I took off the light shirt as well.

A station wagon pulled in next to us, covered with about a million stickers. There was a woman driving, and she had nine children with her, ranging from age fourteen down. She had apparently just taken the long route and gone all the way around the country, through Canada, down the East Coast, and back through the south and Mexico. There were a number of sleeping bags stashed in the back of her vehicle.

We speculated as to just what kind of courage would be necessary to attempt such a venture, while we lay in the shade of our automobile, exhausted. To go on such an adventure with nine children, when only two cats were tiring us, in the ungodly heat. Then we saw that she had a California licence plate on her car, and it was all explained. She and her children swarmed over the service station and we pulled out.

Onward, into the Mojave Desert.

Nobody is crazy enough to drive west, into the blazing sun, in the evening, in the Mojave. The sun in your eyes, the road shimmering as it writhes slowly over the gentle hillocks, winding in and out among the black, upright cores of long extinct volcanoes, and the corky beds of lava flows. Slag to either side, and inept rivers bereft of their water running dryly under the road. Maybe I'm crazy, but I like it. Straight into the sun, with an occasional stop for the gentle hot wind that blows so softly you may miss it in your hurry to be rid of the desolation. And it's not really desolation. There are flowers in the desert, and long blue mountains all around. The road is straight and pleasant.

And, since nobody but me is crazy enough to drive west, in the evening, in the Mojave: I had my side of the road all to myself. Just the way I like to drive, all alone, with no interruptions so that I can enjoy the scenery.

And surprise, surprise, the Mojave was much cooler than Needles had been. As evening progressed I needed a jacket, and as the sun went down the cats revived somewhat. Even Paul revived, though he still thought it was ungodly hot. Just after dusk we came out of the desert, no worse for wear.

...And into a town called Barstow, the confusion capital of the world. This was my first initiation into that perverse form of gambling known as California Driving.

F'rinstance: If there are any traffic directional signs, they are wrong. Or, if they are correct, they are well-hidden behind masses of orange trees or palms. Or, barring these two most popular forms of misinformation, they are simply turned around the wrong way.

We became embroiled in Barstow, and after an hour of hopeless wandering, found our way back to the entrance, a T-form street. On the cross-bar of the T there was a gas station, and as I'd used a tank full of petrol zooming around the maze, I pulled in to get the tank filled. The only people in California who don't have college degrees, you must understand, are filling station attendants, and the one we drew was really the finest specimen I have come across. He didn't know what an American Traveler's Cheque was, and had to wake his boss from a sound night's sleep to find out if he could cash one. And this young man was about 23 years old !

As he was filling the tank he looked into the car and saw Paul sleeping with the two cats in his lap.

"Gee !" said our specimen, "Is he one of Hell's Angels ?"

This could have led to some confusion if I hadn't heard vague stories about Hell's Angels, a group of motor cycle Vikings who are slowly but surely getting back at the world. As I had heard a few stories I answered gently: "No."

"Gosh, no offense," said the specimen.

There were some minutes of silence while he contemplated whatever such people contemplate when they aren't actually thinking about nothing.

"I bet he'd be tough in a fight," said the specimen.

"Well ..." I said, "I wouldn't know about that. I make it my business not to get in fights with him."

This conversation went on until the tank was filled. Then I found out I needed oil, and it started all over again while he laboriously filled out the sales slip and the receipt. He did know how to get me out of Barstow and headed north, so I cannot count him as stupid. Any mind that can remember the complexities of Barstow traffic must be taxed to the fullest extent with that problem alone, so we can excuse him for not knowing a single other thing.

The only trouble with leaving Barstow was that the gas station was on the cross bar of the T, and the way out was the stem. And the traffic signals forbid any turns. I took my life in my hands, plunged out into traffic, and somehow escaped. How, I'm not sure. I think it involved several police cars trying to get out of my way in a hurry.

I believe the highway north of Barstow is made of rubber. It rolls and undulates over dunes like a coaster dip, and one gets the distinct

feeling that the sands are shifting beneath. This produces a pleasant enough sensation, but the speed limits, and the way people in California drive, turns it sour before you have a chance to enjoy it. They are all in such a hurry! And the speed limits posted all over the state: those aren't maximums, like in other places. They're minimums!

