

PLACEBO





BARRY SMOTROFF 1953-1976

One night in early 1973, after he and I had finished editing the lettercol for this issue, my coeditor told me he had decided to resign, not in anger or in unhappiness, but simply because there was now other fanac that interested him more. I was saddened by the loss of his help, but excited by the challenge of doing the zine alone. He wished me luck. I've known since then that I'd be publishing this issue without him. Never in my worst nightmares could I have imagined that Barry would not live to see it.

By the time most of you see this it will have been a year since Barry was brutally murdered in the apartment in a 'safe' neighborhood he shared with Suzy Tiffany. It will have been a year since poor Bill Kunkel found the body and Arnie Katz called me at work the following morning for what I at first thought was an insane, sick joke. It hardly seems that long to those of us here in New York who were Barry's closest friends, the members of his fannish community, and yet what happened is as real and unchangeable as 100 year-old history. The pain has faded a bit now and thoughts of him are not as constant as in those first few weeks, but, for me at least, the disbelief remains. It's strange to think I can't just pick up the phone and call him, and incomprehensible that I won't be able to hand him this issue with an "I told you so" grin on my face and know his pleasure that the joking he'd done about how I'd never do it alone had been proved untrue. It's still easier to picture him chatting with the customers at Disco Disc than in a Staten Island grave.

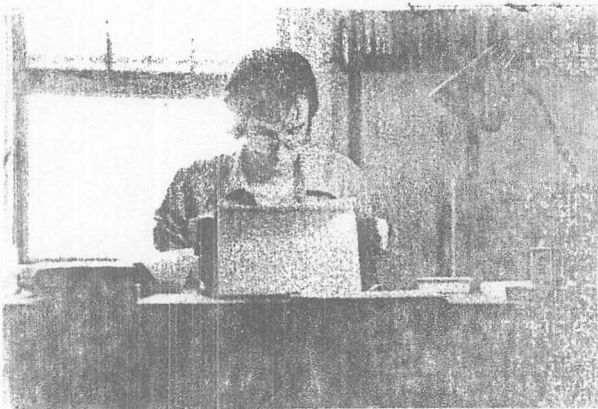
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This is not Barry's obituary. I wrote one a year ago and it appeared elsewhere. But with the formality satisfied, I still felt the need to write something about him, our relationship and his death. My thoughts remain fragmented on paper and frustrate me, but they had to appear here because this was his fanzine too; because you are the people he chose to speak to.

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Even when we have reason to expect it, death is always a shock, a sad, even horrible surprise. This is all the more true in cases of sudden death, still more so with murder. When Barry was killed, one of the first things I felt was that beyond those reasons, because he was a fan, his death was somehow more of a surprise, more of a shock, almost an incongruity. Because our relationship was based on fandom, his death was even harder to accept as real than someone else's might have been. I don't know if such a reaction is rational or if it strikes you as trivializing, but that's how I felt.

The fact is, fandom is a predominantly young population and those who



aren't young are thought of as somehow vaguely ageless, indeed, most of the great names of fanhistory still live. (Who was it who said that fandom is a form of arrested adolescence?) We can speculate further that fandom is so frivolous that we may undervalue the human relationships it is responsible for. So death is usually far from our thoughts of fandom since it is something we usually think about as being connected with those much older than ourselves or our peers. It is extra-unexpected and

incongruous because we undervalue the fannish friendships we make and death is something we worry about and try to anticipate and prepare for by imagining only in regard to those closest to us, like parents and spouses. Only people like the friends of Kent Moomaw and Ron Ellick have had to deal with violent, unexpected death in fandom. The rest of us, and we, Barry's friends in particular, never had reason or opportunity to learn that fandom is a community like any other, in which death is real; that our dissociation from the mundane world goes only so far. Your parents will die, your siblings will die, your spouse will die, you will die and so will all the friends you make in fandom. You may nod your head and accept that intellectually, but how many of us ever learn to feel it in our gut? That's why I think his being a fan made Barry's death utterly shocking to me. Because death in fandom is like barbed wire amid flowers, landmines in the outfield. Because fannish life is supposed to end in gaffiation, not death.

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I am the only boy in my family. Since I have no brothers I have sometimes cast some of my friends in that role, and, since 1970, my friends in fandom. These are fans who, though not all equally close to me, any more than real brothers would be, are, like real brothers, equally valued by me. Barry Smotroff was a brother in this sense. He was someone I knew I could rely on even when we disagreed, someone I competed with, cooperated with, compared myself to, whose flaws I accepted as givens, whose talents and abilities I appreciated, someone I knew felt the same way about me. He was not the most intimate friend I had, not always the one I would choose to confide in (though there was little he didn't know about me) - there was too much sarcasm in him for that - especially if I absolutely had to have sympathy regardless of the facts of the matter. But if objective opinion, cold, clear and refreshing analysis was what I wanted, Barry could be relied on. That's what made him such a good coeditor, such a perfect foil for my romantic whims and acute enthusiasms. That's one of the things I remember most, the times when his witty common sense led me to pause for a second thought, to look before I leaped.

Barry understood me very well. I think he could have predicted my reactions correctly nine times out of ten. Yet we were very different in some important ways, ways that kept me from knowing him as fully as I know some friends with whom I've spent much less time. I am open, even compulsively confessional, but Barry was a private person, with no window on his depths that he would show or you could find. I remember him smiling, laughing, mocking, bantering, punning, gossiping, girl-chasing, comfortably stoned, enjoying music, opinionated, competitive, proud, friendly, - living. I can't remember any specific instance of his expressing strong emotions or showing any evidence of the agonized self-appraisal so common among fans. I thought and think of him in terms of his displaying con-

tented satisfaction rather than joy, annoyance and joking disparagement rather than anger and vehemence.

Barry could seem superficial, as if he was afraid to act himself. It wasn't that he really was shallow; I believe there must have been more in him than he chose to show. To some extent this was due to healthy self-sufficiency, a pleasant lack of neurotic self-analysis. In part, however, it stemmed from a core of insecurity which was also at the root of the air of certainty, savoir faire, confidence and self-possession he strived so hard to convey in some situations. But Barry was a boy just in the process of becoming a man when he was murdered, and I think that because of Suzy and for other reasons, that core was melting away in the last year of his life and eventually would have disappeared. Barry was happier and more fulfilled during that last year than I think he had been at any earlier time. If anything could, that makes his death all the more tragic - that the happiness, the becoming, was cut short. How ironically unjust that seems.

During the days between the murder and the funeral, I could only repeat over and over and over "it's not fair, it's not fair" — feeling the parallel of his potential and mine, knowing that his was cut short and, arbitrarily, mine remains. But I was numbed by his death and that was all so much intellectualization, until after the funeral. When I walked away from his grave, I stepped into a cold close cloud that I was to walk through for weeks, a cloud that was my identification with Barry made almost tangible. He was really dead, that was his body they lowered into the ground - unlike the murder, I had seen it with my own eyes. The cloud pervaded me and the unfairness and the sadness struck home and that night, mourning Barry with my girlfriend Lise by sharing memories of him, I finally cried.

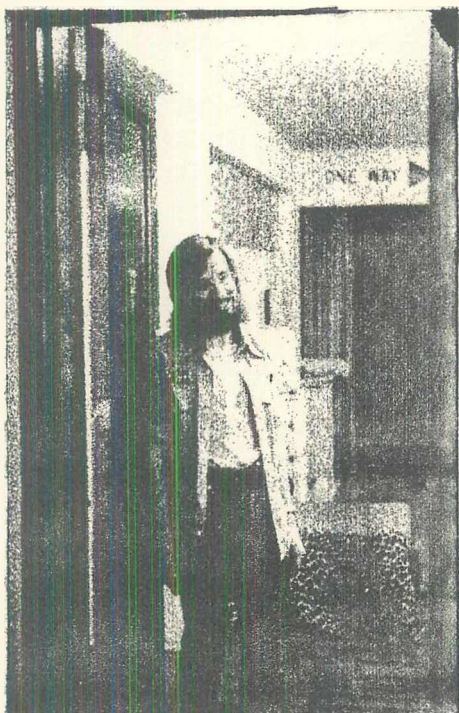
We were enough alike that identifying with Barry was very easy. I don't just mean that we were both young (although the death of a young person always has an extra impact on another young person), nor am I referring to the slight, superficial, physical likeness that caused so many people - before they knew us well, and because we became fans together - to develop the persistent habit of confusing us. (Even on the day of his funeral, it led someone to call me by his name.) It was the ways we were alike that drew us together. We shared so much: background, neighborhood (I remember being struck by how easily we could have met each other years sooner.), tastes in reading, fannish development (often with Barry forging the way), opinions and interests, and all of that was evident on the first day we met.

He came to an early meeting of the Science Fiction club I founded at Queens College and we came together like two magnets — I sometimes imagine that there must have been an audible snap. We discovered how much we had in common and were so excited by it that we continued our high-speed dialogue without a pause long after the meeting ended. I went home with him to see his collection and the talk went on late into the afternoon. That enthusiastic conversation was the foundation of our friendship and surely one of the turning points of our lives. All the things we did in fandom, all the people we met and places we went, all the decisions stem from that intense afternoon. On that day we chose a worldline along which we would move together for a long time before we diverged. Because that line was through fandom, I can say that I may have had closer friends than Barry, but never one with whom I spent more time or had more fun. We spent time together and had fun in school, in SF and Fantasy tutorials and generally around the campus, at club meetings both at school and at the homes of the members, at each other's

houses, and eventually at cons and the meetings of off-campus clubs like FSFSCU, Insurgents and Fanoclasts (which he eventually co-hosted) and, of course, working on PLACEBO.

Putting out a fanzine is much like a business and doing it with a coeditor is literally being in a partnership. Barry was a good partner. I don't think I realized at the time how well we meshed, how well we complemented each other. I'd mutter to myself instead about all the time we wasted when I was 'obviously' right. Yet it was from those disagreements I learned the most, especially the impossibility of objectivity about one's own work - a priceless lesson for a writer. We agreed more often than not - despite the image of discord we projected in the fanzine - or the thing would have been impossible, but I really do think it was the disagreements that often produced the best fanac.

PLACEBO bound us together. When there was nothing else to talk about we could always talk about the fanzine. We split the typing; we each had the right to edit and layout our own editorials (although each of us could and did make nonbinding suggestions to the other) and we collaborated and compromised on the form and content of the rest of the issues. One of the jobs we teamed up most closely for was the editing of the lettercol, which I think we always did at my house. We'd spread the letters out on my much larger bedroom's floor and physically shuffle them around until they fit well together, simultaneously deciding where to make cuts and then we'd write our comments on the back of the pages. We developed a whole theory of LoCol editing, seeing the whole column as a unit with "paragraphs" (the letters) and "sentences" (the paragraphs within each letter). It was like doing a puzzle and it was a job we enjoyed doing together (though he sneered when I described it as "running barefoot through the egoboo") and I'm glad we worked on this issue's LoCol before he quit.



We did a lot of advance planning for PLACEBO, as for our never-realized theology issue and our spectacular first annish (which this, the 5th issue, would have been, if it had come out in October '72 as planned). Most of that planning was done at his house, where PLACEBO's mail came (He had won the toss.) and we'd pore over newly arrived LoCs, articles and artwork and bargain over who should get which tradezines when we'd been sent only one copy. (It stings a bit now to remember how I told him a couple of times when he wouldn't give up a zine I wanted that ultimately it wouldn't matter because he would leave fandom before I would and then I could buy his collection.)

His room was a tiny, closet-like space where two was company and three quite literally would have been a crowd. Its single window looked out on the row of garages that backed the worn down row of garden apartments, its door opened directly onto the living room and abutted at a right angle the door to the kitchen. Yet in that room we were ensconced in our own fannish universe and it was the easiest

thing in the world to forget Barry's parents and sister only a few feet away in the living room, to ignore the sounds of the neighborhood kids playing on the driveways and dusty lawns outside, and range the universe of discourse! We'd sit on the bed, slouching low into the mattress, our upper backs or just our heads against the wall, never sitting up straight to avoid bumping our heads against the dense bulk of his record and book collections lowering overhead. Our legs would span the awkwardly narrow aisle between the bed and the other furniture so we could rest our sneakered feet on the edge of the desk or dresser. Once comfortable, we wouldn't move for hours, but would talk endlessly about fandom, SF, school, sex, politics, language, literature, music, science, art and PLACEBO. How odd that, for a while at least, the fanzine seemed as significant to us as some of those other things.

I guess that's why our relationship worked, that, and because we respected each other enough to be able to agree to disagree without rancor, or even for one of us to put pride aside and bow to the other's expertise or talent with grace.

The essence of our relationship was activity and experience rather than emotion. While PLACEBO lasted as a coedited publication, our relationship went far beyond it: so many cold nights together pacing the platform of the highest elevated subway station in the city, trying to keep warm while waiting for our connection, passing the time discussing the events at a club meeting with the same stubborn, slightly neoish, dedicated trufannishness that had driven us to travel two hours to a meeting in the first place, so many shivering waits for the bus together in Flushing, so many long phone calls. When Barry left the fanzine, we began to drift apart. No longer did we have a special relationship by virtue of being coeditors and, coincidentally, our new fannish friends were beginning to think of us as individuals, the accidental association of the two of us from our having joined the community together was fading. We were becoming "just another fannish friend" to each other and no longer, for example, the obvious choice if a hotel room had to be shared. We saw each other only at club meetings and then not at all. That seemed very strange for a while.

Anything I say about Barry has got to say more about me than about him; both directly, when I express my feelings, and indirectly, by what I choose to say and not to say about him. It's easiest to describe him in terms of myself. I'm the person I know best, and, of all my best friends, Barry was in some ways the one I knew least. Despite what you might think, that was not my personal share of tragedy in the greater one of his death. The sense of loss was more general than that, the grief much harder to articulate. I regret that I've lost any chance of getting back together and developing our relationship further, of having it evolve over the years as we grew older, yes. But as far as what we did have together is concerned, I was content with our friendship, as he was. In that, as in other things, I think we understood each other.

— Moshe Feder
July, 1977

THE SMALL INFORMAL PORTRAIT IN THE HEADING OF THIS PIECE WAS SKETCHED BY STU SHIFFMAN IN 1972. THE PRESTYPE WORK IS BY ANDY PORTER, TO WHOM GO MY THANKS FOR A FAVOR UNDER UNUSUAL CONDITIONS. THE PHOTO OF BARRY ON THE SECOND PAGE WAS TAKEN BY ME IN 1972 AND SHOWS BARRY IN MY ROOM TYPING A STENCIL FOR PLACEBO. THE PHOTO OF BARRY ON THE FOURTH PAGE IS ALSO BY ME AND SHOWS BARRY AT THE DOOR OF THE JAMAICA APARTMENT HE SHARED WITH STEVE STILES AND THEM WITH LOU STATHIS WHERE FANCLASTS MET. THE PICTURE WAS TAKEN ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1975 AS THE LAST OF US TO LEAVE THE LAST MEETING HELD THERE HEADED FOR THE ELEVATOR.— M.F.

Placebo

Page 1 - editorial - Sinuous Convolutions - by MOSHE FEDER

Page 12 - featured article - Snow Walt & the Seventies - by DAVID EMERSON

Page 20 - regular column - The Root of All Evil - by HANK DAVIS

Page 29 - faan parody - The Epic of Gilligan Mesh - by STU SHIFFMAN

Page 38 - lettercol - Smoked Salmon, part one, letters on PLACEBO 3.5

Page 44/5 - between the lettercols, two collages by JOHN DOWD

Page 45 - lettercol - Smoked Salmon, part two, letters on PLACEBO 4.

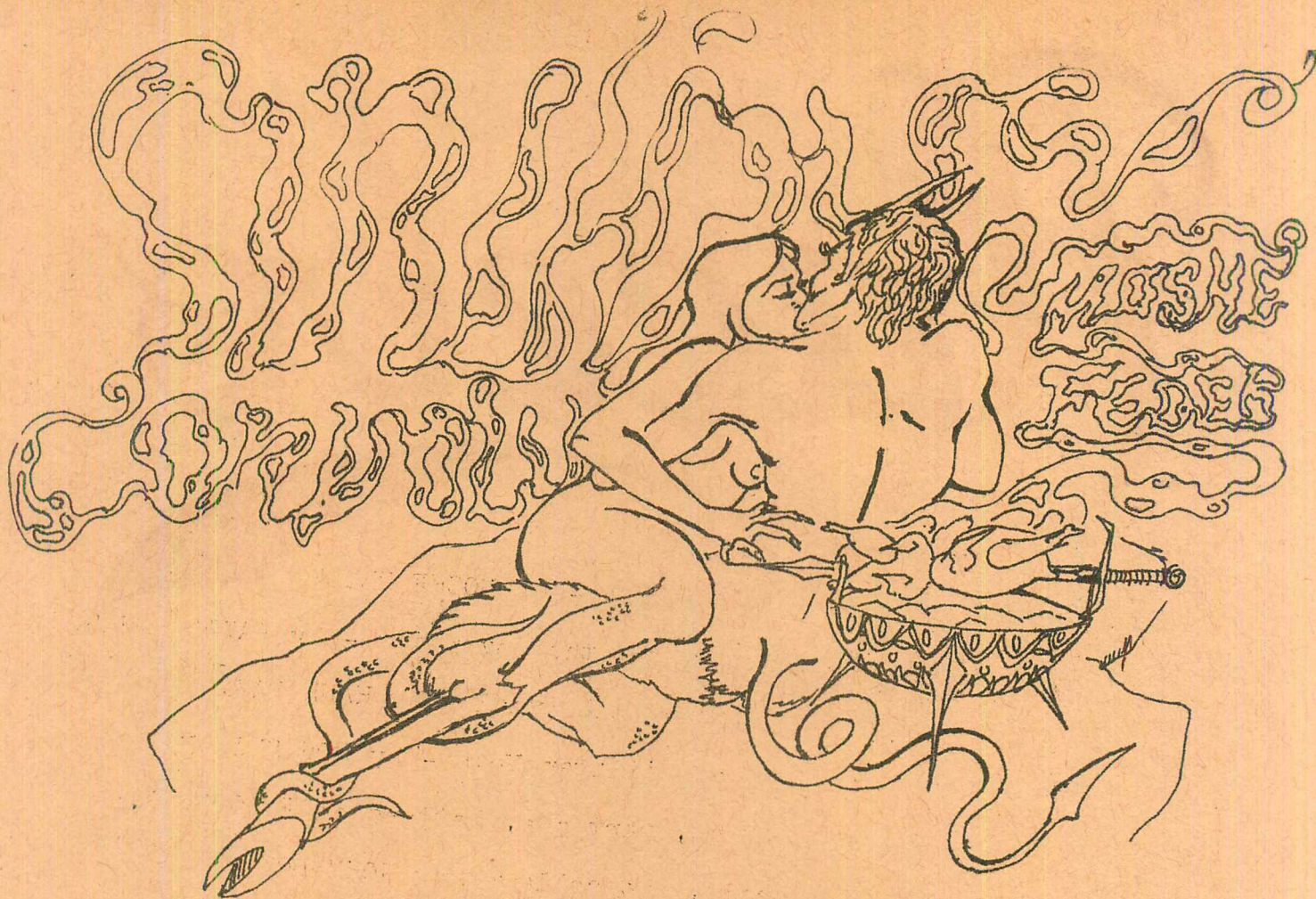
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Back Cover by STEVE STILES

Envelope Cachet by C. ROSS CHAMBERLAIN

Interior Art by: Grant Canfield, pp.16,17,22; Tom Foster & Ken Fletcher, p.58; Terry Jeeves, p.53; Paul Jordan, p.2; Bill Kunkel, pp.4,5,7(4x),11,22,23,27,40; Loren MacGregor, p.49; Andy Porter, p.28; Bill Rotsler, p.9; Dave Rowe & Stu Shiffman, p.25; Stu Shiffman, pp.7(2x), 15,22,24,29,30,32,34,35,36,37,46; Dan Steffan, p.20; Steve Stiles, pp.12, 19. Photo on p.10 by Lise Eisenberg. ToC logo by Sheryl Birkhead.

PLACEBO 5 IS THE FIFTH IN A SERIES OF LARGE FORMAT PAPERBOUND BOOKS NOW BEING PUBLISHED SOLELY BY MOSHE FEDER AT 142-34 BOOTH MEMORIAL AVE., FLUSHING, NY 11355, USA (TELEPHONE: 212-445-4614). THIS VOLUME OF THE SERIES IS DEDICATED TO THE LATE BARRY SHOTROFF, WHO COFOUNDED AND COEDITED THIS PUBLICATION.///PLACEBO IS AVAILABLE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARTICLES OR ARTWORK, MUTUALLY AGREED UPON ALL-FOR-ALL TRADES WITH OTHER FANZINES, LETTERS OF COMMENT, NEGOTIATED TRADE FOR OLD FANZINES OR COCA-COLA ARTIFACTS, AND FOR \$1 THE SINGLE COPY. NO SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED AT THIS TIME BUT EXISTING SUBS WILL BE FULFILLED AT THE OLD RATE.///PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SECTION OF THE EDITORIAL ABOUT GOING TO WORK (FROM THE MIDDLE OF P.8 TO THE MIDDLE OF P.10) APPEARED IN A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FORM IN QUIBBLE 39, FROM THE SAME PUBLISHER.///THIS FANZINE WOULD NOT EXIST WERE IT NOT FOR THE HELP OF MANY PEOPLE. THE ONES WHO HAVE DONE THE MOST ARE LISE EISENBERG, STU SHIFFMAN, PAUL JORDAN, JON SINGER AND LINDA BUSHYAGER. LINDA SPENT MOST OF A WEEKEND HELPING IN NUMEROUS WAYS, MOST NOTABLY BY SINGLEHANDEDLY PASTING THE DECORATIVE LABELS ON ALL THE ENVELOPES AND BY RUNNING OFF MOST OF THE TEXT OF THE PRE-EDITORIAL ABOUT BARRY. LISE LENT ME THE USE OF HER GESTETNER 360, ON WHICH ALL THE COLOR WORK (EXCEPT FOR 90% OF THE TOC LOGOS) WAS DONE. SHE HERSELF RAN OFF THE BLUE SALMON ON P.38. SHE ALSO PROVIDED A NUMBER OF ELECTRONIC STENCILS CUT ON HER EISEN- FAX 451 (ALL THE OLDER ART WAS E-STENCILLED ON THE BORN REX-ROTARY 2202 OF THE QUEENS COLLEGE ICC.), 24 LB. WHITE PAPER AND HER TYPING (SEE THE EDITORIAL) AND DE-SLIPSHEETING SERVICES. STU AND PAUL DID MOST OF THE DE-SLIPSHEETING I DIDN'T DO, AND STU DID ART ON DEMAND ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS UNDER DIFFICULT CONDITIONS. JON SINGER ALSO HELPED DE-SLIPSHEET (THE WHOLE ISSUE WAS SLIPSHEETED, EXCEPT THE EDITORIAL.), BUT HIS MAIN CONTRIBUTION WAS HIS DISCOVERY OF HOW TO HAND INK MY MACHINE, MAKING THE USE OF CHEAPER INK, AND THEREFORE THE PUBLICATION OF THIS ISSUE, POSSIBLE.///ALL TYPING WAS DONE ON A SCM CORONET AUTOMATIC OR A ROYAL MANUAL MICROELITE (PURCHASED FOR A FANNISHLY LOW PRICE FROM BILL KUNKEL). THE STENCILS WERE COPY-RITE CLASSICS OR POLYCHROMES. TEXT AND B&W ART WAS PRINTED ON A GEHA AUTOMAT 500DA, USING GEHA, TEMPO, WHITE BOX AND GESTETNER 491 BLACK INKS. THE PAPER IS TOPSHAM COLORED MIMEDOGRAPH 20 LB. 'TWILTONE.' PRINTING STARTED IN 1973 AND WAS COMPLETED ON THE DAY OF COLLATION, JULY 10, 1977. THE COL- LATORS WILL BE LISTED NEXT TIME. ALL OFFSET PRINTING BY ROCKY AND THE GANG DOWN AT FLUSHING COPY EXCEPT FOR THE BACK COVER BY COPYMATE INC.///PLACEBO IS COPYRIGHT (C) 1977 BY MOSHE FEDER AND ALL RIGHTS ARE RETURNED TO THE CREATORS.



