

# PERSONAL NOTES

This is issue #1 of PERSONAL NOTES which is, as you might deduce, a personal-zine. If you don't know what a personal zine is, don't worry - the great fuzzy one up in the sky will take you under his wing and protect you from evil. It is produced from time to time by a cast of characters, notably one Richard Harter, aka The Master of the Universe, a gentlemen's gremlin known as Alphonse who is in charge of typos, an IBM selectric known as Henri, and a Large Orange and Blue Pussy Cat.

There are a number of philosophies of fanzine format. This will be done in a style occasionally referred to as Junkyard Informal. That is to say stuff will be typed up and run off as I happen to acquire it or get around to typing it up with no particular pretensions to order or sense. If I don't tire of the whole idea a typical issue will be a jumble with letters interspersed with essays, editorials, musings, poetry, or Ghu knows what.

Some of you may wish to know what my policy is on contributions. To tell the truth I am not terribly interested, particularly in unsolicited contributions. If you send something to me there is an apallingly good chance that you won't even hear from me, let alone get your stuff published, or even get it back. I am not interested in book reviews. Let it be clearly understood that this is a personalzine, that I publish it for my own pleasure, and I feel no sense of obligation to someone just because he sends me something.

Perhaps you think you are an artist; you may even be an artist. You may be so good hearted as to send me artwork. Don't expect it back, whether I use it or not. It will all go in a folder and every so often I will run off an art issue. If I still have your address, you will get a copy. Don't count on any response to unsolicited art. Such artwork as comes in will probably be run off immediately on the Junkyard format principle.

I will welcome letters of comment. Every time one comes in I will personally welcome it with a rousing cheery hello. I may forget sometimes but the intent will be there. Letters of comment will probably be typed up immediately and run off. Commentary on the letter may follow directly, may appear later in the zine, or may appear in a subsequent issue. On the other hand it may not appear at all - in fact your letter may not appear. I reserve the right to excise all or any material from a letter of comment. I will, however, be scrupulously fair except for those instances where I am not.

Subscriptions: I welcome subscriptions. The rates are ten dollars for one issue, five dollars for two issues, and three dollars and thirty three cents for three issues. Don't worry about not getting your copy. If anybody subscribes at those rates it will be a cold day in hell before I forget them.

*The rest of this editorial will be continued somewhere else in this zine. Look for it. It might be vital to your health and future happiness.*

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Well, here it is, the rest of the editorial. Aren't you glad you waited?

Perhaps you publish a fanzine and wish to trade. If so, my condolences. I don't trade. However I must admit that that is not strictly true. If you send me a fanzine and I happen to like it you will probably become one of my favorite people (unless you are already) and will thus get copies of this zine in the future.

Can you get a copy by writing to me and asking for one. Surprisingly enough your chances are pretty good. If I happen to have some extra copies on hand I might well send you one. Don't count on it, however, and don't expect a reply to your request.

All of which brings us to the question of how you do get this zine. The answer is very simple; I send it to you. (Or hand it to you or some such.) There is nothing you can do (barring subscribing at my ridiculous rates) to ensure delivery of a copy. How it works is very simple - I have a file card box for three by five cards with names and addresses on them. I send copies to people whose names and addresses are in that box. If a copy comes back I throw the card away. If I get tired of sending copies to someone I throw the card away. If I think somebody should get it I let a contract out on them. Etc. In short this is a personalzine with very standard personalzine policies.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

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*Once upon a time I used to write poetry. Most of it was pretty bad. Much of it was amusing doggerel. Here is one that had a bit more merit than most.*

A moment.  
That's all I ask,  
A moment.  
To see your face,  
To touch your hand,  
For a moment.  
How much happiness,  
How much love,  
In a moment?  
All that one can bear  
All that  
In a moment.

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Good lies are self evident and widely believed

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# Back in the Saddle Again

by Richard Harter

Being an account for the idly curious of certain equestrian activities on the part of certain NESFA members, among whom the author plays a prominent role.

It is conventional in this sort of thing to begin at the beginning and that is the rub - which beginning should I begin at? Oh well, I suppose I shall just pick one, and let the others wriggle in as best they may.

To begin with, I was born. At least I am told that I was and although I have no clear recollection of doing so I have no real evidence to the contrary either. For those who are fussy about the rules of evidence let us merely say that it is alleged that I was born on a cattle ranch in South Dakota.

Actually, of course, it wasn't really a ranch, but then, it wasn't a farm either. In the eastern part of South Dakota there are farms. In the western part there are ranches. In the central part, which I come from, they combine the two operations. We planted various crops such as corn and wheat. We also ran about a hundred head of cattle on fenced in grass land. These were reasonably large pastures - the east and west pastures were each a square mile in size. However, they definitely weren't open range.

We had horses of course. When I was a kid we still had a couple of work horses, Babe and Shorty. They were large and brown and I haven't the slightest idea what breed they were. They had it pretty easy because most of the work was done by tractors, but they were still used to pull a plow or a seeder every now and then. They were also used occasionally for riding after cattle, for riding to school, for pleasure riding, or for pulling a sleigh. (During the worst part of the winter we used to get around by sleigh.)

Sometime during my grade school years we finally got rid of the last of the plow horses. Before we did, we acquired freckles. Freckles was a cross breed - half golden palomino and half quarter horse. Nominally, freckles belonged to my eldest sister, Lynn, but actually she was ridden by everybody, so that she was really the family horse. (I mention this theory to Lynn when I was last out in LA and she hotly disputes it. Freckles was her horse, by God.) For a while we had a colt of hers, Smoky. Smoky did not have the most reliable or sunny of temperaments, however, and my Father sold her after she and I parted company on the most unfriendly of terms one day. Freckles was used when we wanted to bring the cattle in, or just go out and count them.