"Let's go straight to Berkeley!" Paul kept saying, over and over. He was sitting there half asleep with the cats in his lap. But I wasn't about to try it. And besides, there was one more thing I wanted to see before the trip was over, one thing that meant more to me than all the other things we had seen along the way.

At three a.m. Three Rivers is a pretty dead town. But even in a small town, at three a.m., money talks, and with remarkable fluency. The only place open, where we could get accommodations for the night, was a frightfully expensive Guest Ranch, but it was open, and a personable young man came leaping out of bed to arrange everything for us. We had an individual cottage, with a refrigerator, a super-gigantic quadruple size bed, and the shower was in a separate little room from the bath, complete with a built-in sun lamp for drying comfortably. The windows were open, and it was chilly, but we were too tired to close them. We slept until about noon.

In the morning the air was clean and cold, and the sound of the three rivers burred in through the open windows to awaken us. It had been a good night's sleep, and the smell of the trees was sharp and invigorating. It was a bright day, noon, clear; a perfect day to see the Trees.

The Sequoias are real.

Real, those trees that even in this late hot summer sit serenely among snows in their mountain keep. Men walk like ants around their roots, and never know, never notice ...

All the noisy children in the world can't despoil the silence of the place.

You glide up a mountain to see them, twisting and turning, backward and forward, passing by, in anticipation, vistas that are like water-colors by Bok or Dali. There are great stone mountains, and close, and far below, a Golden Eagle soars and glides above a water-fall, a torrent falling from some lost place.

We saw the Trees.

It took us all day. There is a little village, and we stopped at the restaurant to have dinner. Turkey with stuffing and giblet gravy, and Paul thought it was too much and that he would get fat. I bought a bola tie of Hopi silver, and a small red-wood bowl. After that we went down and saw the General Sherman Tree.

It's there, and it's four thousand years old. A little boy was asking his father: "Daddy, what makes this tree so special?" And his father couldn't answer.

Maybe because he didn't know; what made that tree so special. Maybe because you just can't answer that question. It's there, and it's the oldest living thing in the world, and it's special; but how to tell the child?

After that I was ready to rest. To stop wandering, to sit down, maybe to get a little drunk with relief. We made the long, unhappy descent from beyond the clouds, and came back to the world where people Ruin.

Through Fresno, and north, and finally we left the highway at Manteca. I was trying to find a sign directing me out of Manteca when the policeman pulled me over.

He was a pleasant looking young man, younger than most of the state police I've seen, and he looked intelligent. But he must have been raised pure.

"Have you been drinking?" he asked.

"No." I answered.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Quite sure." I answered.

"Well ..." he said, "You were driving kind of funny back there. Extra slow, sort of."

"It was a twenty-five mile zone," I said, because I always keep a close eye on my speed. "I was doing twenty-five. Since it's three in the morning I don't think that could be considered speeding, could it?"

"That's what I mean," he said. "Twenty-five in a twenty-five mile zone. Are you sure you haven't been drinking?"

"No." I said.

"Well, there's something in here that smells like liquor," he said, sniffing at the car.

Two things suddenly occurred to me. He was worried, not because I had been going too fast, but too slow. Only the speed limit! And he was diligently sniffing out ...

Stop and think, dear people, just what a car will smell like when it has been inhabited for a couple of weeks by two living, breathing, excreting cats. Then the box hasn't been changed for a full day, in order to save time.

As I said: he must have been raised pure.

He finally decided that I wasn't drunk, but tired, and told me to pull over to the curb and get some sleep. I was tired at this point, and I took his advice happily. I woke up considerably before dawn, pulled out of Manteca, and it wasn't long before I was in Berkeley.