The answer is now. You can't deny it, you can't scoff; you hold the proof in your hands. The question? The question is one I've been asked a thousand, maybe a few thousand times in the last four years, perhaps even by you: "When's PLACEBO coming out?"

What was at first a polite inquiry became a joke, then even a mocking challenge to be accompanied by a nudge and a wink. It became a local idiom here in NY fandom: "When you gonna write that novel y'been talkin' about Sid?" "When PLACEBO comes out." It, and the problem it represented, became a tiresome burden, a twiltone albatross around my neck. Now that I have a definitive answer to that damn question, I feel like Atlas, handing off the globe to Hercules. Put your ear to the page and you can probably hear my sigh of relief. Odd how four years can take so long to live and yet seem so short in retrospect.

Perhaps there was a time when you said to yourself: "Hmmmnn, I wonder what's happening with Barry and Moshe. Their letter supplement came out two months ago and their annish is overdue."

Sometime after that you might have mused: "PLACEBO seems to be late. So much for schedules. I wonder what the matter is?"

Then you might have speculated: "It's been a year now since PLACEBO 4. I guess the zine is dead. Too bad; it had promise."

Finally, you might have heard some neos talking: "Didja ever hear of a zine called PLACEBO?" "Naw, I don't think anyone's ever used that for a title. Dumb name anyway." And you weren't able to figure out why what they said sounded somehow wrong.

Yet PLACEBO wasn't dead and this is not a revival issue. Work on this issue has never completely halted, it has been a constant, ongoing, albeit intermittent, process. No matter what else I was doing, PLACEBO was never far from my thoughts. So this fanzine may have been in suspended animation, its vital functions slowed down until they were almost imperceptible, but it was never dead. Try to think of it all as a striking example of timebinding.

It's an understatement to say that all the contributors to this issue are owed apologies, thanks for their patience and a reminder to you readers that what you see here is not necessarily representative of their current work. Stu Shiffman is a good example of this. I'm proud to say that I recognized his talent when he was still a neo and encouraged him. The artwork by him in this issue was the first really good stuff he'd done and was supposed to make a big splash as fandom realized that another top artist had arrived. Since the issue didn't come out as planned, Stu has made his impression elsewhere, and now the art by him in this issue, while still nothing to be ashamed of, pales in comparison to his current work. His art has been appearing in Hugo and FAAn nominated zines and I wouldn't be surprised if he got a FAAn nomination of his own next year. So Stu, and the other contributors, deserve your courtesy in remembering that this is a four-year old fanzine.

Stu did have one advantage over the other contributors: he has been aware of and could be reassured by PLACEBO's stop and go progress. When the frustration of delay became too much to bear he had the outlet of direct complaint to me. He could threaten, cajole, chide and plead to his heart's content (and de-slipsheet while he was at it) and thereby get some satisfaction. The other contributors live farther away and couldn't do that. Three of them — Grant Canfield, David Emerson and Norman Hollyn — deserve extra-special apologies.

Grant came through with the cover of this issue on very short notice, when I told him in 1973 that my lack of cover art was one of the last things preventing me from getting the issue out in time for Torcon. (!) I had the cover printed immediately upon receipt of the art, returned the art to Grant and then didn't publish the rest of the issue. (There were about 15 pages run off at that point.) While I did and do, to be frank, have some doubts about how well suited the cover is to PLACEBO's personality and my own beliefs about hunting (I might have liked it better if it had been paired with a back cover in which the situation was reversed, i.e., a human across the hood of the vehicle and cats inside driving.), I was and am impressed by the technical quality of the execution and most grateful for Grant's generosity and efficiency in a pinch. I felt like a heel rushing him and then delaying and I hope he has or will forgive me and contribute regularly.

I had long wanted another article from David (His first for PLACEBO was his piece on "The Hula-Hoop Mythos" in the third issue) and after pestering him terribly, finally succeeded by taking advantage of his enthusiastic response to the Summer '73 Disney Festival at Lincoln Center. (Incidentally getting my first Steve Stiles contribution, since Steve had indicated a willingness to do something connected with a piece by David when I was pestering him.) I had hoped to be the first to have a piece relevant to the mini-fad for Disney at the time, but because of my delaying, David and PLACEBO were beaten out by a piece in STARLING. David, among all the contributors, has been the most concerned about my progress with PLACEBO. He was proud of the article he'd written — justifiably so, as is proved by the fact that it still makes good reading — and I'm glad to be publishing it at last. I hope David's patience and

forbearance will be rewarded with egoboo sufficient to insure his eventual reappearance in these pages.

It's been so long now since Norman wrote his fanzine review column (intended to be the first of a series) that not only is the column outdated but Norman's last name has changed from Hochberg to Hollyn. Since Norm has been too busy with mundac and too uninvolved with fanac to update or replace his piece (which is the specific sort that dates quickly), I've been forced to drop it. To my eyes the issue seems unbalanced without it, but that is nothing to the fact that Norm's work has gone for naught. I know he doesn't hold it against me and I think he'll prove that in an issue or two with a different sort of piece he's promised me. A fanzine review column may yet be instituted here, but it will probably not be by Norman. He's one of the few people I know who's really making a success of the life's work he always wanted for himself (feature film editing) and with much less time for fandom of late, he's retreated to ~~the peaceful fields of FAPA~~ the peaceful fields of FAPA. Who can blame him?

While I'm on the subject of contributors, allow me to say that I'm badly in need of some new ones. Although there were many occasions when I spotted a piece of art I could use or saw an article in the making, I had no luck at all in securing same. Potential contributors, even my friends, were so skeptical about the likelihood of my ever publishing again that I now lack the material for even the next issue. Please think of me when next you do something, whether it's sercon or fannish. I'd particularly like to receive material from the many fine fans who have become active (or come to my attention, at least) since the last issue. (Are ya listnin' Harry Bell?) The new answer to that old question of "When's PLACEBO coming out?" is up to you.

Some people think I have a strange mind; I can't imagine why. Anyway, in my mind, the converse of contributions is zines received in trade. I have been touched and delighted by the number of zines I continued to receive in 'trade' both in person at cons and by mail (in some cases for the whole four years!) when I had nothing to offer in exchange but the lame promise of a LoC and a copy of this zine "Real Soon Now." I'm an even worse procrastinator when it comes to LoCs than I am with publishing genzines, so that promise, to my shame, was rarely kept. But the RSN millenium has arrived and now at last my other promise can be made good. I wish I could list all the people

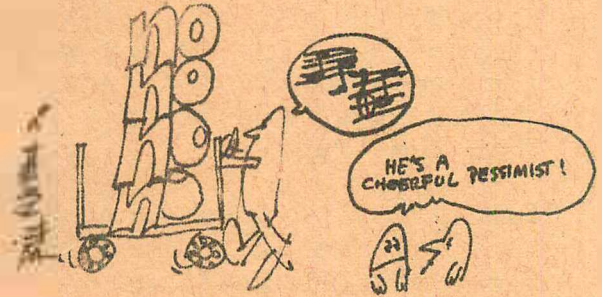
who've been so kind to me, but to do so would be to take the chance of accidentally skipping someone. But you know who you are. With this issue I begin to repay my fannish debt to you. If my plans work out and PLACEBO becomes a smaller, but frequent zine, you should be amply rewarded for your generosity.

I suppose there are some of you who expect something mighty special after five years since the last full issue, four and three quarters years since this issue was originally scheduled to appear, a little over four years since the publication of the letter supplement and exactly four years since this issue's rescheduled due date. I hope you won't be too disappointed that this is just a typical issue except for its lateness. It should be stressed that to the greatest extent practicable this is the same issue you would have seen if it had come out four years ago. The only major exceptions to that are this section of the editorial you're reading now and the ad for the NY Fanhouse Fund added to make the pagination come out right. The reasons I didn't make any revisions were that it wouldn't have been fair to the other contributors, because



it would have been inconsistent with my position, and the fact, that I've been working on this issue all along, and, perhaps most importantly, because this was the last issue Barry and I worked on together and I wanted it to appear in a form he would have recognized. You won't get to see what a completely Feder-edited ('Fedited'?) zine is like until next issue. I predict you'll find it less pretentious or ambitious in some ways, smaller, more fannish, more wide ranging in its interests but with a stress on one particular area (sort of in the manner of STARLING, but not the same area) which I'll talk about next time. Until then, though this is not the issue I'd produce now, I'm content to be represented by it, despite its age, it's still a pleasant fanzine.

One of the reasons this is a pleasant issue may be because of my self-restraint. There have been numerous points in the last four years at which I seemed to be close to publishing, and each time, I could have written a ten page editorial telling the tales of multifarious woe explaining my lateness up to then. I could have told you about unrequited love in 1973, the worst year of my life, about my failure to graduate college on time in June of that year (I had five incompletes and I finally graduated in Sept. '74.), about my agonizingly drawn-out purchase of a mimeo, the resignation of my coeditor, my ten day job at Scott Meredith's agency (I quit in disgust.), my poverty, my laziness, my bouts of depression — well, you get the idea. As I said, however, I'm going to show self-restraint; I'm not going to indulge in self-pity and tell you all those stories. That's all history, old news, fit for wrapping fish in, and I probably couldn't tell it very amusingly anyway. Catch me at a con sometime, hand me a large Coke and ask me nicely and I'll tell you of the quest for the knobs, of the great paste ink swindle, or the mystery of the 'missing' artwork. But unless there's some groundswell of demand for the epic of the interregnum, this is the last you'll read about it in these pages. What I care about now is the future, not the past. This fanzine once again has its chance for a full and lusty life. I hope you'll hang around to share it.



Montreal in '77!

A Myth in the Manner of Roland Barthes

A playground is a highly artificial environment contrived to contain the quintessentially human and ineffable act of play. The classic New York City playground contrasts with, is surrounded by and reacts to the city as a superimposed landscape, in a manner analogically similar to the way cities interact with the countryside that contains them. This is especially obvious here, where our playgrounds are the promised land of Robert Moses.

Playgrounds are designed by adults for children — that is, for what they imagine children to be — and for the child the adult likes to believe remains in us all. It is Homo Faber's clumsy attempt to provide for Homo Ludens. They are a reaction to the alienness most adults occasionally feel in children, a product of their lack of connection (through memory or continuing experience) with their own true younger selves, a manifestation of adult prejudices. So, not surprisingly, they are sealed up like fortresses or detention camps, surrounded by sharp, impregnable, cast-iron spikes and somewhat more vulnerable wire fencing. It is because

of their perception that in these ways — directly and indirectly, physically and spiritually, ontologically — the playground is a challenge and a threat, that children attack and attempt to demolish the playground.

Playgrounds are hard, characterless, dangerous (sometimes as if they were a direct attack on the population problem: 'kill them before they can breed') places. They are mass produced, literally machine-made, they all look alike. This only serves to emphasize (as if it needed any emphasizing) their anti-natural character. They rarely have any grass. The trees, if there are any, are frail and sickly, hemmed in by paving blocks, rising like forlorn, incongruous afterthoughts from the concrete or asphalt. If there is any water it comes from a rough concrete water fountain reminiscent of a tombstone, or from a perforated metal spray head mounted atop a dull grey pedestal that rises from the ground more naturally than the trees.

Some kids, of some generations and neighborhoods, adapt the playground to their needs, in their way resigning themselves to it, accepting it. The young imagination can triumph over even this sterility. Others shun it, not only for the relative unstructuredness of the parks, but even for the equally hard and hostile environment of the streets. At least the streets don't pretend to be something they're not.

Essentially, the playground, for the adult, is the wild place. The place where children indulge their baser instincts, where they can be safely allowed to be the "little savages" they are. A sanctified site for temporary devolution. And a place where the kids can be kept "safely off the streets," out of the way, out of adult sight and mind. Because it predicates primitiveness or savageness of children, it also, by extension, recognizes the savageness still to be found in our "adult" civilization. It is a symbol, not just of the primitive's jungle (to which the child reverts) but of the whole globe of the world, of which we are all a part, and which we make a jungle by the ruthless, thoughtless behavior we indulge in as men and as nations.

Is it surprising then that we call those steel frame structures meant for climbing "monkey bars" or "jungle gyms?" Hidden amidst their interlacing steel pipes are the flora and fauna of the tropical rain forest, the arid savanna. The sandbox provides the dusty desert of this geography and the "see-saws" or "teeter-totters" are the rising and falling of hills and the switchbacks of mountain roads (as well as an apt metaphor for the course of individual lives and human history). The "slides" or "sliding ponds" are the lands of eternal ice and the regions of highest mountains. Their broad, smooth surfaces glint and flow like the glacier and are cool to the skin and slippery, like ice.

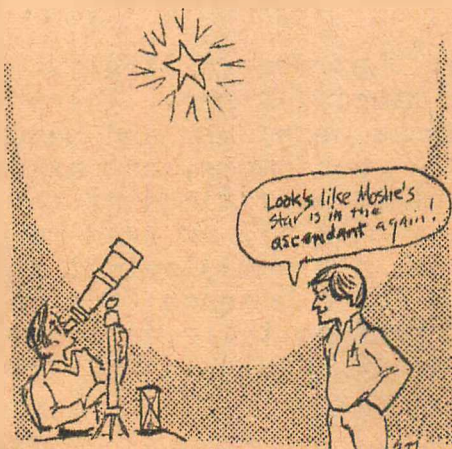
The swings have the greatest potential for recreational honesty, but their credibility too is undercut by their design and material execution. To swing on the shiny steel of a public playground is to become part of a machine. A full line of busy swings resembles nothing so much as the alternating power strokes of a V-8 engine.

The playground is climbing, falling and rhythm. It is jealous envy concretized. It is the distillation of the whole natural world in cement, asphalt and steel.

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I've already mentioned in passing some (by no means all) of the bad things that have happened to me in the years since the last issue. The next page (7) has all the good news, which ages much more slowly than the bad and is much more pleasant to tell. The essay continues on page 8.

Hank Davis was 30 in '74 and depressed about it. To cheer him up and show him we care, I got together with our mutual friends and published a oneshot in his honor called QUO-DAVIS. Some considered it one of the best zines of the year. Q-D was also where Debbie Notkin & Eli Cohen's sketch of The Mimeo Man first appeared.



A lot of my activity since last issue has been in apas: TAPS, Apa-Q, Apa-L & Apaloosa. But while apas may be the heart of fandom as the song says, one mustn't forget the body. I became a Fanoclast in '73, joined FiSTFA when it was revived and founded an invitational dinner club called Omnivores.



I first learned about the power of rejection while reading slush for AMAZING and FANTASTIC between '72 and '75. I now have a similar but more enjoyable part time job as the first reader for Ace's SF dept..

In fall '71 I wrote a story fragment which my teacher (novelist Joseph McElroy) really liked. On Ejler Jakobsson's suggestion and with his recommendation, I sent it to Damon Knight, and after some delay because he was changing publishers, he bought it. "Sandial" appeared in Orbit 16.



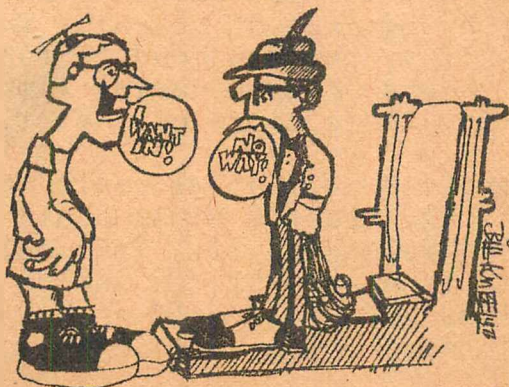
In '74 I noticed this cute girl who'd started coming to Fano-clasts. She seemed to notice me too, and volunteered to visit and type stencils for PLACEBO. We did a lot more talking than typing and I ended up falling in love with her. Two and a half years later we're still together. Our relationship is not ideal, but Lise Eisenberg has made my life a lot brighter and this issue might never have come out without her help & encouragement.

If you've heard of me at all in the last few years and it wasn't because of The Mimeo Man, it was probably because of the FAAn Awards. A lot of people helped, but I'm proud to say that I was the prime mover in their creation. With each passing year I'm happier I had the chutzpah to do it.

I fleshed out the short version of The Mimeo Man in QUO-DAVIS, and it was a smash hit when I produced it for the '74 PgHLANGE and '75 Disclave. The full fanzine version I published won a FAAn nomination and the play's since been done again (without me) in Minneapolis. It was my most rewarding fanac so far.



Some egoboo for the concons: I had an extra good time at Torcon, Philcon '74, Boskone '75, A-Kon '75, Midwestcon '76, Balticon '76, Boskone '77 and the cons we did the play at.



I had always been interested in Coca-Cola artifacts, but I didn't energetically collect them as a hobby until Lise started giving me Coca-Cola gifts. Now it's an obsession. See the colophon.

Roland Barthes points out that modern life is full of myths. Of course, he's using the word in a special sense. There are many things, he feels, which are presented to us as necessary and natural when they are actually mere products of history — accidents, not axioms. Barthes is a socialist, so he applies this concept to a critique of the bourgeois, capitalist West. While I don't agree with all or even much of what he has to say on that subject. I do think his semiological approach to culture can be a useful tool, especially for a Science Fiction writer. SF writers need ways to distance themselves from their native worldviews, from the things they would otherwise take for granted. Barthes has invented an excellent way to do this.

Now, if you'll excuse the Hegelian Dialecticism, it occurs to me that man the player is the antithesis of man the worker. Of course, most people are a healthy synthesis of these two aspects, but I've noticed that a number of fans of my generation and younger are not. I'm not sure why this should be (and would welcome your speculations) but I also observe it in myself. Where, to my father, for example, work comes as naturally as breathing and is almost as necessary (he goes nuts on his vacations and has even cut them short a couple of times), for me, it's difficult, even traumatic, and I am much happier at play (which is what fanatic is, of course). I'm not such a fool, however, to think my attitude towards work a practical one. I know I'll have to fend for myself and pay my own way, at least until work itself becomes a Barthesian myth. (Which is what Galbraith and others, including many SF prophets of total automation, tell us will happen eventually. There may come a time when we continue working because it seems the natural thing to do, even though there is no longer any historical justification for it.) But I'm not holding my breath, and meanwhile I'm doing what I can to adjust to the harsh realities, observing all the while. Which is how the following piece got written.

BRITAIN IS FINE IN '79!

It was 4 a.m. I lay awake after two futile hours of fanzine reading, completely alert and not the least bit drowsy, wondering what to do. I was supposed to be going in to work for my father that day — a flat impossibility if I was still awake at four. Exasperated, I listened to my parents moving around and talking on the floor below as they began their day. Then it suddenly occurred to me that the best course was simply to get out of bed and join them, go in with my father.

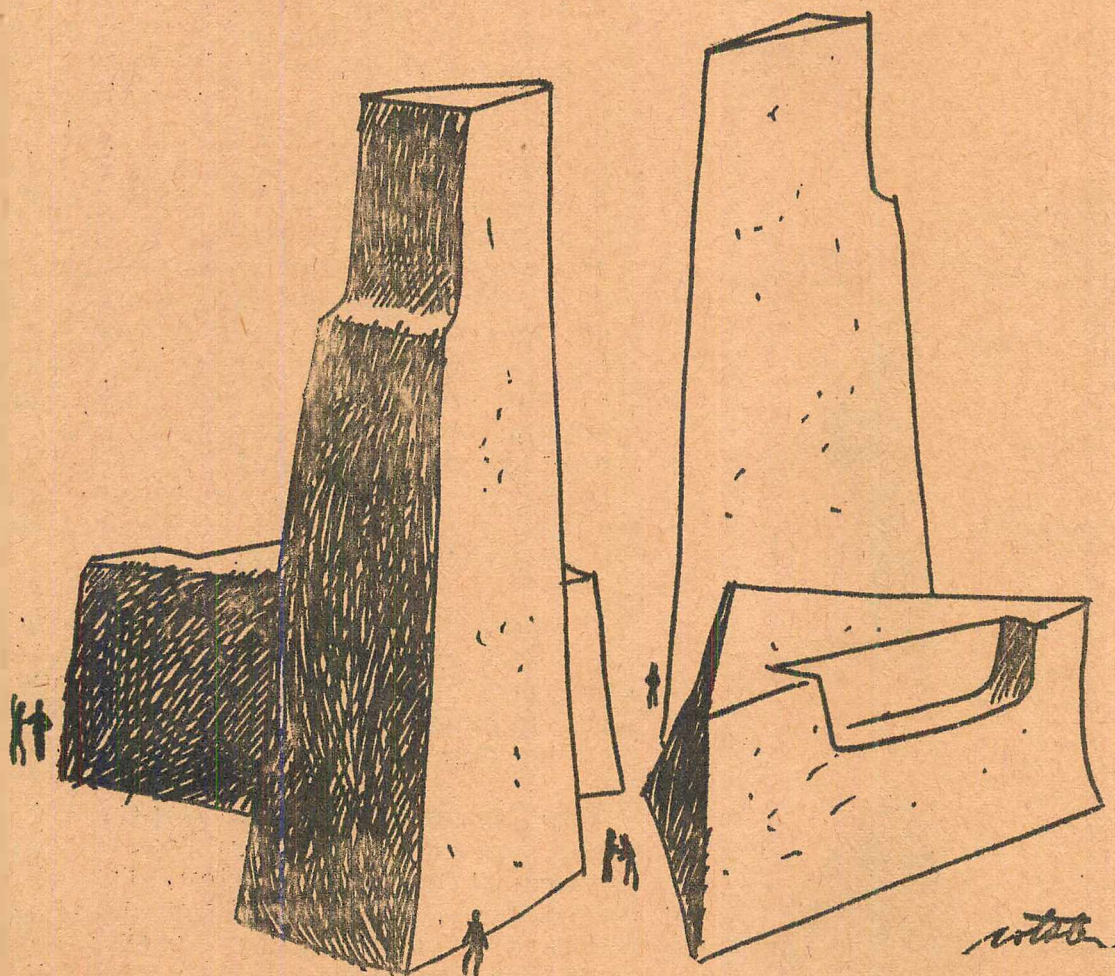
I had breakfast, he went through his own personal abridged form of morning prayers and we left at 5:10.

Being awake and on the street at ten minutes after five is not a new experience for me — but leaving home rather than coming home was. I said as much to my father and we laughed about it. There was nobody else out — not even in their cars, and it was colder than I'd yet felt it that fall. I surprised myself by my lack of yearning for my warm bed. It was good to be up at a healthy, puritan hour, a farmer's wholesome time, looking forward to 6 or 8 hours of work during time I'm usually unconscious. It was like getting those hours as a gift.

At the bus stop, my father told me that we would take the 5:25 bus. I'd had no idea that New York City transit buses could keep to a precise schedule, but apparently he relied on it. It's only a five minute walk to the stop, but my father is a careful man and so he leaves as early as he does because the buses are still half an hour apart at that early hour and it wouldn't do to miss one. He said we could be expecting some

company soon and a few moments later two men came up from different directions and greeted my father by name. My father replied with "Good morning." and introduced me. "This is my son," he said, and the men shook my hand and made approving remarks to my father about "breaking him in" and "taking him into the business at last" through tight, cold-morning smiles. A grey Oldsmobile pulled up and the driver beckoned to us. He would have driven us into Flushing for 50¢, but we waved him off to wait patiently for the faithful 5:25.

