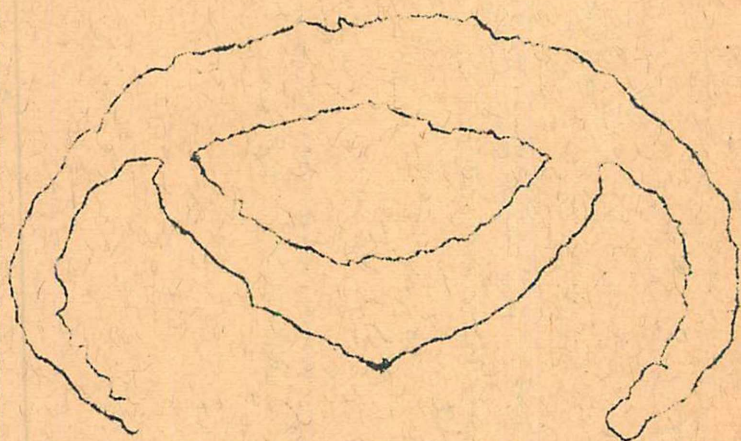
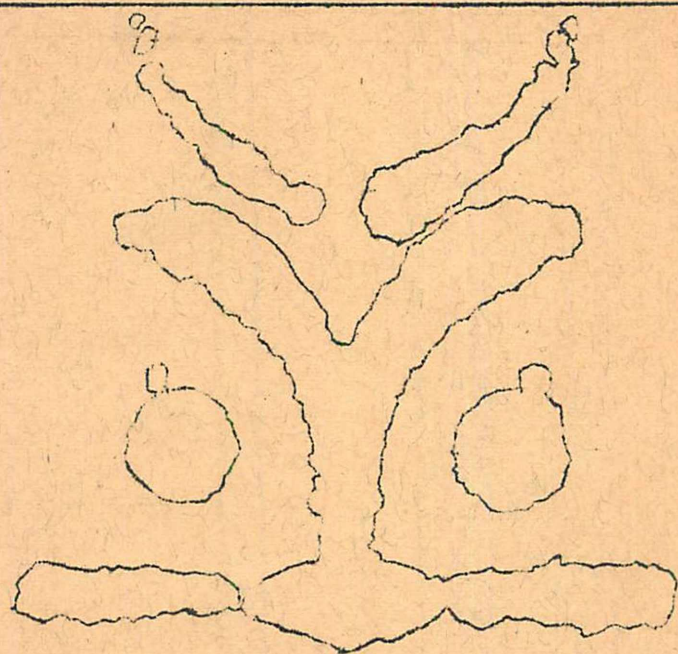
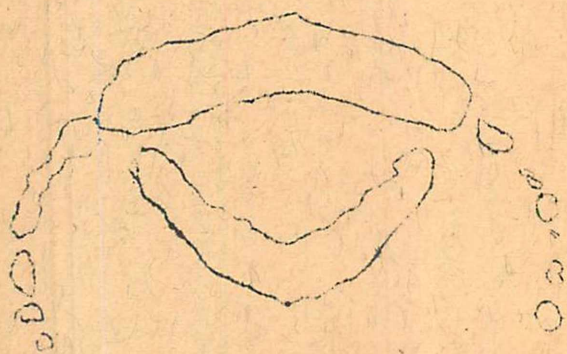
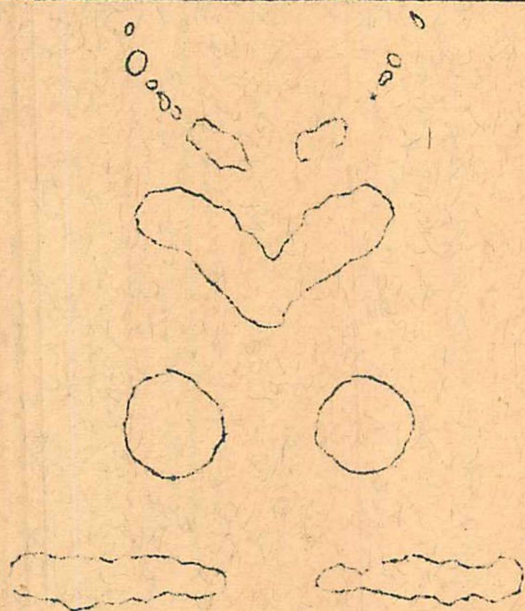


RATS!



JULY
'71

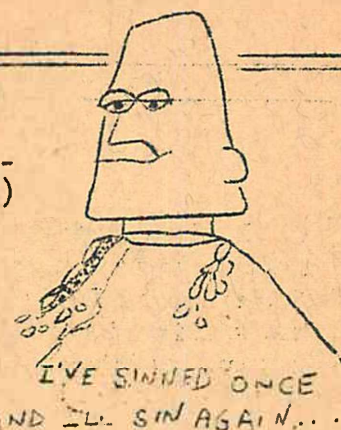
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RATS

NO.9 JULY '71

RATS! #9 for July of 1971 is edited by Bill Kunkel (72-41 61st Street, Glendale, New York 11227) and Charlene Komar (85-30 121st Street, Kew Gardens, New York 11415) and is obtainable for a publishable letter of comment (in other words, not just a note), art work, other contributions, your fanzine in trade (all-for-all basis) or 25¢. This issue was published by Arnie Katz (59 Livingston St. Apt. 6-B, Brooklyn, New York 11201) and Joyce was helpful on several levels. Thanks very much, folks.