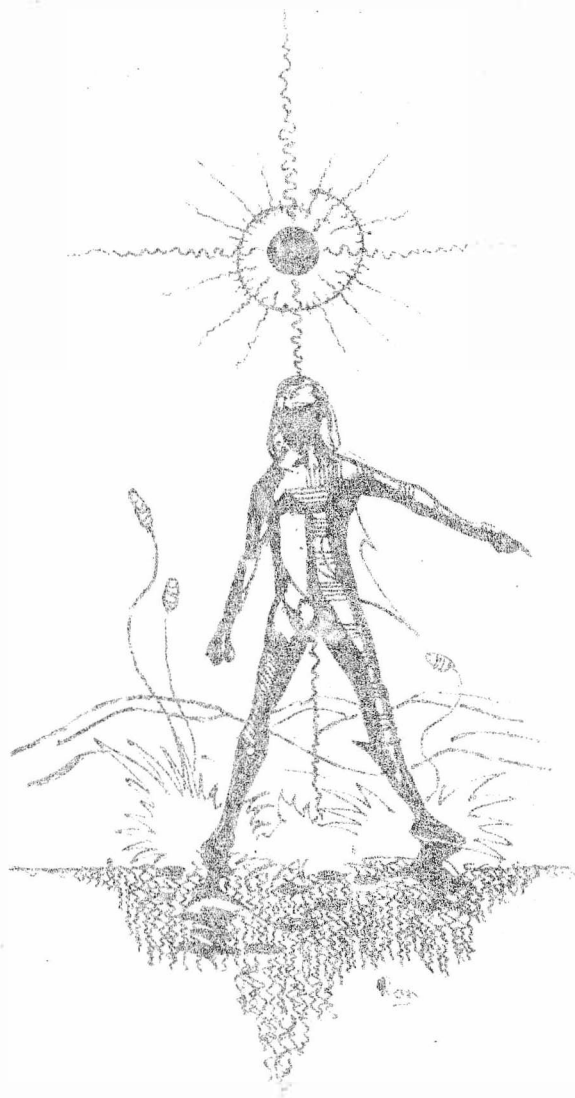
It took us a while
to find the house, because
Berkeley street maps are
actually schematics
rather than maps, but
find it we did and sleep
we did for some time.

And now that we are
safely across the contin-
ent, and residing in
Berkeley? Well, there
are tournaments, and
jousts, and readings of
poetry. And I have
finished the first
draft of a new novel,
and ... well, another
time.

Till then,
Cheers,

DON.

Don Studebaker,
March,
April,
May,
1966.



THE PROZ-TMAN BROUGHT...

From: Archie.

So you want a LoC on OZ 5. So have such a thing.

If you react that way to telephones, telepathy'd drive you to addiction to Wiener Schnorkels. (They're the same as Wiener Schnitzels only you don't have to come up every so often to breathe).

Just to make it crystal-clear (or something), my attitude to predestination and/or being "pushed around" is that I don't approve of it, and don't think it happens - but there are times when it does indeed seem very much as if it does, and one can't possibly prove that it doesn't. Whatever one does, or doesn't do, in the final analysis it is the only possible thing that, being exactly the kind of person one is, one could in the circumstances have done. Seemingly arbitrary "decisions" are not necessarily arbitrary at all - they depend on, for instance, one's state of mind at the time one makes them. The decision one makes today would not necessarily have been made yesterday, had one been faced with it then.

Hope is pleasant, I agree, but can be so very illusory. I can see no reason whatsoever to suppose that the foreseeable future will be any less unpleasant than was the historical past. The difference is that the past, having happened, can be known and measured, whilst the future can be no more than speculated upon. This can be fascinating, I do so agree - but the past (all of which of course is inherent in whatever the future may bring - the past caused the future) has its fascinating side too.

From: Gray Charnoc, of Wembley, Middx.

Well - OZ. I think this must be one of the first regular OMPazines I've come across. Ah, yes, I did see an AMBLE once. Is it more or less part of the OMPA deal that a fanzine should consist of mainly a personal manifesto? Or is this just a Mercorism? Actually I know next to nothing about OMPA save that it stands for Offtrails Magazine Publishing Organisation or somesuch. Perhaps you could tell me more about it - I'd like to know, I really would.