When I was in high school we moved up town. We owned two places, one fifteen miles from town and one just a mile from town. After we moved it became a regular thing to drive the cattle out to the ranch in the spring and bring them back in the fall to winter up town. These drives usually took about half a day and we usually borrowed a couple of horses from a neighbour for the drive.

Freckles mostly had an easy life uptown. She had a large pasture to run around in and was mostly ridden for pleasure. During certain times of the year she would be used to bring the cattle in during the evening - an exercise that took about half an hour. I would guess that 99% of the time she was ridden bareback. We usually just grabbed a bridle, went out in the pasture, caught her, put the bridle on, and jumped on. The only time she was ever saddled up was when we were driving cattle for a distance. Some of the time we didn't bother with the bridle - we just went out and jumped on. I don't know that we were ever very good at riding indian style - Freckles was a quite good tempered horse and we were totally indifferent to falls. The big trouble with riding indian style is in controlling the horse - particularly in slowing it down. I do remember that Freckles had the cute little trick of going into a gallop when you were riding indian style and then coming to a sudden stop and ducking her head down. Since we were always hanging on to her mane for dear life we used to go sailing through the air regularly. It never bothered us, though, we just got up and jumped back on. In retrospect I suppose that Freckles was trying to teach us something, but we were too dumb to learn.

Eventually, of course, I left home. I went in the Marine Corps, went to college, and moved to Boston. When I was home I would often go out riding but the times I was home became fewer and farther apart. Eventually Freckles passed away, and my horse riding days vanished into the past.

At this point we should tell Leslie's story. Properly speaking Leslie should tell her own story. However Leslie has an enthusiasm for horses and for riding that passeth all human understanding and, in consequence, tends to burble a bit. Since she is aware of this tendency of hers she has declined to inflict herself on the public at large and has passed the buck. *(Actually I expect she could tell a very good version of her story if she chose.)*

Leslie is, as some of the more perceptive and observant among you may have noticed, a female. Now there is a cultural thing that it is quite common for adolescent and pre-adolescent females to have an enthusiasm for riding. I have no real idea why this is so - but it is quite noticeable. Go out to any riding stables and you will find that the large majority of people there are female, and usually young females. Like many of her compatriots Leslie had this thing for riding when she was a young girl, and it has stuck with her ever since.

I'm afraid I can't say much for her judgement. If she did mean to have this thing about riding she should have had the foresight to have had parents who owned horses. Like so many of us, however, she picked them with no thought at all and ended up with parents who didn't own horses and didn't have a place for them. Thus her girlish equestrienne ambitions were hamstrung from the start.

She did go riding a few times, I am told, on stable hacks when she was young. Now this is an experience that has been denied me. However I gather that they are mostly a battered and worn group of horses and that for someone who has a burning mystical urge to ride, riding a stable hack is something like giving a bottle of warm TAB to someone who has been lost in the desert for three days. As a result she didn't get a chance to really go riding until she got into college.



..... On the trail to Helga's .....

Once Leslie got to college she started taking riding lessons at various places in the Boston area. What with one thing or another, however, none of them seemed satisfactory to her. As I have mentioned, public riding stables tend not to have good horses. For a while she went to a place in Chelmsford which gave a choice of beginners classes (which she was beyond) or advanced classes (which she wasn't ready for.) This activity was of a sporadic nature over the years and, I gather, somewhat discouraging. At one point she was apparently ready to give up on riding entirely. And then...

And then an chain of events led her to Helga's. It all started (if I have it straight) with Octavia. Octavia is an Englishwoman who was a member of an apartment of girls who were part of the old MIT crowd (or one of the MIT crowds, in any case.) She is an enthusiast about riding and was riding out at Helga's. Truman Brown, a founding NESFA member and a former MITSFS president, was dating Octavia. He started riding at Helga's. Marsha, knowing of Leslie's great interest in riding, got Truman and Leslie together and Leslie started riding out at Helga's. *(Somewhere along the line Leslie got a car so that she wouldn't have to depend upon Truman for rides. Riding can be a very expensive hobby.)* Since Leslie and Marsha were thick as thieves and Marsha was a generally sympathetic listener and since Marsha was female and therefore automatically predisposed to succumb to the great American Female riding syndrome, Marsha got talked into going out riding.

Although Marsha and I had broken up we were on the best of terms and saw a great deal of each other. It has, no doubt, escaped the attention of most of you, but Marsha has a certain tendency towards talkativeness. As a result I got to hear a great deal about horses - a great deal. Believe me, I got to hear all about horses.

This sort of put me in a quandry. I knew about riding, you see. I was raised in an environment when one rode as a matter of course. I don't remember a time when I didn't know how to ride. So I was an expert - in the nature of things I had to be. Except, of course, I wasn't really. After all I hadn't ridden a horse for ten or fifteen years. More to the point Marsha and Leslie were learning to ride English style which is an entirely different style of riding. But I listened sympathetically and made sage sounding noises.

And then came the fatal moment. I had made the mistake of listening with sympathetic interest. As a result it was suggested that I come out some evening and watch the girls go riding. That was OK - I wasn't in trouble yet and I was interested. And besides, they did want to show off for somebody - provided that it was clearly understood that there would be no snickering or humorous remarks if they had any trouble. So one evening Leslie and Marsha picked me up at Lincoln Lab on their way out to Carlisle. We got out there and I sat and watched as they rode two of the arabs around the ring. *(In keeping with my promise I won't say anything about how they were doing. Actually they were doing quite alright and were obviously having a great deal of fun.)* At this point I was still not in trouble but I was definitely on dangerous ground. Naturally, as I watched, I was struck with a wave of nostalgia. Remember, I had been raised riding, and had been away from horses for a long time. I watched, and the urge to be out there too rose within me. So it was quite natural that when Helga asked if I would like to take Jose around the ring (Jose being the stallion she was riding) I said sure. At that point I was sunk, although I didn't realize it at the time.