Now, On With The Show!



Look out, fandom - Cause here we come ! - Bill & Charlene

CONTENTS

The first editorial, Drivel, by Kunkel begins on page 3 and runs through 6. The second, Ploy, by Charlene Komar is on page 7. Harry Warner, Jr.'s comments commence on page 8. illo on page 9 is by Ro. the column on p. 11 is adorned by an illo sent by an anonymous fan. (!) Ray Nelson takes up on page 14 and the title for "Two On A Crank" was designed by Bill Kunkel with the illo having been done by George Foster I, likewise, designed the cover, but the drawing were by Jack Gaughan.

Art Lastish was not listed:

G. Foster (pps. 1, 3, and 7)

J. Gaughan (pps. 4 -bottom-, 5, 6 and 9)

R.E. Jennings (pps. 2 and 4 -top-)

DRIVEL

In its second incarnation, this is the second RATS! and welcome to it. I have a lot of things to impart to you, but there is one that must come before all the others. Charlene and I have decided to make this a family affair and announced our engagement. The wedding is now being planned (more on that elsewhere in the issue) and should eventually happen around the middle of next year. Either May or August. And that ain't no drivell!

~~~~~

I imagine some of you actually read the colophon before going on to the rest of the issue (I know I often do). That being the case, some of you have read that this issue was run off by Arnie Katz on his Groovy, New Super-Duper Mimeo Deluxe. This all came about as a result of a visit Charlene and I paid on Arnie and The High Priestess of New York Fandom (aka, Joyce). We plowed through the Vestal Virgins, prone in the position of adoration along the hallway, and enjoyed a wonderful dinner of herbs and spices. For desert we ate the par-broiled remains of a neo-fan who was gutted for the occassion. It was all very nice.

After dinner we were showed the Printing Room (two beautiful mimeographs, reams of mimeo paper, and assorted stencils strewn about the area) and even Charlene was awed. This is something, believe me, because Charl and Mimeos have not gotten on so well in the past, she once having gotten sick after a few hours of inhaling the fumes given off by my clunking monster. But we had, prior to this, been discussing the possibilities of getting a first-rate, real keen dittograph after the wedding, but in the hallway while waiting for the elevator or minds flew immediately to musings about how much Arnie's had cost.

"Maybe we better not even ask," she said to me. And I knew then that perhaps some things are better never revealed. It really looks expensive.

But anyway, after viewing the duplicating apparatus we retired to the living room where in the course of about two hours I learned more about fandom and fanzines and fans than I was able to pick up in a year and a half on my own. The cram course was quite intense and I'm afraid I said a few ignorant things now and again, because, really, I'm wasn't all that familiar with fannish fandom and had once even assumed it to be clannish and, perhaps, elitist. But the Katz's showed me the light, they really did. Arnie just knows a hell of a lot about the fanzine business and in going over the delicious pile of fanzines he gave me I realized that his basic thesis about what RATS! is best suited for is correct: after a while the sercon sort of fanzine just becomes a stone drag. But a zine that is being formed from the seed of one's personality will live on as interestingly as one's personality manages to. And from that little acorn, who knows what might be wrought?

Anyway, I decided to try out RATS! as a fanzine with a faanish heart. GENOOK? Well, I'll just wait and see about that. Charlene agrees, and we've junked the old stencils that we'd cut with all those book reviews and stuff that seems so gauche now. I hate to have this sound like we walked into the Katz domicile and were brainwashed. I just realized, perhaps for the first time in my life, that here was somebody who knew a hell of a lot more than I did about something, and why don't I listen to what he has to say?

Besides, writing this faan stuff is a gas!



drivel:::

And while I'm chatting about fanzines let me mention a few that've come my way. Let's see, I've gotten GRANFALLOON #12, which looks much nicer than it did before and now is down to one editor, Linda Dushyager. The early issues of this fmz used to drive me crazy, exhibiting a giddy female attitude I've always found annoying. Linda is married now, however, and manages things very well. I sort of enjoyed this. And I got a few issues of LOCUS, but more on that below. And TWENTIETH CENTURY UNLTD. (2), a beautifully wrought ditto production from Andy Porter. One or two other things and, best of the bunch, Joyce Katz's latest POTLATCH (#4). Joyce is just a wonderful person and her personality comes through in this really first rate new fmz. Along with Arnie's back issues of FOCAL POINT (which will soon become more of a straight fanzine) this was, far and away, the best fmz I've read since getting back into fandom.

~~~~~

And now folks, it's time for a little LOCUS - POCUS!

....nothing up ma sleeve! Anddddddd, PRESTO! I pull a hugo outa' ma hat!