(+ (It's Association, not Organisation - and you can put anything you like in your OMPazine as long as it's not libellous, seditious, obscene, etc. You don't even have to do mailing comments if you don't want to, but most members do, because OMPA is, partly, a large correspondence club. It's a British-based apa (and we could certainly do with a

few more British members'.) having a maximum of 45 members. At present there is a majority of American members, and we also have a sprinkling of Europeans and Antipodeans. Mailings are quarterly, there is a minimum annual page requirement - recently raised to 20 quarto pp. - and the dues are 7/- per year. BM)+)

S'funny and I'm sorry but there's very little in OZ-5 that I'd want to pick holes in. Apart from your notions on reincarnation, that is, but live and let live I always say. Oh yes, I'm glad you know what you like to read and what you don't like to read. That's a very comfortable position to be in. Now me, I don't know for sure what I like and what I don't like as far as reading is concerned. That is, I'm perfectly prepared to let people (more experienced people one would presume) tell me what's best for me, what I should like and shouldn't like, goddamn it yes, what I do like and what I don't like. Perhaps some day I'll be "old-fashioned" enough to determine my own tastes instead of having them defined for me. I hope so.

From: Jean Muggoch, London N.W.1.

THE SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A NON-FAN

My friend Daphne says it's pathetic. She says she never met a fan who was so completely ignorant of Fandom!

At the tender age of eleven I first encountered the works of H.G. Wells, Jules Verne, Wizard, Hotspur, et al, but, alas, I had never heard of "Science Fiction" so did not realize what was being offered to me. Much later I re-encountered it through a copy of Astounding (1/9d. vintage), and enthusiastic I became. At the sight of SF on a bookstall, out would come my purse - hard-earned bawbees were squandered recklessly! An avid reader of SF I continued to be for many years and that was all until the fateful day I read an advertisement for the London Convention!!!

It didn't sound awfully me - I visualized groups of earnest young gentlemen standing round discussing vectors, velocities, James Ballard, etc. but it was only 7/6d. for a preliminary canter, so I parked my bathchair in the cupboard, pinned on my best shawl with my grandmother's brooch and set out.

+ + + +

Two Cons later I am convinced I AM A FAN!

+ + + +

My friend Daphne says it's pathetic!

+ + + +

"What do fans do?" I ask. "They write fanzines or else read fanzines and write comments," she says.

I borrow some of her fanzines and start reading. At last I exclaim triumphantly, "Ah! That's interesting. I would like to comment on that."

"Go ahead. Perhaps they'll print it in the next issue," says Daphne. We look at the date on it. October 1964, I think it was. Somehow I am not sure that anyone will remember what the heck I'm answering. Of course I could quote the date ... "In your article in October '64 ..." No, I can't do it. Congenital bus-misser, me!

Ah, Joyful Day! My friends BerylanArchie Mercer have sent me some fanzines from Spain. How kind! They know I like things Spanish - I also have interest in sailing, psi, dancing (Fans don't dance, says Daphne scathingly), yoga, Mozart, old Astoundings ... Back to business in hand.

Hooch and up the Rangers, I scream joyfully. The last date on these is May so that's not too much out of date so I will be able to comment!

I read through the Spanish fanzines. They consist of comments on other fanzines which I haven't read, a very good series of poems about Martians, the whole wrapped with a bit of Spanish charm. Alas and alack, I cannot comment on fanzine comments, can only say I liked the poems about Martians, and I should comment about Spanish charm ?????

Gloom descends on Balcombe House like a pall. Recently I have been saying to our fannish visitors, "Welcome, and as we are all fans, here's the kitchen, help yourselves." This will not do. I shall now have to rush around being a hostess proffering cups of tea made by my own fair but unfannish hands. I may even be shamed into baking a cake for the next lot. Once more to me ye laurels ... for Lycida is past her prime or words to that effect ... Despair overwhelms me and only a faint wisp of reck ascends from ^{my room} my room.

Will somebody please say Jean is not a true fan but we like her just the same?

Think of me as I surreptitiously dust off my bathchair and wend my sorrowful way to offer obeisance to Ian Peters's collection of Astoundings.

+ + + + +

Let's put it this way: we think Jean is a trufan. It's just that she was a late starter, but she's catching up as fast as she can - partly by allowing the flat she shares with Daphne to be used by any out-of-town fannish types who happen to be in London for a day - or a week. Partly by grabbing joyfully at any and every excuse to throw a fannish party, or to attend somebody else's. And the walls of the little living-room (into which about 27 fans were crammed for one party) are lined with sf books and magazines, and they can't all be Daphne's.