To my surprise, most of the seats were taken. My father went through his good neighbor routine with some of the people who were already aboard. There's a subculture of predawn commuters and they share an unspoken sense of community. Slowly, I was being initiated. For example, when we got to Flushing for the bus that would take us to somewhere near the borough border where we'd change for another bus across Brooklyn to Williamsburg, we found the bus lit up but closed and the driver missing. "He's across the street having coffee," my father said. He then proceeded to pull the door open from the outside and enter the bus, deposit our fares and take our transfers. I was about to protest when I noticed that there were other people sitting near the back of the bus who seemed to find nothing unusual in my father's behavior and perhaps had gotten in the same way. After we sat down, I watched a few more people get in and help themselves similarly. "It's a self-service bus," my father noted.



The early morning streets of central Queens are as lifeless and unreal as the town in a kid's model train layout. I couldn't help thinking of all the thousands of unconscious human bodies all around us in every direction. We were a floating island of awareness in the night. I watched the stores and houses as we went by. The farther we went into the heartland of working-class Queens, the farther out of fashion everything seemed. If you ignored the few cars, you'd have no trouble believing you were riding into the past. All the Coca-Cola signs were pre-swirl. All of the architecture was pre-1950 or even pre-1940. I kept expecting to see "Buy War Bonds" signs and N.R.A. stickers in the shop windows. My father was deep in conversation with one of the other regulars, so I turned away from them and continued to stare at the passing diorama. It was so carefully done it was hard not to believe in its reality.

Crossing industrial Brooklyn after changing buses was like trekking across a great, dark desert. The streets were even emptier and there were no warmly-lit kitchens with people having breakfast in them to give the area a bare semblance of life, just dark buildings. Somehow the lack of thousands of unconscious bodies was even spookier than my knowledge of their presence. Reaching the foot of Brooklyn's Broadway at 6:30, the sun was beginning to tint the buildings of lower Manhattan across the river. Seeing Manhattan again was like waking from a dream.

A Fanhouse for Fun in 2001. Support the Fund:

This issue begins as soon as you receive it in the mail; for that's when Ross Chamberlain's marvelous fannish 'Believe it or Not' strikes your eye. Considering how many people had given this fanzine up for dead, I couldn't think of a more appropriate motif to mark the occasion (and incidentally to give those of you with weak hearts or nervous conditions a warning as to the possibly surprising contents of the envelope: I wouldn't want anyone to sue me for 'shock'ing negligence or assault with a deadly fanzine) and Ross, as usual, has outdone himself and surpassed my perfectionist hopes.

It should be noted, by the way, that all but one of the 'strange facts' on that cachet are true. Deducing (or guessing) which is not is left as an exercise to the reader.

This is an opportune moment to suggest to you all that Ross is long overdue for some wider, formal recognition. It's perhaps understandable that he's never gotten a Hugo nomination, considering that most of his work has appeared on or in small, fannish zines, but now that we have the FAAn Awards (and assuming Ross keeps up his current level



of activity) there is no reason he should not be nominated in either FAAn fanart category. Certainly there is no one in fandom with more mastery of the ancient and noble skill of arting on stencil, and that alone is worthy of an award. I hope you'll remember that next year at nominating time.

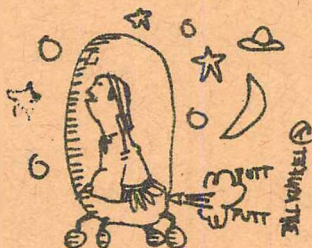
Anyway, I had started to talk about how this issue actually began before you opened the envelope. I brought the subject up because I want to explain that the photo reproduced over there on the facing page is a complement to the envelope cachet. I like to round things off neatly, so to sort of balance the fancy envelope, I'm ending the editorial with a similar bit of fanciness, indeed, another believe it or not. That's right, believe it or not, that is a picture of me.

Now I know some of you will have difficulty believing that, and I'll even admit that the picture is not very recent (it's all of a year and a half old), but that really is me.

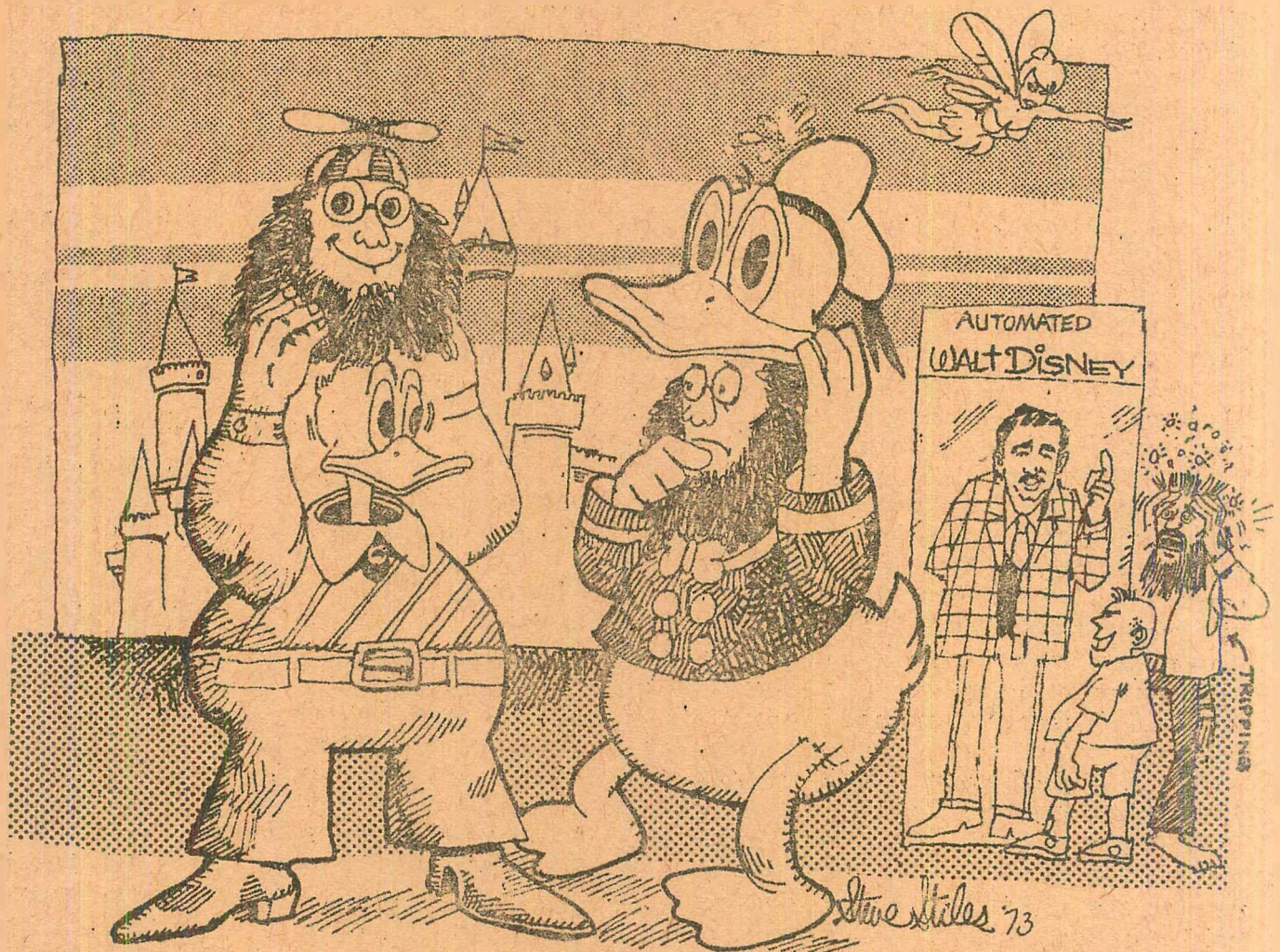
You see, the more I've gone to cons, especially since the FAAns began, the more often I've met people who are surprised by my appearance. It's not just that I'm not quite what they pictured — that's a common enough experience in fandom and one I'm quite familiar with myself. It's because they thought, for some strange reason, that I'm about twice as old as I actually am. I don't know how this image of me got started, why I'm pictured as middle-aged and stodgy, but there it is. Of course, there's no truth to it. I'm 25 and in the prime of my life (Although I'll admit it seems strange to be even that old.). I have all my limbs, and, as far as I know, all my faculties. (If I've been typing in a padded cell all night oblivious to my true surroundings, please someone tell me, so I can go to sleep on the nice soft ceiling.) While it's true that it's been a long time since the last issue, and it's true that I was just a college kid when the first issues came out, it hasn't been so long that I've grown any grey hairs yet and my hand is still steady enough to apply corflu with great accuracy. So quash the rumor that I'm Ben Indick's older brother or Bill Bowers's grandfather: I'm a kid, always have been and always will be. My style may wreak of age, crankiness and respectability to some of you but ~~check your streak receptor~~ that's mellow patina, not cobwebs you're detecting and actually, if viewed as a piece of furniture, if anything I've been artificially antiqued and I'm actually fresh from the factory. I'm not 60 or 55; I'm not 42 or even 37. I'm one score and five and will remain so until at least November. I am not a hoax. I hope the photo will be sufficient to convince you of the truth of my statements. If not, how about a short footrace at the next con I see you at? A sprint down the beach at Suncon? Well, we'll see. Meanwhile, have a good summer and enjoy the fanzine.

Deep peace of the running wave to you,

Moshe
Moshe Feder
(4/73-7/10/77)



Snow Walt & The Seventies



David Emerson

When I first saw the ads I nearly flipped. For four weeks in July and August, Lincoln Center would be holding a retrospective of Walt Disney films, in conjunction with the Disney studio's fiftieth anniversary. Prominently a part would be the full-length animated features such as Snow White, Cinderella and Fantasia. I immediately wanted to see everything on the program — a tall order, since there were three programs a day, six days a week, for four weeks, with little repetition. But I had other things on my schedule, and by the time I got around to ordering tickets, I could only work-in nine shows. It was just as

well that I had waited, or rather, procrastinated, for the Center had added extra showings of the most popular features. Still, seats were not that easy to come by and I had to settle for way-in-the-backs. Prices were three dollars for the evening shows, so I came away from the box office \$27.00 poorer but nine tickets richer. Just leafing through the tickets sent shivers of anticipation up and down my spine, and I jumped up and down a few times with glee, no doubt entertaining several passersby. ("Look Harry, there's a real live New York weirdo, just like Aunt Edna said.")

I don't know what I expected from the showings themselves — at least not until my roommate Eli came back from a daytime (He's a student and doesn't have to follow somebody else's 9 to 5 clock.) program in the first week. "How was it?" I asked him.

"Great," he replied, "at least, what I could see of it from behind all the Mickey Mouse ears."

Inwardly, I groaned. I recalled going to see Beatles movies when they first came out, and missing most of the dialogue for all the screaming in the audience. Now I anticipated the same screaming from all the tiny tots whose parents were taking them to see decent family entertainment instead of all that sex and violence crap you can't take your kids to nowadays.

Instead, I was surprised to find a typical West Side audience of the young-and-shaggy mixed with the slightly-older-but-still-hip, with a smattering of the normal Lincoln Center dressy crowd and, yes, an occasional little kid. After all, how many little kids get taken to a 10:30 p.m. movie? And these people were all there to see the films, more than to see each other (a phenomenon you often note at rock concerts) or to show others how aware and current they were — I mean, it wasn't the crowd you'd find at Last Tango in Paris. Nor did it seem the campy thing to do or part of the 50s revival. People just up and came to see Snow White because they wanted to see Snow White, and that was that.

And I went to see Snow White.

You know how your memory fades on you, how after a while what you think is a pretty clear memory is really only the bare bones, the highlights of what you once remembered? Well, it must have been ten years at the very least since I had last seen Snow White, and when I saw it that first week of the festival, I realized I had that kind of memory about most of these films. There were all sorts of things in there that I hadn't remembered at all, and everything else contained richness and detail I had forgotten. But more than details and certain scenes, I had forgotten what animated films used to be like. Just as someone who hasn't seen you for years may remark, "How you've changed," while you haven't noticed anything because it's happened too slowly, so the quality of animation has gradually declined over the past 20 or 30 years. Now that Hanna-Barbera (or maybe Jay Ward/Bill Scott) is the norm, we are no longer conscious of how good animation can be. Until this past July, I accepted as standard that cartoon characters were nothing more than cardboard cutouts and backgrounds were made to go unnoticed. I knew that motion could be more fluid than the usual stiff style, and from Yellow Submarine I knew that surrealism and psychedelia were possible, but still in an abstracted way.

Disney animation was a whole different world: a world of carefully constructed backgrounds and finely crafted characters, of light and shadow, of rounded, shaded, three-dimensional objects, of people that looked and moved like people, and animals that were really animals even with the human characteristics imposed upon them by the medium. For the first time since childhood I found myself identifying with a cartoon character and getting caught up in the cartoon action; so, apparently did everyone else in the audience, judging from the cheers and applause that accompanied the wicked witch to her demise.

And when I walked out of that first Lincoln Center show, I was hooked. Were nine shows going to be enough? I bemoaned the filling of my schedule and emptying of my wallet that crossed Dumbo and Sleeping Beauty off my list; try as I might, I couldn't manage to see Lady and the Tramp or The Jungle Book either, but I did skip work one afternoon to see The Sword in the Stone.

By the end of the festival, I was floating. I had nearly O.D.'d on Disney films, and had come to the conclusion that Being Real is a Drag. I mean, just look at the evidence: in a cartoon, the colors are clear, bright and beautiful; people are still people, but it's much easier to tell the good guys from the bad guys, and the supporting cast and the comic relief from the rest; life goes on in pretty much the same fashion, except for the existence of real M*A*G*I*C — fairies, godmother and otherwise, spells, transformations, pumpkin coaches and flying elephants, talking animals (indeed, in Alice in Wonderland, talking everything), witches, wizards, magicians — the whole bit. Who wants to live in the gray, humdrum, so-called "real" world? Wouldn't you think that a world so much brighter and more intense is naturally more real? Besides, I had fallen in love with Cinderella.

After a week or so I calmed down.

Looking back now, I can see what I got out of the experience. First of all, there was the chance to see all those films in a short time, and thus be able to see the growth and development and eventual decline of the Disney product over the years. Even the shorts (e.g., Mickey Mouse cartoons or Silly Symphonies) that were shown with each program contributed to this overall view; in fact, they were indispensable, since many of them were made well before the first feature-length animation, 1937's Snow White. I could see how the cartoon technique improved through the shorts until the Silly Symphony, "The Old Mill" in 1937 employed all the masterful touches — use of color, musical score, timing and pacing for dramatic effect, rich background and detailed movement (when a bird flies by, you can see every beat of the wings), and most of all, the animalness of the animals. The owl was like a grumpy old man, but he was still an owl; the nesting birds were like a newlywed couple, but they were still birds; in spite of human traits, the bats were really bats and the frogs were really frogs. It was clear that by this time the Disney animators were more than ready to tackle a full-length film.

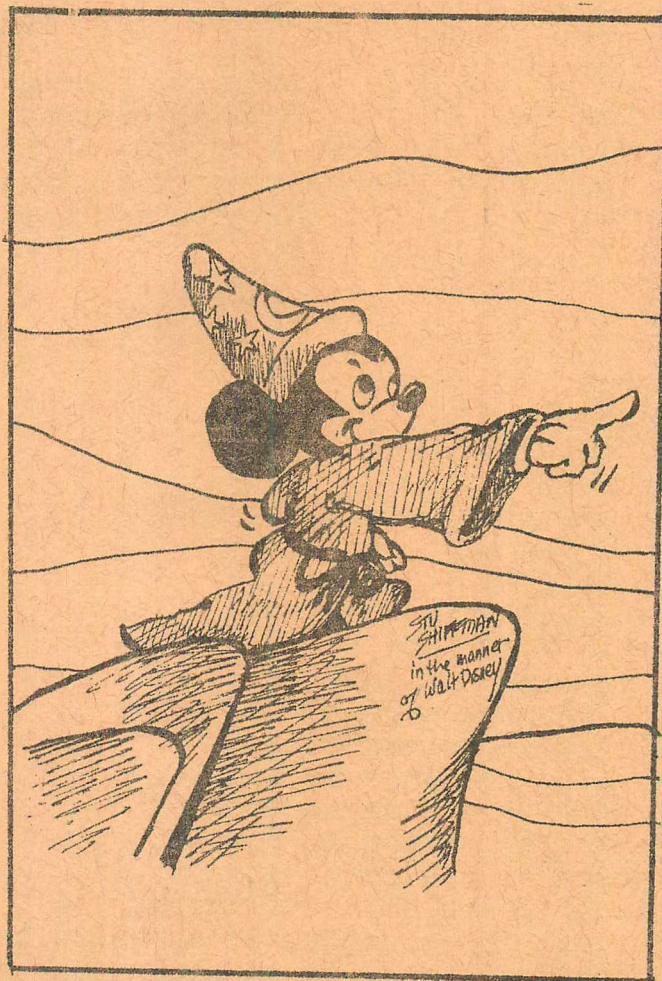
Naturally, Snow White, and Pinocchio which followed in 1940, were excellent films from the production standpoint — triumphs of animation. But they suffered from excessive moralizing and an almost infantile division between Good and Evil, expressing the philosophy that there were only those two sides to choose from and that Evil was bad simply because it was the wrong side. Morality was simplified to the level of a game. This was especially evident in Pinocchio, where it was

shown that Being a Bad Boy was not so much intrinsically harmful, but the punishment for it was to be turned into a donkey. It was probably this attitude that relegated these films to the children's market, more than the simple fact of their being animated rather than live action. But then again, these were fairy tales, part of a rigidly defined tradition in which the strong Good/Evil dichotomy was a basic assumption.

The next three films overcame this drawback, mostly by sidestepping it, while the technical quality kept improving. Fantasia had nothing childish about it, except possibly Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice; Dumbo, in 1941, was intentionally light and comic; and the 1942 Bambi was a serious picture of life, complete with all the great universals — love, death, fear, struggle, friends and enemies, youth, growth and maturity.

Bambi also represents a pinnacle of the mechanics of setting drawings into motion. It opens with a pan through the forest, using the multiplane camera (different layers of the background mounted on different sheets of glass photographed so as to simulate the depth and relative motion of vision in the 3-dimensional world) and a richly detailed set of backgrounds to give a convincing illusion of reality. Only when the camera pans across a waterfall and stream do we remember that this is animation — they couldn't quite duplicate flowing water, though they came very close. The use of light and darkness in this film are striking. The scenes in the forest are suitably muted, in contrast to the bright colors and open feeling of the meadow scenes; and a major sequence — Bambi's first fight with another stag — is done half in shadow, with the two of them occasionally tumbling through patches of light. The famous forest fire scene is a masterpiece of light and color epitomized in the depiction of flames, which are in essence nothing more than moving color.

Here again is the amazingly faithful portrayal of animals. Just picture in your mind a grazing doe, lifting her head and straightening up, then pausing as if listening, or perhaps smelling something as the wind shifts, then jerking her head around, looking over her shoulder and bolting for the safety of the forest. You can see this particular set of motions; the animators had to create a set of drawings which, when



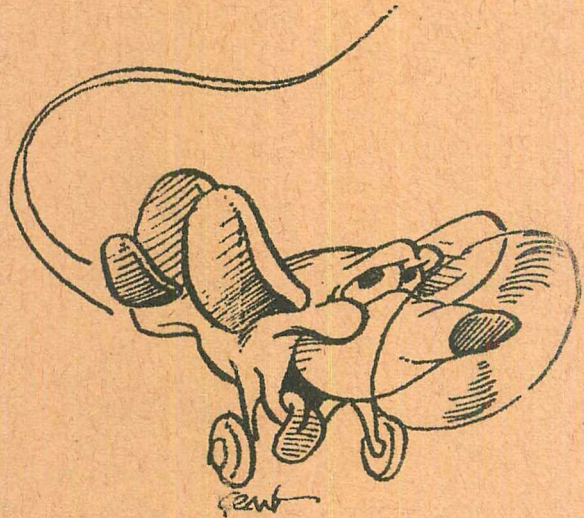
viewed at a certain rate of speed combine to produce exactly that motion. According to the program notes, Disney brought live animals into the studio and sent artists out into the field to study the natural actions of their subjects. The results were certainly worth the effort. Yet, paradoxically, while the animals were truly animals, they were truly human as well. All the "child" creatures (the newborn Bambi and his early friends Thumper and Flower) were done with what seemed like actual little-kid voices; their behavior and mannerisms were almost archtypical child patterns; and they were just SO CUTE — but not in the calculated, sickeningly-sweet fashion of today. As an amusing contrast, Bambi turns up the following spring with a set of antlers and a Joe College voice.

The festival's remarkably thorough program book, which included essays on animation and the Disney animators, a chronicle of Walt Disney Productions and notes on each of the major films, pointed out the economic influences on the animations after Bambi:

After the war, Disney was forced to rebuild his financial base and this led him into areas of compromise he had previously been able to avoid. None of his postwar films display quite the sense of risk that is apparent in so much of his work of the thirties and forties. —Christopher Finch

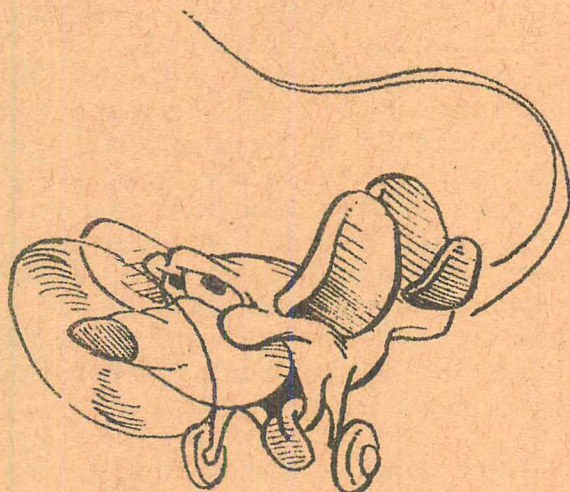
Apparently, this put restrictions on the purely technical side of the operation, like the painstaking work that had gone into that opening pan in Bambi; and the urge to innovate, as in the stag fight with its unusual lighting, or with the whole concept of Fantasia, seemed to bow to a new sense of caution. Indeed, in the later years of the fifties, and throughout the sixties, it appeared that the physical processes were undergoing a change in emphasis away from the ultimate goal of complete naturalism. Sleeping Beauty (1959) introduced a stylized, angular look in the drawings; 101 Dalmations (1961) saw the transition from fully modeled, rounded backgrounds to a flatter, more two-dimensional style; and by 1963, it was evident in The Sword in the Stone that the drawings as a whole were becoming sketchier and less finished-looking. Not that the films were going to pot: Sleeping Beauty was done in wide-screen with a \$6 million budget, and The Sword in the Stone saw the use of many more colors than had previously been the standard.

Fortunately, the films of the early fifties still retained most of the high quality and ideals of the forties, while reflecting the changing cultural definitions in terms of plot and character. In other words, they weren't quite as corny. For example, Snow White is an incredible goody-goody; and although Pinocchio is a genuine innocent, the prevailing spirit of his story is in that same moralistic mode. The characters of the fifties films are a little more worldly and considerably more human.



More importantly, the fifties featured the development of a naturalistic treatment of human faces, figures and movements, while continuing the caricature treatment as an alternative. An example of this is Peter Pan (1953); in which Wendy is portrayed realistically; pirates, Indians and Lost Boys are definitely cartoonish; and Peter and Captain Hook are somewhere in between, with natural expressions on stylized faces. (Digression: I was surprised, upon seeing Peter Pan again after about 15 years, to realize what a rotten kid Peter was! Insolent, cocky, brash and self-indulgent — in fact, every little boy's ideal. This movie really expressed the fantasies of children at play: pirates, Indians, a secret hideout, magic (in the form of Tinker Bell) and flying. No wonder it was a favorite.)