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So I swung up into the saddle and walked Jose around the ring a half a dozen times or so. Apparently I impressed my viewers a little bit (Helga, Marsha, and Leslie.) Part of the reason was that I swung up into the saddle (got on the horse, if you prefer) with great ease. Not anything to inspire awe, you say? Well yes, but Jose was a very large horse, you see. To me, mounting a horse is no particular problem - I'm a little over six feet tall. But to Marsha, it was a different matter. Marsha had sort of a three stage procedure for mounting Jose. First you lower the stirrup as far down as you can. Then you stick your leg as high up into the air as you can. Then you spend ten minutes or so clambering up the side of the horse. This gets you to the top. Then you crawl over the top, and there you are - a Marsha mounted on top of a Jose.

The other thing that impressed my viewers was that I apparently had excellent western form. Even though I was on an english saddle I was riding in classical western style. It was sort of diverting to be told that I had flawless form at anything.

At that point I should have left well enough alone. I had actually gone out and established my credentials in creditable form. I could now rest on my laurels and bullshit about riding without ever having to being embarrassed to actually establish that I knew what I was talking about. And, if pressed, I could always point out that I was a *western* rider. However...

... Back in the Saddle Again ...

As you may have gathered I did not let well enough alone. After my visit out in Carlisle I got to thinking a bit. It is one of my maxims that it is often worthwhile reviving old interests. Sometimes and for some things it is best to bury the past and let it be. But quite often an old interest is sort of like a played out field. You let it lie fallow for a while and take no notice of it. But time goes by and the time comes when that field is ready to grow a new crop, rich as ever. And then, too, when you revive old interests and old ideas you sort of keep in touch with yourself. What you used to do and used to be is a part of you, part of what makes you what you are now. And all that sort of deep philosophy stuff.

And I got to thinking, too, that it is worth while every once in a while to do something new, something different, something that maybe you aren't too sure about. A person can get set into grooves and if you get deep enough into the groove so that you are doing the same sort of thing the same way all the time you get so that you can't see anything but that groove and you forget that there is anything but that groove. And then, bimebi, you wake up and say to yourself, what in the hell happened? Where did all the time go and where in the hell was I? (*Complicated busines, this living. Sort of makes you wonder if you had it to do all over again, would you choose to be born? I suppose I would - one never thinks out the important decisions of life.*)

As you can see I had already decided that I would take up riding and was busy building a set of rationalizations to support my decision. It ended up that I got Helga's number, gave her a call, and asked if it would be OK if I started riding. I got the impression that Helga was a little surprised but she agreed cheerfully and there I was.

... In deepest, darkest Carlisle ...

At this point I really should explain something about Helga's place. I am somewhat nervous about this because Helga will probably get to read a copy of this and I am sure I will get all sorts of details wrong.

First of all Helga is Helga Hardacker (I'm not too sure of the spelling of her last name but that is close.) Helga is tall, has a strong accent, and is very energetic. I have never seen her wearing anything but work and riding clothes but one suspects that high fashion would be very flattering to her. There are two children in evidence - a son and a daughter. Her daughter goes to BU and is also enthusiastic about riding. Helga works at MacLean's as (I believe) a therapist. *(MacLean's is a local mental hospital. When I lived on Bigelow St. the girl in the apartment on the ground floor was a very gregarious outpatient, so MacLean's has some significance to me.)* She has an arrangement with the hospital where patients from the hospital come out to her place to ride as therapy.

Helga's place in Carlisle is a fairly good sized place. There are two houses, a horse barn, three sheds, a number of paddocks, an outdoor lighted riding ring, a small field (or large garden, considering what is planted in it), a pond, and critters. Critters include a variable number of horses (eight at the moment, I believe) several ponies, three dogs, cat and kittens, some muscovy ducks, a recent invasion of barn swallows, and I don't know what else. The place borders on the town woods and is very countryish. It is obvious from the place that Helga very much likes horses, riding, and living in the country.

One gets the impression that Helga doesn't really take in riders for the money. It helps with the feed bill and it means that the horses get exercised. But, one feels that really she just enjoys training horses and riders, likes having people around who like horses and riding, and watching them and the horses develop. Helga has a very low keyed approach to teaching which is a great advantage in teaching something like riding. Many people get nervous in learning situations and riding is one of those things that one should be relaxed about - alert, yes, but relaxed. *(Leslie comments that this is one of the things that she particularly enjoys about riding at Helga's - it seems that the place that she was at before the instructor was very intense and she felt uncomfortable with the pressure.)*

One of the nicest things about going out to Helga's is that one isn't going to a commercial establishment - one is going out riding at a friends place. It really is a very comfortable sort of place.

And horses. This is about horses, after all. Currently Helga has four arabs - Kibi, Kiki, Martha, and Arafma. The latter is a phonetic transliteration. Kibi is short for Kibretta, I believe Kiki was a name bestowed by a child, and Martha is short for Martha. Then there are Sugarfoot and Pammy. I think they are both part arab and part thoroughbred, although they may be something else entirely. I know very little about breeds of horses - I do feel confident that they aren't percherons, but that's about it. Those six are mares. There is also a stallion, and Pammy's colt. There are several ponies, of whom Jed is the only one I recognize.



.... *Where is the saddle and why is that postage stamp on the horse? ....*

If you have never ridden a horse (or even if you have) you may be under the impression that there is only one way to ride a horse and that all horses are much the same for the purposes of riding. Taint so, McGee.

In this country there are two major styles of riding - English and Western. Each was evolved to meet very specific practical requirements in the days when horses were an ordinary form of transportation. Western style riding was evolved in the western part of the United States and strongly reflects the needs of cattle raising.