Anyway, for the record: WE LOVE JEAN - no matter what she is or isn't. Signed, BerylanArchie Mercer.

Dimma werrit, Jean lass; I suspect that Archie was one of the people who started fandom - but I didn't discover it until mid-1963, via a little ad. in the "Newsletter" of the Science Fiction Book Club. (To which, by the way, I had belonged for many years). The ad. said that anyone interested in joining a Birmingham SF Group should contact Peter R. Weston ...

So it's really all Pweston's fault!

NOTE - to interested OMPAns: Jean did write to the Spanish fanned. And the first thing we saw, last time we visited Jean's flat, was a large, coloured drawing on the wall. It was of an ornate heart, and inside the heart was written: "Miss, this Spanish fan loves you ..." Spanish charm, did she say? COR+R+R+R+R+R!

From: Doreen Parker, of Peterborough.

That article on predestination and free will greatly interested me. I've always had your views up to now to a certain extent, and now you have confused me, so I'll confuse you!

(+(Like, I'm not confused enough already ??)+)

You know my theory of a treadmill - no matter what the circumstances are, a person goes on making the same mistakes to a greater or lesser degree, because they are what they are. As you know, I believe if you fall in love with a particular type who is wrong for you, you will continue to do so, and that's why I feel that most second marriages have the same disadvantages as the first one. There seems to be some sort of masochist streak in all of us which goes looking for the same mistakes. One of the reasons I have always admired you, Beryl, is because you did get off the treadmill and make a complete new circle. So, as you can see, I believe to a certain extent that the events are predestined, but what you do is 'free will' within the circumstances of your nature. Now I don't know what to believe!

(+(Which is exactly the position I'm in!)+)

I'm wondering if you have read a certain story (I think it's fairly well known; it was before I read SF, but it's in the same line), where a certain young man left home to make his fortune, and came to three paths. He didn't know which to take, but finally took (say, 'cos I can't remember) the middle one. Came to a hotel, made love to the landlord's wife, and was killed by him. Goes back to the beginning of the story, but this time he took the right hand path, where he was set upon by thieves and killed. Goes back to the third beginning; he took the left hand path, saw some people fighting, joined in and got killed. Then it started all over again. Comment?

(+(The only comment I made when I read this precis was vitriolic and quite unrepeatable; for a long time now I've had a rough draft of a story in my file, which I had hoped might one day turn out to be my first attempt at a full-length novel. It's on the same basis as the story you've just outlined somebody has always done it first! Curses!

(+(Seriously, though, it seems to me that if people are on a treadmill, most of them don't realise it and simply accept it as their apportioned lot. To some it is "the will of God", to others "Fate", or "just the way things are", etc. Still others never even think about the matter at all. But anybody like us, who does a bit of brain-rattling on the subject - well, if you're on a treadmill, you get off it - unless you happen to like it. Or at least you make some attempt to get off it. The point is that, if we are being pushed around, we do have the satisfaction of knowing that we've tried to push back. It doesn't always work, of course, and even sometimes proves to be the well-known leap from the frying-pan to the fire - but at least we tried. And I always was a rebel ...)+)

From: Brian Stableford, of Denton, Lancs.

Thanks for OZ 5. You say you'll be sending it to all PaDS whatnots unless he/she/etc. writes and tells you not to, but I thought I might as well write and say that I/me/us/we will welcome all future issues just so long as all those people aren't asked to shell out. And possibly (supreme burst of

magnanimity) even if we are. Actually, I never doubted that you were sane underneath, so you didn't really have to prove it.

On this intriguing subject of "does free will exist, or is everything predestined" - I present my own view.

I prefer to express the argument as "Is everything predestined, or is there an element of chance" - which is a wider view. Consider, for a moment, that everything is determined, that every event has a definite and irreversible cause, even down to one's emotions. After all, the mind is only a series of electrical impulses when all is said and done, and if every stimulus triggers off the same impulse every time, then everything would be fixed and predestined.

Then, every event must have a cause. Okay, what caused the first event? For anyone who maintains that God did, what caused God? Instantly, we have reached infinity. If time is finite, then random chance must exist to account for its beginning.

