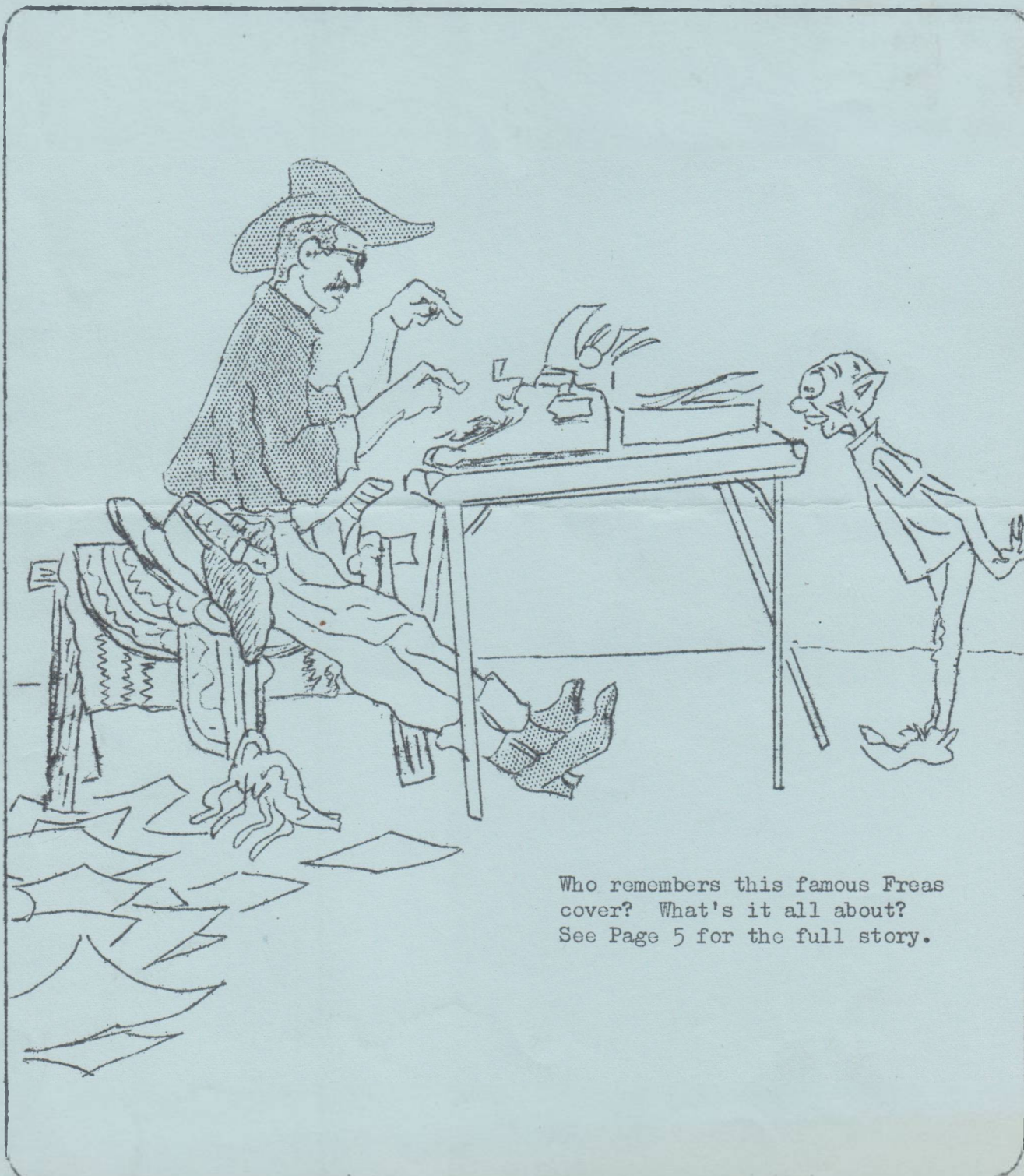


2nd Great
Number!

PROLAPSE

August 1983
APA-B No.3.

- "What words mean in dictionaries is often irrelevant to what they mean in real life" - Joy Hibbert.



Who remembers this famous Freas cover? What's it all about? See Page 5 for the full story.

INSIDE: SOUR TASTE AT THE BARBECUE; SECRETS OF THE MILLION-POUND SF MAGAZINE; THE CURSE OF MANCHESTER - Plus Langford, Hoffman, Gillespie, Aldiss, and more!

PROLAPSE

This is Prolapse-2, intended for the third mailing of APA-B, the Brum Group Amateur Press Association, due for distribution on 19th August 1983. Once again "I" am Peter Weston (with no desire to be Larry Niven, Joseph), living at 72 Beeches Drive, Erdington, Birmingham B24 ODT. The last issue, my first in a long, long time, broke the barriers, and this one has been much easier to write and produce; welcome to some new readers who may not have seen the epic firstish. For their benefit, the Story So Far:

'Old Man emerges from suspended hibernation into a strange future world. He foolishly stands for election into a local branch of the International Science Fiction Conspiracy. Things then start to happen to him...'

"Grow up, man, for God's sake!" - Joseph Nicholas, BSFG Newsletter

This is it; I can't stall any longer, the moment of truth has arrived. I've fed the cat, watered the plants, cleared my correspondence, stencilled the letter-col, bashed out my MCs, and now there's nothing else for it, I have to write something.

How I hate writing; but as Walt Willis once said, "how I love having written!"

So, what was the reaction to Prolapse-1?

Limited, is the best word. There was only really one person who enjoyed the first issue immensely, who chuckled at the cartoons, re-read each page lovingly, nodded in agreement with every sentiment; yes, me!

Others were less enthusiastic. Predictably, one or two of the London Lot didn't like it - not because of any merits, or otherwise, you understand, but on the general principle that "if Peter Weston has done it, then it can't be any good".