But the best films of this period, and in my own view the best of all, were Cinderella (1950) and Alice in Wonderland (1951). Alice in particular is my personal favorite, due to my fondness for the Lewis Carroll original. Alice herself is not your typical Disney character. Neither Good nor Evil, she merely reflects and reacts to her curious surroundings and accompanies the viewer in the journey through Wonderland. A touch of Disney is put in, making things around her a little cuter and adding a little slapstick, but Carroll's basic intent comes through clearly.



John Culhane, host and commentator for the festival, says in the program notes, "An animator is really an actor with a pencil, and these films contain a gallery of great performances." And in particular, "Milt Kahl takes on the hard-to-draw, hard-to-animate human characters from Alice in Wonderland to Aristocats — and brings them all off. It's true. The animation of Alice is a work of genius. She moves, looks and

talks realistically; and all the consternation, amazement, curiosity, glee, anger — all her reactions to the strange and confusing world around her — are apparent on her face, all fantastically convincing. In one scene, she wrestles with a flamingo that's supposed to be her croquet mallet; she smiles craftily, enticing the bird's head down to within reach and then grabs it by the neck in triumph, with a hint of anger and frustration. All these emotions cross her face as quickly and subtly as in life, so that the viewer reads them directly, rather than by translating a set of cartoon conventions. Tautologically speaking, she is made a real person by being made lifelike.

However, it is Cinderella that I consider the best of the Disney animated films. The two main characters, Cinderella and the stepmother, are both done in that incredibly lifelike human style; the animals once again combine animal and human characteristics; the magic is suitably awesome and beautiful; the story is classically romantic; there is just enough humor in the right places. The mice are adorable but still short of being too cute; Cinderella is a remarkable woman but still a believable person, just as the stepmother is cold-hearted and nasty without being truly evil.

The emotional content of the story is paced for optimum effect, delivering frustration, anticipation, grief, joy, suspense and triumph, culminating in the happiest of happy endings. What more could anyone want? This is not only a great animation, it's a great film, period. But then, I may be a bit biased. I told you I had fallen in love with Cinderella.

Seeing several of these films at once led me to notice some similarities they share. After seeing three or four examples of that standard opening sequence showing a book opening to reveal a story with illustrations which begin to move, and turn into the first scene of the movie, I got to the point of cringing whenever yet another film began the same way. And a minor point, which few have noticed, is that most Disney movies are pro-dog and anti-cat. (Not surprising when one realizes that the entire Disney empire was built around a mouse.) Aside from the recent Aristocats, the only sympathetic cats were the minor characters of Figaro in Pinocchio and Dinah in Alice in Wonderland, and they were more like kittens than real cats, at that; but the cats in Cinderella and Lady and the Tramp were downright villainous.

After viewing Peter Pan, I was talking with some friends about it and we all wondered what had happened to the songs we remembered from the movie. People brought up other songs from other movies, and we all knew the songs but hadn't heard them or had heard slightly different versions in the recent showings. Could they have cut these films? With all the dedication to art that was a keynote of the festival, it seemed highly unlikely that any cuts or alterations would go unnoted. But the clincher came when people started saying that these songs were on the records, too. Now the plot thickens. Because of all the commercialism surrounding the Disney product, each major release was accompanied by a host of books, records, cereal-box premiums, jelly glasses and assorted paraphernalia — and of course when we were little kids we had to have them all. Eventually, I found that no one could swear that they had really heard the songs in the movie rather than on the record. I remember having a map of Never-never Land tacked up on my bedroom wall, and I played Peter Pan games all the time; so it's very likely I had the record, with songs like "Second Star on the Right" and "Never Smile at a Crocodile" which I later came to think were in the movie.

Now, at first this seems to merit little more than a shrug and a "How about that?" But it got me thinking. I thought of a nation of children, all seeing the same movie, being enchanted by it, and pestering their parents to buy them the associated merchandise; these kids really get into this movie and it becomes a permanent part of their early lives. This happens again and again, and in twenty years you have a great host of young adults who all had this one thing in common: they all saw the Disney films and loved them. One single man, Walt Disney, reached millions of people in their formative years and permanently influenced them. It is difficult to think of the titles "Cinderella" and "Snow White" and see anything but the Disney version. And if all these millions of people were so affected, could they possibly have prevented the implicit value system of these films from seeping into their souls?

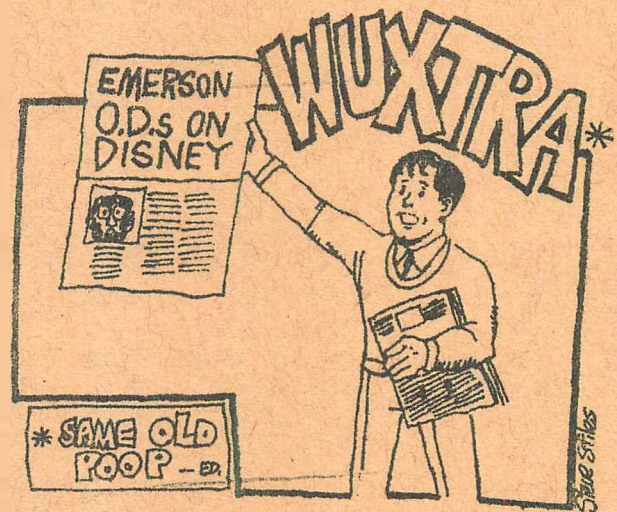
Walt Disney merely wanted to make movies that entertained. But despite that, or perhaps because of it, his creations were so excellent that they transcended mere entertainment and became cultural phenomena. Disney and his movies are now an integral part of American culture, and I don't mean culture as in the Philharmonic and the Museum of Art, I mean culture as in Our Way of Life.

About a year ago, when I was visiting my family in central Florida, we

went to Walt Disney World for a day. I had lots of fun and enjoyed myself immensely, but that was mostly because of the long associations I'd had with all the Disney creations, not to mention all those years of watching the weekly TV show and seeing bits of the California Disneyland. As I was going through the "Swiss Family Robinson's Treehouse" exhibit and marveling at the huge banyan tree it was built on, I noticed that the tree wasn't really a tree at all, but a plastic reproduction. It had been built there on the spot. The rooms and furnishings were not made of wood, but of plastic cleverly faked to look just like wood — no doubt they held up to the weather better than wood at that. But the whole place was like that — not a collection of real things, but constructed imitations. Frontierland was twice removed from reality: not the real Old West, but a simulation of a misconception of the original. An all I could think of, as I stood outside "Sleeping Beauty's Castle," watching the wholesome families with their 2.3 children patronizing the snack bar inside, was, "My God, how utterly American this is." The more I looked, the more I came to see that Disneyland, and the whole Disney mythos, is not just an entertainment, not even merely an American phenomenon, but the epitome and total embodiment of America.

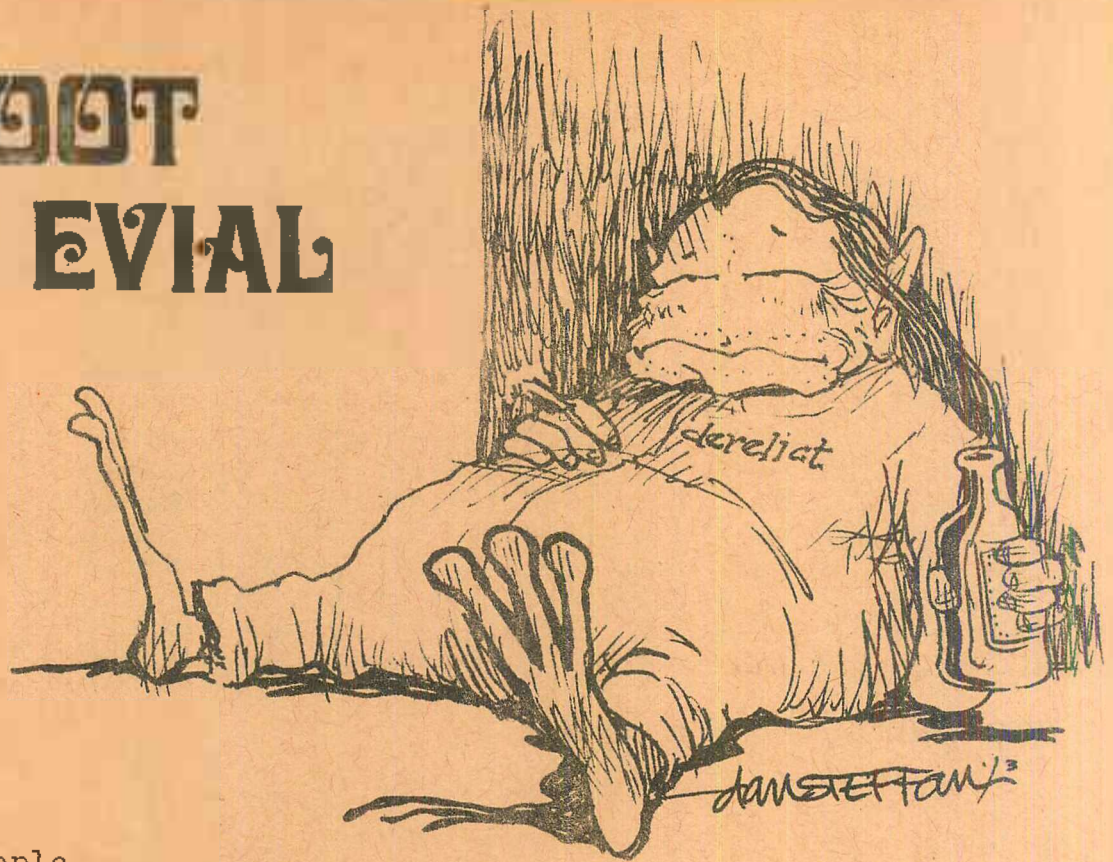
And that's an awesome thing.

— David Emerson
(8/23/73)



THE ROOT OF ALL EVIAL

by HANK DAVIS



An Enemy of the People

Speaking of evial, there is the matter of work — a necessary, but undeniable evial, and more so for most fans than for the mundanes. Consider the almost Hegelian contradiction between the Slanlike world of fandom and the crass commercial world to which the fan needs must return, like a butterfly being recycled into a caterpillar, again and again. Few are the Terry Carrs and Ted Whites who more or less make a living in SF.

Fortunately, a fan can get back his own every time and pile up the fanac as well. When the roof fell in at the Overhead Door Co., Buck Coulson filled half a page in YANDRO with an account of his hearsbreadth escape. When weirdo customers bedeviled Liz Fishman in the store where she worked, little did they suspect that they would soon be ruthlessly dissected in her fanzine column. When one of Rosemary Ulliot's coworkers suavely suggested to her that he move into her apartment, not because he lusted after her soft, white body, but because the location was conveniently close to work, how was he to know that all of fandom would be witness to his gaucherie? Beware, mundane world. We fans are everywhere, watching you, and laughing at you.

Swift and dreadful is the wrath of the fan writer. And the wrath's unleashing makes good copy and resolves the fan/mundane contradiction at the same time. For most fans.

But my job, alas, lacks these fringe benefits. As several fans have mentioned, I am an Enemy of the People. I am a tax collector. "Dum da dum dum." (The Internal Revenue Service doesn't want me calling myself a tax collector, I should note, but the few other chores I perform are trivial. A tax collector I am.)

Even lacking Slannish tendrils, a fan can spot an evildoer a mile away. My lame comeback, "Well, somebody's got to go out and get the money for the space program." is beginning to wear a little thin, as is the program.

I did experience a brief martyrdom which evoked sympathy last November, when the Scientologists were picketing the IRS building because the Service did not consider L. Ron Hubbard's chowder, marching and money society to be a bona fide, hence tax-free, church; but since that time, the dreaded April 15 has come and gone. Look what I've done to them lately. Back on with the black hat.

Aside from making me known as Running Dog Davis, the tax biz does not give rise to chatty, witty columns. Humorous things do happen in IRSland, but most would be too esoteric to the outsider and require too much explanation before they could be appreciated. For example, there was the company whose 941 form tax had been deposited not on the 501 form, but rather on the 503 form used for the 1120 tax form. When he received a notice stating that IRS had gotten his 941 form and it was okay, but where was the money, eh? he indignantly mailed in a photocopy of the 503 stub. When I saw that photocopy of the 1120 deposit form 503 stub, I was rolling in the aisles.

Doesn't sound funny to you, does it?

Take it from me, it's a real thigh-slapper.

(Bet you didn't know we had aisles at IRS.)

Less esoteric was the fellow whose payment had gotten, as happens on, ah, rare occasions. This time, we had the taxpayer's return and no dough, but the fellow had sent a check to us instead of depositing it in a bank, letting the bank send it on to us. Pity; banks know what they're doing.

He responded to the notice from IRS by sending another check. For full payment. Even though he had the cancelled check, he sent full payment again. And he didn't do it too promptly, either. As his check crept through the catacombs, dungeons and torture chambers of the Post Office, it must have passed our Final Notice going the other way.

You will notice that I have capitalized Final Notice. It deserves it. The phrase in bold type sitting in the center of the page, FINAL NOTICE BEFORE SEIZURE, alone merits the honor. It goes uphill from there. And Lovecraft thought he wrote scary stuff. . . .

Anyway, our hero responded to the third notice without hesitation. He sent a third check, with a note saying, "Please don't lose this one."

Your mommy was right. It does help to say "please." His second check had closed the case, and the third was returned to him. We knew, too, that the IRS had located the first payment, since a voucher called a credit advice had arrived at Manhattan District IRS. The second payment would be refunded in due course. Wouldn't take more than two or three months.

Hilarious, eh?

If your funny bone remains untickled, perhaps a bit of personal involvement will be more to your liking.

The boss called everybody into the office a couple of weeks ago. Made an announcement. Seems that the Black Liberation Army is no longer content with blowing up policemen. They are now going after your friendly

neighborhood tax collectors — such as me. They are mailing small, flat bombs in envelopes of all types and sizes. The trigger spring is under the sealing flap. Open the flap, and you will instantly be cured of biting your nails, unless you can manage to reach your feet.

We were told to beware of envelopes with unfamiliar return addresses.—

But I'm a fan. . . .

I get lots of mail with unfamiliar return addresses.

Doom!

The People may yet be avenged.



POK → DEATH

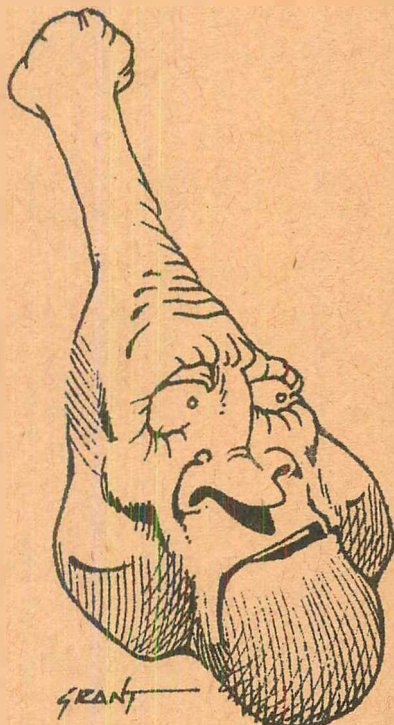
The Revolt of the Pedestrians

When I read Starship Troopers, I was not horrified by the future society presented therein. A society that has public lashings for traffic violations can't be all bad. I have no patience whatsoever with operators of Mr. Ford's infernal device and its competitors.

Of course, I have never owned a car. Nor has my father or mother. There may be a connection.

In any case, none can deny that there are many wrongs committed by drivers which go unpunished. And when the "legitimate" authorities cannot deal with the problem, vigilantes must arise.

For example, there is the well-known erotic fixation that many drivers have on the color red. At intersections, this leads to their stopping their car as close as possible to the red light, blocking the pedestrian crosswalk. The hapless walker must walk around the car, losing time and possibly thrusting him or herself into danger.



This intolerable situation must cease! Pedestrians must band together for common defense.

Therefore, I propose the formation of of the Legion of Ball-peen Hammer Wielders. Members will carry a ball-peen hammer in a convenient hip holster, or, for the more flamboyant, a concealed under-arm holster. When a member is trapped by a motorist in thrall of the hypnotic red light's attraction, he will briskly whip out his instrument of justice and wreak a terrible vengeance: He will smash the lout's right headlight. Or, to be more exact, the car's headlight.

In addition, he will record the offender's license number and communicate it to the Legion Grand Command, which will

compile weekly lists. In this way, if a motorist persists in his villainy, he can be identified as a second offender. He gets both headlights smashed. If he has let the first headlight go unrepaired, he gets the remaining headlight and both taillights smashed.

As for third offenders, more about them later.

Another type of villainy going unpunished is that of the cur who who prepares to turn a corner, sees a pedestrian about to exercise his Ghod-given right of way and cross at the cross street, and goes right ahead and turns the corner. The more sportsmanlike of this type will hit the horn to give a honk of fair warning.

Since the car in this case never comes to a halt, or even slows much below sixty, the dreaded ball-peen hammer is not the appropriate weapon of retribution. To handle the job, a compact paint sprayer would even the score, but would be risky in a high wind. Better would be a gun firing a pellet which would unfold upon impact into an adhesive sticker. After being struck by one of these projectiles, the wrongdoer would be forced to drive a car bearing some suitably vindictive slogan, such as "The Legion Strikes Again," or "The Weed of Crime Bears Bitter Fruit," or perhaps just a silhouette of the dreaded ball peen hammer.

We all know the driver who — even though he is required to stop for the "stop" sign — honks his horn at the pedestrian crossing the street in front of his car. Imagine his surprise when he tries this on a member and the Legionaire whips out his portable foghorn, with parabolic reflector and fairly shatters the noisy lout's eardrums. And, if the driver should happen to be one of the unspeakably evil third offenders mentioned earlier, imagine his further shock when the Legionaire cuts in the optional ultrasonics and the shattered windshield falls into his lap! If bad driving should happen to be hereditary, this last maneuver might well eliminate the undesirable gene within a generation.

There will be those who will scoff, doubting that such an organization of vigilantes would be allowed to get away with such doings. But the sanctity of The Legion can easily be assured: The Legion shall claim to be a union. No court will dare rule against a union. A union can get away with anything.

And once the Legion is well organized, it can exert political pressure. Maybe a few new laws could be passed. . . .

Like I said, having public lashings for traffic violations doesn't sound like a bad idea at all.

Trees One, Cats Nothing

Up in the Bronx, we've got two cats. There's Sarsparilla, usually called "Sassy," and there's Fred, which is short for Fred. Fred grew up in the apartment and considers the spaces beyond those walls as unfit for feline habitation as if it were a hard vacuum. Taken outside occasionally, for his own good, he humps down, hoping nothing will notice him, and tries to make his black and white fur blend in with the concrete and brick. Though he tends toward foolhardy ventures, as this inept camouflage attempt shows, he's no problem.

Sassy, however, wants out, constantly. His heart knows why the caged

bird sings: Which wouldn't keep him from going after that bird. He has been known to sit in windows and yammer through the glass at birds for their impertinence in being out of reach. When I return to the apartment, he is always lurking behind the door, forcing me to display Bruce Lee-like footwork to discourage him from making a break. The footwork does not always turn the trick, but there is an outer door, making a sort of airlock of the entrance, which has so far stopped him. He is a problem.

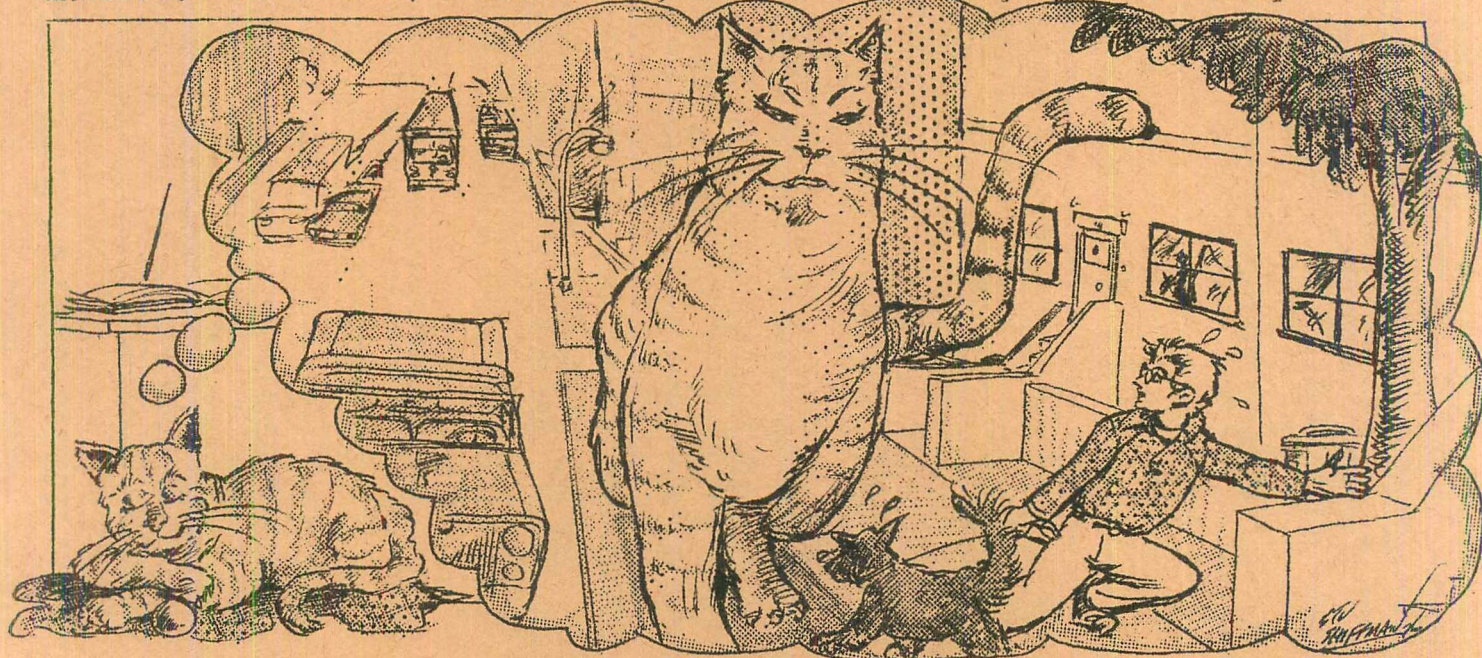
Sometimes, I let the poor shackled beast out to run around. At first, I watched him to make sure he didn't confuse home base with the other cracker-box houses, but his exemplary behavior lulled me out of my fully justified sense of impending disaster. Usually, he didn't do more than leap into the window flower box and eat the grass growing there (The grass is the kind you mow.). He ignored the baby maple tree sprouting in the box, apparently preferring to let it live until it's old enough to provide syrup.