The western saddle has a high front and back, large stirrups designed to be stood in, and a saddle horn. The latter is there for tying a rope to, but generations of insecure riders have made the discovery that it is something handy to hold onto. There are only two important gaits in western riding - the walk and the gallop. The reason for this is quite simple - when you are working with cattle those are mostly the only gaits you need. It is a general principle in working with cattle that you don't run them; the whole idea of raising cattle is to get them to put on weight, not run it off. So, when you are moving cattle, they and you walk. Sometimes you have to get to somewhere other than where you are in a hurry - usually because an animal is doing something you don't want it to do such as heading out in some other direction entirely. In that case you move out sharply in a gallop, get to where the action is, slow down quickly (remember you don't want to spook the steer and get it running) and head it back to where it is supposed to be going. In working cattle it is important to be able to move fast and change direction sharply.

In western riding it is important to have a hand free, so both riders and horses are trained so that you hold the reins in one hand. In western riding it is important that you be able to get off the horse without it wandering off so western trained horses are trained not to move while the reins are hanging free. In western riding the trot is not a very important gait and western saddles and the western style of riding are ill suited to the trot - particularly the fast trot. It should also be mentioned that jumping plays no part in western riding.

There is one other facet of western riding that it embarrasses me to mention. The truth of the matter is that western style riding and the western saddle are particularly suited to people who don't ride very well. The western saddle and riding style evolved from military saddles and riding styles. In military riding, back in the days when there was no mechanized transport, large numbers of people had to ride whether or not they were any good at it, and they had to be able to perform a large variety of activities while they were in the saddle. Much the same was true of western riding. The average cowboy was not a particularly good horseman. (There were more deaths due to falling off a horse than there were due to gunplay in the days of the wild west.) The western saddle is designed so that one is rather firmly held in place - a distinct advantage to someone whose seat is uncertain to begin with. In western style riding the signals that the horse and the rider must understand are very simple and uncomplicated. Remember, you didn't have to be very bright to be a cowboy. (Considering the wages that a ranch hand gets it might be considered an occupational requirement not to be very bright.)



If you've never ridden anything but a western saddle, the first sight of an English saddle is a bit of surprise. It's so little. The whole front end is missing. They have these little dinky stirrups. Your first thought is that an English saddle is a compromise between riding bareback and riding with a western saddle.

Then you try riding English style. First of all you discover that you are expected to hold the reins backwards. Not only that you are supposed to hold them using two hands. You learn that there are all sorts of body signals that you are supposed to be using to tell the horse where to go. (It is easy to get the impression that the point of English style riding is to have a horse that can't figure out for itself where it is going so that you can tell it every thing to do.)

You learn that you are supposed to trot a lot, particularly fast trots. Now the trot is not the most comfortable riding gait that a horse has. In fact, on some horses, trying to sit a fast trot is the next best thing to operating a jack hammer. In western riding you don't bother with any such thing - you lope instead. But in English riding they have a manouever called posting. This involves moving your ass up and down in sync with the horse so that you don't get any shattered teeth.

As you can see English style is different from western style. Having read a lot of Geogette Heyer books I can guess why it is different. Basically English style riding is more suited for riding in varied terrain and woods. Because you are riding a great deal closer to the horse, so to speak, you are much more in control. Furthermore the western style saddle is very ill suited for jumping whereas the English saddle is well designed for jumping. In terrain where there are lots of natural obstacles it is very convenient to be able to jump over them. There is also the advantage that the English saddle is a great deal lighter so that the horse can travel at higher speeds for longer distances. It all makes sense, I guess. I suspect also that the English saddle is basically a more comfortable saddle.

My evidence for this is obscure. Whenever one rides for an extended period of time after having not ridden for a while one notices a certain amount of stiffness afterwards. My impression is that a long ride leaves you less stiff if you have been riding English rather than western.

The real great advantage to English style, as far as I can see, is that it is much more suited to trotting. Despite my remarks about the demerits of trotting, the trot is the best pace for covering extended distances - particularly in varied terrain.

*.... If you can ride, why are you taking lessons? ...*

So there I was, having undertaken to go riding at Helga's. This made for some problems. First of all, it had been a number of years since I had been riding, so my recollections of the various paraphernalia of riding was somewhat less than sharp. Secondly I had the disadvantage of never having had the theory of riding, so to speak. I just knew how to ride - I didn't know how to talk about it. And thirdly, I would have to ride English style which I didn't know a damn thing about.

My first few sessions were rather interesting. In some ways I became a worse rider each time I went out. The problem was that I knew well enough how to ride my way, but I didn't know how to ride the way I was supposed to be riding. As a result the first time I went out I rode western in an English saddle and got on quite well (except for that business about trotting.) It is true that I was using western style signalling but western signals can be understood by an English trained horse without any difficulty. More importantly, I was in full command of the horse, because I was accustomed to being in full command of the horse. (This is important - it is necessary at times to be firm with horses and for them to know that you will be firm and in control. You should know, of course, the difference between firmness and roughness and abuse.)

This was all very well, but I realized that when I started riding at Helga's that I would be learning English style. I had welcomed this idea on the grounds that I would be learning something new - always a useful thing to do. The next few times out I began to learn something of the elements of riding English style. I learned how to hold the reins in the approved fashion. I learned something about body signals. I learned something about sitting in the English saddle.

Now the trouble with all of this learning is that when one is learning something new, particularly something one has to learn to do on the move, one is shaky and lacking in self confidence because you aren't too sure what you are doing. It is particularly unhandy that you have to do things almost as reflex actions without thinking about them - not too easy when you aren't sure what in the hell you are doing.

As a perfectly natural result I began to lose confidence in what I was doing. Since I was trying to things "right" I was never sure whether I was confusing the horse or it was just being obstreperous. Not only that I lost my confidence in being able to tell the horse what to do. Naturally I became less able to control the horse. What's worse the horse was well able to tell this.

