

# PERSONAL NOTES

.....

This is PERSONAL NOTES #5, a personalzine published by Richard Harter, 5 Chauncy St. #2, Cambridge MA 02138. Due to some incredible oversight it has not been nominated for anything. No doubt this is an oversight or perhaps laziness on the part of my many devoted readers, so get out there and nominate it and vote for it. Copies are available at the whim of the editor which translates into the usual for the most part. NEW SUBSCRIPTION POLICY: My old subscription rates were \$10 for one issue, \$5 for two issues, and \$3.33 for three issues. At these rates I got subscribers. Sniff! The new rates are the same moneywise, but they cover how many issues of PERSONAL NOTES you are going to send me.

.....

EDITORIAL COMMENT AND LIKE THAT: It has been nine months or so since the last issue. A gap of many months in publishing a fanzine of many many months is usually an ominous sign that the end is nigh - that the initial burst of enthusiasm has burnt out and that an issue is being dragged out, not out of interest, but of a weary desire to try continue what one has started. It is usually followed by a long loud silence. It is possible, of course, that the gap is merely the result of someone's trying to piece together a really superlative issue, and that it is a consequence of the necessary time and labor. Unless it is Algol, however, you had probably better not count on seeing the zine in question again.

Alright, you say, so cut the B.S. Are you trying to tell us in a polite way that you're folding the zine? Well, no, says I, I'm not. As it happened I just figured that I ought to start out by saying something about why the zine was late (not that a scheduleless zine needs any apologies for its schedule.) And when I sat down to write something about that, the symptomology popped into my head and I said something about it.

The real reason this zine is late is that I am lazy. I disguise this by talking about how busy I have been, and how my personal, business, and social life has been rather hectic. However, the truth is that I am lazy.

I am also a person of fits and starts. I will get intensely interested in something and work very hard on it for a while. And then the energy fades away and it all disappears into the morass of other interests and hobbies that are quietly gathering dust in the junkheap of my mind, waiting to be resurrected.



DISCON  
FREAK  
OUT...

REPORT OR DEPLETED GENE  
FOOLSON PARADE

1

GOOD GOD! ITS FANNNN CITY!



OH ITS  
SCHENHERR  
AND J

SUE,  
ITS A FAN!  
ITS EYES  
DONT  
TRACK!



ITS MEET THE  
PROS

GASP



GO  
AN  
PROSPER



LE'DINNER

ARUGH  
FANS!!

FAN  
→



FANS!!!



Clark Schoenherr

ROAR!



# the Great Discon Freakout

or

THE CONNING OF RICHARD

by

Sheila Gilbert

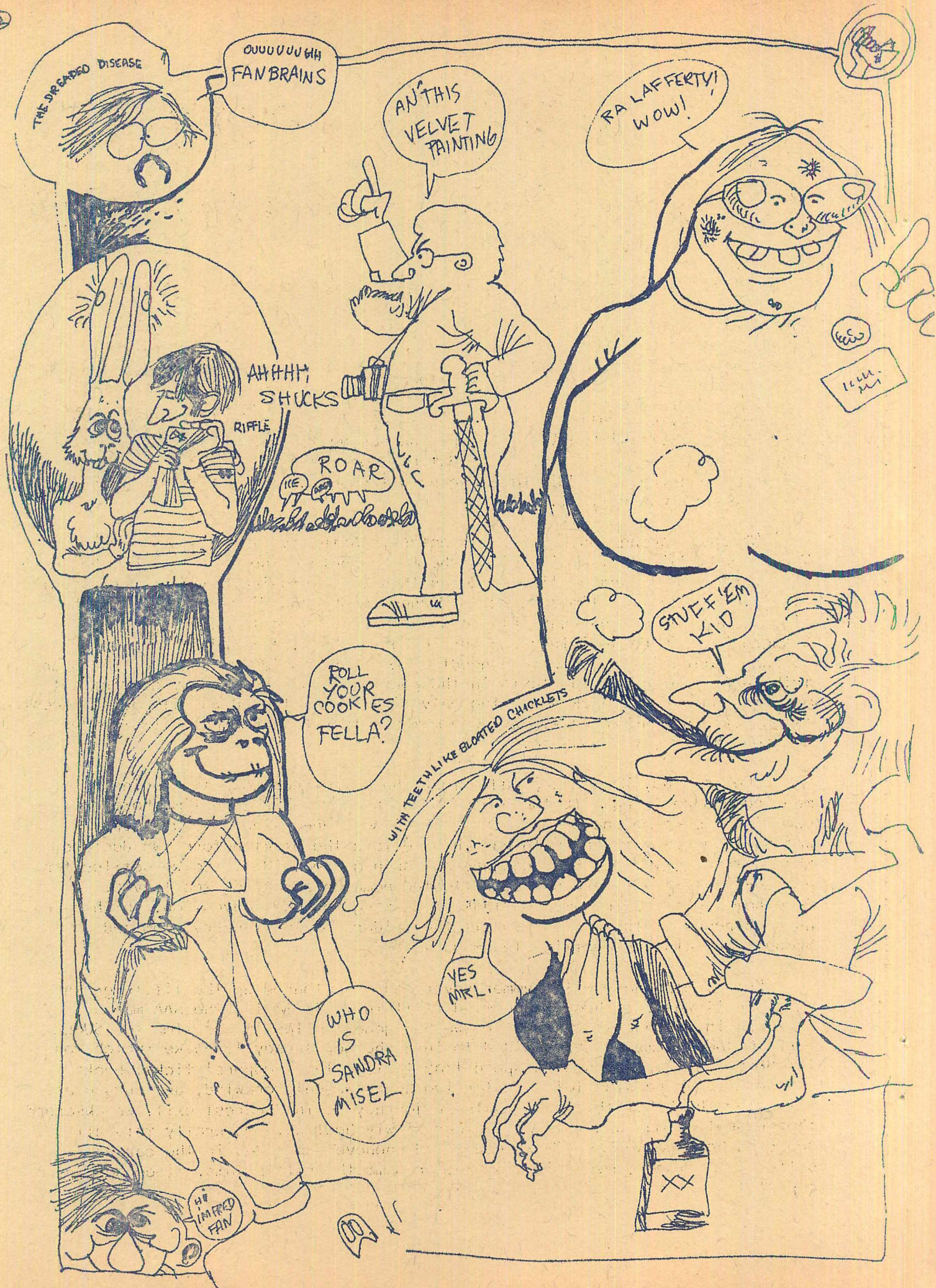
Struck by convention fever, I rushed off to the nation's shabby capitol, disguising myself with a bushy beard, and hoping to pawn off my now useless tapes on some awestruck trekkies. But no sooner had I arrived than my disguise was penetrated. "Hi, Dick!" echoed throughout the hotel lobby, and I knew the game was up .....

Whoops. Wrong con. Wrong characters. Actually it all started when Marsha and Eddie arrived in Edison the Monday before the con. As they had much they wanted to do and no time to do anything, a confusing few days were spent by all. By the time Tim arrived on Wednesday, he and Mike had just enough time to grab a bus and rush into town to join everyone for dinner at Tom's Shangra La. There we introduced our German friends, Tom and Eva Schluck, to such delicacies as chow mein noodles, New York humidity, and the trials and tribulations of capturing taxis in the pouring rain. Aside from getting wet and missing our bus back home, the only mishap we suffered was Tim being accosted as an obvious non-New Yorker by some member of an unknown sect. (No wonder he keeps his money in a shoe.)