Good grief, Charlie Brown.

A few days ago, in the seizure of a fleeting whim, Charl mentioned to me, "Bill, I don't think I'm going to vote for the Hugo awards this year."

"No!" I shrieked. "Don't do that! At least vote for Best Fanzine, will you? I mean if/when LOCUS wins, at least you will have the knowledge that you didn't contribute to its victory, even by not voting for something else."

"Yes," she muttered, thinking about it. "I guess you're right."

At any rate, in the end she voted for the whole ballot, but I'd like to explain my intense and hostile reaction regarding LOCUS to you. After all, I've only seen a few issues of it, why become so adamant? Well there are a few reasons. Three very good ones:

1) It's not even the best newszine of the year. FOCAL POINT, which wasn't even nominated, is much more exciting, readable and important. LOCUS gives bland coverage, and when opinions are given, the editors come across as such insufferable lames that the thought of giving them a Hugo makes me gag. Take for example their opinion of DON'T CRUSH THAT DWARF, the Firesign Theater Hugo nominee:

"....rather obvious satire with drug references thrown in."

Obvious? Charlie Brown, I doubt you'd have begun to understand the record after hearing it twelve times, spaced out on your ear. And what of the drug references? That makes it inferior? Bad? Immoral? Don't be so, so...oh hell, lame is the only word that comes to mind.

2) Some very slimey tactics. Why is it that just as soon as someone sends in his name to register at Noreastcon he gets a copy of LOCUS, sometimes even before getting the worldcon packet, hmmm? Perhaps so that those fringe fans who haven't seen any fanzines will see yours and have something to vote for. Why is it that you get a copy of the con mlg list? This seems to me highly unfair and downright contemptable.

A lot of fans might not have picked this up because they get LOCUS anyway. But I personally know a number of fringe fans and, in fact, I myself got two copies of that particular issue--one for my fanzine and one after joining Noreascon.

3) The heavy commercial aspects of LOCUS. With that above mentioned copy comes a sheet of raves about how comprehensive and all that LOCUS is. This LIFE Magazine approach turned both Charl and I off immediately. Who ever heard of pubbing a fanzine for money? They didn't do things like this the last time

drivel:::

I was an actifan. Maybe in Comics fandom, but not here.

Now I realize that as far as fan things go, the Hugo Awards are often very unfair. The highest circulation and, lately, the best electioneering often stands in for the best quality. But I just think LOCUS has gone too far and I wanted to say so.

And I have.

~~~~~

I guess I'm going to finally get around to the business end of the fanzine. Since I'm temporarily dropping the idea of GENOOK in favor of letting RATS! develop, I'll be requesting material from you, particularly locs. There'll be a letter column next issue and I'll continue with my discussion of those spicy-blue risquee tabloids.

I could also use light, faanish art, and headings. All sortsa stuff like that. I don't have an aversion to sticky quarters, and I know that a few of you aren't inclined toward contribs. But, of course, I'm not in it for the money. So I would dig the above mentioned things. If you like RATS!, then, my advice would be to make sure you'll keep getting it.

~~~~~

I'd like to throw in a recommendation here for The Enchanted Duplicator, a 1954 faanish allegory written by Walt Willis and Bob Shaw. This is the third time around and this time it's illustrated by Ross Chamberlain and pubbed by Arnie Katz and Rich Brown. It's an all-around classic, done to perfection by all concerned and just something that every fan should have in his library.

The price is \$1 while they last and considering the 18 chapters and magnificent artwork here, it's a bloody bargain.

~~~~~

"Don't call me 'Sir,' call me 'Master!'"      There is a current craze (at least within the New York area) and that priceless bit of dialouge up there, spoken by a neurotic vampire to a hypnotized hunchback is all part of it. They're Mexican horror films, and they have certain built-in values that make them ideal for television movie-watching. The genre-fad was originated when AEC picked up about twenty-five or so - the cream of the crop? - to show on Saturday afternoons and at one o'clock in the morning after      Dick Cavett.

One of the main advantages of these films is that no amount of editing or butchering, no matter how severe, can detract from their quality - if anything, it enriches them. In one classic, "Robot vs. the Aztec Mummy" the whole film is building toward the titular clash, involving this mummy who protects the Precious Jewels and the Robot (a stove inhabited by a migrant worker), a creation of "The Bat" ("for years I tortured small animals - with pleasure! - to learn the secret of life!"). It promises to be monumental. A girl becomes involved, as does her reporter boyfriend ("Bat, you are mad - and ignorant also."). The viewer holds his sides and wipes tears of laughter from his eyes for an hour and a half, awaiting the finale when, at long last, the two atrocities confront one another and are just about to commence grappling when, zip, cut (fanfare, very flat) THE END.



drivel:::

For a minute you sit there in stunned silence, unable to accept what you have just seen. And then, as it slowly dawns on you that you didn't give a damn about the fight anyway, and you just laugh some more before turning off the set and going to sleep...

The finest of these films are the "Samson" ones, only he isn't the ancient strongman, but rather a wrestler cum superhero, replete with mask and Liberace cape. And whoever they use to dub in the voice for this character possesses a timbre so self-righteous as would make Batman seem suspect in comparrison. The long wrestling scenes are both excellently carried off and very exciting. Each film contains at least two matches and both usually go the full three falls - which calls to mind the one match in which Samson was having a hell of a time beating this other masked character until he finally yanked off the face covering and found out he was fighting a werewolf! In another episode concerning an insidious wax-works proprietor (disfigured and, natch, he Hates Beauty), Samson gets a phone call informing him that the heroine is about to be turned into a panther girl.

"I'll get on it in a minute," Samson intones in his best no-lie voice, "but first I have a rassling match."