I find this attitude a bit sad. Completely predictable, of course, but it would be so much more of a surprise if people were able to rise above their own prejudices and limitations, just for once!

SOUR TASTE AT THE BARBECUE

This leads me naturally onto a related topic, on which I'm currently feeling quite strongly; why do some individuals set out to pick fault, to spoil and destroy? I have two specific examples in mind, and I shall Name Names shortly. But first, let's set the scene, set the mood...

It is Saturday August 6th, and tonight the Brum Group is holding a barbecue in the Malvern Hills. It is the first time we've done anything quite so ambitious, and I'm feeling a little nervous as to its success. The idea grew from a collective committee brainstorming session, but now the moment of truth is drawing near, and many of the detail arrangements depend on me.

11.30a.m., and I pop into Stechford to hire the barbecue itself.

12.00 noon, and Margaret arrives (with baby Helen). She's been shopping all morning, and has pounds of sausage and beefburgers, dozens of bread rolls, buckets of salad, cole slaw, mustard, paper plates, and all the trimmings. We wait for Chris Suslowicz for a few minutes; he's obviously been delayed, then decide to go for the drinks.

1.25p.m. After two abortive attempts (Augustus Barnett had been taken over, the previous evening, so we are informed by a glum shop-manageress, and their stock is next to non-existent; she was quite dispirited), we arrive back with a car-load of booze to find Chris sitting on the step. He'd had a 2-hour bus journey, but has brought the paper cups, picnic table, and other items, as promised.

"Will it be enough?", we ask each other anxiously. We have 30 pints, in small cans, to drink on the coach; 30 more for the trip back, and 55 pints in party 'bumpers' for the barbecue itself. Plus cider, soft drinks, and so on.

"It's a sell-out," says Margaret. "We had to turn away another ten or twelve people because there weren't any seats left on the coach".

2.30p.m. By now, Chris and I have consumed a hurried fry-up, and now we set out for Erdington, to buy charcoal, plastic forks, batteries for my cassette player, and sundry other bits and pieces. We walk the length and breadth of the High Street, finding plastic spoons and knives galore, but no forks! "A conspiracy, someone is trying to corner the market", Chris mutters darkly. An hour later we find them in our local corner-shop.

4.00p.m. I've scrubbed the barbecue with a wire-brush, loaded up with the charcoal and firelighters, and we decide to perform a test ignition on a small lump. This is the bit I'm most anxious about; a barbecue 40 miles from base is not to be undertaken lightly, and I've never tried it before. Will the damn thing light? (My previous attempts have utilised asbestos coals). Fortunately, Chris is an Explosives Expert, so manages to get a satisfactory burn. All is well - except that one sack of charcoal is not enough.

4.30p.m. Back into Erdington, where we buy more charcoal, but notice dark clouds gathering, and even a few spots of rain starting to fall. On the way back we stop at a neighbour's house to borrow some cassettes, since we've failed to reach any Group member who might bring some along (later, David Hardy tells me of the many dozens of titles he'd have been pleased to provide).

5.30p.m. Panic is setting in; the player won't work, and Chris starts to dismantle it on the kitchen table. I slump into a garden lounger and chew my fingernails about the weather.

6.15p.m. Chris is triumphant. By this time I'm running around, trying to sort out an old garden table, wondering if the thing will fold up small enough to fit inside the coach.

6.30p.m. Coach arrives. We start to load up - first the table, then food, drink, we put the first 30 cans inside, just behind the driver. Everything is set; I take one last look around my garage, then put on my cowboy hat and climb aboard.

7.00p.m. We arrive outside the Grand Hotel in Colmore Row, to find 30-odd BSFG members waiting for us with various expressions of cautious optimism, wonder, and excitement. Among them are three Swedish fans, Ahrvid Engholm, Lottic, and Magnus, who are staying with Superfan Martin Tudor. He, with Paul Vincent, will follow behind in the car with Mike Millward and lady, since there isn't room on the coach.

7.10p.m. Alan Cash arrives late, and is the last one aboard. With a roar, we are away! The driver seems an obliging sort, the weather is clearing, Steve Green and I sit in the front seat and start to natter happily about fan-projects. Everyone seems happy, we pick up speed along the Bristol Road, and I suggest that we pass out the beer when we get to the city boundary.

SUDDENLY....

A tap on my shoulder. I turned, to see the belligerent features of Ian Hastie, our man from Scotland (you remember, he gave the 'V' sign to everyone at the Chinese restaurant, the other month).

"Is that all the beer we've got?" he demanded, gesturing at the travelling supply.

I looked at him, and all sorts of feelings chased through my brain. I thought of the hours we'd spent organising, trying to make sure nothing had been forgotten. I thought of normal standards of social behaviour, of the fact that we'd been going for barely ten minutes, and that I wasn't answerable to him for my actions.

"Don't worry, there's one each," I replied.

Uproar! Minor explosion of Scotsman!

"Listen here," he said, "I've paid four quid for this night and I want to know where it's gone. If that's all the bloody drink you've got, I'll have my money back and get off now!"

(I paraphrase of necessity, but that's a fairly accurate rendition)

I thought I'd better calm him down, and made reassuring noises. "Relax. We've taken care of everything. There's plenty to drink."

But would he shut up?— not Ian Hastie. He continued to curse and complain. Finally, with an unpleasant mutter, he disappeared back to his seat.

By then the damage had been done. My mood had been shattered. I sat there, and re-played the scene in my mind, and brooded, and fumed. Steve told me to forget it. "You know what he's like," he said. But I started to get angry. I thought of all the things I could have said to Ian Hastie, if I'd been better prepared. How dare he spoil my evening!

Suddenly, without conscious volition, I lurched to my feet and went after him.