The next day Marsha and Eddie took the Metroliner down to Washington, meeting and partying with the Schlucks on the way. Mike and Tim, however, came in to meet me and some friends for dinner and, since the weather was again unbearable and we'd had Chinese food the night before, we decided that a trip uptown for Szechuan was not such a great idea. So we settled for a five-course Japanese dinner and floated home on a raft of tea leaves. Once home we faced the awesome task of packing for the convention, which gave us a chance to introduce Tim to all the spiders in the laundry room and brought out his Lovecraftian leanings.

Friday morning - will summer never end - we loaded up the little green car, and it was off through the wilds faithfully following the AAA map clutched in our hands. But before we had gone 3 miles it was time for SUPER TRAFFIC JAM. Someone had decided to turn the New Jersey Turnpike (which, on its better days, serves as a speed trap to fill the troopers' ticket books) into a massive parking lot. So for two hours we sat, crawled, and cursed as, following the behemoth trucks on their journey to the nearest exit, we absorbed the pungent aromas and watched the car slowly heat up. Naturally this all occurred because we had Tim with us, and whenever he rides in the car we suffer from floods, mysterious smoke, or mammoth traffic jams. (See Noreascon report.)







Meanwhile, at the convention ..... A fuming friend named Susan sits in the lobby brooding over our only too obvious absence and the fact that she may not only have to sit there all day, risking being accosted by propellor beanies in all their youthful fervor (*which were actually there - M.G.*) but that Tom and Pete, her so-called protectors from such a fate, have deserted her ..... A shiny-foreheaded fellow in a bushy beard is having second thoughts about coming to Washington. Who knows, perhaps he will be beaten to pulp with ten cent comic books???

But, as all trips must, our cheery car ride comes to an end, and we have only gotten mildly lost three times and arrived several hours late with a solid meal of popcorn, stale cheese crackers and ice tea under our belts. Once we find a garage to park in, we set out to find something even better hidden - the hotel lobby! Following careless directions, losing one dragon wing in the process, and rescuing Tim from lots of groping hands, we reach the lobby where we find: Susan, deserted by her friends; no bearded man skulking in the shadows; and, most important, no line at the desk. We grab Tim, who will have to register as Howard C. Green (that knave who promised faithfully to come and then temporarily disappeared from the face of Boston) and proceed with the complicated business of checking in. I'm still not sure whether the hotel or we got the better of that deal. However, paying up and grabbing Sue, we head off to find our room. This is not as easy as it sounds since in our section of the hotel the lobby is on the ninth floor and there are any number of peculiarly coded corridors. But he who seeks eventually finds, and dumping our things and implanting the room location in our memory banks, we set off to find the art show room and Sue's friends, Tom and Pete. The art show was big and confused, to say the least. But, after hiring a guide, we found our way to where Mike's artwork was hung. (From what we later heard, other people never knew it was there.) The less said about the art show, the better, though there was some nice stuff there and it's a shame that more people weren't aware of the Powers and Bonestell exhibits.

Anyway, having disposed of the dioramas and stained glass windows we had brought, we checked the huckster room for Tom and Pete, our two Wisconsinite science fiction fans who were bravely coming to their first and probably last worldcon. Then, having acquired the rest of our party, we went to collect the their luggage and Sue's needlepoint Day of the Ness pillow. Back at the hotel once more, we ran into Marsha for the first time and got commandeered to attend the "meet the pro's" party, which consisted of lots of near-sighted people milling aimlessly around trying to read the name tags of anyone with a hat on his head. In the midst of all of this Mike got asked if he was the Michael Gilbert who wrote those mystery stories and was also introduced to another Mike Gilbert, who apparently was not the mystery writer either. We did manage to enjoy the free drinks and spend a few minutes with Eddie (on the liquor line). Then we decide that the best thing we could do was to get some foo. And that was our first mistake.

Figuring that we didn't want to face the hotel crowds or the hotel prices, we sloshed through the pouring rain to the Old Stein Pub or whatever it was called. And there we were treated to pureed cole slaw or perhaps cleverly disguised sawdust, and Sue got a special bonus - a live wasp for garnish on her sandwich. Maybe this was why the waitress avoiled us. To soothe our injured systems, we visited the handy dandy liquor store,







and picked various exotica, and some liquor also. Then back we went to the madhouse to play musical parties. It was hard enough locating the rooms that belonged to the room numbers and perhaps that was why we kept running into the people we wanted to see in the hotel lobby. I think some of them never left there. Finally it was back to the room with still no sign of Tim, so we cruelly left him to take his chances on the box spring should he ever escape from his adoring public.

Saturday dawned and already the convention was beginning to blend into one confused pattern. However, the mysterious bearded man came out of hiding and proved to be a friendly refugee from Texas, bearing a Dakota bid, party fixings, and cheery companionship. (How's that for good publicity, Dickie?) The only other really memorable thing that happened Saturday was that Sue and Tom went off to the wilds of some Washington suburb for a good dinner, the traitors! We found a nice little grocery where we bought survival rations and then we ran into not one but two Dicks. Dick Pero, the mad chemist who regaled us over a mediocre dinner with tales of mice and horrible unknown substances. I bet you'd like to know what they really do with the thermo couples! Dick Harter knows because he was there. But he won't tell, will you Dick? Pero also kept telling tales of his 190 proof homemade gin, which finally appeared on Monday night and flattened quite a few of those who were still able to stand.

After dinner, which was incredibly leisurely because, partly, of the non-existent waiter service, we drifted back to the hotel to drop off our goodies and meet Sue and Tom and Pete at the masquerade. Quel fools! We managed to get to the balcony where nothing, least of all Sue and Tom, was visible. We ended up on the mezzanine level, watching boring skit after boring skit, and getting more entertainment from seeing the poor bartender sneak off his post to see what was going on and being chased back by some ominously garbed and wratful member of the hotel upper echelon. When we couldn't take the heat anymore we retreated to the room, thinking that Sue might come there. Eventually we checked back and found that we still couldn't find them and that the masquerade was almost at an end, maybe, so back to the room again where eventually everyone showed up. Then off to the parties again; this time we saw a few more people in rooms and a few less in hallways. Mike took pictures to show to Judy Schoenherr, but he wasn't quick enough for Jack (at least most of the time.) We have some really strange pictures that people wouldn't like framed.

Anyway we somehow got through to Sunday. By then I was developing a nice cold, and Mike was becoming very hungry. Wait, Mike, today is the first decent meal! Luckily Dick Pero had been in town for a while plaguing the patent offices and delving into state secrets. (Oh, these Dicks, they can't leave government alone.) He'd had time to discover a few decent places to eat while we had only discovered places to avoid. (We don't even like to mention breakfasts and lunches.) But it was really not a bad day, because we ran into Marsha and Eddie again after not having seen them since Friday. Eddie, out of the kindness of his heart and of his wallet, took pity and fed us lunch in the hotel. I think that lunch was their insurance as they had bought tickets for the banquet, brave souls.