Of course, there are people who would maintain that time is infinite. But, what is infinity? It's an artifact. A thing dreamed up by mathematicians. It doesn't really exist. The only thing that is infinite is a number series - and numbers themselves are artificial. I maintain that nothing natural is infinite - infinity exists only as a theoretical thing.

(+(Which is all very interesting, Brian, but doesn't tell me which 'side' you're on! And anyway, I can't accept that premise of "the mind is only a series of electrical impulses". Is it? Then why are no two human minds the same? Sorry, but I rejected epiphenomenalism the first time I met it. And thank you for giving me the opportunity of using the word ... !)+)

In the next bit, you seem to think there's something wrong with violence, pain, cruelty and enslavement. Don't forget that violence, etc., were and are responsible for progress. (+ (BALDERDASH!)+) Without them, we'd be stuck. I mean, if everyone's happy, all change comes to a full stop, and we're dead in all but name. You can thank violence, pain, cruelty and enslavement for the fact that you aren't living up a tree. You've got it cushy - and you can thank v., p., c. and e. for that!

I'm all in favour of all of them, with just one proviso: nobody tries it on me. This, I'm told, is hypocritical, selfish, and downright nasty. Well, so I am.

(+(I suspect a bit of the old tongue-in-cheek malarkey here, but just in case: I have always believed that progress is caused by one or both of two things: natural hazards, and human discontent. I don't deny that war usually gives progress a boost - destructive progress, anyway, if you'll pardon the paradox. Bigger and better bombs, etc. Although medical science and surgical techniques usually got a kick in the pants, too.

(+(And perhaps I might like living up a tree ... think of all the housework I wouldn't have to do ...)+)

I barely scanned the mailing comments - after all, I've never heard of the zines concerned, so there wasn't much point in reading them. One bit that did catch the old jaded eye, though, was that bit about women being illogical and the masculine mind tending more to logic, etc.

I don't believe that the masculine mind tends to logic any more than the feminine. It is simply that women act on emotional evaluation more often than men - and why? - because they're expected to. It's part of the modern conception of femininity. Conditioning, you see, which brings us

back to environmental and heritable traits - a subject which you say you have views on. Let's hear them, please, 'cause so have I.

(+ (Well, now: some years ago, I started to write a poetic trilogy called HUMAN TRINITY, of which the first two parts have been finished for quite a while. I intended to put the whole thing through OMPA when it was complete, but the last part "won't come right" - at least, not "right" enough to satisfy me, so it's still hanging fire. However, the gist of the thing is that heredity and environment, so beloved of psychologists, juvenile courts, etc., are not the sum total which makes up a human being. I firmly believe that there is a third factor, which I call the 'X' factor (nothing to do with the famous tribe of the same name!), and that this owes nothing whatsoever to either heredity or environment. It isn't even part of a man's personality - it is the man (or woman), it's what makes him/her different from every other person of Earth, past, present, and probably future as well.

(+ (Being a reincarnationist, I also believe that the 'X' factor is carried forward from life to life, growing, maturing, accruing knowledge and experience. When it is in its infancy - when the person is what I call a "new soul" - it is receptive to conditioning, it makes mistakes and "commits sins". People have asked me, "what's the point of reincarnation if we can't remember anything that's happened in previous lives?" But I believe that we do remember, instinctively, and that it is the 'X' factor which carries these memories. Finding a well-stuffed wallet lying in the street, a "new soul" keeps it without thought of returning it to its owner. He simply thinks of the things he can buy with the money. A somewhat older soul hesitates, decides that "it serves the owner right for being so careless", and banks or invests the money so that it will increase. Progressing even further, the finder will only keep the money to give to someone he knows who is in desperate need, and will have pangs of conscience even so. And finally, a really mature "soul" will not even think of keeping it - he returns it immediately to the owner, or takes it to the nearest police station.

(+ (There's a lot more to it than that, and I've tried to incorporate all of my ideas in HUMAN TRINITY - which may one day see the light of OMPA, when I can grab a bit of spare time to work on that obstinate third part!)+)

From: Don Studebaker, of Berkeley, California.