I go into a peculiar mental state when I'm very angry (I always get the shakes before a drop). My horizons close in, until I'm only aware of the target of my wrath. Time seems to slow down; my voice seems to be coming from a long distance away, from inside my head, almost as if someone else is speaking and my consciousness is a mere observer. Physically, I start to tremble; nothing matters but the defeat of my opponent.

It's not a good state of mind, and one day this reaction is going to get me into a lot of trouble; however, it did come in useful at the Brighton Metro-pole in 1979, didn't it Simone?

So I told Ian Hastie what I thought of him.

He gave as good as he got. "I've a right to know what you've done with the money," was one of his lines, and, "I'm speaking on behalf of all of them", (indicating the back half-dozen rows of seats), "they all want to know".

"You're being very evasive", he said. "You're nobody. I don't have to do what you say," and a nice parting shot, "How much are you going to have to drink?"

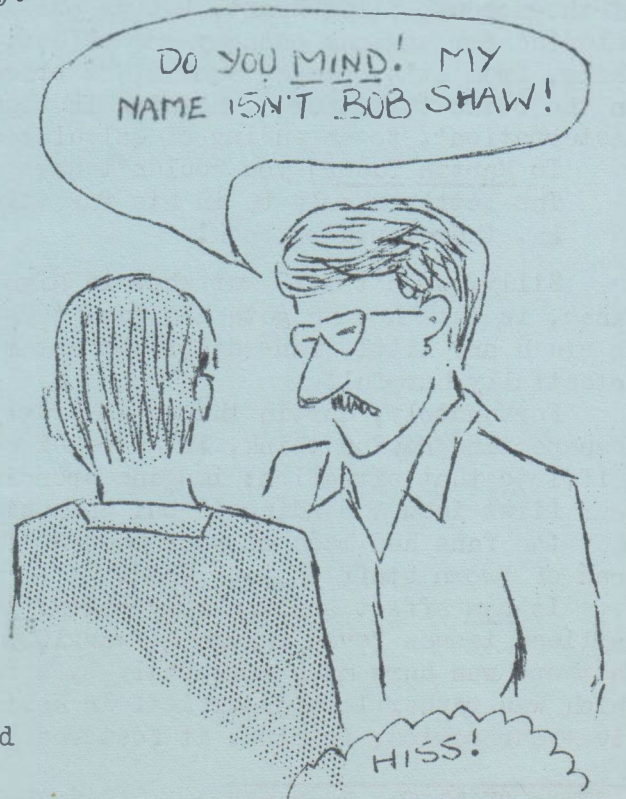
I felt better after the argument was over, but I couldn't recapture the earlier mood of pleasant anticipation. Talking it over with Steve, I reasoned that the outburst hadn't actually been caused by anything we'd done, or not done. It had nothing to do with the time, the effort, we'd taken (and enjoyed doing, I hasten to add, before someone else gets the wrong end of the stick). No, this person had obviously boarded the coach determined to find something to moan about; anyone else would have sat back and waited to see what happened.

Well, it all went off pretty well, I thought. We found the recommended site, an old quarry (where we had permission from the police to have our fire), we parked, and Chris, Steve, Phil Probert and one or two others helped to unload, while I set up the barbecue as a priority.

However, I was conscious of a minor disturbance at the edge of the group; instead of pitching-in to help, a little knot of people were muttering and complaining. Finally, after about ten minutes, and led by Ian Hastie, they marched off to find a pub.

Well, good riddance, perhaps. But I was saddened; they hadn't given it a chance. And what did they expect — here we were, at Malvern. It was a lovely, warm evening, with a view for miles, and as the Sun slowly set the delicious smell of sausages started to fill the air. We had music, and far more beer than we could drink, and as the light faded, Mike Millward turned his car so that the headlamps shone on our little group.

Seemingly in a flash, the night was over, and at 10.45 we began to pack up. There was some hilarity, as we discovered the best way to put out the glowing coals; Gentlemen, be Upstanding!



We put the equipment back into the coach, and only then discovered that Mr Hastie's little band had appropriated nearly all of the single cans of beer which I'd been keeping for the trip back. Determined to get value for money, I suppose - 26 pints between them, and never mind anyone else!

But, fortunately, no-one seemed to care; we picked up the six breakaways at the pub, and most people fell asleep before we even reached the motorway. I looked around, once or twice, to see slumbering bodies and blank faces; except for Bill McCabe who sat there with eyes bright, thinking, watching.

Simon Norburn seemed almost apologetic, to his credit, as we dropped him off in Selly Oak. I didn't speak to Ian Hastie.

Well! All action-packed stuff, eh? But the night was not quite over, not yet. You see, the afore-mentioned Swedes were going back with dynamic Martin, as were Paul Vincent and Steve Green. Having nothing better to do (it was only 12.30a.m.), and with Lady Eileen and children safely away in Wales, I decided to join them for a room-party.

Not a lot happened. Heck, it couldn't, in Martin's compact bedsit-cum-den; but around 2.00a.m., talking about his fanzine (these days Martin talks of little else), he showed me a LoC he'd received from Mike Ashley.

"Look at this," said Martin, "it's a real KTF*-type letter!"

What do I know about Mike Ashley?

He came into fandom in the late sixties, I think, with a 'zine titled Xeron, which wasn't a lot of fun, being mostly filled with checklists. Then he started a new title, Plinth, which was all checklists. He was a tall, gangling, blonde youth last time I saw him; then he disappeared for a time - rumour had it (or so Rog told me) that he'd married a Jehovah's Witness or something like that: his business, really. Then he came back in SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY, with a series of articles on the history of SF, which he later expanded into a 4-volume set of books for NEL.

Mike was always conscientious, amazingly well-informed on science fictional matters, a little dry, and essentially a loner. But he was always friendly and well-meaning so far as I was concerned.