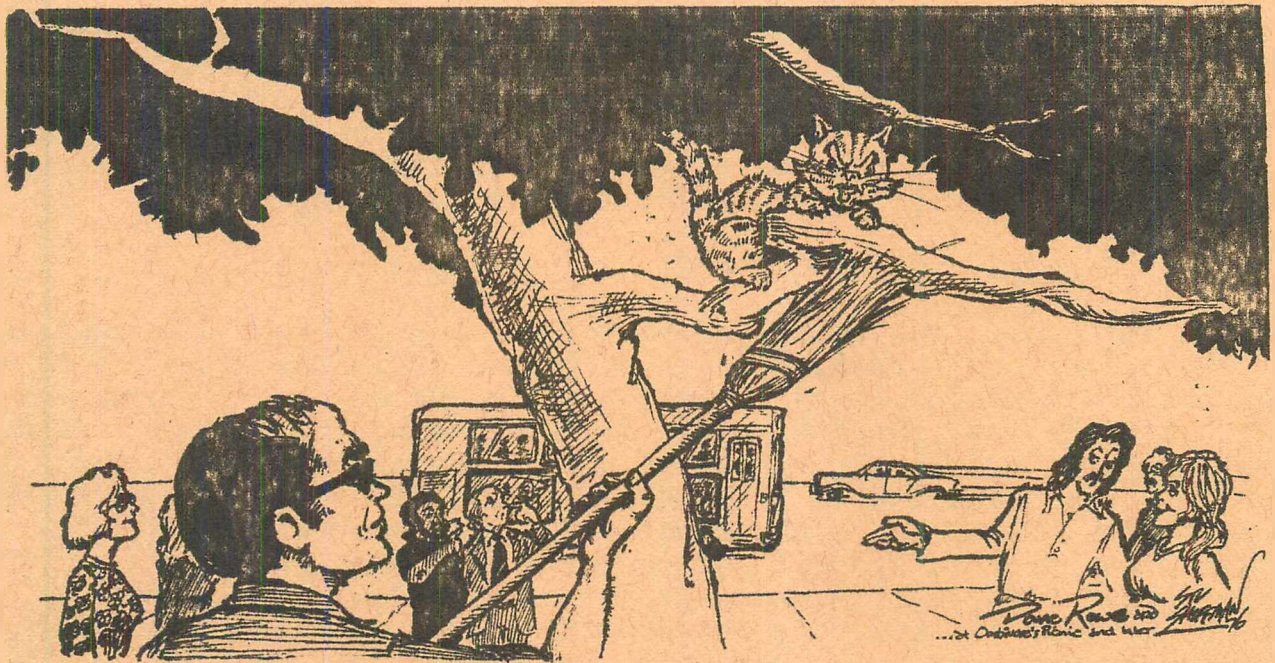
Maybe he got tired of waiting for the tree to grow up and took on its mama.

Whatever the cause, the third or fourth time that I had let Sassy go outside unattended proved the new cat excursion policy ill-considered. After letting Sassy have a go at the weeds and fresh air and sunshine for an hour or so, I emerged to collect him, and couldn't find him. Or couldn't see him, at least; though I heard him yelling somewhere. Finally, after listening to him for several minutes, I had the wit to look up, and saw him. In a tree.

I decided this was ridiculous. In movies, it's a cliché. Anything a dog does is funny — it goes with the floppy ears — but to get yoks from a cat, a director has to get him up a tree. But Sassy may not have seen the movies. Or maybe he did, and wanted to be a star. I could have told him that Morris didn't start out that way.

He wasn't far up — just twelve feet or so, nestled in the first fork of the tree. I tried to coax him down. Given a better command of the feline language, I would have shamed him with the example of my late cat, Neutron, who climbed trees, then got back down by herself. Or, I could have compared him unfavorably with Neutron's sibling, who easily got up and down garages, houses, and the local frive-in restaurant unaided. As it was, I could only listen while he yelled for help.





After a time, a neighbor came out. I had heard that there were neighbors in New York, as in other cities, but hadn't seen any before. Too bad there was no film in my camera.

The first two neighbors to arrive were helpful. Both women suggested (1) a ladder, (2) catnip, (3) both, (4) calling the fire department, (5) calling the ASPCA. One helpfully provided provided (1) and (2), so I climbed on (1), while brandishing (2), mixed with some tuna, on the tip of a broom. I wasn't sure what would happen next, as the stepladder's height plus my own left Sassy still a couple of feet out of reach. I was hoping he wouldn't try climbing down the broomstick while I was standing on the top platform, held there only by feedback from my semi-circular canals.

As it turned out, I had nothing to fear, including getting him out of the tree right then. As soon as he saw the broomstick coming at him, he went up another ten feet to the next fork, then went back to yelling for help.

We tried the local firehouse. No matter what you have seen in those movies, however, firemen do not get cats out of trees. They told us to try the SPCA. We did. They said they would have a crack team over realsoonnow.

Now consider this sequence, in which incontrovertible proof of precognition in cats is revealed!. Only minutes after Sassy had gone from the first fork of the tree to the second, along came two neighborhood kids, either of whom could have climbed up to the first fork. By then, Sassy was yelling for help from the less accessible second fork- but not for long. He soon had a difference of opinion with a squirrel, and ended up in the top of the tree, still yelling, at least forty feet above the ground, perched on a branch too thin to support anything heavier than a cat. Moments after this second escalation, along came another neighbor who offered the loan of his thirty-foot ladder. I rather wish the firemen had brought their truck over, just to see how Sassy would have rendered a hook and ladder useless.

All this notwithstanding, the critter continued to insist that he wanted help, bad. He had quite an audience by now, mostly between nine and twelve years old. Maybe Morris did start out this way.

Finally, the well-known ASPCA arrived. Rescue trucks only arrive quickly in Jack Webb TV shows. The defenders of animalkind unlimbered their gear, and one of them went to the top of the house closest to the tree and began waving a long pole at Sassy, chasing him down the tree, boing, jump sproing. The other was holding another pole, with a noose at the end, trying to get it around Sassy's neck, to pull him down.

Down? By his neck? But that's what he breathes through!

My mental image of a cat being forced to wear a neck brace did not come to pass, however and hurrah. Though they chased him throughout the tree's three dimensions, they never got the noose on him. During parts of the chase, he was hanging upside down, clinging to branches; which proved once and for all the virtue of not biting one's fingernails. In the end, he fell some twelve feet, hit the roof of a car, and headed for the outer door of the house and sanctuary. That door is not locked, but it has a spring to keep it shut and it takes some effort for me to push it open. Sassy got it open without slowing down at all, and I found him panting in the space between the doors. Carrying him on into the apartment was easy. The hard part was keeping his preteen fan club from following us.

Nowadays, the neighbors are again invisible, and when Sassy ventures outside, I'm watching him. I'm watching that baby maple tree in the window box, too. If it grows another inch, out it comes!

I Talked With God — Yes, I Did — Literally And Actually!

Back in the ninth grade, when I had my first English class that was anything more than a dreary rehash of basic grammar, I was having a ball writing essays on command. Later, I would tire of having a specific topic assigned, but initially I didn't mind; and I I was equal to any topic, save one. . . .

There was the time when I was prodded to write about a religious experience of mine. I realized that I had never had one. Deprived childhood, you know.

Eight years later, I could easily have written that paper, because I then had a religious experience of the sort which is normally vouchsafed only to a saint. I went to the 1966 Worldcon and I saw the gods. . . . Whoooo!

The experience was not wholly unflawed, however. Oh, Poul Anderson was there. Gordon R. Dickson, Roger Zelazny, Edmond Hamilton and Leigh Brackett were there. Lester del Rey and Hal Clement were there. Andre Norton was there somewhere, even is she was incognito. JOHN CAMPBELL WAS THERE! But God wasn't there.

Heinlein wasn't there.

And if SF is a religion, Heinlein is God. It's a polytheistic creed, of course, and nobody has pretensions of being the Creator; certainly not Heinlein. But Heinlein is the one in charge now, though unlike Zeus's castrating of Chronos, the succession involved no such major surgery, possibly because the gang of pre-Campbell SF writers was largely a ball-less lot, anyway.

So my first SF convention was a rewarding experience, but not an ideal

one. The main pedestal in the pantheon was vacant. Other pedestals were empty, too, such as those of Sturgeon the dazzler, and Clarke the dreamer, but subtracting Heinlein leaves the biggest possible hole in the space-time fabric (excepting only Campbell, and the editor-gods have their own pantheon).

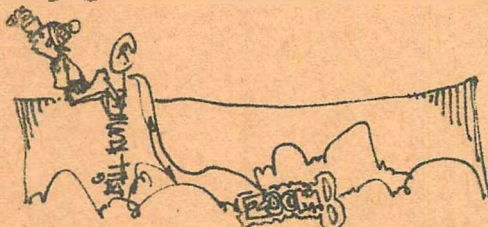
Later, after I got to know fandom, I could understand why Heinlein hadn't shown up. He was probably avoiding the Heinlein-haters. Fandom is rife with them. They lurk in the woodwork, like termites, but noisier. Mention Starship Troopers and they can be depended on to launch a sub-literate attack on its "fascism," usually revealing a superficial reading of the book. Mention a Heinlein juvenile, and they're quick to say that the book read well when they were teens, but couldn't stand up on rereading. When Alexei Panshin serialized most of Heinlein in Dimension in RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, one reader wrote in rejoicing that Panshin was "destroying" Heinlein. At a get-together of New York fans a year ago, one hater mentioned that Heinlein had been one of the founders of the John Birch Society. (He seemed offended when asked for proof of the statement.) Another, who had been at Annapolis and heard Heinlein's speech there discribed it as so "far right" that the cadets were shocked. (A reading of the speech as published in ANALOG indicates that someone is certainly easily shocked, though possibly not the cadets.) And the feminist fans throw flak at Heinlein, of all people, for being "sexist," though hardly anybody else in the 1950s had females as independent and gutsy as Heinlein did in The Star Beast, The Puppet Masters and The Rolling Stones, just to name a few. Starship Troopers has Ms. Deladrier Captaining a starship, and Project Moonbase (the other movie with a Heinlein script; the one nobody ever sees) has a woman President.

Thus the Heinlein-haters. Arguing with them is fruitless, if only because of their numbers; which may have something to do with Sturgeon's "90% crud" ratio. And I could easily understand if Heinlein wanted to keep them at a distance.

So I reconciled myself to never seeing Heinlein in person; at a con, at least. I did catch a glimpse on TV, in connection with the moon landing, (remember Project Apollo?), but it wasn't the same. Time passed, and I filled in the still-empty pedestals, meeting such gods as Arthur C. Clarke, Theodore Sturgeon and A. E. van Vogt, but still no Heinlein.

And yet the are rewarded. Came an announcement recently that Heinlein would speak in New York, at the 92nd Street Young Men and Young Women's Hebrew Association. When he did, I was there, and I didn't even have to kill anybody to get inside. And, after being introduced by the lady in charge as "one of today's leading Science Fiction writers" (just one of? — you can strike that!), out he came. Chewing gum.

I wasn't expecting lightning bolts to flash, really I wasn't, but I had read Anthony Boucher's description of him as tall (in Rocket to the Morgue, where he was renamed "Austin Carter"), and I was a bit surprised to see that he was not tall at all. I was expecting hair to be sparse, but in those dust jacket photos, the remaining hair shows as dark. In person, it's an almost transparent ghostly white. Somehow, he looked fragile, which was the last thing I expected. Even at sixty-plus, his writing isn't fragile.



He apologized for chewing gum (it was Aspergum — the last few days had

been rough, he said) and for not being a polished public speaker. He spoke in a rambling way and sort of sidestepped into one topic, batted it around, then sidestepped over to another topic. (But don't worry -- I'm not going to make you listen to the speech.) About half of the the speech reprised material from the Annapolis speech, as published in ANALOG. The voice didn't send thundering echoes throughout the hall, but mental thunder and echoes are more important, and those had been reverberating in my head for years.

There were questions, in writing, later, and strangely, I forgot to ask the question I had wanted answered since reading The Moon is a Harsh Mistress in 1966: Did you ever have an unpleasant experience in Lexington, Kentucky? But it didn't really matter, because I wasn't there to ask questions, anymore than I was there to hear a speech. It was okay that there was a speech, and I would have liked to ask the question, but it was minor, really.

I have a row of books by Heinlein on my desk. By excluding the few clinkers, it barely fits. Those books represent some of the most enjoyable moments I have ever spent. I came to see the man who did that.

And -- as with John Campbell, seeing Heinlein was going home again. As with Campbell, there is a large chunk of my mental machinery that was put together by Heinlein. I came to see the man who did that.

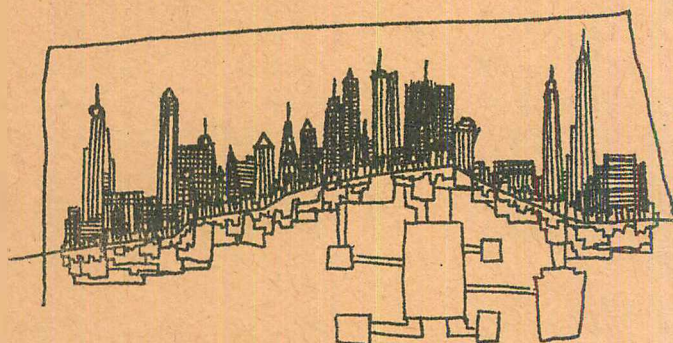
The timing is always bad, of course, when something long sought occurs. It would have been better to have seen him at that first Worldcon in 1966 (and not just because that would have been before I had read I Will Fear No Evil, alas). Even better to have seen him earlier still, when his only bad book was Rocketship Galileo.

That's just grit in the gears, though -- and the gears still turn. I have seen Heinlein.

After the speech, Jerry Kaufman asked me why I was wearing a coat and tie. "When you're a middle-class WASP from the Midwest," I said, "and one of the gods comes down from the clouds, you dress up."

He thought I was joking.

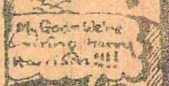
— Hank Davis (7/73 & 6/74)





THE EPIC OF GILLIGAN MESH

text and art
by Stu Shiffman





Chapter One

Gilligan Mesh, great was his reputation. Upon him BNFship had descended. He saw mysteries, knew secret things and performed wonderful deeds.

Gilligan Mesh was the president of the Science Fiction Club of the city of N'Uruk. He edited a long-running fanzine, LORD OF KULLAB, of comely layout, powerful voice and multi-colors, which had no equal. He contributed often to the fanzines of both neofans and more established fans. He was a mighty fan in all ways.

But the day came when he grew arrogant and cynical and insulting in the LORD OF KULLAB and all his other works and writings. So his friends, readers and loyal club members came together and appealed unto the SMOFs to help them to get Gil Mesh to return to his former wise and generous ways.

It happened that Andy Mshtadlim, a SMOF, had planned to abandon his own fanzine ENKIDU because the work necessary to get it out had become too troublesome and interfered with his clandestine labors. He decided to call to Gil Mesh, that he should take over ENKIDU from him, the one who had created it. So the friends of Gilligan Mesh said to him, "Accept this gesture Gil. It is a fanzine unlike any other, it comes to you from the Mount of the SMOFs. It is the strongest in the world, like an immortal piece of writing." So Gilligan Mesh, whom BNFship had been bestowed, took ENKIDU as if it were an old and trusted companion. And they waxed great together.

Chapter Two

One night Gil dreamed, and his dream was LOCed thus: "The meaning of the dream is this. The Lord of the SMOFs, Shamus, has given you BNFship, such is your destiny and its full extent, everlasting fame is not your destiny. Do not be sad at heart because of this, do not become grieved or oppressed. He has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of Fankind. He has given you unexampled supremacy over the fanzines, victory at Cons from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no turning back. But do not abuse this gift of power; deal justly with subscribers, deal justly with the SMOFs and with Shamus."

When Gilligan Mesh heard this he turned his thoughts to the Present. So he said in ENKIDU, "I will not print my name on the Future, my destiny is decreed. Resigned, I will go to the warehouse where the finest paper is found. I will set my name in the place where the names of famous fan are written, and where no fan's name is yet written will I raise a monument to the SMOFs. Thus will I show my acceptance of their decree."

First Gil Mesh went to get the blessings of the SMOFs for his venture, and these he received. So he went to the great

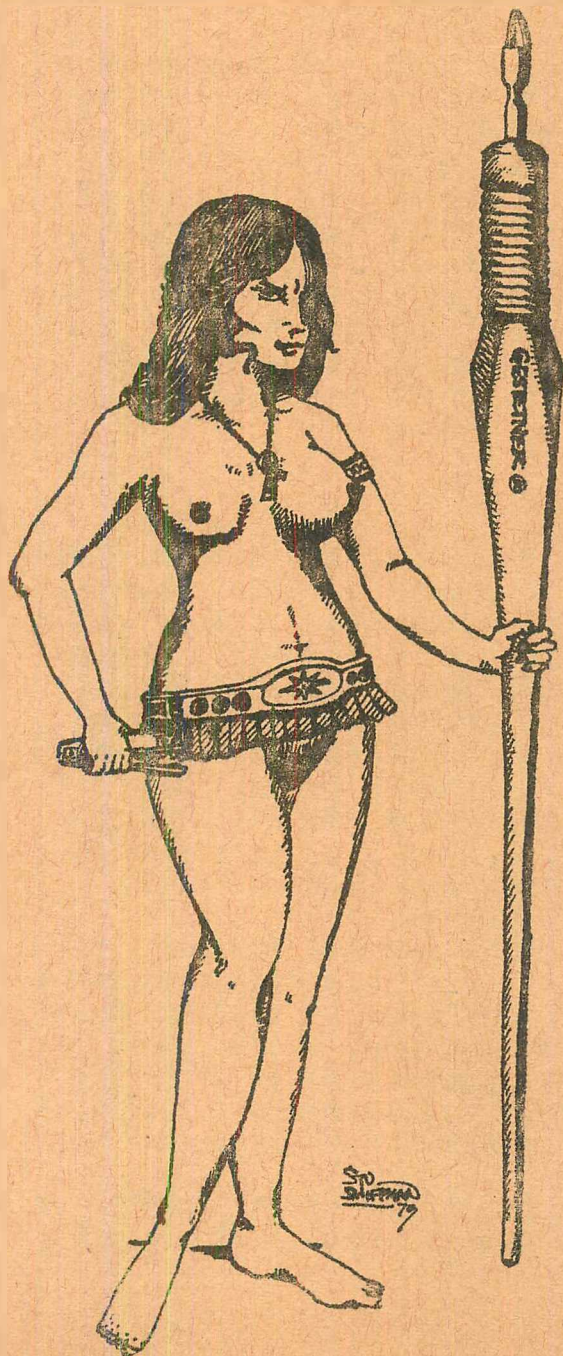
warehouse and bargained down the price, defeating a ferocious giant, Humbaba, whose name is "Hugeness." And Gilligan Mesh brought back the paper to the city of N'Uruk, to the Science Fiction Club of N'Uruk.

Chapter Three

Through ENKIDU Gilligan Mesh waxed great and famous. So that one day, Tish Tarr, the SMOF, came to him. And she said, "Come to me Gil Mesh and be my co-editor. Grant me and my fanzine the seed of your creativity, let me be your co-editor and you mine. Kings, rulers and pros will bow down before you; they will bring you tribute from the mountains and from the plain."

And he answered her: "If I take you as my co-editor, how shall it go with me? Your co-editors have found you to be like a leaky mimeograph that dirties the user, a ream of paper that cuts

and slices the fingers, a dull stylus that rips stencils. Which of your co-editors did you keep for ever? Listen to me as I tell the tale of your co-editors. There was Thomas, the co-editor of your neofanhood, for whom you later decreed fafiation. You have had many BNFs; one sacrificed neofans for your sake. Then you struck, blackening his reputation with it. Now his own subscribers chase him from fandom! And did you not want Izzy Danor, who was a member of your own local club, to join you? But he said to you, 'What are you asking from me? Would it not be best for me to start my own fanzine and rise up on my own credentials? Why should I come to such as you for what is tainted and rotten?' But when you heard this answer you smote him. You condemned him to perpetual neofanhood, to be like the blind mole in the earth, one whose desire is always beyond his reach. And if I should become your co-editor, would I not be served in the same fashion, as all those others who were your co-editors?"



So Tish Tarr swore revenge on Gilligan Mesh for these insults. She went to the other SMOFs and told them. "Gilligan Mesh has heaped insults on me and I shall be avenged." But the other SMOFs opened their mouths and said to her, "You invited his rebuke upon yourself. Gil Mesh has related your abominable behavior and your tainted acts." But the anger of Tish Tarr did not abate: the other SMOFs decided to try and appease her wrath.

And Gilligan Mesh, upon whom BNFship had descended, lay down and had a dream. And the dream he dreamed was this: All the SMOFs sat in council and one said to another: "No fan may defy the SMOFs. Because of his hubris, one zine shall die, let it be the LORD OF KULLAB." But the other said, "ENKIDU shall die, the LORD OF KULLAB shall not die!"

So for Gil Mesh the problem of putting out ENKIDU increased. The quality of the writing, illos and reproduction deteriorated. He was off schedule, there was trouble getting contributions. Finally, ENKIDU lay dead before him.

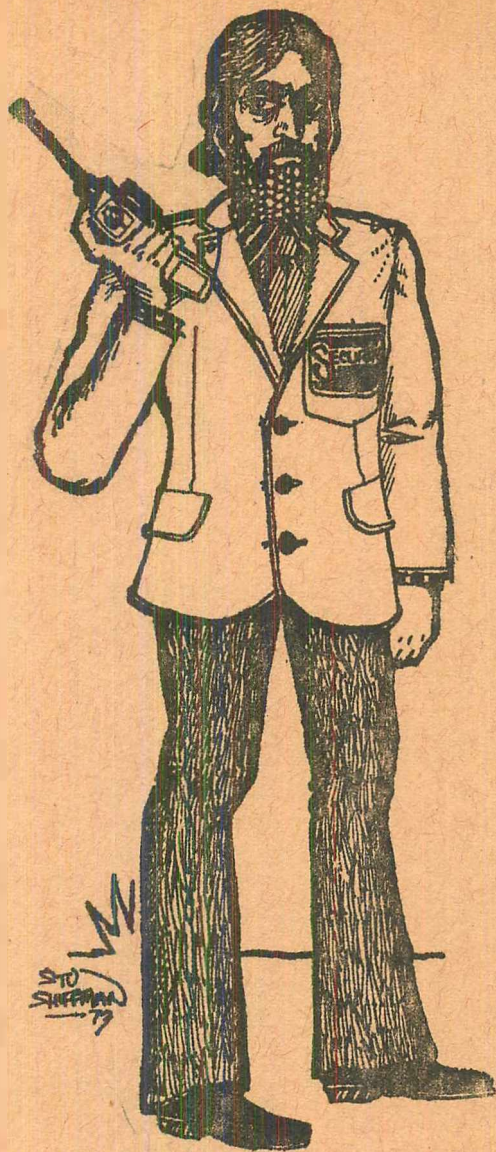
"How can I rest," he cried, "when ENKIDU which I loved is dust, and the LORD OF KULLAB shall someday die and be laid in the earth forever?" And that night he dreamed again. And here is the dream that he dreamed: There is a house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. He entered the house of dust and saw the BNFs of the Earth, their styli and stencils put away forever. All those who had once worn BNFly crowns and ruled fandom in the days of old. They had stood in place of the SMOFs, but now, like servants to fetch corn chips in the house of dust; they stood, to carry cooked meats and cold Pepsi from the icebox. Such, he saw, was the fate of those whose fanzines die and are forgotten.

Chapter Four

Gilligan Mesh wept for ENKIDU. From friends he learned that Tab Peshting, who had been raised from BNFship to SMOFhood, knew where could be gotten the Blessed Paste Ink of the Ghods, which could assure his fannish immortality. So Gilligan Mesh journeyed to the Mount of the SMOFs, where could be found Tab Peshting.

On the mount of the SMOFs he was hailed by Shamus. And the chief of the SMOFs said to him, "None but SMOFs have ever come this way before, nor will, as long as the winds drive the sea and fen drink blog. You will never find the Blessed Paste Ink for which you are searching." But Gil did not listen to him and continued his quest.