It was funny, in a way. In some respects I was an old experienced rider. In others I was a rank beginner. For example, I don't have any problem with staying on. I may have problems sitting "correctly" but my sense of balance on a horse is so ingrained that merely trying to learn an unfamiliar style of riding is not going to affect. Similarly I have no real worries about emergencies - I may be trying to learn new reflexes which are still shaky, but the old reflexes are still there, ready to take over when needed, and I have every confidence in them. In a sense it is as though I am playing a game of make-believe. For the purposes at hand, I was a rank beginner and played the game that way. However, if necessary, I could stop the game and take control if the horse got too out of hand. (I should qualify that - I couldn't bring the horse to a closely controlled gait; that wasn't part of the style of riding that I learned. However I wouldn't have felt particularly upset about bringing a runaway horse under control.)

At this point in time I feel a good deal more confident. I expect that my style is still abominable. (*Riding English with a strong western accent and a stutter?*) But I'm familiar with the gear and I have a much better notion of what it is I am supposed to be doing and what the horse is supposed to be doing. I now have enough feeling for what I am supposed to be doing so that I can do it without painful thinking, even if I am not doing it right.

Since it is basically Leslie's fault that I got involved with riding, I expect I should say something about how she rides. Basically Leslie much better than I do, and worse than I do. She rides much better than I do because she has been riding English style for years and has never had anything to unlearn. She rides worse, because she didn't learn to ride as a kid and doesn't have an ingrained sense of the horse.

As I say she rides a lot better than I do. She knows a lot more about signals and stuff like that and does them better. She can post automatically and with ease - something I can manage only in a half assed fashion. She knows how to jump - something that remains a mystery to me. *(On the trail a couple of times Sugarfoot jumped something, but that was strictly a matter of the horse knowing what it was doing and me being along for the ride.)* It is easy for someone who has never ridden English style to underestimate how demanding it is.

As most everybody knows who is reading this, Leslie took a bad fall a few weeks ago. In one respect it wasn't her fault at all. The horse unexpectedly bucked and she got thrown. This is the sort of fall that could happen to almost anybody. On the other hand she does have two disadvantages in staying on a horse. First of all she is short. This means she can't get her legs as far around the horse as someone taller. Secondly, and more importantly, she didn't learn to ride until she was an adult. Once you are an adult it is much harder to learn something that requires balance and physical coordination, particularly if you haven't got superb balance and coordination to begin. Part of the trick of riding is simply to automatically maintain your balance on the horse. It is especially important when something unexpected happens because you need to be able to maintain your balance automatically while you are dealing with the unexpected. This seems to be her worst problem, but I expect that it will go away with time. There is nothing that says that you can't learn as an adult - it just takes a little longer.

.... When and where ....

Nominally we go riding three times a week, although with weather and such it is more like once or twice a week. On tuesdays and thursdays we ride for about an hour to an hour and a half in the ring in the evening. Most of this time is spent doing close control work at a walk or a trot. Sunday mornings are spent trail riding through various local woods. This is done at a mixture of walking, trotting, and cantering (a canter is sort of a slow gallop.) To be honest, trail riding is more fun. You are out riding just for the hell of it. The ring work, however, is probably more profitable because both you and the horse are engaged in learning something.

Since I have started up riding I haven't gone riding anywhere else except at Helga's, with one exception. After LACon while I was visiting Lynn she and I and her two kids went riding at a local stables one afternoon.

Besides riding at Helga's, Leslie occasionally goes riding with Fred. I have never seen Fred ride. I gather that he learned to ride in military school and rides quite well, although strictly western.

.... Why? ....

For the Hell of it. I like to ride. Why in the Hell not?



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The shadows crawl out of the night and the howl of wolves whispers at my ear. The Emperor's troops lie dead in the park, their bright red uniforms good now only for costuming the indecency of the naked dead. The stars look down, specks of light spattered against the warm dark sky. But the night is no longer a friend.

My knife is stained with still wet blood, and I wipe it off, for I'll need it for the night ahead. The stones on the left there, jumbled marble slabs, are not gravestones, which makes it worse. The trees do not move and that is bad. The water in the brook is only water and that is worse still.

On my breast I wear an emblem, cast in iron. I wore it as a child before I has the misfortune to be happy. I wear it now but it has no merit other than it once saved my life. For as little as that I walk in fear in the night.

Before me, on a bench, sit two lovers. For them the night has no horror: to them the night is filled with peace and the quiet joyous excitement of being in love. And I had thought the Gods were kind.

The wind is rising. The branches are starting to rustle and the shadows flicker. The gravel crunches under my feet as I hurry along.

- prelude to A Night in Utopia -

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The Jandivar were returning. They still wore their cloaks, their armor of light, but they didn't have the brilliance, the aura anymore. The glory was gone. The Quest had failed. They slouched in their saddles, immensely tired, and the heads of their horses hung low. They plodded across the great plain. In a long tired file. The sun hung eternally low on the horizon, its color dull red, as if to announce that its power too had failed.

Six centuries they had set out, with the shouts of glory at their back, their banners high, their horses prancing. And now a handful, ten and one, returned. And all the bright beginning had become a tired end.

It hadn't been the Raum. The Raum-King lay dead many leagues behind. He would raid no more. Nor had it been the hairy things, the man-beasts, of whom they'd heard afar. Those they'd seen and fought and beaten. Four score they lost in the March of Mair to the Codyn beasts and three score more in the iron wood to the darts of the burning elves. Gorcil, their leader, they had lost to the Grakken bird on the plain of Istal. One by one, score by score, they fell in foreign lands. And they who still kept on held their heads on high. Not yet did their armor dim. Not yet did their banners fall. Till, at last, in the endless quest, they reached the wall.

Not really a wall, but a fog, a blank grey fog that put an end to all beforeness. And graven on a stone at the very edge of the fog were the words "Go home, your quest has failed." It was then that the glory died, the spirit fell. The quest had failed, and as failed the quest, so failed the Jandivar. And now the ten and one returned to Jandar. But Jandar, city of the Jandivar, was no more.