Now, however, he seems to have developed a new, and much more unpleasant personality. The letter Martin showed me was quite startling in its malice, or so it seemed at 2.00a.m.! I know how such letters get written; not as a spur-of-the-moment, first draft, but as polished set-pieces. Every word had been selected for maximum economy and effect, clearly hours of work had gone into this thing, from it's opening remark, "I presume you call your various issues EMPTYES on the basis that there's nothing in them", through various sneers about 'mutual masturbation', to an ending of calculated poison.

To Martin Tudor; you couldn't have a keener, more anxious-to-please fan!

The letter should be in his fnz this time..... Whoops!

Ah, there, you're back!

Silly, wasn't it? But what is Mike Ashley about? Is this his idea of fanac, is this how he gets his fun, these days? What a crabbed, negative aim, to crush any little fan-editor who dares to send their publication. And how potentially harmful!

Fortunately, Martin thinks it pretty funny, and yet what would an innocent, unsuspecting neofan think, if he received a letter like that? I mean, put yourself into that situation; imagine spending all that effort and dedication on your first issue, sending it out enthusiastically, sitting back eagerly to see what the fans had made of your maiden effort.... and *PLONK!*, down comes this load of brown stuff on your head.

It can affect someone very badly. I was hurt by Jim Linwood's review of my earliest issues (even though he was 100% correct, as I later realised); Kevin Easthope was hurt much more badly by a venomous attack by Greg Pickersgill, which was rather less justified. In Kevin's case, it stopped him totally for a five-year period; in mine, it fostered paranoia, and much confusion.

* KTF = "Kill The Fuckers"

So, to return to my original question, a couple of pages back, why do they do it? What drives them, what sort of people are they, who set out to wound, to score points, to destroy?

I'm no goody-goody; I have enemies, for one reason or another. Sometimes I'm impatient with others, maybe insensitive, but I have never set out to hurt someone deliberately, as a first-strike (hitting back is different!) If people leave me alone, then I will respect their right to do their own thing, in their own way.

Fandom is for fun. Fandom is a place to make friendships. Fandom is not for feuding, for ill-feeling, and such forces are invariably corrosive, they ultimately spoil and destroy those very souls who invoke them. -10/8/83

* * * * *

PRIMORDIAL EVIL

Well, I see the ancient curse has not yet been lifted from the Manchester area, which remains a total Dead Zone as far as all things fannish are concerned.

No-one now knows what dreadful evil brought down the blight, so long ago -- why, I doubt if even Mal Ashworth can remember. But the sad fact is, nothing fannish has ever come out of Manchester; and those poor unfortunates who venture in, invariably lose their youth and strength to emerge feeble and prematurely aged -- look at Chuck Partington and Eddie Jones!

Legent tells of disastrous conventions in the early days, of 'Bloody Provincials', Monster fans, Malfunction and Madcap. There was the THIRDMANCON at Buxton in 1968, which was a noted shambles; then the 1972 CHESSMANCON (which I enjoyed, but many didn't), and the Owen's Park catastrophe in 1976.

Latest manifestation has been the failure of the Blackpool Eastercon bid for 1984, so obviously accursed, as was seen at ALBACON. I mean, there we had a good, fannish bid, well-supported, which fell flat on its face. First, Malcolm Edwards' wife went into premature labour, so that he couldn't deliver the bid package in his so-persuasive tones. The Charnox offspring was taken to hospital with asthma, thus knocking out Pat & Graham. Then Rob Holdstock (who was the spokesman) contracted a strange paralysis of the frontal lobes, which turned this most articulate of men into a stammering idiot. My God, when they flipped a coin to decide batting order, the Blackpool team even lost the toss!

Why worry?, you ask. Because valuable fans are still straying into the Zone, to be lost for ever. Look at TAFF-man and social dynamo Kevin Smith, who moved from South London to Altrincham... and silence. Or Leeds fan and BSFA-Supremo Alan Dorey, who moved to Middleton recently... and at BECCON, they were asking, "does anyone know what's happened to Alan Dorey?"

But worst of all, Bob Shaw has moved to Warrington! This is terrible! I advise that he watch him carefully at the September meeting; look to see whether his hands tremble, his eyes twitch after midnight. Will Bob last until Christmas? If not, this could be serious - IT COULD SPOIL OUR PARTY!