CLEANS UP

ER SO UMBLE HUMBLE UMBLE

AGAIN

NO WAY

I DIDN'T DRIVE 100 MILE FOR THIS

EGG ON BURNED MUFFIN

SUE

WAAH

IS THIS BETTER?

BREAKFAST, LUNCH!  
DINNER  
OF CHEESE TOSTIES

AH SHUCKS



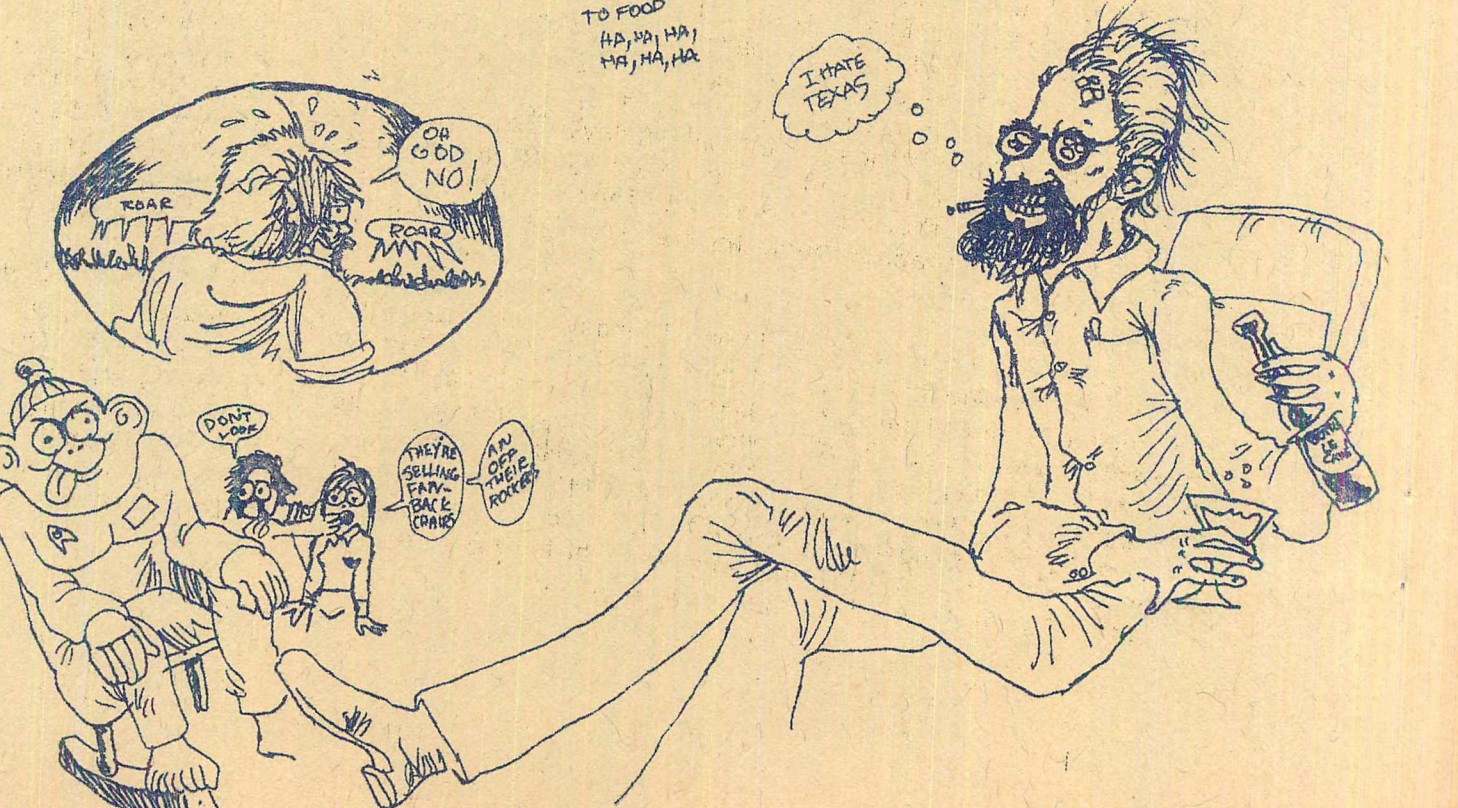
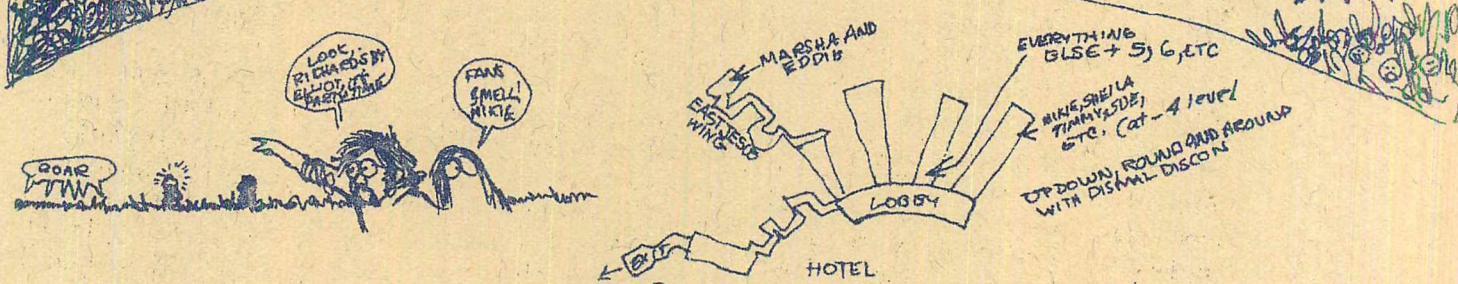
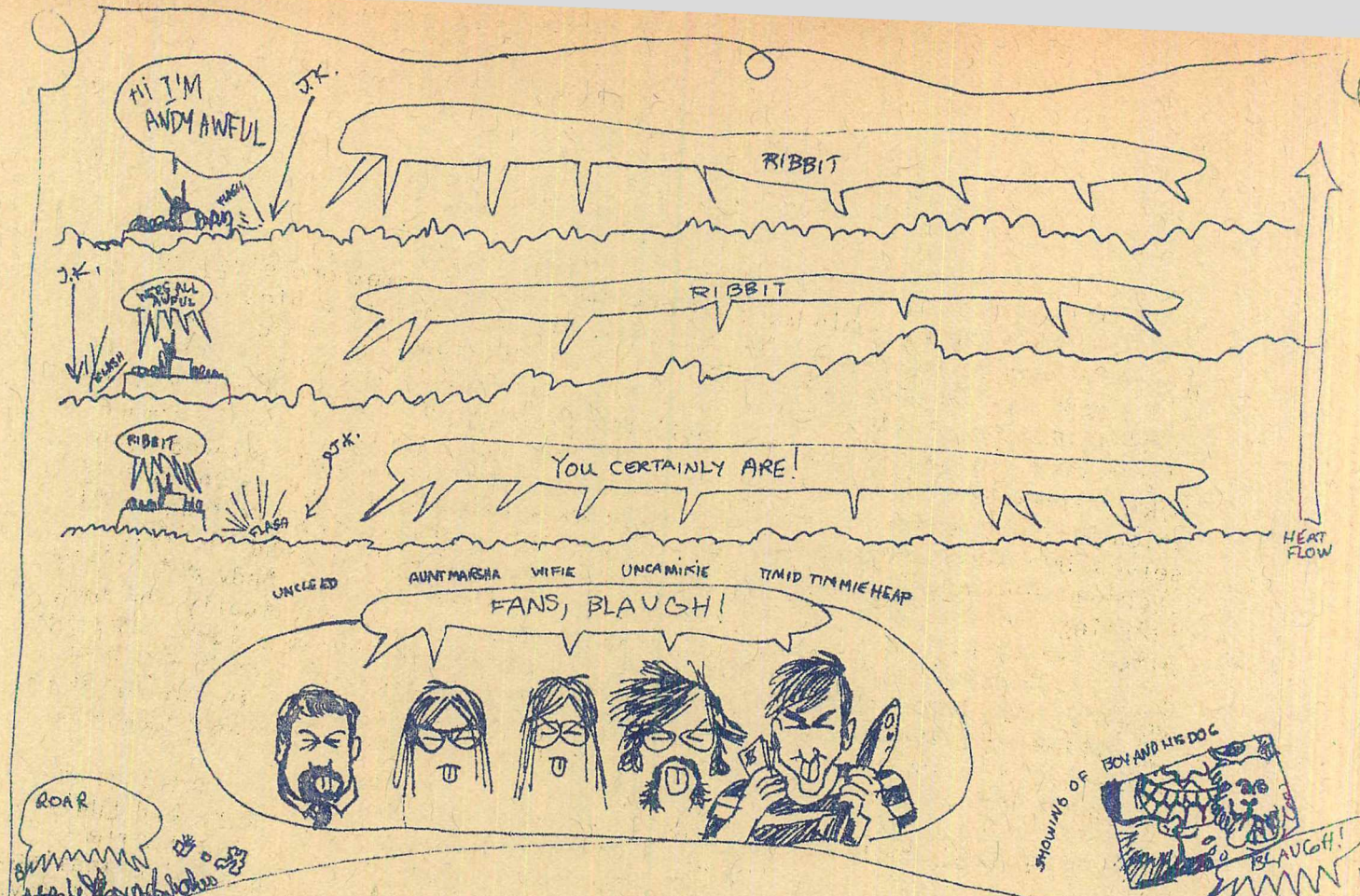
Sue and company again went off to the wilds of somewhere else and promised to meet us back at the speeches. We went off to a nice Chinese restaurant with a good Moo Shu Pork and tolerable Szechuan food. The only quibble was the service, but we were in no hurry and discovered that they didn't object if we provided essentials like napkins and water for ourselves. Making shameless pigs of ourselves, and thoroughly confusing our stomachs which were not ready to accept two real meals in one day, we enjoyed ourselves immensely, and then got a nice talky taxi driver back to the hotel. There we found that the banquet was just finishing and Andy Awful was just starting. We also found Sue and Tom and Pete and Sue's friend Vickie. After realizing how hot it was and how crowded and how long Andy was likely to go on for, we made for the sanctity of the hall, and eventually the bar, where we ran into all sorts of brilliant people with the same idea. Having fortified ourselves, we returned just in time to catch the awards and hear hisses, boos, and cheers. For a moment I thought I was back in college going to one of those freebie movies. So much for the glories of award banquets.