Now he came to a great house, but the way to the house was blocked by a burly man in a blazer and beard. And this person said to him, "Tell me, what is your name? Where do you come from? Why do you come here? Tell me these things, for I am Uri Shanabi, the major domo of Tab Peshting, called 'the Faraway.'" Gil answered

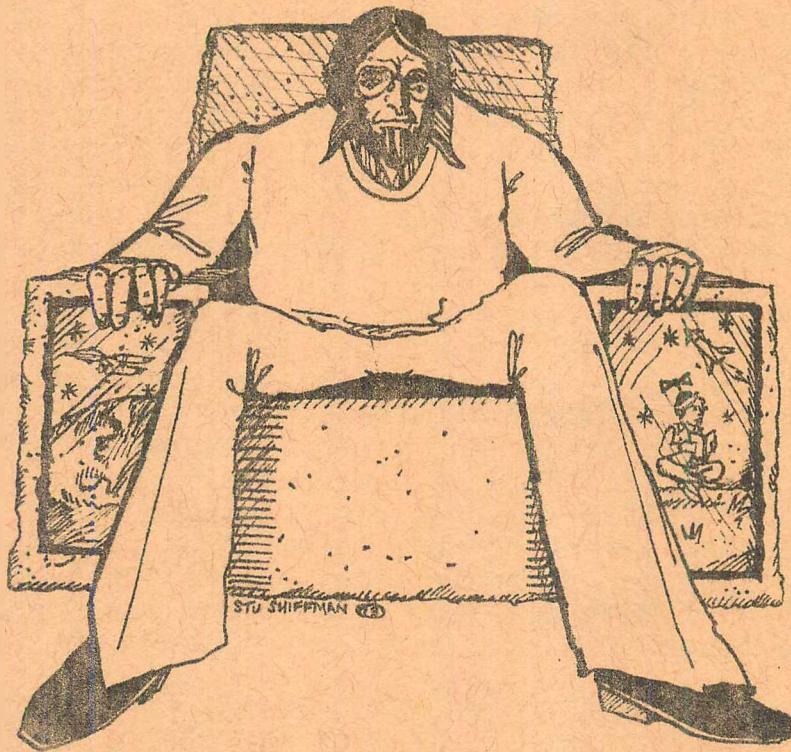


him, "I am Gilligan Mesh, a BNF from N'Uruk. I have come to see your master." So Uri Shanabi, the major domo, brought him before the great SMOF, Tab Peshting the Faraway.

Tab Peshting asked the reason for the visit. So Gilligan Mesh explained, "It is to see you that I have come on this journey. Oh Tab Peshting, who has entered the assembly of the SMOFs, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead and of how I shall find the Blessed Paste Ink of the Ghods for which I am searching, for ENKIDU is dead, and I cannot be consoled."

Tab Peshting said, "There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand forever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep forever, does the floodline of a river endure? Did Star Trek prove to be a program for all seasons? Are you not glad that Lost In Space could not last? Do not seek the Blessed Ink any longer!"

But Gil Mesh became annoyed and said, "I look at you now and your appearance is no different from mine; there is nothing strange in your features. I thought I would find you like a hero prepared for battle, but you live here taking your ease on your back. Why should you have what I cannot!?"



And then Tab Peshting remembered his BNFship and yearned to refute these rebukes. And in his pride he forgot himself. So Tab Peshting said to Gil, "I will reveal to you a mystery, I will tell you a secret of the SMOFs!"

Chapter Five

"Gilligan Mesh, I shall reveal a secret thing, it is a mystery of the SMOFs that I am telling you," began Tab Peshting. "Within the city, in the most inaccessible part of the city, there is an old stationers. And in the darkest and dustiest corner of the storeroom is the Blessed Paste Ink of the Ghods. If you get it, then your hands will hold that which can restore lost fame to an old fan or render your fanzine undying. There is but one tube and it cannot be consumed entirely. It is the Ink of the Ghods."

When Gil Mesh heard this, he ran from the house of Tab Peshting, down the Mount of the SMOFs. And he returned to the city, to the most inaccessible part of the city. And Gilligan Mesh came to the stationers that Tab Peshting the Faraway had spoken of. There he found the Blessed Paste Ink, in a tube of pearl.

"Come here," he said to the clerk, "and see this. It is a gift of the Ghods. By its virtue a faned may win back all his former strength. I will take it to N'Uruk where I will use it for the old fen. Its name shall be 'The Old Fen are Young Again,' and at last I shall use it myself and reap its benefits."

So he went to return, down into the Subway to return home. And he held the tube of Ink in his hands, the thing that meant so much. He waited for his train and stood musing on the reaction to his succesful return. Suddenly, he was pushed from behind. He lost his balance, throwing out his arms to keep from the track and out of the path of the mighty express that was approaching. But the Ink fell from his hand to the tracks. And the Ink was carried away by the express, which was like to a giant serpent. So it happened that the Blessed Ink was lost to Fankind forever.

Gilligan Mesh returned to his home in sadness, chastened by the judgment of the Ghods. Now he knew that they had not meant immortal Ink for mortal fen. And he returned to his former ways, but never surpast his former greatness. And it came to pass that his remaining fanzine died. And a new filksong was sung by the singers:

The king has laid himself down and will not rise again.

The LORD OF KULLAB will not rise again.

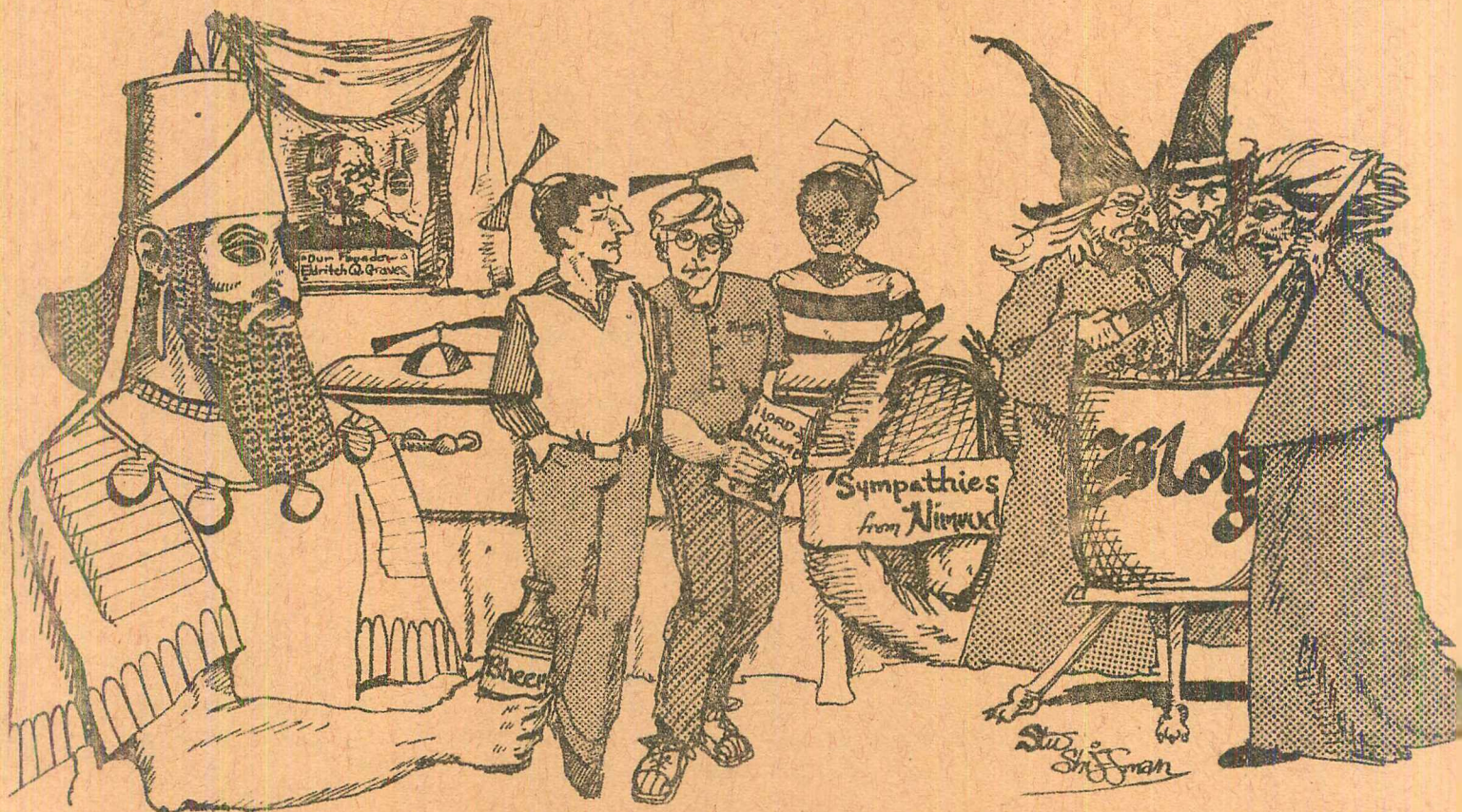
Though he was strong of arm, he will not rise again.

He had wisdom and a comely face, but will not come again.

On the bed of fate he lies, he will not rise again.

From the couch of many colors, he will not come again:

WRITTEN DOWN ACCORDING TO THE ORIGINAL AND COLLATED IN
THE PALACE OF ASSURBANIPAL, KING OF THE WORLD, KING OF ASSYRIA



Fanhouse
for fun
in  in
2001!

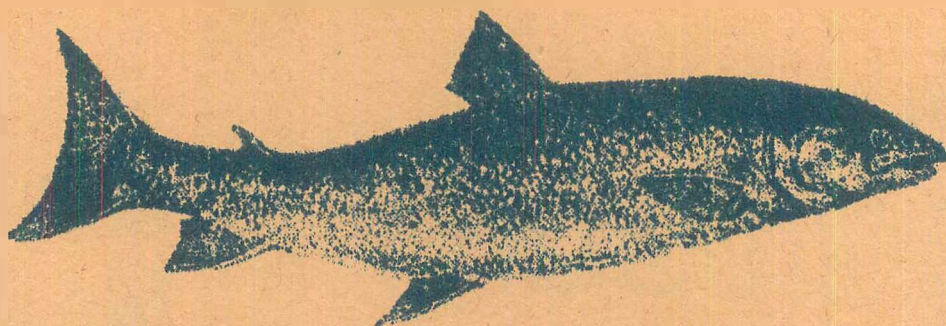
Donate
to the
New York
FANHOUSE
FUND

(not a joke, y'know)

money or items for auction should
be sent to Moshe Feder at 142-34
Booth Memorial Ave., Flushing, NY
U.S.A. If the fund fails all pro-
ceeds will be donated to DUFF & TAFF.



Pepsi Can 11F



Norman Hochberg
69 Fifth Ave. Apt 4D
New York, N.Y. 10003

Honestly guys, I really really like you better when you're being nice and informal than when you're doing a — gasp! — genzine. You know, you guys should really do a person-

alzine. Or maybe individual personalzines. Or even write articles for other people. Or even write locs (I know you do sometimes Barry, but what about more and what about Moshe). Youse guys are fun to read when you're not doing serious things like answering locs or book reviewing etc., etc. But then I suppose PLACEBO 3 was just a personalzine with articles attached. Right?

Mike's mention of Postal Service (as they liked to be called now) rubber stamps is interesting. Two summers ago I worked in a post office in Far Rockaway, New York (11690, tee hee). One day, when we had nothing to do (which, surprisingly enough, is a rare moment in Far Rockaway) we raided the central supply of rubber stamps. The USPS must have a friend in that business! There were stamps which read "Passed," "Please Wrap Packages Neater," "No Inclusions In This Aerogramme," and "No Such Return Address."

There was also a stamp with nothing on it save for three underlines on which you were supposed to scrawl cryptic messages, and the topper of them all — a stamp which read "Returned for postage. Please paste the stamps over this notice and re-mail." The guys at the place used to love to stamp this one over the main address.

Tom Digby
1043 N. Curson Ave. Apt 6
L.A., CA 90046

When I re-use old envelopes, I paste stickers over the old addresses. That brown paper tape used for sealing boxes makes good cheap address labels, especially if you can stick

the whole roll into the typer and cut them apart after typing. (Come to think of it, I suppose you could address them by hand too if you wanted to.)

On a related subject, are you bothered by forms with lots of information to be filled in, designed so they won't fit in a typer? And if they can be stuffed in, the line spacing often isn't right. / One of the guys I work with is applying to various medical schools. One of the applications requires him to use a typewriter with ten characters

SMOKED SALMON

to the inch for filling out the application. -BS7

But if roaches were the only animal, wouldn't that include people?

A line in the lettercol about "thinking about such an animal as fanzine layout" coming right after (by a page of two) a discussion of aardvark, wombat, and other fandoms leads to Ideas, like could a wombat be fanzine layout if it tried hard enough? I don't see how it could, but it might be able to if it tried hard enough. Or did the writer mean that fanzine layout is itself a species of strange animal, to be given its own band of devotees, detractors, etc.? If so, what is the habitat of the creature? Obviously fanzines. Other questions, such as food, sexual and mating habits like cycle, etc., are harder to answer. And I don't think I've ever heard of fanzine layout in a zoo. Maybe it doesn't breed in captivity?? Maybe it tends to turn into roaches when things don't go right for it???

It's now March 10, [1973] as I've somehow managed to put this aside and forget about it for almost a month. I was half expecting a notice to the effect that a LoC was overdue and if I didn't come up with one ~~Real~~ ~~Book~~ immediately the matter would be turned over to a collectionzine. Of course, that in itself is an idea worth pursuing some time, like wondering how it would work. Would it be like selling a bad account to a collection agency, where the collectionzine's publishers would write you an LoC and then turn around and try to get me to write them one, perhaps by having my name in the WDHF (We Didn't Hear From) column until the letter comes in? And might they eventually go to Small Claims Court and try to attach my apa comments or maybe even some of my mundane mail in lieu of real LoC's? (Small Claims Court is where fan matters should be tried, of course.)

Pauline Palmer & the Wild Fennel Co. When I was very young, about 8 as 2510 48th Street Barry was when he wrote his baseball Bellingham, WA 98225 opus, I wrote cowboy stories. I remember one in particular, mostly because I found it in the back of a drawer later when I was in high school...in its final scene, I had my hero riding his horse over the border from California to Texas.

And better yet, I also remember when I was about 11 or 12, I decided to write a novel. Our family had just acquired a typewriter and I intended, in true professional fashion, to make use of it because I wanted this novel to look just like a real book. (Up until then I'd done all my writing by pencil into tablets and always told anyone who asked what I was doing that I was writing.)

Anyway, I lugged the typewriter into the solitude of my bedroom and began my novel. I typed a title page, a chapter heading and then the first line and a half of the story. Then I stopped, counted how many characters I had left to make the second line justify with the first, and carefully composed the rest of that line so it would come out even. Because, you remember, I wanted this to look like a Real Book and that meant, of course, having justified right-hand margins. And being a basically honest child, I didn't cheat by adding an extra space or two here and there between words, either. It had to come out JUST RIGHT without any fooling around ...

This went on, as I recall, for six or maybe eight typed pages over a period of several days before I finally gave it all up. And not from counting spaces to make lines justify, either—but because I'd already

managed in that short time to write my heroine into a major crisis that had no conceivable solution.

Poof ...

Meanwhile, I'm forced to admit that my memory is not only flawed but in some cases it actually contains huge credibility gaps. For instance, the first sf that I can remember reading is the Heinlein Waldo/Magic Inc. combination when I was in, perhaps, the seventh grade. However, I know perfectly well that I was aware of, and had read, science fiction before that, because I can specifically remember fantacized sf--stories that I had made up and, although I don't remember for certain, possibly even wrote--when I was still in early grade school.

Also, for as far back as I can remember my own dreams, I've had what I've always thought of as 'layered dreams.' Now, I've had those dreams that, in themselves, seem so real that it takes hours before I'm able to dis-associate myself from them emotionally. These are the ones that, as Moshe discusses, sometimes pop up later as memories and it takes a while to sort them out and say, no, that was a dream.

But layered dreams are, well, much more subtle and sneaky. They build up, within the dream itself, an entire backlog of memories-within-memories and dreams-within-dreams to support the basic dream. And then these somehow go back so deep into the subconscious that when I wake up, I never feel certain about which layers were based in reality and which not.

So in the process of mental housecleaning, I've probably discarded a number of perfectly valid subconscious memories because they somehow surfaced as a part of a layered dream which, after waking, I decided to dismiss in total, rather than go to the trouble of sorting out its separate parts.

*But on the other hand, it probably doesn't matter very much anyway ... *

Loren MacGregor
Box 636
Seattle, WA 98111

I remember one time when I was in high school and well started towards achieving my record of being kicked out of the same class 17 times in one year. The

teacher involved was a most particular fugghead, and after awhile I began to take great joy in doing things to him. Like the time several of us got together after school and assembled a Volkswagen inside his classroom. The door was less than three feet wide. Or the time he cancelled the senior party we had planned at a nearby beach, and we brought in several truckloads of sand, cleared all the chairs into a back room and filled the room six inches deep in sand, brought in a picnic table and two beach umbrellas and planted them in the middle of the floor. I never really entertained thots of taking over the school. I already had the run of the damn place as it was.

Certainly language has become debased! Why, do you realize that the word "rape" is indicative of grapes plucked from the cluster, or the stalks and skins of grapes from which must has been expressed? And, further, that it is one of six divisions of the county of Sussex, England? Were you aware that a rape is either of two summer-blooming plants? Or that "to rape" means to take a hasty or precipitous course? Or that, used as a noun it is analogous to the word "rope"? See how our language has become debased. Personally, Ah don' give a shit. (Sorry about that.)



/As I resume typing the letter column at this point, it has been one year and nine months since the previous page was typed. Even then, these letters were old and some of the addresses had become obsolete. With the exception of the editorial, this issue is still very much the same fanzine it would have been if it had come out as originally scheduled. Because I don't want to violate that authenticity, and because this lettercol is the last part of PLACEBO Barry and I ever worked on together, I am not going to do any more editing here, or add comments explaining changes that have taken place since the letters were written. The only concession I will make to the passage of time are to remind you now not to rely on any of the addresses printed here or to hold any of the writers to the opinions they expressed at the time of writing and to identify that time by printing the dates of the letters. The letters printed above are dated 3/3/73, 2/13/73, 2/26/73 and 3/5/73 respectively.--MF/

D. Gary Grady
102 Ann Street
Wilmington, NC 28401
2/20/73

As another addendum to the Common Origin of Fans (the little bookish kid), I note that the guys who used to beat up on me back in school now seem very embarrassed and ashamed when they see me. I am yet to have

somebody directly apologize, but some have come damn near it.

I recall, by the way, that when I was in the early grades, I used to snatch up the reader on the first day of school and go straight to the fairy stories /Me too! And after that, I usually proceeded to finish off the rest of the reader in a couple of days. Sure made the rest of the term boring, though!--MF/ The nonsense about Alice and Dingus in the big alabaster city interested me not one iota. This made the teachers think I was strange. They were right, but they didn't act soon enough!!!

Mike Glicksohn
32 Maynard Ave., Apt. 205
Toronto 156, Ontario, Canada
3/4/73

On the idea of students and citizenship, you may be interested to know that the Ontario Teacher Act, which sets out the duties and responsibilities of teachers, has recently been revised so that now we no longer

need to be "examples of Christian principles." As you can imagine, this eases my mind considerably. I believe we've also been released from some of our obligations to boost Truth, Justice and the Canadian Way, /The Canadian way? SUH!!!--BS/ although I haven't read the new act yet so I can't be entirely sure on that part. I know of no Act of the Legislature which outlines the responsibility of the student in these matters, which is one of the strengths/weaknesses of our system.

I see another checkmark by Hank Davis's nostalgic remark on Captain Marvel. I'd never seen any of the old CM books, but naturally I'd heard a great deal about the whole family and all their enemies. So when DC revived the original Captain Marvel, I naturally got a copy of issue #1, although my vast collection of comics is nearly all Marvel. That has to be the worst drawn, dullest written collection of utter crap I've ever read. /We agree, Mike, and if the original Captain Marvel wasn't a hell of a lot better, our opinions of a lot of people will go down./ If Hank and others of his kind can view this book through rose-colored glasses, it might be a success, but by every contemporary standard of comic art quality, it's a loser. I realize that it's intended to be a faithful reproduction of the old comics, but for those of us without any memories to be stirred, it just doesn't make it.

And, Hank, for all the Catherine the Great fans who read Supergirl, there was a Wonder Horse as well, wasn't there? (And a cat? And I have memories of a small monkey who just might slip past the comics code, maybe. . .?) [And didn't Captain Marvel have Hoppy, the Marvel Bunny?--BS/ [And how does Catherine the Great come into it?--MF/

Although I've never been further off the mark with trying to guess what people look like than I was with Sandra, who is one of the truly elegant and beautiful people I know, [Hear! Hear!/] I seem to make a habit of misreading people's letters and fanzine contributions. This is a well-known fannish phenomenon, subject of many articles and pieces of fan-fiction, but that's because there's so much of it happening. "You mean, you're . . ." may well be the commonest introductory phrase ever used at conventions.

Roy Tackett
915 Green Valley Rd. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107
3/7/73

Mike shows his lack of knowledge of fannish techniques. John Berry, the Ulster one, explained in detail back about 1960 the whole thing about reusing envelopes. It is necessary to have a supply of tape on

hand. One splits the envelope, turns it inside out, and then uses the tape to reseam it. Works well. [Ingenious! I'm recycling more envelopes than ever these days and have tried many techniques, but this one never occurred to me. I wonder, though, if the tape expended might equal in value the cost of a new envelope and how much weight it adds? Whatever the answer, an elegant technique.--MF/] This technique also allows one to make two envelopes of one. Simply cut it in half lengthwise. Of course, one then must fold his fmz to get it into the envelope.

Only an Orangeman would think of something like that.

How far back to religious roots does Don Fitch want to go, I wonder? Even Judaism is a johnny-come-lately religion compared with some others. Shall we, old Don, go back to the Mother Goddess? Or to the bear? [But aren't you ignoring a crucial point? Even if I wanted to return to the bosom of the Great Mother, there isn't any neighborhood temple (in any neighborhood) that I can go to. Judaism is the oldest Western religion (I'm not sure about the founding dates of the Oriental faiths.) still alive and functioning. That, in fact, is one of the few boasts of faithful Jews through all of our post-Exilic history: that we, a small and humble people have outlasted the peoples, the faiths, the nations and empires that were our contemporaries in ancient times. The original Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Babylonians, the Romans, all are gone, blended with and absorbed by their successors; their empires are dust. But the Jews and their faith live on, still a distinct entity. Although I'm not as observant as I once was, I still get a sense-of-wonder thrill up my spine when I contemplate the history of my people in these terms.--MF/

And here is Mae Strelkov (Hi, Mae!) discussing the discussing of a pre-Aryan mother language of grunts, expletives and sighs. Yep. Plenty pre-Aryan, Mae. Man had a full language many, many thousands of years before the Aryans appeared on the scene.

Mae Strelkov
Casilla de Correo 55
Jesus Maria, Cordoba, Argentina
2/24/73

I like your fanzine and your pre-occupations with "meaning" (deity, etc.). I liked this issue too, and this time it was Don Fitch's letter that specially interested me -- the part re a possible "return to reli-

gious roots." I do agree Judaism has an awful lot to offer — no isms of any crazy sort. (Oh, you have the various mysticisms, but they're charming.) /Charming? Of all the unexpected adjectives! I think your view of Judaism is a bit sentimental. You make it sound positively quaint.-MF/ I loved a recent published remark in TIME by a great Jewish theologian who just died: "To the pious man, it is a privilege to die." In short, to the good soul, death is a door opening to the answers sought and craved all one's life. (He had such a nice face in the photo too!) That is the beauty of Judaism. What Christian would ever have said it in such a fine and gentle way!!

I've met many people of all types, in many lands, and this I can say, the most profoundly religious spirit (not fanatical worship, but a quiet loyalty to wisdom and goodness and mercy, without foolish sentimentality) I have found in Jewish homes and in Jewish hearts. (Also in Chinese families.) And I salute this people, so loyal, so faithful at any cost to what long generations of experience has proven so! (True and right!)

I haven't much hope for a worthwhile change in Christianity. It is frozen by the "letter of the law," even while they say it's the Jews who follow the letter of the law. But that's not so. Each child of the Old Faith (of the Old Testament — the Torah) is controlled not by mumbo-jumbo or confessions or archaic and foolish "laws," but by his or her own conscience, reason and heart.