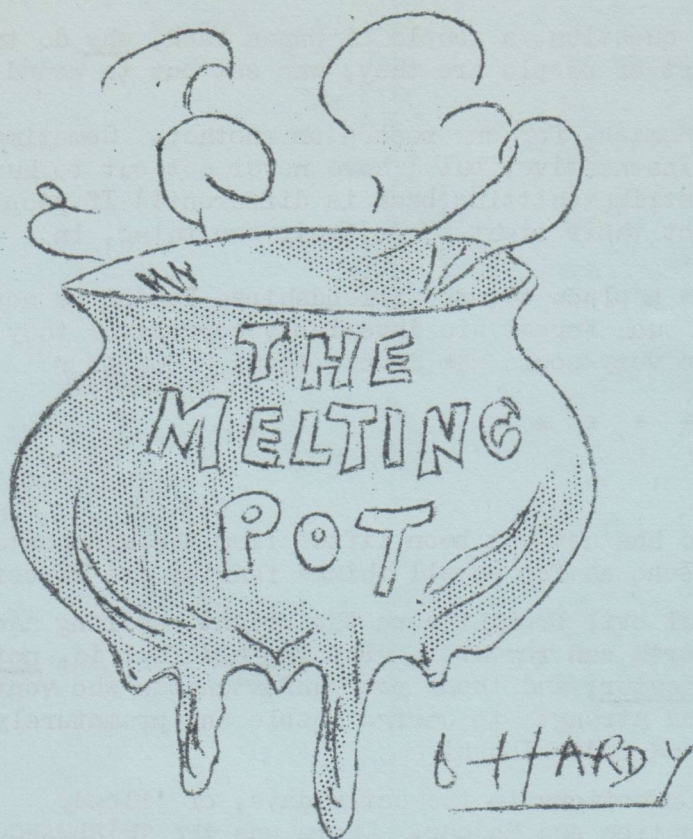
OUR COVER, THISH

A bit in-groupish, maybe, but long-time Astounding readers will immediately recognise this Freas sketch from September 1954, illustrating Fredric Brown's 'Martians Go Home'. Now, since I brought a black cowboy hat back from my Texas trip, which I oft-times wear while typing (or at barbecues), I thought the illo would be appropriate.. particularly since Fred's character is pestered by little people who stop him from getting any work done -- just like me (though my three girls aren't green!). Anyway, I thought it was funny.

A word on the issue itself; I'd meant to finish my article, "What I Really Think About Americans", but the "editorial" ran away with itself; I'll try to catch up next time, with a little more about my exploits in fabled California.

Illos this time by Steve Green, David Hardy, & Hand-Cut Films, Ltd.

- PW.



"Damn plastic cauldrons they make, these days!"

A new title-illo this time, this one by David Hardy (one of his rare fanzine sketches in recent years), and done on the coach en-route to the BSFG Barbecue. Nice one, David!

Well, I can't say I was overwhelmed with letters on Prilps the First; in fact I was a bit disappointed. It wasn't made any better, either, by the sight of Martin Tudor running around like a rat up a drainpipe, waving missives from Ted White and other notables. Still, while my lettercolumn this time might be small, it's choice. Do please drop me a note on this current issue!

DAVID LANGFORD, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU

"At last, the Master Plan has come to fruition. Since 1976 I have deluged you with each and every copy produced of Drilkjis and Twll-Ddu; since 1979 I've been able to remind you yet more frequently with issue after issue of Ansible; now, raised at last by this constant bombardment into a higher fannish energy-state (cf a letter of your very own in Wrinkled Shrew), you've been forced to respond by emitting a fanzine of your own.

"This was the climax of long years of effort, loosely based on the rejected screenplay 'RAISE THE WESTON'! Now, revelling in the long-delayed triumph, I wonder what I'll do for an encore? Already I find myself sketching out vague plans for a Machiavellian scheme which will cause P. Weston to shut up again....

"Glad to see some result from all those mysterious early morning phone calls in which you would ask me addresses of unlikely fans or unlikelier U.S. conventions. It used to be hell. Try to delay it though I would, the morning bowel motion would have me in its grip though I knew it was folly; sure enough, exactly as I was in the process of losing weight with scientificfictional speed, the phone would ring and it would be good old Peter; at that moment already alerted by the sinister spiderweb of communications extending from 72 Beeches Dr., the postman would demand signatures on recorded-delivery packets while almost simultaneously the milkman would demand money, and there I'd be, clutching my trousers and torn three ways at once, while from the phone trickled a rich Brummie voice, its apologetic tone overlaid with infinite malice, saying, "I'm sorry to bother you so early in the morning, Dave..."

"All right, I'm sorry I mentioned the Brum Group upheavals in Ansible, I really am..."

"PS: Numerous submissions to this 'SF magazine' of yours (as mentioned in John-Henri's letter) will be along, as soon as I can think up bright new titles for all my old ANDROMEDA rejects.

"PPS: It rained this morning. So when I found this long, floppy, damp, pink thing dangling from the letterbox, the title seemed quite appropriate. (Must try harder to forget unwisely reading of one of James Herriot's close encounters with unfortunate parts of cows. Yikh.)"

(So that's the reason for your somewhat strained tone of voice, Dave! And I thought you were just being uffish because you didn't want to share your secrets with me. Anyway, soon there'll be no more need to trouble you any more, because as I've mentioned before, we hope to publish a 'Directory of British Fandom' as a BSFG project - something which will be useful to new fanzine editors, or old has-beens like me, desperately trying to get back in!

(The mysterious SF magazine; keep on reading, and all will be revealed. But I'm really looking forward to seeing "Jellyfish" again, Dave. I really think that was one of your best stories. I don't know why I didn't take it for ANDROMEDA in 1976. Or why anyone else hasn't taken it, since!)

MALCOLM EDWARDS, 28 Duckett Road, London N4 1BN

"Thanks for the fanzine - the old bones creak, the withered hand reaches once more for the duplicator handle. There is no escape! It'll be conventions next! "

(Malcolm is of course a mere chubby-cheeked babe of 13 years in fandom)

BRUCE GILLESPIE, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.

"If there is any highlight of the whole year, maybe even the decade, it's receiving the first Pete Weston fanzine in ten years. My eyes went all sort of misty when I spied the address on the outside, then opened to find a real fannish-type fanzine. The return of Dick Bergeron was remarkable enough - but the return of Peter Weston! Maybe there will even be another issue of *DELETED BY CENSOR*.

"The only trouble with Prolapse is that you assume in it that your readers know what's been happening to you and your family in the ten years since they last read a fanzine from you. All I've had is the faintest glimmerings - a very nice Christmas card one year, which I was always going to answer, and brief accounts of you from such people as Damien Broderick and John Foyster, who've been overseas. The Christmas card showed far more children than I remember. When I saw you and Eileen and Alison last, Alison was less than 2 years old, and Eileen was about to have another child. I don't know any other details. I presume that your house is much as it was, with all that vast amount of garden flourishing. And from what I've heard you've been doing pretty well in your job.