That night we had our own private party by virtue of the fact that we had so many people. Then we were off for the tail end of Marsha and Eddie's wine tasting party where we got a nice shot of Richard with wine bottle raised to his lips. (Now you know what really goes on at those wine tastings.) Then it was party on into the night as many people were leaving the next day.

The next morning Sue and Tom and Pete trundled off in their car to go back to cheese country and Mike took naughty pictures of Tim and his Hugos. Then everyone collected their artwork and Tim taxied off to the airport, promising faithfully to send cartoons for this report which still have not arrived. (Last chance, Tim! Send some Hallmark cards; we won't tell.) We joined Marsha and Eddie in their room which I am still convinced was in another hotel. Monday night parties were the most fun as many people had left and things were much less frantic. Leslie had a really nice party, and Richard's room was voted the coldest in the hotel. Oh yes, Oh yes, just for a change we had Chinese food on Monday, but this time there were thirteen of us (or was it 11) and the service was good. It was getting the food once it was on the table that was the problem. We still managed to stuff ourselves and stagger back to the hotel. Dick Pero's gin digested everything anyway.

And at last we made it to Tuesday. After packing rapidly we had brunch with Peggy Rae Paviat, bid goodbye to dissipated-looking Schoenherr and Gaughan, revved up our over-rested car, and set forth on the road to New Jersey and home. That's where this report ends, though our convention didn't end till we put Marsha and Eddie on their five hour delayed flight back home. But we won't bore you with Eddie's escapades at the "family party"; or introducing the Schlucks to turkey and American shopping malls, or anything else that happened in that last frantic week before we all went into hibernation till the Boskone ....







LETTERS FROM THE LOST

from

Unca Mikie

What else can I say; who else can I slander? Oh yes, they had the worst art panel in the existence of the universe, what with one chicky libber spouting high school art jargon and the other runing for congress a and not even Jack Gaughan able to save it .....

ARGH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

And the FANS, oh good Gods, slimy, limping, leering, drunk, eyes not tracking, bulging out of dresses, depleted gene pools and decidedly over-dressed as god knows planet of the cookies.....

FAAAAAAASNNNNSSSSSSSSSS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.....

Whew, I had to say that. OH, the attack of fan brains..... It was epidemic and even now come and goes like malaria ..... oh, say Pero, where;s your ethol gin Blue Ruin ??? ..... Dickie, is your party starting yet ?????? Oh, the fans are closing in ..... NO, IT'S ANDY AWFUL AND HE'S GOING TO TALK !!!

.....

The Editor regrets to say that Mr. Gilber has been hospitalized indefinitely. We understand that he is suffering from dementia praecox, Boone's Farm apple wine addiction, and a malignant case of Fan-brains. He is but a feeble shadow of himself, wandering around, feebly muttering "cute, cute" and "cookies." His friends and well wishers should send him a Hallmark get well card, in care of THE Head Beagle, Daisy Hill Puppy Farm.

It is not known what triggered Mr. Gilbert's tragic psychosis. Rumor has it that he was trampled by a thundering herd of rabbits, screaming we want Timmie. Another story has it that his mind suddenly snapped in the middle of a Ripple Wine tasting party. Whatever the cause may have been, we all wish him well, and hope that he may recover quickly and return to his brilliant career as an artist, illustrator, and spelling instructor.



# SYMES SAYS

Yep, Personal Notes is still my fave zine. Mostly for its unpretentiousness. Somehow I don't feel it's being measured against that shining platinum-leaf copy in the vault of the International Bureau of Fabulous Fannish Standards (Remember Platinum Staples?).