~~~~~

I found myself reading a lot of "mainstream best-seller" type books in the last few weeks. The Mafia is certainly becoming very big in bestsellers. Wouldn't be surprised if it started picking up more gallup points than old stand-byes like infidelity and Blacks.

I read "The Godfather" but was turned off by most of it. I didn't mind so much that it glorified the Mafia, but I did find the mainstream best-seller cliches objectionable. The guess-who-this-is-it's-Frank-Sinatra! stuff is an example. I don't know, it was so long, too. And by the end it was really getting bad.

On the other hand, I really enjoyed Jimmy Breslin's "The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight" with its more jaunty style and hilariously accurate descriptions of Italians and gangland types. It's about a third as long as Godfather but out-distances it in perception, insight, and pure humanity.

The third paperback off the candy store rack was "Ball Four" by Jim Dauterive. To tell you the truth, I was expecting a potboiler sort of castigation of the sport - intellectual, non-jock Dauterive throwing the saran wraps off a sport my friend Vito Aiello always felt was fixed anyway. But no, he doesn't do that at all. The more controversial aspects of the book were handled only in non-sensational it's-all-in-a-day's-work type writing. Dauterive is very entertaining and I found the book to be the most reinforcing thing to have happened to baseball in years.

~~~~~

Just at the point when I had decided that I wouldn't use book reviews, I got (sort off) book reviews from Ray Nelson. Of course I'm using them, but I'd like to explain why. First off, the main reason why I wasn't using book reviews were because I felt nothing I could say hasn't been said plenty of times before in other fanzines. Well, Ray is unique, and the way he handles Phillip Dick's books, for example, in this issue, just flipped me.

Also, of course, they're in the radio show format, which makes it different. Ray is doing the show out in Oakland and this is the only fanzine (only zinc, period) that is publishing the text. The text is not completely in chronology, and I broke up the two shows slightly, so that it would fit more evenly into two parts.



CHARLENE  
KOMAR

Hi. This is the debut of Ploy, in which that name following Bill's following "edited by" takes form as a real person - or something. Anyway, I'm now co-editor of a fanzine. This is really pretty strange, because up to a couple of monthes ago my connections with -not to mention interest in- fandom were nonexistent. Now, suddenly, I'm a neofan. I find that this sudden transition has made several changes in my life. For one thing, as I lay in bed this lovely Sunday afternoon, I hear those immortal words, "when are you going to finish your editorial?" Ugh. My many excuses - ranging from "I've got two paperbacks and two textbook chapters I've got to have read for school tomorrow" to "I think I have a collapsed lung" are of no avail and instead of tending to either of these priorities (or more realistically, instead of sleeping) I find myself sitting before this damned thing. Oh well.

Actually, I have a much more healthy attitude towards RATS! than I had just a few weeks ago. In the course of a weekend, I'd been sick in the back of a print shop where our electrosten-cilling and newly-refurbished mimeo was waiting, as well as having gotten sick from the accumulated fumes from that same mimeo emitted into this air-conditioned and unventilated room. Now that I know that RATS! will be run off on the Katz beautiful, unsmelly and probably perfect Rex Rotary 1000, I feel that I can rush right ahead into the fabulous field of fanzine publishing.

Now I wonder how much the Rex Rotary people would give me to use that in a "Rex Rotary changed my life and saved my marriage" ad campaign?

\*\*\*\*

I suppose that most people have watched CBS' much-publicized "All in the Family" at least once. A few weeks ago, I saw an episode in which Mike, the son-in-law college student, was awaiting his marks. This guy must be the most atypical college student around. He's married. Well, that's not too unusual, but wait - he doesn't have a part-time job, and his wife neither works nor goes to school. Hmmm. Well, he has a scholarship, and that might cover total tuition and books. And since he lives with his in-laws, he doesn't pay rent and apparantly doesn't contribute anything for his food, either. Still, there are things like transportation and clothes to consider. So, I suppose the Dunkers supply this, too, as well as money for an occassional night out. Now, in this episode, Mike's marks arrive and he has two B's and an A. Great. But wait. This guy is only taking three courses! He's a full time student, apparantly totally supported by his wife's parents, not being drafted and keeping a scholarship, and he's only taking three courses! In a show that's supposed to be outstanding for its realistic portrayal of a middle-class family living in Queens, this is just a bit incredible.

[concluded after Ray Nelson's article in back]

EDITORIAL



loc  
smith

HARRY WARNER, JR.