"I think I sent odd bits and pieces which would have filled you in with my own story. Basically, Elaine and I got together by a most peculiar set of circumstances in 1977/78, lived together for a year, and were married in March 1979. At the same time, with the help of Elaine's father, we managed to take out a mortgage on a house in Collingwood. Since then, Elaine has got the garden growing, and we've survived financially, sort of. Actually we went broke altogether about this time last year, but Elaine took a job as a proof-reader with a typesetting agent, while I went on making very little as a freelance typesetter and copy-editor. Which is my current situation. I did publish (October 1982) SF Commentary Reprint Edition: First Year 1969, which hasn't sold all that well, which is the main reason I don't have the money to continue publishing SFC itself. Also, postage rates have become incredibly high in Australia, quite a bit higher than for Britain or USA. My current plan is that I will typeset for Van Ikin, who publishes Science Fiction in Western Australia, and Van will take over my subscription list. Meanwhile, I hope to publish something which will have much the same intention as Prolapse, only I think I will use the facility of having an IBM Composer on the premises to fit a lot of stuff on a small number of pages (About 1500 words a page, in 8 pt. type).

"So that's a decade in a paragraph; vastly improved life (and waistline), except financially. Of course, not having much money means that it seems unlikely I'll ever get overseas again, but maybe you will be able to get here for the Worldcon in 1985. It's a good thought."

(Thanks for the nice letter, Bruce. And I'm pleased you're so much happier, now - amazing the civilising effect women have on fans, isn't it? Actually, I might just have a slim chance of getting to Australia before 1985, if the company

for whom I work can stagger on for a little longer. You see, I try to wangle a business trip overseas, every six months or so - it's partly genuine, we do have a lot of export business, and I usually manage to bring back enough orders to cover my costs - and I have my sights on a Chamber-of-Commerce organised, British government-sponsored mission to Australia, in January 1984. Funny how these things are always arranged in the middle of winter over here; one might almost think the organisers, too, are looking for an excuse to see some sunshine!

(Bruce, I still have that excellent biographical article you wrote in 1974, while you were staying in our house (and quietly freezing - yes, we now have central heating!) Would you object to my using it in Prolapse, if I get chance? It was intended for the tenth annish of The Fnz With No Name, but since that's ten years late, I doubt if I'll get round to publishing it, now).

PAUL VINCENT, 25 Dovedale Avenue, Pelsall, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 4HG

"I could tell you really enjoyed hammering out your own ish after all those years; nice to see you back in action. Funny, though, I can't quite picture you as "the Fairy in THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR" - or is there something you've got to tell us???

"Judging from your surprise at the, er, low-key response to your Jophan rig at ALBACON, I take it you don't fully appreciate just how many 'active' fans these days are only interested in con-fandom? I wasn't around in fandom, 10 years ago, but I get the impression that, as a percentage, more fans were into 'zines, back then. It must have been quite a culture-shock for you. Never mind, next year sees Tynecon II, - the Mexican, which will exclude such periphra as Comix, Mediafans, and D&D, and will concentrare on two areas - SF and fanzines. I'm going, anyway.

"Incidentally, re. your comment on my letter last time, the Brum Group is full of 2-headed mutants - I always see several as I leave the Old Royal after an informal meeting. *Hic!* "

(Don't quite agree, Paul; just now I'm amazed at the number of fnz titles around; everyone at BECCON seemed to be handing out their issues. Must be a TruFannish Renaissance, or something.

(And yes, I do know about Tynecon II. In fact, I'm actually pre-supporting member No.2, and have a signed receipt from Sue Williams somewhere to prove it. Of course, the organisers have forgotten all about their pre-supporters; Linda Pickersgill was quite amazed, when I mentioned it at BECCON, but that's suitably fannish! I think No.1 was Darroll, or Steve Green, or someone like that. I joined at ALBACON, just after the 'boos' had died down after Kevin Williams' proposal. Trouble was, he tried to sell a bid, based on excluding fringe-groups, to an audience largely composed of fringe groups!)

BRIAN ALDISS, 16 Moreton Road, Oxford, OX2 7AX

"I liked Prolapse - the title if nothing else. Here's a one-liner contribution to it, strictly true. Place: eminent Birmingham restaurant. Aldiss to waiter, after scanning wine list, "I'll have No. 17, Macon Rouge, please." Waiter: "Very good, sir. Red or white, would you like?"



"My father was a docker and my mother was a mugger" - Pete Lyon,
July BSGF meeting. (That's what it sounded like, anyway!)

DAVID REDD, 'Kensington', 9 Queensway, Haverfordwest, SA 61 2PB

"Nice to see Prolapse and discover that you're returning to real life again. You realise, of course, that we old subscribers are expecting something else from you now...

"That letter from John-Henri Holmberg was interesting, both for the glimpse of Swedish SF schemes (more, please) and for the intriguing comment, 'Best of luck on your SF magazine'. ?? "

(Ah, well, David, I was so impressed by the enthusiasm of John-Henri that I found myself telling him about a scheme of mine, hatched quite a few years ago, to launch a mass-market, semi-glossy SF mag. onto the British market. I believe that there is no future in the usual sort of under-capitalised schemes we usually end up with; today, publishing is BIG BUSINESS, and the promotional budget alone, of something like a part-work, is £500,000 or more.

(So, I reasoned, we need to interest a major group, like IPC or Morgan-Grampian in the concept of a skiffy 'zine; actually, it's not as daft as it sounds. I mean, have you seen some of the things they do publish? TROPICAL FISH WEEKLY, THE BIRD-WATCHER'S FRIEND, MASTER SWORESMAN, and so on! I actually worked-up some impressive figures on the potential circulation, based on estimated purchases of SF PB's per annum, which I coupled with the tremendous interest in SF-style films, TV, etc.