But, tone down the 'fannishness.' I think I've liked 'Notes' because it was unfannish, and here you are in #3, baffling me with 'faunch' - what does that mean anyhow?

Some artwork will probably end up in the envelope with this letter. Perhaps some material by Nancy King (a friend from MCA), definitely a piece by Tom Canty and myself (check the credit lines, ok) and maybe some of my stuff.

LOC Interlino: "...She was buns-up kneelin', I was wheeling and dealing..."  
-Frank Zappa, from 'Dinah Moe Humm' on Overnite Sensation

Other pick hits:

YES: 'Close to the Edge,' 'Fragile'

MOTT THE HOOPLE: 'All the Young Dudes,' 'Mott' (See 'em live, too)

STEVIE WONDER: 'Talking Book'

QUEEN: First Album

TRAFFIC: 'The Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys'

Those are all albums that are good all the way through, something very rare these days.

How about the Eggplant Subs meet the Anchovy Pizzas? "Yes, sports-fans, today the Anchovy Pizzas bested the Eggplant Subs by a mere 6 points..." "Anchovy Pizzas" rolls off my tongue as easily as Miami Dolphins (am I in Miami!?) or Houston Astros.





← yo-yo of egoboo



In your review of The Gods Hate Nebraska, were you thinking of the Frank Lloyd Wright story? Supposedly, while pregnant with FLW, Mrs. Wright boasted of his future eminence as a great architect and Blah Blah Blah. After his birth, his parents, especially his mother, worked to make sure that little FLW also thought he would become the world's greatest architect. As part of this project, Mrs. Wright purchased a revolutionary new kind of children's building blocks. All during his career old FLW constantly returned to his kiddie blocks, for relaxation and as a way of working out his theories.

That's what my teacher told me in my architecture class last spring. He also thought that the story of the first glass walled buildings would make a great Gilbert and Sullivan comedy. Some Prince had the responsibility for staging the 1850 World's Fair or Exposition in England. Various architects submitted plans, invariably for incredibly massive, expensive stone clunkers. Aside from cost, the other problem was that the quickest of the buildings, as far as construction time goes, would take at least three years.

The Prince was unhappy, but convinced that there was a 'Better Way.' Out of the blue he was approached by a gardener who suggested a steel and glass frame building, which would be constructed in less than a year and at far less expense.

Naturally, the Prince dug it, but the architects were pissed, since this gardener fellow had no training or experience and was a 'common gardener' after all.

When finished, the Fair building was very impressive. It was large, airy and sunny instead of being dark and oppressive, and parts of it also housed large plants and trees. Ingeniously, the glass was framed in wood which would expand and seal when wet, and the whole structure was assembled from modular components.

The gardener, of course, was knighted.

Tell Alphonse to keep up the typos; it's good for your image - nobody likes anyone who's perfect. It makes you more approachable.

I have finally become the Big Cheese in my apartment. (Hey, Symes - you stink!) All the people who were there when I moved in have moved out and I've imported my own hand crafted new roommates. While not exactly the apex of 'Big Cheesedom,' it does allow me to set precedents or standards for cleanliness, use of space, scheduling and other stuff. On the whole, I Have My Own Way more often.

Oh, yes, what's hurt my interest in fandom is the Army Reserve's horrid insistence that I type mimeo stencils. I type ('write' would be a gross exaggeration) and publish a quarterly 12 page zine containing pure fantasy, if not science fiction.



In it are scheduled activities like formations and inspections which may not occur, and other things like PT tests, CBR, and the 'Soldier-Citizen's Historical Heritage' classes which not only do not happen at the scheduled 0900's to 1300's, but don't happen at all.

Instead, people pretend to be working, talk endlessly about basic training (a religious experience for reservists), or hide somewhere and play cards or sleep. Yep. The battlin' 338th. Wanna trade zines?

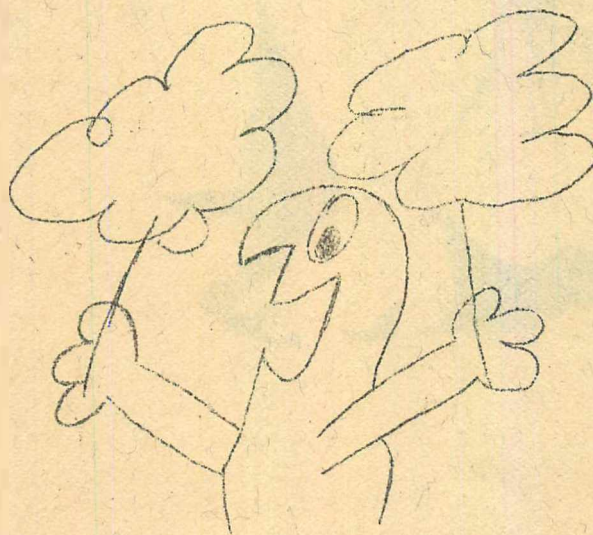
Have a big theoretical debate about whether editorial comments on letters should occur through the letter or at the end of it. People like me with truncated attention spans prefer immediate comments, although the uninterrupted ramble of the LOC, a pure art form, still has its basic appeal.

During our recent short Interregnum between Nixon and Ford, were you grossed out by the press's recent fawning attempts to preserve the 'Image' of the presidency, lest the public feel the sky was falling?

Well, the kid is through writing, so it's cartoon time.

Hope to see you soon.

Mike



ANCHOVIES!  
RAH! RAH!





Help!  
I CAN'T  
TAKE ANY  
MORE OF  
THIS SHIT  
FROM THAT  
MIMEOGRAPH  
BIRD



## MORE BY ME

I suppose I should say something about the contents of this zine. Yecchh. There, I've said it and I'm glad. The Discon report by Mike and Sheila Gilbert was an illustrated Discon report. The illustrated letter by Mike Symes was an illustrated letter by Mike Symes. The Rotsler illo was not a Rotsler illo at all. It was an illustration by Mary Cole in the style of Rotsler. If I had a table of contents and page numbers there would be a place in the art credits that said, page mumbledefritz ..... Mary Cole. Come to think of it, I ought to have some page numbers. After all, previous issues had page numbers. Very well, then, here are some page numbers: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,69,100,101,666,1024,1048576. Put them where you like.

Many of my admiring and devoted readers have sent me enthralling and learned letters. They are not doubt perusing these very pages to see where their letter is. Well it just so happens that all those letters are still sitting in the file folder marked PERSONAL NOTES and will get typed up for the next issue. Honest injun, they will. I have a contribution from Jon Inouye, which I may run. I thought I had made it clear that I wasn't really looking for unsolicited contributions.

POLICY STATEMENT: There no guarantees that material, solicited or unsolicited, will be used, returned, or acknowledged. There are no guarantees that subscriptions, letters of comment, or desperate pleas will get you anything but indigestion.

So much for policy. I am not really all that hard nosed - really I'm not. It is a simple matter of not making any promises that I might not keep.

No letters this time. Also I do not plan to write anything about the recent NESFA imbroglio. At least not in this issue, and perhaps never. Suffice it to say that I had a ring side seat for a while and chucked it. Those readers who are interested in such matters may have noted that I picked up the interrupted thread of fanzine publication almost immediately upon disentangling myself and draw whatever conclusions they see fit. Nuff said.