[I asked Harry if he could write a loc to my fanzine - before he'd seen a copy. The fmz in question was GENCOCK, but the response is as follows:]

Can I write a loc on a fanzine which hasn't emitted an issue for years? The answer to that question might be tied up with major philosophical matters. I believe it was idealism that got all the free publicity in ancient Greece when the brains trust started to argue over such questions as whether there is such a thing as a circle as the idea of a circle, over and above the numerous examples of a circle that daisies have grown into and doodlers have scribbled onto scratch pads and Claude Deglers have given Cosmic attributes to. Similarly, can there be a loc with no actual fanzine issue to serve as referent? Is the fanzine as a concept existent in the universe as a philosophical reality without regard to any particular issue of any specific fanzine? Was there a fanzine built into the entire space-time continuum from the instant that first primeval atom exploded and began the creation of the universe, even before atoms had been segregated into oxygen and carbon and all the other elements that are utilized in the creation of ink and paper? If so, is the United States Post Office Department equally implied in the basic matrix of all that ever was and will be, as an essential concept accompanying the fanzine, just as a deity seems always to be accompanied by a devil or demon in religious aspects of the universe?

I'm not sure of the eternal verities as they relate to the question with which I started this. But I do know that a loc can be created under less than ideal conditions. Some of my feats have surprised me so much that I give credit for the accomplishments to something outside myself, some external force that the loc-idea is slowly accumulating as one fandom after another slips by.

For instance, I once wrote a loc on a fanzine published in a language that I can't read. Someone sent me a copy of a Swedish fanzine, perhaps because it reviewed something I'd written and the editors felt obliged to spur my curiosity over the reviewer's verdict. It was a big fanzine, fifty or sixty pages long, and even though I wasn't able to read anything in it, I felt it deserved a loc. So I wrote one, and the editors told me a few months later that it was the longest, most comprehensive loc which anyone wrote about that particular issue. It wasn't really hard. Art is free of language problems, so I could devote a paragraph or two to comments on the illustrations in that issue. I glanced through its pages, looking for proper names and clues to the context in which they were used. For instance, if I found in the same sentence the names Sam Moskowitz and Ted White, I could comment on that juxtaposition by recalling how the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon got along together and the Montague-Capulet era, with confidence that my comments bore a real relationship to whatever the Swedish words surrounding those two names might have meant. Several of the books reviewed in that issue

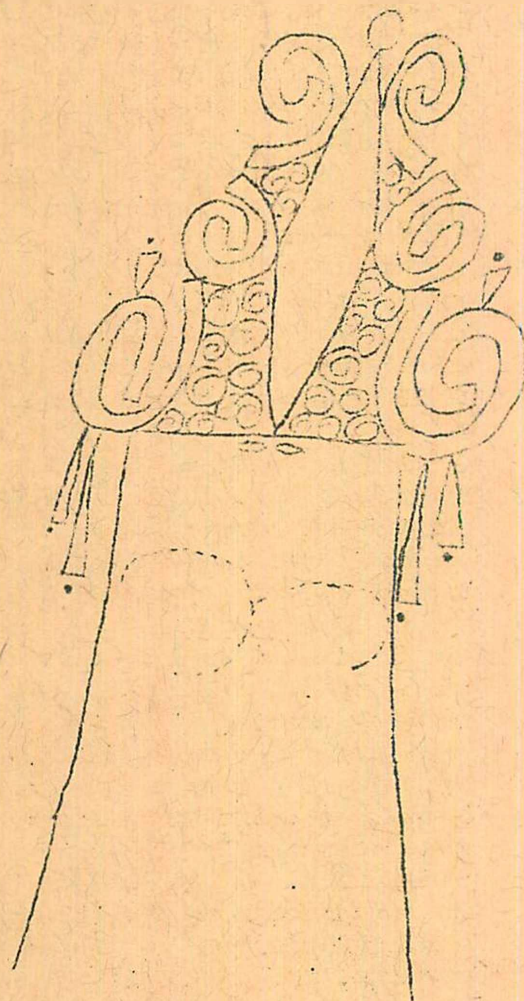


harry warner, jr.

had recognizable titles, because there was a proper name in the title or because a date of publication was included after the author's name and I knew that he'd published no other books in the course of that year. So I could share my reactions to those reviewed books via the loc. I spotted the names of several Swedish fans with whom I'd corresponded long ago in the loc section of that issue, and easily filled up another paragraph in my loc with reminiscences about what fine fellows they'd been when I was in contact with them. There was hardly enough space remaining at the bottom of my second page, after I'd written all that, to insert a remark or two about the quality of the mimeographing and the way the staples had pulled loose from the last few pages.

I try to read English language fanzines before I write locs on them. But sometimes when I'm rushed for time and feel particularly anxious to catch up on unwritten locs, I cheat. People who have never tried it would be surprised, how little reading is necessary before you can write a loc on a fanzine, when you're really desperate. There are two secrets of the trade. One consists of glancing at each non-fiction item just long enough to find out what it's about - a conreport, the first twenty novels written since January by Farmer, or whatever - and then fill the loc with generalized remarks about those subjects. There's very little danger that you'll repeat in other words exactly what the writers said of the topics in that issue. The other trick is achieved by glancing at random at any paragraph in the issue that your eye first lights on as you shuffle through its pages, and reading just as many lines in that paragraph as are needed to give you an idea about writing a paragraph in which you'll take the opposite argument to whatever the author favored or you'll reminisce about some past experience vaguely related to what you've just read. You may be able to write six paragraphs and fill two pages of your loc by reading only six hundred words at various spots in the issue unless the editor was overstocked on New Wave-Old Wave arguments.