## *A Short essay on God and Four sided Triangles.*

One of the problems that exercised theologians during the middle ages was the question of whether God could envision or, indeed, make a four sided triangle or a three sided square or some such monstrosity. At first sight the problem seems trivial or foolish, but it is really an instance of a more fundamental problem: Is God bound and limited by the laws of reason and logic or can She overcome them or alter them as She chooses. On one hand God is omnipotent: She may do anything She pleases, logic and reason notwithstanding. On the other hand it seems inconceivable that anyone, even God Herself, can maintain that  $1=2$ .

At first sight it would seem that there is no theological problem here. It is a well founded principle of theology that revelation is superior to reason; that God may work miracles if She so chooses; that the universe is an artifact of Hers, that She may alter without regard to its internal logic or laws. The trouble is that logic and reason, truth and beauty, are not in the universe, per se. That is, there is no thing that is truth, no object that is reason. They are absolutes, ideals, outside the universe, affecting and shaping the character of the universe but unaffected by it. In fact, their existential character is much like that of God Herself, and it is widely held that these ideals are aspects of God. And that is the crux of the problem; for if God is Truth and Truth is God then how could God conceive of that which is not truth. On the other hand, it is held that God is omnipotent and therefore may do as She chooses, including thinking untruths. So, you see, the four sided triangle is an aspect of a fundamental theological problem.

Now it seems to me that the answer must be in the affirmative; that God can make four sided triangle if She so chooses. My answer is based on the observation that it is in fact possible to conceive of four sided triangles and defend their existence. I suspect that She has chosen not to do so, but I argue that it is within Her powers. Let us consider for a moment a conversation between those two redoubtable and hoary combatants Sage and Simp:

Sage: Greetings Simplicitus. See thou the line figure I have inscribed in the sand. I have been musing on for an hour or more.

Simp: I see it, oh Sage. But to tell the truth I know not what to make of it, for it seemeth to be a shaky and irregular circle. What is it supposed to be?

Sage: Alas, my infirmities grow, and my hand is palsied with age, so the drawing is somewhat irregular. It is a representation of a geometrical figure. As you know matter and man are corruptible whereas the content of geometry is incorruptible. So it is that this figure falls of good form whereas that which it represents is clear and true.

Simp: So I understand, oh Sage. But I remain puzzled; what form is it that your line represents?

Sage: Why, it is a four sided triangle.

Simp: I am not sure I heard you rightly, oh Sage. You speak of a four sided triangle whereas it is well known that triangles possess three and only three sides. I have heard it argued that God may conceive of such a thing even though it is not possible; but such a thing is surely beyond man.

Sage: So have I understood. You may appreciate my amazement at realizing that such a construction was possible and that its conception was within the powers of a man's mind.

Simp: But sire I find this incomprehensible. I cannot not conceive of such a thing. Nor, if it were possible, do I see it implemented in this line which I say only as a rather shapeless form.

Sage: Well then, let me make things clear. Let me poke three holes in the sand to represent the three vertices. You see.

Simp: Why yes, I see. There are now three points in the line which are the vertices of the three angles.

Sage: Well then. Joining each pair of vertices is a line which we shall call the side of a triangle. Now we count these sides and we see that there are four of them.

Simp: But sire, surely you jest. They are readily counted and there are but three of them. Let me make it clear. You agree that I am holding up three fingers.

Sage: With those reservations well known to philosophers everywhere concerning sensory perception, yes, I agree.

Simp: Well then, sire, I place one of each of these fingers one a line, thusly. Now would you not say that for each finger there is a line and vice versa?

Sage: Why yes, I would say that.

Simp: Why then, as there are three fingers, and there is one line for each finger, there must be three lines.

Sage: Why no, Simplicitus, I sorrow to see your error. Thou hast three fingers pointing at four lines.

Simp: But sire, did thou not say that there were as many fingers as there were lines?

Sage: Why yes, I agreed to that.

Simp: Well then, it would seem that thou art maintaining that three is the same as four.

Sage: Oh no, I would never maintain that. The difference between three and four is clear and self evident - no one would dispute that.

I think we can leave them here. It is clear that their dispute can go on indefinitely. Sage is going to say, in one way or another, that three and four are the same. Simp is going to catch him at his trick and point out that he is, in effect, saying that three and four are the same. Sage is going to deny that he is saying any such thing. Simp is going to go back and ask what he did say if wasn't saying that three and four are the same. Sage is going to assert the same thing again in a different form. Round the mulberry bush they go again. Simp can never establish that Sage is being inconsistent because Sage always changes his position to avoid the immediate inconsistency while retaining the basic inconsistency by returning to it whenever he gets the chance.



Sage's rather heavy handed little game with Simplicitus is based on a principle well known to mathematicians: It is perfectly possible to be consistent within a formally inconsistent system provided you never carry inconsistent lines of reasoning to the point of inconsistency. This is done in the foundations of Mathematics where traditional Mathematics, which is consistent but not totally rigorous, is based on Set theory, which is rigorous and inconsistent.

Now it is presumed, at least by Mathematicians, that Mathematicians know what they are doing when they are skirting the edge of inconsistency. However we have many instances of people who engage in inconsistent conceptual frames and thinking and don't know what they are doing. Such people are called psychotics, or, sometimes, politicians.

Now surely God, if she chose to, could engage in such modes of thought if She wished. However She would have great advantages for She could shape the Universe to Her will. Not only could She create a formally inconsistent Universe but She could also rig things so that the thinking beings in Her Universe could not detect it.

For all we know that's exactly what She did. Maybe triangles "really" do have four sides and we have been tricked into incorrectly perceiving them as having three sides. Certainly we would have no way of ever knowing. I kind of like to think that She did. To me it seems like the sort of trick that a God that could create a Universe having theologians and politicians would pull.

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*Book Review Corner by Nathan Childers:*

The Day the Dinosaurs Ate Lower Manhattan and Shit Petunias All Over New Jersey.  
Wilhelm Scheiskopf, Burning Cross Publications, NY, \$19.84

It would be nice to welcome Burning Cross Publications to the list of publishers carrying a line of Science Fiction. However it will be utterly impossible to do so if this monstrosity is going to be representative of their line. Many years ago L. Sprague de Camp wrote a manual on writing SF. This book might well serve as a manual on how not to write it.