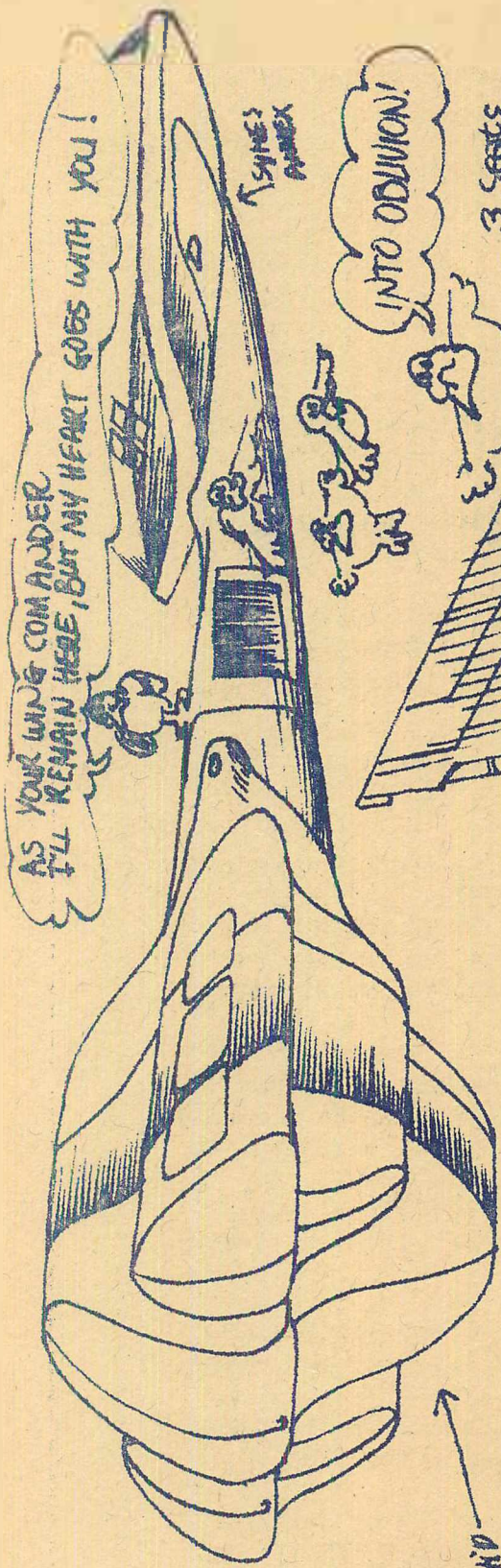
But what did happen, you ask? Why was it so long between the last PN and this one. Well I will tell you. Briefly, the pressures of work made it impossible to get out an issue at that time when I would have naturally gotten one out. As a result the whole project got shuffled down to the bottom of the queue. Any time it might have poked its head up, there was work, riding, NESFA, or, ahem, social activities. It is only just recently that I have gotten turned on to doing a lot of things that I have sort of let slide.

Once upon a time, back last winter, I conceived the idea of running off a weekly two pages of babbling. I would send this out to APA-L, accumulate a months worth for APA:NESFA, and publish them in PN. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I ran off exactly one such issue. I stuck it in this issue, mostly because I ran it off and it is in the long dormant pile of stuff to go in the zine.

I also have a Boskone report by Mikie which may appear in thish or nextish. Perhaps, all things considered, it is best to get this one out now so that I can get started on nextish. Also appearing nextish or so will be an article on the NESFA cavalry and lots of deep philosophical commentary and all sorts of good stuff.

Oh yes, Mike Symes tells me that he had to bounce all of his carefully picked roomates. There is a lesson there, somewhere.





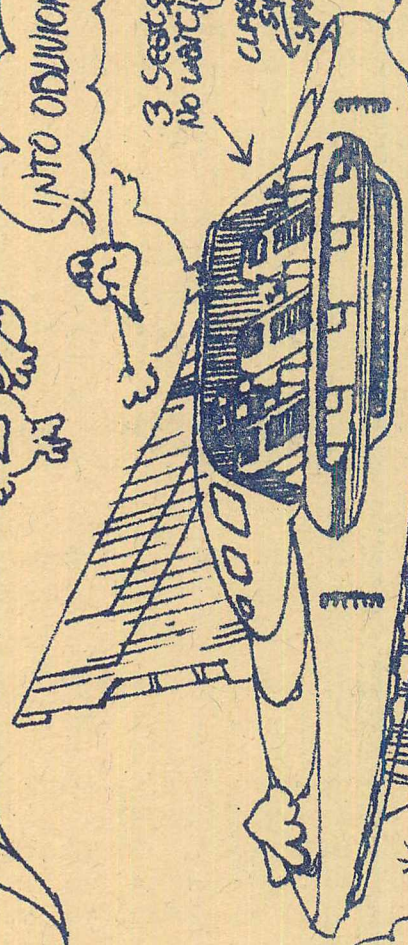
CLASHY  
CANTY  
SPACED-UP

SYNEX  
PYRAMEX

INTO OBLIVION!

3 SEATS  
NO WAITING

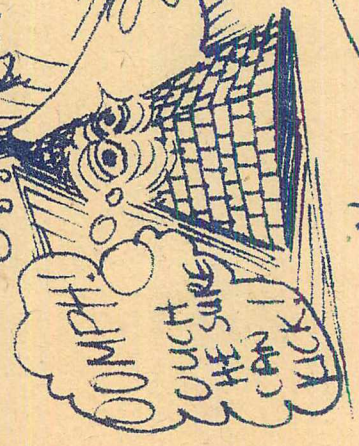
CLASHY  
SYNEX  
SPACED-UP



LOOK! THAT  
ASHOLE IS  
GONNA EAT  
THAT LITTLE  
DUCK!!  
LET'S GET EM  
BOYS

My quack  
is in danger!  
the 16 day old  
perfect quack!  
I must save him!

"KICK"



"Gurmooids  
to the rescue!"

FUCK  
YOU  
PYRIMID!

I KNOW KING-FU

CANTY/SYNEX



# Weakly Noates

Weakly Noates is published weekly by Richard Harter at 5 Chauncy St. using the NESFA G-466. It is intended to appear in Apa-L, Apa: NESFA, and Personal Notes.

\* This is in the line of an experiment. The idea is that I am going to run off enough copies for all three (L. A:N, and PN.) I plan to do two pages a week of general nattering. Each week I will send out copies to Apa-L. When A:N rolls around I will put the accumulated copies in it. And, likewise, when I bring out an issue of PN.

\* There are several reasons why I am trying this. First of all there is the fact I would like to keep up with Apa-L and I simply don't have the time. At least I don't have the time to do so if I am going to keep up on the mailing comments, read it carefully and so forth. The one day turnaround time - get it Monday, read it, turn out a zine, and mail it out Monday night - is too much of a hassle for me. At least it is right now.

\* Another reason is that I want to keep PN in hand. One of the reasons that I started it was that I sort of enjoyed the notion of a zine of general and personal nattering. This is one way to ensure that a certain level of this kind of junk remains in the zine.