cont. next page



GREEN OF 1972

EX-100



harry warner, jr.

Unfortunately, there are some grey areas on which nobody seems to have established rules and working procedures for the loc creator. For instance, when does the 'statute of limitations' expire on loc obligations? Is the recipient of a free fanzine entitled to write it off totally as an ob which he'll never pay back, if he hasn't managed to write a loc on that issue after six months or after one year or after three years? I can't remember how long it's been since the last issue of Genook, but I'd bet that some other fanzines which appeared at just about the same time as your last issue are still gathering dust in a set of shelving in my bedroom, where I keep all the fanzines I've never written locs on and don't feel right about taking to the attic where I keep the fanzines by which I've done my duty. If a fanzine comes to me free regularly, and I write an article for it once in a while, why does my conscience hurt if I fail to write a loc on the issue in which my article appears, even though it should come to me free of obligation for the sake of the contribution? What is the smallness limit beyond which no fanzine editor should expect a loc? I've had requests to write locs on two-page fanzines consisting solely of news notes about a local fan group.

Anyway, I'm very happy to know that you've decided to resume fanac and even if this isn't exactly the prototype loc or form loc you suggested, even if you find somewhere in Plato the needed proof that a loc does not have the same mental existence as a circle, you can still use this as proof that I'm glad to get a loc written before you get Genook published again.

- Harry Warner, Jr.

((And most happy we are to have you. D&CK)) \*\*\*\*\*

# # # # # # # # # #

NOTES ON THE NEXT RATS! A great deal of the next issue seems already to be lined up, and I thought I'd pass on some of this information to you (with the thought in mind that perhaps you will respond to this issue in dire fear of not getting it - I'm sly...).

There will be a Terry Carr Entropy Reprint from fandom past, and an article or something from Arnie Katz. Plus the last half of Ray Nelson's Cosmic Circle. Of course, there will be the Plain-Old Regular features such as Drivel and Ploy and at long last, a letter column, providing some of them are written.

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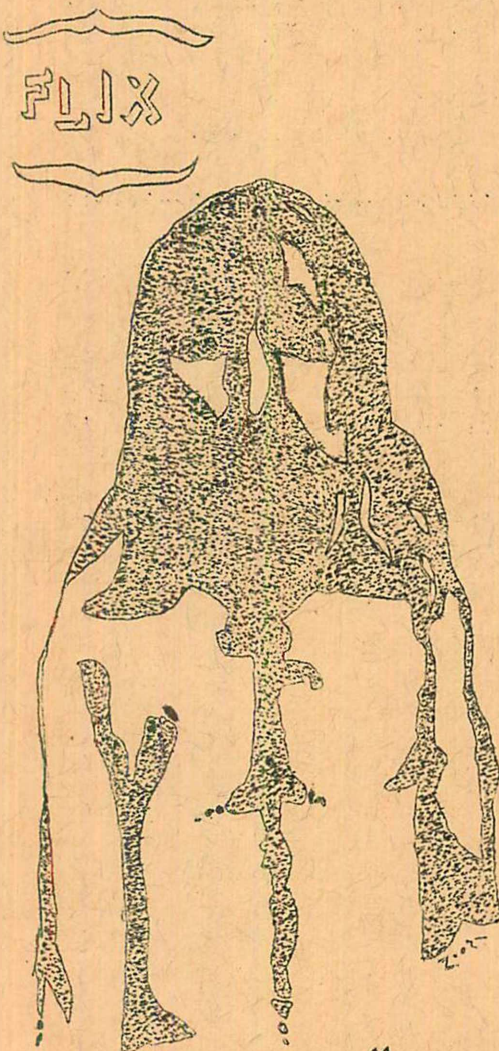
a column  
by  
Bill Kunkel

To begin with, we enter the brand spanking new Paramount Theater on Broadway and 61st Street. It's a bunker-like construction, the eight foot high molding brocaded with large, eye-straining incandescent light bulbs at four inch intervals. It's strange, as if the place were unable to decide whether it wanted to be a fun house or a bomb shelter. It doesn't come off like a movie theater, though, or at least it didn't to me.

A large sign informs us: "This Way To The Ant Colony." We follow the sign to this space age dungeon's idea of a lobby where, indeed, an ant farm is on exhibit. My mind immediately finds its way back to the Saturday afternoons of my youth and those olden matinees that showed "Fire Maidens from Outer Space" or the latest from Bert I. Gordon. And just as tellingly as them olde lobby displays of plaster of paris monsters fortold the terror that would soon burst upon the coke-stained screen, the insect display here hints at the nature of the film we are about to see. A film, mind you, that Chet Huntley has promised on the TV commercials is "not science-fiction, but science-fact!"

Well that's too bad. To tell the truth, THE HELLSTROM CHRONICLE can't really make up its mind as to what it really wants to be and as a result almost totally wastes some of the most awesome documentary footage ever taken.

The film doesn't want to be sf. That's obvious. And although I know deep down in my heart that it would have been much better if it were, I won't hold that against it. I simply ask why, then, do they base the entire film around a fictional premise, i.e., the existence of a "Nils Hellstrom, M.S., PhD." We enter the film believing him a real character, because that is what the credits have told us. He even tells us, as the film opens, that he is real and in fact has made an Incredible Discovery that has cost him numerous teaching positions, fellowships and even personal associations. Hmm, must be a pretty heavy discovery. What is it? That man is laying waste to his planet and that insects are altogether capable, biologically, of inheriting the earth. Well now I'm no scientific genius, but it doesn't take one to realize that this is nonsense. The thesis is not new, nor would it be very hard to accept. What science department - academic or governmental - would be so shocked as to fire old Nils for discovering something like that? I'm beginning to suspect that he's not a real person, even though the credits said so and even though Chet says the flick is "science fact".





flix:::