(+ (The first part is addressed to Archie:)+)

Don't know whether I mentioned it in the last letter or not, but really, LEADOWS OF FANTASY is a magnificent story and a brilliant job of writing. Have you tried selling it anywhere? With certain expansions it could well be the Great Novel of Fandom that everybody has been saying they will write someday. The scene in the form of a Rondo is particularly moving and beautiful, a skilful blending of all the most beautiful cliches in SF into a completely original scene, one that is poetic in its simplicity and tenderness. (You put all that on the jacket and I get a cut for writing the blurbs. You may quote me).

OMPA is damn near death's door, to judge from the last mailing. How many of us are left? I wish Ken Cheslin would come back. And somebody

ought to lock Harlan Ellison in Ethel's bathroom for her withdrawing her zine. Damn it all, people keep bitching about the British flavour ebbing away; the flavour is what I like best about it, too, but aside from you and Archie (may I talk from one to the other of you?), just what's happening to all the Britons? I'd love to see a nice fat VAGARY in every mailing, and maybe Roles could give up his job and wander around the world for a while so he could write us some more Rollings? I mean, it's unfair for Gaudeamus Higginbottom to support the whole weight of the apa on his shoulders, don't you think?

(+(Alas, poor Higginbottom - we knew him well ...)+)

As soon as my mimeo gets shipped out here I may be able to put another LP through OMPA, but really, this last mailing was the smallest I've ever seen. What's going on? Maybe I should say something obscene and start a feud. They always pop things up. But with Brian we can't even try that. And, I mean, I really work on the Naked Artichoke. Don't these people realize that some of us care?

Ah well, you can't win them all. But I'll be damned if I'll let OMPA die for lack of my support. You know, one or two good mailings would revive everybody's interest no end. Instead of all this business about cutting and pruning, these bitches ought to devote some time to producing good material. That way there would be something to attract the interest of the better people in fandom. Like, the ones we've lost of late. If we keep losing members at this rate, I will end up among the Olde Guard. And I'm too young to be an old fan and tired!

(+(The above was written way back last summer. A few days ago we received another letter from Don:)+)

Since I have moved again, and since the June OffTrails says that our beloved AE is planning to move, I thought I had best write to you and ask you to forward my new address to him. The September Mailing hasn't come yet, and it's now November 4th. I left a change of address at the old place, on Arch Street, and anything that comes there will be forwarded, but still and all.

What the hell, West Coast transportation can't take that long on an OMPA parcel, can it? I mean, it only takes a month to get it on the East Coast, and packages from my agent got here in no time at all, say a week or two. What gives? Is Brian sending the packs at all? Is this part of a secret campaign to get rid of Americans? No, come to think of it. I haven't received many post-mailings in the last couple of years. And most of them were from Americans.

Does OMPA still exist? Where are all those people? I'm still trying! Ah, I mean the fate of this most noble Apa, that I should see it flourish and fall before my eyes. Where are the beers of yesteryears? I think I had better close now and peel the pumpkin. I'll do the next Naked Artichoke as soon as I finish my novel, which shouldn't be long. It will be about the Berkeley Society for Creative Anachronism and the Tournaments that we throw. Also how I became, for a brief while, a singer with the Consortium Antiquum.

All for now. Happy Christmas to everybody. Best from us both. ++ BM

THE SURVIVORS

No time to mourn. Though ruins smoulder yet,
Work must begin; the future will not wait.
No time to grieve; for now, we must forget
Those whom the atoms ravened to cremate.

No time for tears. Soon we, too, may be dead.
Some preach revenge - but whom is there to hate ?
No time for that; both "they" and we were led
By madmen. Sanity prevailed too late.

No time to pray (and maybe no-one hears).
Neither waste time in meaningless debate.
No time to curse, and nothing left to fear;
The worst has happened, horror ultimate.

No time to weep, though Man is now bereft
Of all the attributes that made him great,
Stripped of all pride - not even hope is left,
Except for such as we may generate.

(What will they be, the heirs whom we produce ?
What seed will our poor bodies procreate ?
Or are we sterile, of no further use
To evolution ? Are we to stagnate ?)

We are the doomed, the damned, the stricken - yet
Dying, we must not perish intestate;
Whoso comes after, let them not forget
Our testament: THERE SHALL BE NO MORE HATE !

Beryl Mercer
October 1966.