\* And, of course, it is a way of maintaining my fanac level while cutting down on the actual amount of work. That, in itself, is a strong consideration. Perhaps this should be titled *The Minac Special*.

\*

In the interests of good taste the above paragraph has been deleted.

\* There are some disadvantages. It won't have any disty comments, which are the heart and soul of an APA. There will be those people who see it two or three times. Oh well.

\* Er, I suppose that I should mention that that is 5 Chauncy St. #2, Cambridge MA 02138.

\* As some, but not all, know my personal and fan life have been severely muddled by several business trips to Texas. (Two weeks before the worldcon, a two week trip in October, and a two week trip in November.) I have been working for a company in Texas for the last six months, an arrangement that is coming to an end. I had sort of been looking forward to being unemployed for a while, but it looks as though I will be working - I seem to have a couple of job offers. It's all very confused.



\* These days it seems that the only thing I do is sleep, work, and ride horses once in a while. I'm sure that can't be right but that's what it seems like.

\* Christmas, it would seem, is almost upon us. I am afraid that this year it has snuck up on me while I haven't been looking. I have been too busy and too absorbed in what I have been immediately doing to get shifted over to thinking about it. I have my suspicions that this is undesirable.

\* I haven't gotten my tree yet (as of this writing) and plan to do so tomorrow. As usual it will be a good sized tree and decorated in the usual fashion - "Oh look, there's a twig, put a gaudy ornament on it." However I decided to skip the annual tree trimming party, mostly because I want to do one all by myself one time. I have the feeling that a Christmas tree is, er, a work of art, gaudy and baroque, to be sure, but a work of art.

\* A Christmas tree should be a "Childs garden of Christmas."

\* My mother's dog recently suffered a most mysterious ailment. It was eating normally, drinking a lot of water, urinating a lot (but normally), and had no bowel movements at all - none whatsoever. She took it to a nearby animal hospital (nearby in So. Dakota is 60 miles) where they looked puzzled, scratched their heads, and finally did exploratory surgery. They found no tumors, no intestinal obstruction, and no feces - none.

\* The dog finally started shitting again. They don't know why it stopped and they don't know why it started again. Stuff went in one end and nothing came out the other. They're still scratching their heads over where it all went. I dunno, it's a peculiar world.

\* In a recent issue of the National Review (Bill Buckley's left wing rag) there was an article condemning the theory that Christianity provided the world view for the exploitation of nature that has led to our ecological troubles. (Yecchh, such a sentence.) The theory alleges (a) that the monotheistic worldview was a prerequisite for the development of science, (b) that Christianity put man first in the world whereas other philosophies viewed him as being part of nature, (c) that, in the Christian viewpoint, the world was his to exploit as he would, etc.

\* I rather have to agree with NR this time around. Given the Church's centuries long opposition to free thought and intellectual inquiry it seems rather unfair to blame it for Science, even behind its back. (*Besides, J. W. Campbell advocated the Science-Monotheism connection in one of his editorials. This is presumptive evidence that the idea is sheer flapdoodle.*)

\* And it must be observed that the slapdash drive to exploit nature comes from people's drive to improve their physical well being - a matter that has never been of more than minimal concern to the Church.

\* Ted White and Jerry Pournelle have this in common - they are both illustrious fugheads. (*To be precise, I consider them to be fugheads - I expect that there are at least two people who disagree with me.*) Each, however, has a redeeming virtue. Ted's is that he is a lovely fan writer who is interesting and often a great deal of fun to read. And Jerry's is that he is marvelous science writer. I have started reading *Galaxy* again simply for his column. Whatever his faults, God bless him for that.



As a fanzine this issue definitely violates most of the sacred canons. That's not particularly important. However the material in it so far doesn't really match up to what the zine is supposed to be. Actually it isn't that there is anything wrong with the material, which, afterall, is rather nice, but that there is very little personal presence, which is the sine qua non of a personal zine, or, at least, this personal zine. Ergo I am tossing in a couple of more pages.

.....

One of the few things that I have been becoming more aware of recently is my innate superiority over much of the rest of the human race. My evidence for this is that I have observed a restless arrogant egotism in many of my fellows whereas I have observed only a creditworthy and unassuming modesty in myself.

.....

I have recently been reading and rereading *The Mote in God's Eye*. It is both infuriating and fascinating. It is infuriating because there are so many sections that are so bad and unnecessary, so utterly boring. One is tempted to attribute all that is bad to Pournelle and all that is good to Niven. This is probably incorrect and unjust. People who do collaborations rarely split up the work in the way that one would assume from reading it.

But it is true that the things which are peculiarly bad about the book are associated with concepts that Pournelle is associated with, and things that are peculiarly good in the book are things that are characteristic of Niven's work.

The major weaknesses of the book are: (a) the beginning, which is slow, dull, an irrelevant, (b) the dependence on an idiot plot (It is an essential part of the plot that the anthropologists and social scientists simply don't know what they are doing, and (c) the assumed human society. Correction - these are some of the major weaknesses. The strengths are the aliens themselves and the "Crazy Eddie" concept.

The human society is the thousand year old Empire that Pournelle has been using. This sort of thing is out of fashion these days and is usually treated by reviewers as being unbelievable and bad sociology. This critical fashion is probably overdone. An interstellar technological quasi-feudalism is conceivable. But it is true that this sort of thing has been overdone. Hack after hack has rewritten Roman and European history into galactic Empires, dark ages, etc. It has been all too much a matter of projecting the romanticism of the past into the future without any real consideration of plausibility. Feudalism is an anachronism; aristocracies are an anachronism; the conditions were gave rise to the feudalism of Europe are totally inconsistent with any sort of industrialism. I won't deny the possibility of a revival of feudal trappings, but I should like far better reasons for them.

One rather gathers that Pournelle is enamoured of that particular aspect of the past (monarchy, aristocracy, the military, the medieval church, etc.) and is recreating it, willy nilly, whether it makes any sense or not. But, then, these are merely personal obsessions of his, and not uncommon ones at that.



Still and all, this is not a grievous fault. Let's face it; almost all SF rests on grossly improbable sociology, technology, and futurology. Science Fiction tells us much more about our attitudes and the attitudes of the authors and the current views of what the world is like now than it does about what the world is likely to be. Science Fiction on an interstellar scale is really no more than a particular breed of fantasy.

The trouble with Pournelle's projected future history is not that it is improbable, but that it is dull and hackneyed. It is interesting if one is interested in the paraphernalia of the middle ages and a bore if you are not. Perhaps others find the sections of the book that are concerned with his background society interesting. I find them to be a bore and a severe strain on my "suspension of disbelief." So be it.

The beginning of the story is irrelevant. I suggest for anyone who has not yet read the book that they start at about page 60 or 90 or so and read the rest of the book first and then go back and read the beginning for the sake of completeness. The whole thing with the New Chicago revolt, the heroines internment, and getting the various characters into the scene could have been handled with a three paragraph flashback and the book would have been the better for it.

It is hard to see how the idiot plot elements could have been avoided without completely reworking the book into something totally different. It is quite true that everyone involved has to be a boob not to figure out that the Moties were undergoing periodic collapses. But, if the plot demands that nobody see the obvious until the very end of the book, then you are stuck with people just not seeing the obvious.