Unfortunately, this is not all that Hellstrom says. He says a whole lot more. There's heavy-handed social-satire, endless babble about man's vanity conveyed with thermo-nuclear subtlety, comedic touches that miss by a light year and endless preachy poetry about the Purpose of Existence. This entire babbling congeals in one breathless moment as Hellstrom seizes upon the case of the Mayfly, and from this literal cornucopia of potential metaphor manages to extract something to the effect of: "The mayfly lives but for twenty four hours. It does not spend that time in endless contemplation of its short life, though. It does not question its existence, but enjoys it and ends with a sweet good-night" - while on screen the insect drops dead in a lake.

As for Hellstrom, at the end of the film we learn that he is nothing but a fictional character, portrayed by an actor. Good Lord! At least they could have chosen a performer without a speech defect - those badly maligned 's' sounds can do funny things to your nerves.

The documentary footage in itself is simply remarkable, perhaps the best of its kind ever. There are moments of breathtaking beauty, along with flourishes of trick photography in doubtful taste. And there's even a Candid Camera type sequence, somehow included to prove to us that people get disgusted when they find bugs in their food. On the whole though, I think that with a much better context (why not a sf one, huh?) this could have been a truly classic work. As it stands, I found it too highly flawed.

And do avoid that theater if you can.

\* \* \*

Let's see some hands on this one: How many of you have ridden a bus in New York City?

I'm one of those persons who doesn't like cars. I don't want to own one and I don't enjoy riding in them. I used to be content to ride the public trains and buse s. But things are changing and, like everything else in this city, the city rapid transit system is getting intolerable.

I used to be able to stand the buses. I'd pay my 30¢ (which I think is a bit high) and sit down and read a book till I got where I was going. Well then, all of a sudden summer comes. About a year and a half ago, the city got new buses with air conditioning in them and constructed so that it would be impossible for roaches to nest in them. Now the problem is getting the T.A. to turn on the air conditioning on. New Yorkers sweated and sweltered for a month and a half before they got around to it this year.

And I know why the roaches can't live in these buses. It's the same reason that I can no longer read on them. They shake. And not just a little, they shake a lot. They quiver violently and the empty seats all but lift themselves from the floor and jig down the center aisle. Believe me, it's a drag to try and read while a bus literally dismantles itself at speeds over twenty miles per hour. And the money collector, the box for which you must have the Exact Change, they dance like a two legged robot up front there, the Exact Change shooting wildly from all directions within the transparant skull. It's very disconcerting - why just yesterday an old woman on the bus with me came this close to actually being thrown from her seat.

I haven't got an air conditioned train in so long I'm beginning to doubt their existence. The subways are depressing enough - can't a little cool air be pumped in at least?

And the main reason I bring this all up (not only that it's my only means of transportation) is because they now plan to raise the fair as of next year to -



flix:::

get ready for this - 60¢ each way! Can you imagine!

At this point, taxes in New York are stifling. To go to the movies in Manhattan is (for one film) at least \$2.50 per person. And if you're lucky enough to be near a subway station without having to take a bus, that's still 60¢. It will really become absurd should this new increase come into play. \$1.20 just for the subway, \$3.00 (the most common price) for one movie and you better bring your lunch with you.

\* \* \*

I'm not a violent person, but anyone who puts his name to such a fare increase should be publicly flogged before being exiled to New Jersey where he would forever ride on the Seacaucus Shuttle, his only word from New York being week old copies of the Daily News ads and editorials.

\* \* \*

The big underground hit here in New York is a low-budget horror opus titled NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD that they only show at midnight on weekends at one or two Village theaters.

I didn't really think too much of it, except that it was a pretty good parody of the Vietnamese war, what with "search and destroy missions" to get the ghouls (which they pronounce disturbing like "gooks"). I laughed through quite a bit of the film, especially when they have the interviews with the leader of the S&D missions and ask him stuff like how fast the ghouls move.

"Oh," he says, "They're dead. They're pretty slow."

And there's another scene where a young couple are burned alive in a truck and the ghouls crowd around to eat the remains. Very reminiscent of Chicken Delight, I thought.

The film is being praised high and low, which strikes me as strange. There's plenty of horror, i.e., gruesome scenes (a daughter devours her father on screen), but very little real terror, and the distinction must be made.