/Your remarks about Judaism are very flattering to it, but as I indicated above, not completely accurate. There are plenty of orthodox Jews who are very much controlled by "archaic and foolish laws," and as far as theological theory goes, Jews are no freer to choose their path of religious observance than people of other faiths — they just do anyway, just like Moslems who use alcohol or Catholics who use the pill. Judaism is perhaps more flexible and it has a humanistic tradition founded in its principles which was fostered (rather than discouraged or discarded as in Christianity's case) by its history of persecution. Jews know what it's like to be the underdog; perhaps that has some effect on our character, but on the whole, I don't think we're all that different from other people. If we were, if we had succeeded in being better and setting a good example for the rest of mankind (the job we were "chosen" to do) than the real Messiah would have come by now and this discussion would be unnecessary.-MF/

Dave Hulan
P.O. Box 43
Monrovia, CA 91016
2/9/73

I did note Don Fitch's comment on the Dietary Laws. I don't know what occasioned it /I had mentioned my food problems at cons.-MF/; none of the other letters mentioned the subject. I do follow them, in mod-

eration. If I lived in New York, I might even be fairly strict, but it's too much of a hassle in LA, especially the part of LA where I live. There are, as far as I've been able to determine, two kosher restaurants in the entire metropolitan area (this in the city with the second largest Jewish population in the world), both about 30 miles from where I live. There's not even a kosher butcher within 15 miles; there is one place that sells frozen kosher chicken in Pasadena, but that's all. In consequence, I depend pretty heavily on fish, eggs, and cheese for protein. I keep things pretty strict at home, but eating out I don't worry about what's cooked with or served on the dishes; that way lies a very barren social life. I just avoid eating meat and let it go at that. And if I'm invited out to eat at a friend's I eat what I'm served, although

it's pretty well known that I object to pork and shellfish and that sort of thing and I haven't been faced yet with the options of refusing to eat or eating something expressly forbidden in so many words in the Torah. So when dining with friends I don't ask who killed their cow or turkey or chicken and they don't tell me and we let it go at that. Since my reasons for observing the dietary laws are not because I'm trying to be Orthodox (I don't even pretend to observe Shabbes, for instance) but as a matter of personal discipline to keep the matter of religion close to the conscious level all the time, I don't consider it hypocritical to modify the standard Halachah to suit myself. [I don't consider you one either. Your point about the way observing kashruth keeps religion close to the conscious level is well taken. I think most non-Jews fail to understand this important aspect of kashruth and see it as an arbitrary set of archaic taboos. Keeping kosher is one of the more conspicuous signs of Jewishness, and because we eat three meals and many snacks each day, it is something we must always be conscious of, so that it becomes an inward sign as well as an outward one. If natural selection can be said to apply to religions, then kashruth has been a key pro-survival factor in the history of Judaism; both because of the awareness of being Jewish it generates (It's hard to go down the street knowing you can't just buy a hot dog or a slice of pizza whenever you want to, and not be aware of your Jewishness.) and because of the separatism it promotes between Jew and non-Jew. So many social occasions are structured around food and eating, that not being able to participate in them is a real barrier to participation in the social life of the larger community (and hence to assimilation). It is this effect as it specifically applies to cons, combined with my own curiosity about food that have been responsible for the decline in the level of my observance since you wrote this letter.-MF] Especially since I don't try to convince anyone else to do anything about it. I think degree of observance is something every Jew has to decide on for himself. [One of the arguments for Jewish education for all Jewish children that I find most persuasive is that people really ought to know what they're rejecting before they reject it.-MF] The only thing I think is essential is that each of us should have a reason for observing or not in any particular case — rejection of any observance should be conscious and deliberate. Too many of my Jewish friends don't seem to have bothered to think about the question at all. [I agree 100%. I've rejected my Jewish upbringing, but only after examining what I've rejected. I still find religion a fascinating subject and am taking a course on it.-BS]

WAHF: Ruth Berman, who said — "Thanks for SALTY SMOKED SALMON. Apart from the problem that it made me thirsty, I liked it. . . ."

Here ends Part I of the lettercol, LoCs on the LoCs which appeared in our letter supplement, which themselves were LoCs on #3. Part II, with LoCs on #4, follows, beginning with the offset mini-folio of John Dowd's collages. We say "beginning" because though they serve a useful purpose in marking the division between the two parts of the LoCcol, there's another reason why they belong at this point in the issue. They make up the first artwork-LoC (that we know of) in fanzine history. (OK, Harry, so write and tell us we're wrong.) According to John, every component has some significance in terms of his spontaneous reactions to PLACEBO 4, just as in a more conventional LoC, some with obvious referents, others with tangential connections that are hard to fathom for those of us without a direct line to John's unique mind. You may enjoy trying to puzzle it out. . . .



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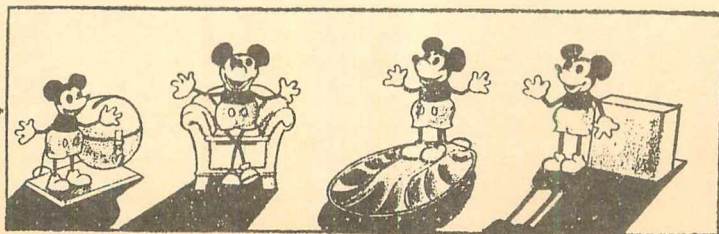


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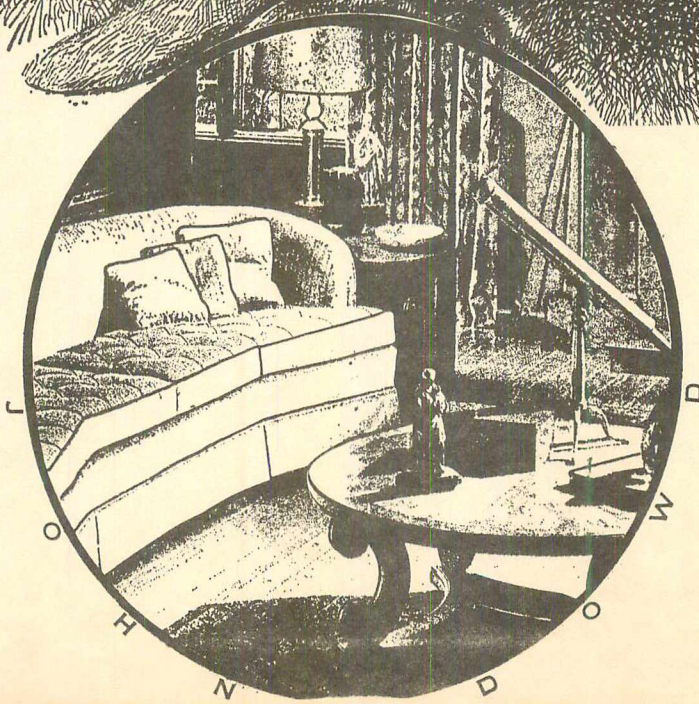
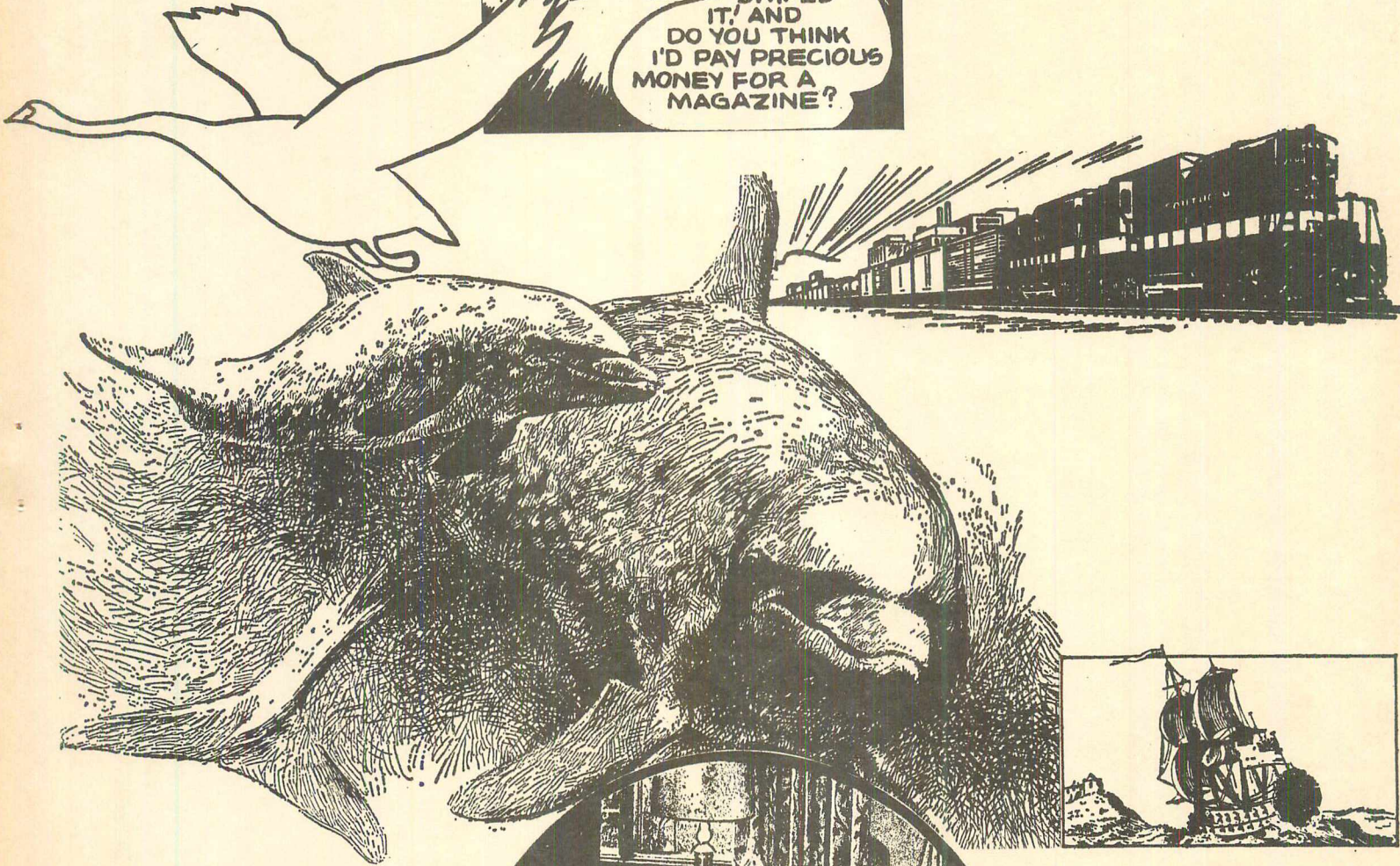
← Rubber
Tires



J O H N D O W D

THEN LOOK AT THE REAL
ME, YOU COSTUMED QUACK!
HOW DO YOU THINK I GOT
ALL MY MONEY? — THE
ALL-AMERICAN WAY, OF
COURSE...

...I
SWIPED
IT, AND
DO YOU THINK
I'D PAY PRECIOUS
MONEY FOR A
MAGAZINE?



Hank Davis
1421 E. 12th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11230
6/73

Ah, PLACEBO 4. What a subtle sense of time twisting is produced by Stu Shiffman's medieval robot cover. How pleasant. Contrast it with the less pleasant wrench given my time sense, as I reread "Stet" and must

continually remind myself that Barry is writing of last Summer. (This goode olde tradition of getting a LoC in to the faneds barely under the wire may be fannish as hell, but it can also be rough on the Davis nervous system. . . .) What a feeling of deja vu when he writes about the rainy days of Summer and that June "had only four days when it didn't rain." This June wasn't quite so bad, but then the rest of Summer lies ahead. One should not stop counting one's rattlesnakes until they have finished hatching.

Moshe's idea of using God as a fictional character doesn't bring a rush of ideas to mind, alas. More comprehensible, thus more fruitful for us lazy types, is the old dodge of using The Kid instead. I was planning to discuss that favorite fictional character of mine in the following issue. As I mentioned at the start of my discussion of God, I had already touched on the idea of using Jesus as a character in my "The Essential Mind" column in PLACEBO 3.--ME/ Nor have Moorcock, Matheson, etc. exhausted all possible variations. One such untapped vein was suggested when my brother, Richard, brought forth a cryptic one-liner. A mutual acquaintance had been reading Bruce Barton's The Man Nobody Knows. He read aloud the cover blurb, something to the tune of "This book shows how Jesus and his followers developed a movement that took over the world." And, upon hearing those words, an unholy light flickered behind Richard's eyes. . . .

Now, readers of the Doc Savage paperbacks will be familiar with the constantly reiterated cover blurb of "Doc Savage and his Amazing Crew." But when the stories were making their original appearances in the magazine during the 1930s, a different blurb was used. Since ASTOUNDING was a companion to DOC SAVAGE MAGAZINE, every month would see ads for DSM appearing in the back pages of John Campbell's magazine, alongside the concluding paragraphs of "If This Goes On..." or "Black Destroyer." Those ads, in those simpler and less superamalgamated days, did not speak of anything as effete as an "Amazing Crew." Instead, they invited one to share the adventures of Doc Savage and his Scrappy Pals.

Having seen those ads in my old ASTOUNDINGS, Richard, upon hearing the Barton book's cover blurb, instantly said, "Sounds like they should call the book 'Doc Jesus and his Scrappy Pals'."

Carrying this further, just imagine an endless string of Bantam paperbacks, each decorated with a James Bama cover showing Doc Jesus, his mighty muscles bulging through the rents in his tattered (but seamless) robe, gritting his teeth as he faces a wild man possessed by demons, or drives the ~~hucksters~~ moneymen from the temple. Doc himself would be a stern, humorless figure, but comic relief could be provided by his twelve sidekicks. While no such archetypes as Monk and Ham leap to mind, there are hints enough given to develop colorful characters. For example, the would be "Long" Thomas, who never believes that Doc's latest invention will work. When he hears about the special shoes for walking on water, he will scoff and warn Doc that he's sure to drown. Similarly, he will be dubious about the wine catalyst (for making water more tasty), incredulous toward the matter duplicator (handy when low on food, such

as loaves and fishes), and only numerous demonstrations will convince him of the power of Doc's healing ray. In spite of this charming trait, Thomas will be implicitly reliable, just the guy to have on your side when the rough stuff starts.

(There is of course one member of the twelve who doesn't fit that description, but Doc, with his superhuman intellect, will have spotted him for the cur he is, and will doubtless be sending him off on spurious assignments, listening to conversations in bar rooms, etc.)



Whenever Doc is deep in concentration, one will hear a weird trilling, like the song of a strange jungle bird. If one listens closely, words become apparent in the trilling. Careful listeners will hear parables about good shepherds and good samaritans and possibly Good Humor; or perhaps even Baskin-Robbins.

And then there is Doc's Fortress of Solitude — it can only be entered when this angel rolls away a large stone. . . .

With a little promo, the Doc Jesus paperbacks will outsell Son-O'-God comics ten to one. [We're tempted to ask for a sample chapter for your next column.]

Tsk, Barry. You make the claim that "generalization and specialization in language" is a good thing without supporting it. The most you say is "Imagine a language that never changed, a stagnant mass of words," apparently expecting the reader to recoil in horror; but why should he? [As time passes, so does the world change. As the world changes, the world has to be described. I suppose old words could describe new things, but new words (e.g., psychedelic)

do the job more accurately and more succinctly.-BS/ Stagnation is not necessarily bad [This is a Science Fiction fan talking?-MF/, even if the word calls up connotations of scum-covered ponds of unclean water (because of the word's, ah, original meaning). I'd like to see some stagnation, rather than growth in some areas — such as in those activities which have been increasing the number of such ponds. And if the population stopped growing and started stagnating, who would shed a tear? [I was

talking about language, not pollution or population, which are entirely different subjects.-BS/

Here I've scarcely gotten used to New York's bloody stupid gun laws, even with Kentucky's less restrictive realm a year and a half behind me, and now you tell me that pin-ball machines, too, are illegal in Fun City. As I remarked to a friend when the headlights of his car caught a sign on a bridge reading NO FISHING FROM BRIDGE, "My Ghod, we are living in a police state!"

And then there was the time I inadvertently induced culture shock in the same individual. We were talking about waste baskets (no, I don't remember how the subject came up) and I happened to wonder, aloud, what might have become of a flip-top, pedal-operated scrap can, in smart red and white enamel, which had once served in the Davis kitchen. The can lid hadn't always come up when the pedal was depressed, but that didn't matter greatly. "After all," said I, "All it cost me was the price of a couple of games of Bingo at the Halloween Carnival."

"The what?" said he, puzzled.

"The Halloween Carnival. Every Halloween my school would host a gala event in hopes of keeping the young animals from tearing the town apart. The basketball court would be filled with brightly-decorated booths and stands, with poor but honest merchants, usually teachers pressed into duty, hawking their wares, such as dime-store drinking glasses, and offering games of chance and skill as well. Among these was Bingo."

"Bingo?" he said, his eyes glazing as he tried to grasp the alien Kentuckian concept. "Bingo in a public school!?!?!?"

Yep.

Now do you see the dangers of unlimited immigration?

But what Bingo game, or garbage can, for that matter, can match the thrill I received when at the age of six or seven, while on a vaguely-remembered family trip, I encountered a sciencefictional pin-ball machine with men dressed for vacuum and ladies for a suntan and rocket ships and lightning bolts and rayguns ablaze all over the lighted backboard and the gantlet that the balls ran. Wowee! Sort of a PLANET COMICS pinball machine. I must have played the thing for an hour — I don't remember just how, since the top of my head must barely have reached the controls. Maybe my father held me up. (The things parents put up with!) I don't remember where the trip we were on was taking us, how we were going (not by car — we have never had a car), or where we stopped to find this wonderous gizmo, but I've never forgotten that pinball machine. New Wave, indeed! They don't make New Wave pinball machines! /Although I didn't interrupt you above, I have now decided that this is one place where I must be inconsistent in my observance of my resolve on p.41 not to provide updating comments. As both a true pinball-lover and a proud New Yorker, I'm certain Barry would want our readers to know that New York's anti-pinball law has been repealed. In fact, Ross Chamberlain did a cover for Apa-Q (the revived Fanoclast apa) to celebrate the repeal and the pinball machine he drew bears some remarkable coincidental similarities with the machine Hank describes above.-MF/

* * * * *
BRITAIN IS FINE IN '79!!
* * * * *

Alpajpuri
Box 69
Ocean Park, WA 98640
10/15/72

PLACEBO 4 was actually interesting,
what a surprise.

Pinball machines are illegal in NY??
Howcum? I mean, I realize they're
immoral and dangerous and addicting
and cause cancer of the eyebrows, but I can't remember ever having lived
in a state in which the all-powerful, all-seeing Pinball Lobby hasn't
pushed through legalization legislation.

I cannot recall ever playing a pinball machine. I mean, I just thought
to myself, "When was the last time I played a pinball machine?" and to
my surprise I couldn't remember ever playing a pinball machine. I think
it's rather odd that I can't remember having played a pinball machine,
only outdone in oddity by the fact that I probably HAVEN'T ever played
a pinball machine. This paragraph is ridiculous.

"Only pain lasts forever." Bill Kunkel, you are My Hero.

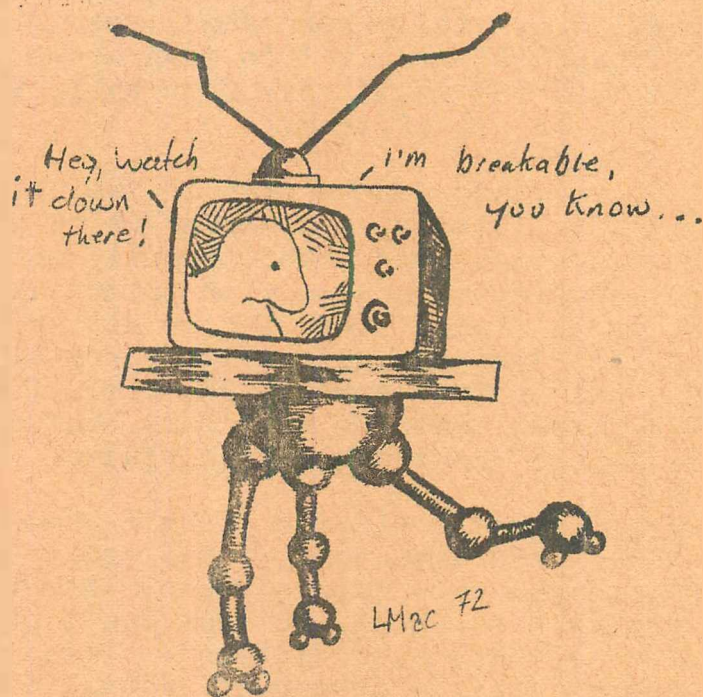
I'll bet that when Paul Jordan inked in the last curlicue of his logo
for "Sinuous Convolutions" after three weeks of eye-pinching labor and
showed it to you, and when you pointed out that he left the "l" out of
"Convolutions," he knelt down on the floor and CRIED. Obviously you've
never met Paul. What he actually said was "Screw you!"

I have an idea that fifty or a hundred years from now, social historians
will look back on the mid-Twentieth Century and point and exclaim, "See
O See how tv altered the consciousness of its audience!" Many of our
generation who have grown up in television technologies have seen more
of the world, more aspects of human experience than our forefathers and
foremothers. On the boob tube people are born, grow through infancy,
childhood, puberty, adolescence, the complex layers of adulthood, old age,
and finally die. TV people are portrayed in all permutations of human
experience, involved in every human emotion and circumstance imaginable
(and allowable by the censors/sponsors). I have a strong feeling that
television was one of the major causes of the hippie movement of the past
decade. Kids were aware in a very direct way of the entire human race,
they knew that we all shared the same underlying characteristics. As a
result, they became intensely involved in world-wide events and shared
a strong sense of humanity, of oneness.

However, the image of reality we see on the tube is often far removed
from that image we might receive were we actually where the camera was,
or were the dramatic scenes real and not contrived by script writers.
Television creates and perpetuates social roles, emotion categories, and
"routines" in the sense of standardized behavior patterns for expression
of ideas, feelings, attitudes. TV also shows exactly what the movie-
makers, detergent/cigarette/deodorant manufacturers, and state-appointed
censors WANT it to show. (Did you know that Spiro Agnew used to be head
of the FCC?) Even a well-meaning televisionist can't give you an abso-
lutely objective presentation, no more than any individual or group of
individuals can perceive objectively in the first place.

So, while television has done a lot to create the kind of global village
McLuhan describes, it still isn't a system of mass communication that
comes anywhere close to being direct and honest in its transmission of
information about reality. There are some people who are very skilled
at getting across just exactly the information they desire, and these
peoplework, almost without exception, for advertising agencies and gov-
ernment information dispersal departments.

I find that, for myself, watching television once or twice a month is about optimum . . . more often than that and you fall into the evil clutches of the blue tube, you begin to yield to its constant, tempting sell-tactics. And you watch it again and again, and finally you become a burnt-out shell of a human being, a veritable zombie, a homo unsapiens, glued to your armchair in a dim, lifeless chamber, a TV dinner in your lap, bloodshot eyes wide and drooping in awed fascination at the flickering screen, mentally sucking the tit of the American Mother-Id.



TV wreaks terrible destruction on the minds of its victims. Just look at Grant Canfield — now there's a sorry specimen by anybody's standards.

Loren MacGregor
Beautiful Box #636
Seattle, WA 98111
10/30/72

Television used to distort my life with great regularity; I still fondly recall rushing home from school to watch "The Millionaire" show, on which Michael Anthony, who was executive secretary to Mr. John Bears-

ford-Tipton, passed out \$1,000,000 checks on behalf of his employer. I can quote the theme song to "Robin Hood," shout out "Margie" with the best of 'em, chase invisible St. Bernards through the living room, and have heart-to-hearts with Cleo of "The People's Choice." But, for good or bad, my television sense doesn't stretch much beyond 1960. That was the year I gave up tv for Lent (being a good Catholic youth at the time).)