("It's an SF world", I proclaimed, in my sales letter, which I never sent. What stopped me? Several things. First, the shortage of material; yes, there is a tremendous vacuum, in that all the major SF writers of the past have stopped writing shorts, or have died, or are doing something else. There are only a few new authors of quality around. (I proved that to my total satisfaction with ANDROMEDA; it was nearly impossible to get anything from a 'name'). Second reason? - what was I trying to achieve? There is no room for amateurs in big-business publishing, so if I was successful in selling the idea, then presumably I'd want to be full-time editor... only I didn't, already having an established career in engineering.

(So I shelved the idea; and about six months later, heard that a major name in publishing was indeed entering the SF field - with Omni. And wasn't I right, about dearth of material, even with their astronomically-high payment rates!

(Anyway, while with John-Henri, I remembered all this nonsense, and briefly thought of trying again; but the idea was still-born before I stepped off the plane, back in England.

(Meanwhile, I'm personally amazed at the way the Swedes claim to break-even on such microscopic circulations - fanzine level, I call it. Why, the BRE Galaxy & Astounding, around 1960, had a circulation of over 25,000 and couldn't make it pay; I suspect the Swedish government is subsidising things, somewhere along the line!)

LEE HOFFMAN, 350 N.W. Harbour Blvd, Port Charlotte, Florida 33952.

"I recognised your Jophan costume from the description. Admire your industry in producing the Shield of Umor. The audience reaction reminds me of a bit at OMNICON (a Mediafan convention where I was a guest earlier this year). I was on a panel, about getting into professional writing, and mentioned that I had served my apprenticeship in the fanzines. Bjo Trimble took it up from there, and I slowly realised that the audience of Media fans had a very different orientation toward fanzines than I do -- and very different fanzines. (Theirs sell for like \$5 or \$10 a copy).

"Most of the crowd didn't even know about our kind of zines -- the personal fnz, the chatty ones, the kind you can get in exchange for a reasonably intelligent LoC or sometimes any response at all. They do read and they do write, but I think most of them haven't conceived of putting out zines of their own, or like that. If I were filthy rich with nothing better to do, I would be tempted to try bridging the gap by publishing a chatty personal media-involved zine in exchange for LoCs.

"Back in the prehistoric days of turbo-prop planes, I flew to G.B. on a Super Constellation that developed an oil leak over the Atlantic and had to shut down an engine. Fortunately we were past the Point of No Return (love that phrase!) so there was no going back. But I was so grogged out by air sickness and the Dramamine I had taken to prevent it that I didn't even know about our problem until after we'd landed at Glasgow, so I missed the fun and adventure of contemplating a crash-landing in the Atlantic.

"Fortunately I was awake enough on the bus trip from one airport to another to catch one interesting bit. The driver pointed off into the green distance and informed us importantly that over there was where Hess had landed when he parachuted into Scotland during WWII. A U.S. passenger commented knowingly, "Oh yes, Alger Hess." (If this isn't funny, you're younger than I am.)

"Re, your observation of our Little Old Ladies, there is a whole horde of L.O.L.s in the United States who have made their lives very comfortable and successful by being totally helpless. They manage to get other people to do everything for them. It is an Art.

"Anyway, glad to know you survived TWA. (Which is more than one can say for Howard Hughes. Or TWA itself)."

(Last time we met, Lee, was in 1977, during the wind-up after SUNCON. Do you remember how we poured all those dollar bills onto Tom Perry's kitchen table? Or how we stood outside a toyshop in Boca Raton, with me saying things like, "My girls don't want any more rotten dolls", and you handed me a doll? I'm glad I'm now forgiven, anyway. When's the next ish of SCIENCE FICTION FIVE-YEARLY?)

ARTHUR THOMSON, 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London SW2 3RU.

"Ta's for Prolapse and nice to hear from you. Should I say welcome to the ranks of those who have just crawled back out of the woodwork? Though in fact, in our cases we were never really as inactive as Vince, or Mal, or Dave Wood. I remember your Maya columns, and I've been fanning away in the U.S. fnz for years.

"The way I see it, as I put to Rob Hansen at the Tun a while back when he muttered something about "you fifties fans", is that so far as I am concerned, I'm a fan ... standing in the Tun and enjoying '80s fandom and being part of it.. just like him. The fact that I'd been a fan in the '50s didn't enter into it.

"I've been reading all the British fanzines from the seventies and early eighties, and think I'm up-to-date on what has been happening. I still don't go all that much for the "clever", insulting type of humour that has been around for a while. The sort in which you have to slag someone to get a giggle. I tend to get a little peeved, also, when I see a keen and conscientious fan on the receiving end of some of the snide and insulting humour that's supposed to be funny. It might be today's form of wit, but not for me.

"Nuff, then. Oh, and on the APA, I'd be pleased to see any fanzines from the BSFG, if you'd care to give my name to anyone who's pubbing. And I agree with your wife - Prolapse is a god-awful name for a fanzine!"

(Me too, Arthur! I'm glad you put it into words for me, because I've come to realise that one of the things which put me off fandom, in 1979-80, was all the silly, snide "wit" which was so common for a time. I didn't enter fandom to trade insults with people - if fans are my friends, I don't expect them to sneer behind my back, the instant I leave a room!

(Fortunately, I think the time for all that has passed - there seems to have been a general, unspoken feeling that 'enough is enough', and the current crop of zines seem remarkably free from the poison; long may it remain so!

(Of course, I don't really agree with your comment to Rob Hansen; the age in which we entered fandom does colour our perceptions, no matter how we might wish otherwise. I know, I had a bad moment on the first night of BECCON, when I stood in the bar, looked around, and realised that almost everyone else in the room was ten or twenty years younger than I was! Suddenly, I felt really old and past it; then Ken Bulmer came in, and I snapped back into context!)

WE-ALSO-HEARD-FROM-DEPARTMENT (There, Terry, now you know!)