One should not object that the plot is absurd; many excellent stories have absurd plots. One should not object that it is incomprehensible; some excellent stories have had incomprehensible plots. But the combination of a trite 1930's pulp plot with psychedelic trappings and fourteen pages of calculus should be beyond the pale.

Weak as the plot is, it is sterling when compared with the characterization. Bad as the characterization is, it shines compared to the dialogue. Many stories have cardboard characters and wooden dialogue; this has cardboard dialogue and toilet paper characters. In summary I would definitely say that this is one of the worst Science Fiction stories ever written, totally without redeeming value, either social or anti-social, an utter bomb that will disgust any one with the slightest appreciation of the English language.

Recommended.

## SPECIAL FAANISH EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

It seems, these days, to be almost obligatory to have lot's of fannish or even faanish material in fanzines. Being a moral coward bowing to the dictates of righteous convention, I can do no other than include some of the same.

In the tradition of fannishness the following material will be off the top of my head. In case that isn't the tradition it will be off the top of my head anyway. Now let's see, what should we talk about. The staples of fannish controversy are cons, hugoes, faanishness vs sercon, some occasional esoteric bit of SF, personalities, and assorted miscellaneous. I haven't quite noticed what this years great burning topic is; I shan't mind if someone informs me but I hope they won't feel bad if I don't get terribly excited about it.

I expect that the current game in town is Linda Bushyager's editorial in a recent (at this writing, latest, but Ghu knows when you will see this) Granfalloon in which she writhes with Idealism betrayed.

The root of the problem is money. There is not enough money in fannish activities to be profitable; however, there is enough in some areas to remove it from the petty cash category. Let me give a for instance. Conventions, particularly worldcons and large regionals generate reasonably large cash flows. They do not, however, generate cash flows sufficiently large to recompense those persons putting in the work on them - no way. *(For some reason people who get uptight about these things have a totally unrealistic view of money.)* I seriously doubt that one hundred thousand dollars gross would be adequate to finance a worldcon if the people putting in the work were paid at current labor rates - In fact, I suspect that a gross of a quarter of a million would be closer to the mark. All of which is totally unrealistic.

The problem is that twenty, thirty thousand comes in and goes and a similar amount goes out. Unfortunately there may be a profit of maybe one or two thousand dollars and that is very embarrassing. No individual has a real claim on it - why should he get it when everybody else was working for nothing. But you do have this money on hand you have to do something with it. There are two customary solutions. The first is that it somehow disappears; the second is that something "worthwhile" is done with it. The usual solution is a mixture of the two. I can't really feel very badly about the former solution - at least, I can't if it doesn't get too far out of hand. The whole situation is one of those where an ounce of hypocrisy is worth a pound of moral anguish. It is highly desirable that Fandom adhere to the fannish non-profit idealism because it is necessary to fandom that it operate that way. For that reason it is desirable that nobody officially profit off of cons for his own pocket and that people be sniped at when they do. However the system will work best if someone every once in a while skims off the profits without telling anyone. The best part of this is it is never one person; several people will be in the know and the resulting quarrel between thieves will fuel the rumor mills for years. This is even more desirable because it will provide fanzine editors with an indefinite amount of material and everyone knows that fanzines are the backbone of fandom.

So much for naked cynicism. NESFA got involved with a hassle with Bjo recently which you probably know about. Most of the hassle is assorted flap-doodle, but one part of it I think is a bunch of crap. I speak of Bjo's detailed accusations of this and that against one Don Davis. Without commenting



on the merits of her accusations I think it is fundamentally a very shabby thing on her part to make detailed accusations of misbehaviour against someone in print in a forum in which they can not reply, and then pass the blame for doing this on someone else.

More fannish flapdoodle. It seems to be the thing these days to lust after a fan Hugo with a naked open lust or to decry such a tendency in someone else. Now it occurs to me that if I juggle things a bit I should be eligible for a Hugo. As I recall the rules say that you have to have put out one issue in the year in question and at least four issues total. I also seem to recall that your zine must be generally available. These rules make things a bit sticky but I am sure we can get around them with a little bit of ingenuity. The four issue thing is a bit of a problem because I am sure as hell not going to get out four issues in the remainder of the year. Aha! I can get around that by putting out three one page issues after this one - after all the rules don't say anything about how big these issues have to be, only that there are four of them.

The generally available thing is a bit more of a problem because I don't really intend for this to be generally available - I have no desire to get into the hassles of circulation. However I think we can stretch things a bit. In the first editorial I announced subscription rates so that part is taken care of. Generally available is usually taken to mean that a zine is available for trade, contributions, loc's, and subscriptions. Well it is available for trade with qualified fanzines, and for qualified contributions and loc's (a trade, etc, qualifies you for a copy if you get one.)

I feel, therefore, that this zine will be eligible for a Hugo in 1974 and deserves your support. I realize that mere eligibility will not get me a rocket on the mantle so I expect that I will have to bring out a monster issue in March with all sorts of graphics and learned articles and faanish humor and other good stuff. God, for a Hugo I might even sell out and put in a book review!

COME ON. GIVE ME A HUGO. I WANT ONE.

So much for the fannish bad taste department. Let's see; who else can I insult or upset. There is a movement about to nominate the LACon final report for the best short fiction Hugo in 1973. The major objection that I have heard is that it doesn't qualify on the grounds of literary quality. However this test has not been applied uniformly in the past; I don't see why it should be applied in a discriminatory fashion now. What I say is let people vote their consciences and let the chips fall where they may and damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead.

Locus is a rather dull and boring fanzine; it is much better than the fanzines published by its critics.

Noreascon was not nearly as good as the people who put it on thought it was, but nobody tell them for another three years and maybe they will be over it by then.