If the book were no more than the usual adventure novel with the usual hack weaknesses that I have mentioned it would scarcely be a book that demands rereading and contemplation. Yet it is and it does. Its strengths are just those elements which are usually thought of being the Niven strong points. Again, it would be a mistake to assume that Larry did all of the interesting parts and Jerry did all of the dull parts. But the ideas and sections and the ideas that are fascinating do have the Niven stamp.

*Ringworld* had The Luck of Teela Brown. *The Mote In God's Eye* has Crazy Eddie. It may be that Larry Niven has consciously gone into the business of inventing archetypes, or it may only be that he naturally thinks that way. The device (if that is the term) is certainly heavily exploited.

It is a very old but very effective device to pick a striking phrase or concept and use it as a recurring theme. It is a common trick of comedy; most comedians have a stock of characteristic lines by which they are known. One of the more outrageous examples of repetition in comedy was in Woody Allen's *Love and Death*, which has a philosophical discussion in the middle of a seduction scene. This discussion, which is really an exchange of existentialist epigrams, reoccurs word for word in the middle of a number of, ah, romantic scenes. The first time it occurs you are surprised. Thereafter you giggle each time it comes up; by the end of the movie it is an old friend.

Most series gain power by using the device of repetition. Interestingly enough it is usually the little details that are most effective. For example, it is not Hercule Poirot, the detective, that sticks in our minds - it is his mustaches.



However, repetition is not really the device being used here. What we have is the philosophical concept personified and converted into an archetype. What makes Crazy Eddie even more fascinating is that it is an alien archetype. For those who haven't read the book, some quotes:

"When a city has grown so overlarge and crowded that it is in immediate danger of collapse ... when food and clean water flow into the city at a rate just sufficient to feed every mouth, and every hand must work constantly to keep it that way ... when all transportation is involved in moving vital supplies, and none is left over to move people out of the city should the need arise ... then it is that Crazy Eddie leads the movers of garbage out on strike for better working conditions."

*"It was not part of his nature to wish for what could not be, but he hoped that the efforts to breed a more stable mediator would succeed; it was difficult to work with creatures who might suddenly see an unreal universe and make judgments based on it. The pattern was always the same. First they wished for the impossible. Then they worked toward it, still knowing it to be impossible. Finally they acted as if the impossible could be achieved, and let that unreality influence every act."*

The problem of the Moties is one of the great problems of life - there are situations which are fundamentally unacceptable and fundamentally unavoidable, and what do you do about it. In the long run death provides a solution to the problems of life, but this "final solution" is of no value to the living. For a species, for life itself, there is another long term solution - wait and endure, for all sets of conditions are transient, no situation really lasts forever. For life as a whole this is valid wisdom, and living beings have it built into their very biochemistry - live and endure, regardless.

While it is true that life is a series of frustrations, and it is true that death always comes at the end, it is also true that there are acceptable and unacceptable situations. One of the favorite experiments of experimental psychologists, for a while, was to put animals in unacceptable situations for a while and see what happened. A typical sort of thing was a situation in which it could only get food by exposing itself to an electric shock. The usual result was various sorts of insanity and neurosis.

One possible type of reaction to this sort of situation is withdrawal. For some types of life and in some situations it can be a sane reaction - tuck yourself in and hide yourself away until the bad things go away. In many situations it is an obvious mistake and therefore not sane, but that doesn't matter to life. All it demands is that you do something - if the sane answers don't work, try the insane ones for you must do something, even if it is no more than hibernating.

Another answer, which is presumably the "sane" one, is fatalism. The food is there; you need it. The shock is there; it is unavoidable. Therefore go get the food and ignore the shock as best you can. The trouble with this reaction is that it is enormously difficult for very good reasons. Pain signals and avoidance syndromes are built into life for very good reasons. Electric shocks are bad for you; open wounds are bad for you; starvation is bad for you. It is good to avoid things that are bad for you. For you these bad things may be unavoidable; nonetheless life demands that you attempt to avoid them or suffer. Fatalism is never totally possible - it is something that life does not allow to the limit. To life as a whole, all problems do have answers, and all problems can be solved or avoided. That doesn't help you - your problems may be insoluble. But, as a living being, you must play by the rules of life, even if they demand the impossible.



The usual answer is an erratic neurosis. One puts off going for the food for as long as possible, and then makes a mad dash for it. This doesn't work. One invents ways of pretending that the shock won't be there. This doesn't work. One tries to find ways to adapt to the shock, so that it is endurable. This doesn't work. If the animal has any intelligence it invents "magical" ways to control the appearance of the shock. These don't work. Nothing works.

Nonetheless, it has to keep trying, and it does keep trying to avoid the shocks, even though nothing does work. In the meantime, however, their behaviour pattern becomes neurotic, even outside the area having to do with getting food. This is not unreasonable; neurotic behaviour tends to spread from one area of life to all areas of life.

The Moties are in just such a box. They must breed. They must overbreed until overpopulation destroys their civilization and brings about another collapse. And there is no way out. The result is a necessary cultural and biological fatalism which is never quite totally accepted. Crazy Eddie always tries to find a way out of the trap and he never succeeds. Never.

To the moties we are all Crazy Eddies. We insist that problems do all have solutions. Actually we also have the same problem. As intelligent beings we know that we are going to die some day. As living beings, this is unacceptable - death is never a totally acceptable solution to the problems of life, no matter how unavoidable. Religion is one of our Crazy Eddie solutions to this problem.

But, for the rest, we feel that problems have solutions. This is not a universal belief, to be sure. There is a good deal of fatalism in the world, and probably always will be. Towards the end of the book, the Moties quote an old story from Herodotus:

"Once there was a thief who was to be executed. As he was taken away he made a bargain with the king: in one year he would teach the king's favorite horse to sing hymns."

"The other prisoners watched the thief singing to the horse and laughed. 'You will not succeed,' they told him. 'No one can.' To which the thief replied, 'I have a year, and who knows what might happen in that time. The king might die. The horse might die. I might die. And perhaps the horse will learn to sing.'"

One of the great fascinations of fiction is that introducing a concept like the Crazy Eddie concept is more effectively done in fiction than in prose. The reason is that when a concept is introduced in prose we discuss the bare bones of the concept; the ramifications are dealt with explicitly and in a non-existential fashion. In fiction the concept sits within life, so to speak. The ramifications are there automatically, because the concept is being treated existentially. Fiction, like life, is richer and more ambiguous than prose. It has been said (or it ought to have been said if it hasn't been) that it takes several good books to really explain a good book. By that standard *The Mote in God's Eye* is a good book. The Crazy Eddie concept and its treatment is good for much more analysis and is richer than this little essay can handle. It is a book one could write a book about.

It is one of the promises of Science Fiction that it offers a larger stage for the treatment of ideas than the restricted stage of mainstream fiction. One might hope for great philosophic richness. It is a promise that, for the most part, remains unredeemed. SF is usually much shallower, much less deep than its possibilities. Not always, but usually. And it is a delight to read something that, in some measure, redeems that promise and puts something on the stage besides wooden puppets.