We also heard from Bob Shaw. Just Bob Shaw? Migod, this is awful. I mean, what a put-down! Why didn't I simply print his letter? How can I explain it didn't really lend itself to this lettercol, that I don't have room, that it wasn't actually funny in intention? Gosh, Bob, no insult meant. I mean, now you're so near Manchester I really wanted to encourage you, not the opposite. Oh dear....

"I'm looking for a regular girl-friend" - Paul Vincent, at BECCON
(Does he mean that constipated ladies need not apply?)

MC²

COMMENTS ON THE
SECOND MAILING

Fifteen titles in the second APA-B mailing... pretty good, eh, gang? - and two more, arriving a day or so later, thanks to our intrepid OE Cath Easthope. So, maybe most of them were small, one-shooters, but I enjoyed reading the mailing immensely, the day after the last meeting. I sat in the Sun, and read, and chuckled... lots of variety, lots of personality. Well done, all!

DAUGHTER OF EVE (Eunice Pearson)

Very fluent, and in some ways a fascinating glimpse into an alien world - women really do inhabit a different cosmos to men, don't they? That said, there's actually nothing else I can, or want to say; I guess there's still some of that 'little boy' conditioning in me; we get brainwashed too, you know!

ABDUMP-2 (Paul Vincent)

Nice fat zine, but I bristled at the insinuations against the evil Brum Group and wonder quite why you felt the need to print that particular article, Paul, because I'm sure you don't actually believe most of the things you say therein. Anyway, wrong-headed I call it, in my LoC to you, so I'll leave further discussion until then. Otherwise... I was, frankly, horrified at the casual acceptance of violence implicit in Martin's piece - I guess that was his intention. I don't mix in such circles, thank God! As for your article on Real Ale, I have already confessed my dreadful secret; I'll take ice-cream in preference, any day!

ANALYSIS REPORT (Dave Upton)

Very clever, Dave. In fact, bloody brilliant, one of the most genuinely original things I've seen for a long time. I particularly liked your study of the TOS zine; though squirm at the description of the "elderly, rather portly-dressed" fnz. I hope there aren't hidden depths to your analyses, but rather suspect they may be all too true.

BOG ROLL-1 (Simon Norburn)

Stop wasting your talent, Simon.

T'ZINE OF THE THOUSAND TYPOS (Martin Tudor)

Not really enough to comment on, Martin. Look forward to the next EMPTYES.

GRAZING SAINTS-2 (Cath Easthope)

You know what I really enjoyed, Cath? Your mailing comments, that's what; in fact this is about the first time that I've seen MCs done properly, actually giving an interesting and very accurate reaction to the contents of the first mailing. I particularly agree with your summing-up of the case for the "KTF" vs kindness schools of reviewing, and think you state the case admirably for a bit of restraint, and of consideration for the feelings of others. At the same time, I think the unkindest thing you can say to anyone is, "shows promise..."

LILITH'S CHILD (Joy Hibbert)

Joy, I might as well say it, I find your material absolutely fascinating, no matter what the subject, because you seem to take a totally different view of things to anyone else (no matter what). I mean, it's almost uncanny to watch you avoid or ignore the obvious meanings of remarks and seize upon some obscure interpretation, maybe 180° away from what was intended. In my case, I guess you're telling me that 'Prolapse' has another meaning to those which I quoted. Did you really think I don't know that? Did my (intended) gentle irony, and silliness, of the title, totally escape you? And your incredible note on Dave Upton's Group Therapy ... Wow!

APA-RATTUS No. 1. (Chris Suslowicz)

I confess, Chris, I really thought you'd never get round to it, so immersed in your chase for equipment that you'd have no time for creative writing. Well, I was wrong; and enjoyed your muddy tale tremendously. Really funny! You write very fluently, with a sort of Heinleinesque finesse in the way you introduce the technology to the story... and "glop" is such an expressive word. More, more!

ZERO HOUR-1 (Geoff Kemp)

A real genzine, Geoff; you've taken a lot of trouble with this one, for which many thanks. I wonder if you'll be able to keep it up, though; or whether you want to, as you remark that you "just want to relax". I'm looking forward to more personal stuff from you next time. (Oh, I must just say how very interesting I found David Taylor's article; I could have read a lot more of this).

RECYCLOTRON (Graham Poole)

Pretty good, Graham - lots of personality. I especially liked your bit on Barrington Bayley; I feel somehow responsible for him, having befriended him, invited him to a meeting, and then having stayed away myself. It was a bit of a gamble, but he's quite fun in person-to-person conversation, and I had hopes he would do rather better than he obviously did. However, I met Barry at BECCON and you'll be interested to know he had quite a good time at the BSFG meeting, quite enjoyed himself. In fact, I'm thinking of asking him again.

PLIGHT OF FANTAZINE-1 (Jan Poole)

Great! Terrific! For a first issue this is excellent, lots of personality, though rather too short and not fully developed. And I feel so sorry that you had such a rotten time at Brighton, while I was riding so high... Look forward to the next one, Jan.

INFORMALITIES & SECONDARY (Bill McCabe)

You know, Bill, this is quite an 'alien' viewpoint, too, in a rather different way to Eunice. I find myself morbidly fascinated with your life; I mean, what do you do? What do you think? Why don't you tell us - try keeping a diary, (as your zine seems to suggest you do) and give us a few days, totally honest sensory-impressions, that sort of thing?

And that's it; Darroll, Steve, you don't need my twittering to tell you that you're doing your usual polished thing (things?) Now I'm waiting to see what's in the third mailing. Gosh, isn't it exciting!

SOUTH GATE'S GREAT IN EIGHTY-EIGHT BUT BRITAIN'S FINE IN EIGHTY-NINE!

PROLAPSE-2
19th August 1983

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