Torcon makes LACon look very good. Discon II will make Torcon look very good. Go to Australia in 1975. Don't come back. Vote no award for 1976. Gafiate before 1977 - beat the rush.

So much for the fannish ~~taboo~~ editorial department.



## ANOTHER EDITORIAL OR POSSIBLY MUSINGS OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT

Since I expect to live off the letters that come in I suppose that I should give people a clue as to what to write about. (I do expect to live off the letters you know - do you realize how much work it is to keep turning out miscellaneous crap without some assistance from your readers.) I guess I will toss out a list of topics or interests that will stir a response on my part: Chess, bridge, and go. Mathematics, programming, logic, philosophy, and scholastic theology. Psychology, psychiatry, and mysticism. Drama. Horses. Food and places to eat. Wine, particularly German whites. SF. Fannish politics. Fanzines. Poetry. Politics, economics, and sociology. Borges and Tolkien. Artificial Intelligence. Georgette Heyer. Childrens fantasy. Jurgen. Fishing. New England woods. Cattle ranching. Music, maybe. Asterix. Emma Lathen. Scientific games and puzzles. The stock market. Desperados in the old west and the vigilante movement. And so on and so forth.

I will probably not respond to comments about tarot cards, astrology, and the occult. I am distinctly unexcited by the new wave. I am not prepared to discuss music in any depth. I am not partial to the various movements and liberation groups but I may discuss them a little bit. And so on and so forth.

\*\*\*\*\* Whatever happened to Arnie Katz? \*\*\*\*\*

PERSONAL NOTES: Since some people who will be reading this don't know me particularly well and since many people who do know me well really don't know that much about me I thought I would toss in a capsule autobiography.

I was born on a cattle ranch/farm in South Dakota, and spent the first seventeen years of my life there. I spent a year and a half at the South Dakota School of Mines learning bridge, poker, and chess. I left at their request. I then joined the Marine Corps, became a radar technician, and spent most of my time in California and North Carolina with three months in Panama. I got out, came to Boston, and got a job as an electronics technician for Raytheon. I worked there for a year, and then went down to the Bahamas where I was a radar technician on the Atlantic missile test range. I spent a year there and accumulated enough money playing poker so that I could go to college. I came back to South Dakota and went to college in Brookings, SD for two and a half years. I then quit one quarter short of graduation and came out to Boston and got a job as a programmer which I worked at for about two and a half years. I quit that job and went back out to Brookings and finished off my degree. I came back to Boston and have held Math Analyst/Scientific programmer jobs ever since except for the period when I was working on a doctorate in math which I did not complete.

While I was in college I was quite heavily into drama, particularly melodrama (I did a summer of summer stock melodrama.) I majored in Math and minored in Physics. I was into Zen Bhuddism a bit.

I have read SF since somewhere around the age of twelve. I letter hacked for a while before I joined the Marine Corps and then lost contact fandom completely for several years. I picked it up indirectly by joining MITSFS and got reinvolved with fandom along with the rest of the MITSFS crowd in the middle sixties. I've read SF consistently all my life but I've never been a collector. Sometime before I joined the Marine Corps I took a shot at being a writer but I never sold anything.

Hmm. I've read over what is in this thing so far and it seems sort of silly. Oh well, it's not too bad, and it may amuse people or something. That biographical sketch really doesn't say much, but it will do for now. For those who are interested I am heterosexual, single and never married, have no children to speak of, and have been told that I am good in bed. I do not, however, plan to discuss my sex life in detail in this or any other fanzine.

Speaking of odds and ends (i.e. gambling and sex) I have started a small project of commissioning paintings illustrating The Son of the Tree by Jack Vance. I expect to build a small topical collection over the next few years. If you are an artist and are interested or if you know an artist who is interested you might get in touch with me if I haven't gotten in touch with you. I am somewhat reluctant to mention this in print because it is the sort of thing that *could start something*.

The last page of this will be a checklist of why you got this. This will definitely not be a regular feature of the zine. However I expect there will be a shakedown period while the distribution list gets settled. Right now the first issue will go to a number of people who may or may not be interested. The checklist is to let people know whether they can expect further copies without any action on their part. It will not be a part of future issues since I don't want to go through individually marking copies.

Final randomneses: One of my closest friends is getting married. (This is not an unusual occurrence, but read on. Actually it is unusual when my close friends get married but it is not unusual in its own right that people get married.) The wedding will have several unusual features. To begin with the marriage will be held as part of a Saturday night party. Secondly the minister is an Episcopal priest who works for a local police department that they met at a pot party. Thirdly it is to be clearly understood that there are to be no wedding presents or any thing like that. Technically the honeymoon will be that she and her new husband and I will drive out to South Dakota for a long weekend to visit my mother. All of this makes much more sense when you know everybody involved and the circumstances but it is much more amusing not to explain them.

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*The gambler sits at cards all night  
And quits his game by morning light  
When his mind by sleep is dimmed  
He dreams of suckers he has trimmed*

*To that man that game is life  
Child and home, parent and wife  
When his backward day is done  
He reckons life by what he's won*

The above is more than just doggeral. It is a fairly accurate and concise description of the life and psychology of the gambling hustler. It will also serve as a short explanation of why I have never really been tempted to make my living playing poker.

## WHY YOU GOT THIS DEPARTMENT

☐ I thought you might be interested. However I probably won't send you future issues unless you send a postcard or something telling me that you wish to continue receiving it.

☐ I thought you might be interested. I will continue to send you copies even though you don't respond. However I may drop you off the mailing list at some future point.

☒ You will continue to get copies of this zine indefinitely unless you let me know that you don't wish to get it.

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General Note: This is not an official NESFA publication and is not connected with NESFA in anyway except for the fact that I am a member of NESFA. Commentary herein does not represent official NESFA policy.

It should also be noted that this zine has no connection with the Proper Boskonian which is the official clubzine of NESFA.