Stu is good, but, like Paul, he occasionally needs a little inking assistance. But he's coming along. I know you (being Moshe) like the "Sinuous Convolutions" heading and I think that you (Barry) do, too, but I'm not sure. [I didn't like it, because I agree a column heading should be readable. But Moshe and I believe an editor's editorial should be his own, so I didn't complain.-BS/ I still think that the heading should be readable, and this one really isn't. /Normally I'd agree with you, but the disguised nature of the lettering is just the point in this particular case. A typical Federish joke that no one else appreciates, I guess.-ME/ Bill Kunkel is getting great, and his cartoons are beautiful.

I left on vacation with two ambitions; to get away from Seattle, and to play a pinball machine in every city I passed through. Pinball has a strange fascination for me; it's one of the few vices I indulge with regularity. On the other hand, there are many things that I don't consider to be vices that I do anyway, so the whole thing balances out.

I learned that High Noon was interesting, but no challenge. Rack 'em Up, a pseudo-pool game, was tricky and required skill, but could be beaten

with practice. College Queens was a straight-out shuck, but Fireball Demons was a genuinely hard game, requiring patience and some real ability. It also had more action than many of them, since there was a possibility that you could have four balls in play at once, and you had to keep an eye on all of them.

I kept my vow, and made a play in twelve different states. The only one I missed was Illinois. I learned which states set the odds high, where the best machines were found (usually in head taverns or in penny arcades), how to recognize a machine with potentially good action, and many other tricks of the trade. Then I blew all my accumulated knowledge in New York, playing the stupid machine with Barry at Queens College, when it doesn't even pay off in free games. Oh, foo. I console myself that it wasn't really a pinball machine after all, but one of those combination baseball-pinball things under a clever disguise. And I never liked baseball anyway.

Actually, I started playing pinball when I was very young and foolish, because they had some sort of ruling at the time that said you couldn't bowl unless you were over sixteen! Now they've changed the ruling, and state that you can bowl, but you can't play pinball machines in Washington unless you are over eighteen. I thought that was absurd until today: there was an article in one of Seattle's noosepapers that stated that a gentleman is trying to legislate against gumball machines. They lead, so he states, to a fascination for machines that give a payoff, and thereby pave the road to the inevitable takeover of organized crime. . . .

Your mention of the disappearing coin trick set off another chain of memory, as I recalled my brother's preoccupation with an even more insidious pastime: Chinese puzzles. These took the form of little boxes with trick panels, or various different small forms (animals like elephants and dogs; pagodas; or geometric shapes) made out of interlocking pieces of wood. The form puzzles were the worst; they involved not only finding the key that would take them apart, but finding the solution that would put them back together as well. Usually, there was one or two small pieces interlocked in such a way that pushing one would allow you to remove the other. It was a slightly easier process to find the next piece to remove, and the parts became progressively simpler to take apart until suddenly the whole puzzle dissolved in your hands. That was the trouble: unless you had been paying careful attention to which pieces you'd taken out first, you had no idea how to get the thing back together again. Worse still, the puzzles generally had no instructions. If you absolutely couldn't get the thing back together again, you could buy the instructions for a mere. . . .

No true puzzle addict would stoop to such a thing, of course.

So I would sit there, with a pile of puzzle pieces in my hands, and swear. First of all, because it was my brother's toy after all, and I had no business with it, and besides, it's beneath my notice anyway and I'd never stoop to working on one of the silly things and he'll be home in half an hour and how the hell do you get this stupid thing back together again...

Besides the elephant and the dog and the pagoda, my brother also had a Chinese-puzzle turtle, a sphere, an oxyhedron (at least, I think that's what you call a thing that has eight sides per flat surface, but which is three dimensional) a square, a barbell shape and numerous others. Many times I was tempted to etch little numbers on the pieces as I took them apart, but my conscience kept nudging me.

I finally solved the whole thing, though. I bought a Chinese puzzle safe,

found the one loose piece that held the key to opening it, removed enough pieces to put the other puzzles in, then closed it back up and glued it shut.

I gave it to my brother for his birthday. I haven't seen him since.

Will Straw
67 Cameron Ave.
Ottawa, Ont. K1S 0W8 CANADA
2/18/73

Thanks for PLACEBO 4 and for SALTY SMOKED SALMON, which reminded me of it, and of my failure to do anything in response. (My failure to write letters of comment in the last few months has been caused by something

I doubt anyone would expect as a legitimate reason. Since I've a cast on my leg, with my toes sticking out, I think I've caught a little frost-bite. The radiator in this room is right under my desk, and sitting typing means my toes are withing a few inches of it — the heat seems to be making the blood flow again or something, and the Pins and Needles sensation comes in, bothering me enough that I can't spend too long at the typer. And it's just ocured to me that I may have stumbled on the reason behind a lot of the unexplained gafiations of the past — it seems like such a commonplace, natural thing that several others have probably gone through the same thing, lacking the quality of endurance that makes me force myself to do fanac when the obligations have piled up enough.)

I have two Merchandise Coupons from the SkeeBall games at Port Dover, on Lake Erie, that I've carried around with me for the two or three years since I won them; they have "Awarded for Skill" in a very distinguished typeface along the top, but my skill wasn't enough at the time to let me win enough to actually get a prize. Last summer I stopped in an amusement park along the New York state shore of Lake Ontario and played the same game, managing to win a deck of cards with movie stars' pictures for faces. (I don't remember the name of the latter amusement park, but it would have been an ideal set for a movie. It looked like it had been in its prime 50 years earlier, and was almost entirely deserted, except for the very old man who ran the concessions. Wind blew garbage down the equally deserted street that ran along the lake, and the whole atmosphere was almost tragically eerie.)

Pinball machines are supposedly illegal in Quebec, too, and most of those who have taken to them most eagerly at the university I'm attending are from that province; going at the games like they'd just become children again. I went through the process of acquiring and kicking an addiction to pinball in my first few weeks here, and things like the article in the Christmas PLAYBOY have kept me interested in the game as an aspect of modern culture without feeling a necessity to play it. I'm good friends with two of the top players on campus, and they both play with a policy of just roughing the hell out of the machines — they kick it and pick it up and bang it on the floor, but do it with that finesse which keeps the Tilt mechanism from being aware of what they're doing. One of the best ways of beating the machines here involved a mechanism on one of them whereby a counter with a miniature pinball in it would rack up points when hit by having that miniature ball bounce back and forth between two 10 or 100 point makers, and would keep doing so until the actual playing ball hit specific places in the machine which would stop it. (It's called the Doodle Bug machine, after the miniature ball that racks up the points.) One Sunday morning, I watched someone set the doodle bug in motion, so that it kept racking up about 10 points a second, then got the actual playing ball caught

between the flippers so it just stayed there. With nothing to stop the doodle bug, he just waited around for a half hour or so, racking up free games by doing nothing, until one of the Unicentre Goons came over and stopped it.

I was never particularly interested in hockey or baseball, but I was a gambler even when I was young, and used to gamble bubble gum cards all the time. (I remember most of the games: Flipsies, which involved flipping a specified number of cards, with another person winning them if he could flip the same number and get the same head to tails ratio. Knocks, whereby cards were leaned up against a ledge and players took alternate shots at them, the one knocking down the last card getting all those that had accumulated. Closies, getting cards closes to a wall.) When we lived in northern Manitoba, my grandmother spent a lot of money sending us a series of very expensive books every month or so, to make sure we'd keep in touch with civilization. When we moved down to southern Ontario, and I got into the card game, I traded them all off one day to a German boy who was hungry for the knowledge the books contained and had won cards off me that I wanted back.)

As far as fannish words that have become obsolete are concerned, I've wondered recently whether its just because I'm in the wrong parts of fandom, or if "Fen" as a plural for "fan" is really more rare than it used to be. I used it fairly regularly two or three years ago, but can't remember when I've used it at all recently, or when I've seen it used. The removal of "femme-fan" from fanspeak seems only natural, assuming as it does that the basis of fandom, a "fan," is male, and that female fans are simply variations from that base.

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21740
9/23/72

I never did understand New York City fandom, so I'm not too surprised by the news that it's taken you two all this time before exploring the inner recesses of Brooklyn and its fandom. What really

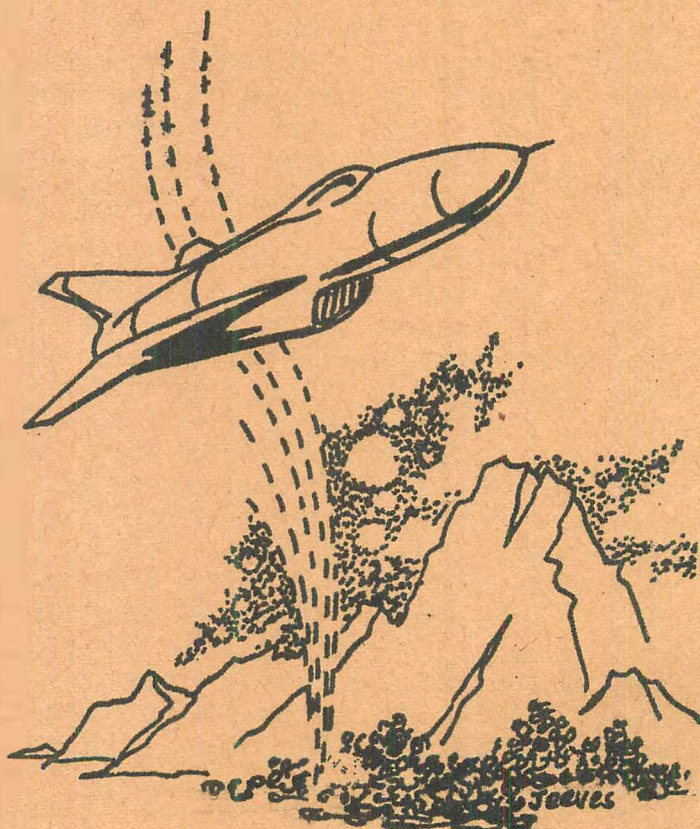
croggled me was the calmness with which you talked about visiting a penny arcade right there in the city. Hagerstown has never been enough of a metropolis to own one and I'm constitutionally incapable of associating a penny arcade with a city, as a result; they seem native only to fairs and summer resorts. But there have always been lots of local places with one or more pinball machines, shooting machines, and the like. I never had much luck with anything except the claw machines which I don't see much nowadays. They were the ones with small items of merchandise half-buried in tiny bits of candy. The operator controlled a small derrick-type affair and attempted to grab the more valuable cigarette lighters and ladies' vanities by the way he manipulated the knobs which governed the direction and distance of the claws' descent. Somewhere I learned the closely guarded secret: that the claws had almost no gripping power if they grabbed something while they were widely separated, but were quite strong if they were only a fraction of an inch apart. So I learned to go for the smallest projection on a prize and id pretty well until I realized that we didn't really need at home most of the things I was winning.

One thing does surprise me terribly: this nostalgia for things that happened at Shea Stadium. You see, Shea Stadium is something so new to me that I haven't seen it yet. I've been in New York City three or four times since it opened and every time something prevented me from visiting it, so I have this firm intention to go to the new stadium the

next time I'm up there, and here are fond memories of the distant past when Marvelous Marv was alive and well in the ball park. Incidentally, I never lost my own early enthusiasm for baseball, and I listen all summer to the Phillies' broadcasts, which are done in part by another of the old Mets, Richie Ashburn. He talks for hours during rain delays about the wonderful things that happened during his stay with the Mets. I've never seen in print the episode which he describes on the last day of one season when the Mets were so deep in last place that they sometimes fell into the news story underneath the standings. The Mets lost that final game because Pignatano came up during a ninth inning rally and hit into a triple play. In the clubhouse, Casey Stengel didn't live up to his reputation for complicated syntax. He simply said: "Well, all season long, it was a team effort, boys."

I once filled about fifteen pages for FAPA with my earliest memories. Mailing comments indicated that I retain more memories than most persons. I have this same confusion Moshe mentions about whether some things are in my memory from actual experience at the time or from later descriptions or photographs. But a few things stick too vividly to be anything other than real memories, like the day the apartment building in which we lived caught fire. I couldn't have been more than three or four, because I was still using a stroller sometimes, and I can remember clearly the sudden acceleration as my mother got word where the fire was, while she was chatting with people five or six blocks away, then even more vividly, I can recall either later that day or the next day, when I woke from a nap and found myself no longer alone in the bedroom because a strange man was there, putting new glass in the window which firemen had broken. I think my subconscious remembers something dating from genuine infancy. I was born with a membrane in my mouth that would have prevented clear speech and when I was only a few weeks old, I was taken to a doctor's office where it was snipped away. Of course, I can't remember this consciously, but I've always had a neurotic fear of dentists or of a physician's examination of my throat, and this must be the cause. I didn't learn about the simple operation until long after the phobia developed.

Christmas is the one religious holiday that means much to me. I think it's because birth impresses me as the greatest miracle of all, a much greater wonder when ordinary mortals are involved in it than a resurrection for an all-powerful deity. Of course, memories of family observance of Christmas must enter into its importance to me, as well as the fact that it's the one time of the year when people behave kindly when there's nothing in it for them. I'm not religious in the sense of believing literally in the Bible, but I'm willing to accept any of several religions as partial insight to whatever truth there may be. I just can't believe that anything as complex as the universe and as evolutionary as life could have developed in a few billion years by sheer



chance. I don't know if immortality is available through some future era's development of time travel or through something closer to the theories of the spiritualists and the saints, but I don't think immortality is improbably at all in comparison with the wonders of an animal or a human body. If there is a god in the sense of some being on another planet or something about time which we can't know in a material body or some other manner, I don't think I'm sinful to lack knowledge of the exact nature and behavior of the deity because I think the implications of higher powers aren't sufficient for humanity to understand in its present supply of brainpower.

Ray Nelson
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9/28/72

Allow me to be the 40th or 50th to inform you that Christmas is not really a Christian holiday. It's a pagan holiday adopted by Christians for more or less the same reason you Jews are finally getting

around to adopt it; it's fun.

And as for God as a character in fiction, I can't agree with your idea that it hasn't been done in the Old Testament. Is God a mere personification when he loses a wrestling match to Jacob-Israel? I was already well aware that Xmas is actually a pagan festival. In fact, when I was younger and something of a smart-aleck know-it-all Was?? BS?, I used to enjoy upsetting my Christian friends who were unaware of this fact by proving it to them and showing them that their whole religion was actually a mishmash of Jewish and pagan ideas. (On the theoretical/tactical level, a good way to construct a religion that aimed to attract converts — especially 2000 years ago, when it was common for cults to borrow and blend. By adopting other customs Christianity universalized itself and moved away from being simply another Jewish sect, and soon everyone could feel at home in it. This points up one of the fundamental differences between Christianity and Judaism. The former is a proselytizing, inclusive, expansionary faith; the latter is a non-proselytizing, exclusive, preservationist faith.) As for the wrestling match. You're the second person to write to PLACEBO (someone did it before about a previous issue) who mistakenly referred to the non-human contender in that match as God. Sorry, but it was just an angel. This is quite clear by the language of the original Hebrew passage and all the commentaries agree. It's possible that English Bibles are unclear on this point; take another look-MF

As for the unreality of the war in Namn, I've talked to people who were there, and they said it was unreal to them too, so it can't just be the effect of seeing it on TV. I'm in a club of plastic model builders and they're mostly soldiers, fliers or vets, and they have more feeling for WW II than for battles they actually were in. Namn is, in and of itself, unreal, because, in spite of all the blood spilled, it has remained an essentially meaningless war. We could believe in the Japs and Germans as a menace, at least after Pearl Harbor, but nobody has been able to figure out as yet how the Cong can cross the Pacific in those little barges and rowboats etc. Nobody has been able to figure out just how the dictators of the north and the dictators of the south are different, except that one of them is on "our side." It was clear to the Kennedys why Americans should die to keep Catholics in power in a Buddhist country, but us Protestants, Jews, Freethinkers, etc. have never had it explained to us in a really convincing way. Probably only Jackie Onassis and the Pope know for sure. (Namn brings out the bigot in me.)

I was a kid during WW II, or "The Big One" as it's sometimes called, so that's how it's real to me, but it's also real to my 14 year old s n.

He knows the name and number of every plane and tank that fought in The Big One, on both sides of the conflict, and that's more than I know myself, but I'm pretty sure he's got his facts straight...it isn't just a movie to him.

But Namn is a movie to him.

Namn really is a movie, but not a very good one. There's lots of violence, but the characters lack motivation.

I like the way you do a number on being Jewish, Moshe. I used to live in a Jewish neighborhood in Detroit, and not just some of my best friends, but nearly all my friends, were Jewish. Somehow I found myself going to intellectual discussion groups at The Temple and being accepted as a Jew myself. I even found myself saying "we" and meaning Jews. What I think is that I could "pass" for Jewish if I wanted to, so long as I kept my pants up. (I'm not circumcised.) What do you think?

Barry, you know how I solved the hair problem? I cut it all off, every last bristle. Now I'm as bald as Yul Brynner and I fit in everywhere by not fitting in anywhere. Try it! You can save money...never go to a barber again. All you need is some electric shears, an electric shaver and two mirrors, one big and one little, and you can do it yourself.

Then you can say to your mother, "Is that short enough for you?"

Don Keller
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10/2/72

Barry, as I remember your hair was quite short — at least compared to mine (which hasn't been cut since I don't know when). Unless it really grew, I can't understand why your mother mother is so insistent.

The whole hair question is ridiculous. First off, long hair is in vogue, so cutting your hair is nonconformist. Right? And defending short hair on the grounds of masculinity is stupid. When was the last time you saw anybody with a crew cut? Besides, you're old enough to decide those things for yourself. I live at home, so I have my mother (who likes short hair) constantly nagging me, so sometimes discretion is the better part of valor.—BS/

There's also the linguistics argument. What you have to say has a lot of validity, especially in perception of words; but I still say that in the 20th century, especially in the second half, language is being enervated and debased. Perhaps it's TV, but people are reading less, and some of the more complicated and richer-meaningful words are dropping out of use, while others are used so much that their meaning has lost its power. "Great" is so used that it's become a synonym for "good" in popular speech. If it's not great, it's no good.

I think that one reason I generally write in such a complicated and high-blown style is to take my reader above colloquial speech so that when I do use a superlative it will have full force.

Moshe: Your name, by the way, keeps cropping up in dialogues in my Hebrew class, where I'm sitting now. (No, I'm Catholic; a language bug.)

The illustration for your title page is excellent; I really liked it. But not only couldn't I read it, I didn't even recognize it as a heading. Be careful. Also, you type around your illustrations that screw up text continuity and got me confused.

Other than that, your piece is fascinating, intellectually quite stimulating. I remember the first SF I read. Doyle's The Lost World, which I picked up because I was a dinosaur freak in elementary school (disconcerting grownups by saying - at 8 years old - that I wanted to be a paleontologist!) Another very early one was Dr. Dolittle in the Moon. The first real SF was Andre Norton's The Stars Are Ours, which totally knocked me out because that was the first place I ever encountered suspended animation — "cold sleep," as she called it.

My earliest memory is of a party at my grandmother's house when I was about 4. I have a clear impression of it, even though it's reinforced by a photograph my grandmother has of it. I was fascinated at how you'd pinpointed that strange function of memory; I still remember sensory impressions of places and situations long after the actual content of the situation is forgotten. The smell of a leather bookbag will put me back in first grade again.

David Hall
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10/5/72

Moshe mentions his earliest memories and ponders on the meaning of it. It's true (in fact something of a truism) that television and the movies have done weird things to our senses — I know people who

have theirs on constantly, and I'm one myself. Most often I have the sound turned off, listening to records. But....

My earliest memories are even more peculiar. I can recall a drug store called DRAGON DRUGS — it had a neon sign. The dragon on the sign was a tremendous input on me, obviously; I also had a little plastic sword with a glass jewel on the handle. My parents had name tags they had to flash at the little toll booth at the edge of town whenever we were going out driving or coming back in. My brother and I were terribly jealous of them. This was in Los Alamos — it was no longer top secret then, but it was still a closed city.

I'm told — this I don't personally remember — that whenever there was a bomb test, it was clearly audible, and on such occasions we were told it was thunder. At the age of three, I might have believed this. A glance at the map reveals that the proving ground was over two hundred miles away.

Earlier than any of this, the earliest I can positively identify in my memory stock, was the trip to New Mexico by train. My parents had already gone, but I was left behind, I think, to have my tonsils out. My aunt accompanied me, and the train was empty or nearly so. There was one other man in the car, and my aunt reports that I drove him crazy running around in my cowboy suit and shooting him and talking to him all the way. I seemed to have the feeling that he was, you know, a member of our party, like. I still have a faint memory of a dark suit.

Looking back over the years — twenty-two of them — I am suddenly struck with a horrible suspicion. I think the son of a bitch was a Secret Service agent.

The problem with a long, chatty, conversational personality zine is that you have to realize that nobody is going to like you. Nobody. A person locked up with his typewriter and writing just whatever comes to mind is soon going to discover that he has nothing much to say and is going to start getting fouled up with that which is more omnipresent in his head —

his fuckups. It isn't always a safe bet that he realizes they are fuck-ups, but it is a safe bet that what he would really like to say would be judged by anyone else to be pure and utter rubbish and probably grounds for psychiatric examination. I'm not trying to be funny. After all, what is there to say? What record you've liked a lot lately? What you think of Asimov's new book? What the blonde said before she slammed the door on your hand? What you like best about the government? It's like I tell you, everybody's going to hate you. But I don't. I like you. I like everyone — even Art Linkletter. I can look at myself and realize I better not judge anybody...not even the apes, for instance, who now want to put up several billion dollars worth of radar equipment at the South Pole.

Art Linkletter. How do you get a name like that? Of course, if you go back in history far enough, you find out what a person's ancestors did for aliving. I suppose that Linkletter's ancestors were the local scribes. My name, now, is D. Noland Hall. Hall means my ancestors worked in a manor or maybe a castle. There was never a manor owned by them, or it would have been called Hall Hall — an intolerable situation comparable to my idea, if I ever became rich, of donating money to the University of Missouri so they could put David Hall Hall up right next to McDavid Hall.

Peter Roberts
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9/15/72

One of my favourite words, and one that's lost nothing over the years, is the precise West Country superlative, "gert" (a dialect word for "great," in the sense of "large" or "massive"). It always seems to be stressed in such

a way that the wonderment of sheer size is immediately communicated: "Where's thy father to, then, Ter?" "A gert lorry did squash 'im flat." The adjective, accompanied with a stretching of the hands and a raising of the eyebrows, shows that the vehicle must have been a monstrous and many-wheeled pantehnicon, probably carrying a cargo of lead.... The word is also adaptable, of course: "Fout on that gert fugghead!" would be an excellent form of dismissal.

The trouble with an adapting language that changes with the times is that it usually degenerates and certainly becomes less attractive. There is a fine line between degeneration and change.—BS/ This is most obvious today in several European languages which have adopted English to an absurd extent. Franglais is well known, but I've seen terrible examples in German and Welsh. The cause of their adoption lies in a lack of vocabulary in a large number of people, which results in them borrowing or fabricating a word. The same happens in English, of course, and I object strongly to such tendencies — putting an "ize" on a noun to form a verb, for example, is a wretchedly lazy way to add to the vocabulary and produces barbaric words, many of which had now forgotten verbal forms in any case. Worse still, another noun is often formed from the root by adding "ization," thus I once had to work on the decasualization of dockers...I was happy to lose the job when the section underwent computerization anyway. It's all the Americans' fault, vocabulary-wise.

I have a good memory for childhood events and I can detect later anecdotes and photographic influences on my early recollections. I was helped, however, by the amount of moving we did in the early fifties and by various events. I don't remember much of the Coronation, for example, or the well-told story of my tearful indignation at not receiving a special mug (we'd just moved and I wasn't considered a local child — all examples of the latter received a mug); but I do remember my third birth-

CHAIRMAN MAO AND THE MEN FROM MARS



THERE! NOW
HOW ABOUT
THAT!