And despite the blood and dripping entrails, I was much more frightened by the old Howard Hawks' film, THE THING.

But the film did contain one of the all-time great pieces of dialouge, when the s&d leader opines on the best way to kill the creatures (blowing their brain out) he says: "When you kill the head, you kill the ghoul!"

And podna, that 'bout sez it all.

\* \* \*

Lastly, let me clue you in on a film that is getting very little exposure, but is, in fact, one of the years very best pieces of work. It's Roger Corman's masterpiece: "Gas-ss-s". And I have neither the room here nor the capacity to give you an accurate description of this flick, but can only recommend it to you wholeheartedly.

It's a shame that this didn't get the exposure the previously mentioned bit of gore did.

\* \* \*

This filler column will appear irregularly in future issues and will continue to deal, not too seriously, with films I'd like to mention. - Bill Kunkel





KPFA - script 2-A

I want to thank you for your gratifying response to my first Cosmic Circle broadcast. It looks like, in spite of all sorts of bad luck and confusion, the Cosmic Circle is about to become a regular feature on this station.

As you may have guessed, what I have in mind for this show is a sort of fanzine of the air, a verbal amateur magazine, devoted to the discussion of science-fiction, fantasy and related subjects. With a little bit of luck we may have interviews with some of the well-known professional sf writers in the Bay Area and, if technology permits, even some call-in shows. There are an amazing number of important sf writers in the Bay Area. To name a few, there's Poul Anderson and his ironic and poetic wife Karen. There's Phillip K. Dick, the whimsical bear of San Rafael. There's Frank Herbert, Robert Heinlein, Avram Davidson, Miriam Allen DeFord and Reg Bretnor. There's Jack Vance, Wilmar H. Shiras, and Emil Petaja, and a lot more I can't seem to remember right at this moment. And rumor has it that Terry Carr will be moving back here from New York. We'll get Terry on this program if we have to kidnap him.

I've got some other ideas that are, I admit, still in the dream stage. For instance, I'd like to present on this program some dramatic sf in the style of old-time radio, with dialouge, music and sound effects. If you feel up to writing it, I'll do my best to put it on. The maximum length for such a production is about thirteen minutes of air time, that's about eight and a half pages, type-written and double-spaced. There's no payment, of course, except the fun involved. I'm not getting paid, so why should you? This is going to be strictly a hobby production, not a way of life.

The backbone of this program, however, will be book reviews, and I, for the most part, will be doing the reviews.

I have certain strong pre judices and will not be anybody's idea of an impartial reviewer, but I think that when you get to know what my pre judices are, you'll find me useful even if you don't agree with me. When I pan a book, you'll be able to say to yourself, "If Nelson hates it, it must be good."

It's only fair, however, to tell you right now, before we start, the exact nature of my pre judices. First, I really love science-fiction. I've loved it since I was in grade school, where I first ran into it in the form of the work of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. I loved it in the Golden Age of the Pulp. I loved it in the Campbell Are. I loved it when the New Wave came splashing in to wash away old restrictions and hampering conventions. I love it in the movies. I love it on TV, and was one of those who wrote in angry letters when Star Trek went off the air. I even love it in the comic books, and when the New Gods came, I was ready for them:

I'm also fond of detective stories, if there is a real mystery, and historical novels, particularly if they are set in one of my favorite periods... and my fav-14



ray nelson:::

orite periods are the First Century AD and the Victorian Era.

So much for my loves; now for my hates.

I hate almost all modern poetry. I hate almost all mainstream autobiographical novels. I hate all stories in which a passive protagonist sinks slowly into the mud without even a token struggle. I hate Hemingway and his imitators. Hemingway's bare-bones style has reduced a large and influential segment of writers of England and America to the level of mumbling illiterates. I hate plotless, rambling slice-of-life stories where nothing really happens.

I've given a great deal of thought to the stories I hate and why I hate them, and the stories I like and why I like them, and I have, by trial and error, come up with a few general rules to use as guidelines. The most important of these rules is this: That a satisfying work of fiction must have a hero.

If a story has a hero, there is a good chance I will enjoy it. If it does not have a hero, it is almost certain that I will hurl it at the wall before I read the third chapter, or perhaps even the third paragraph.

When I was in grade school my little brother and I used to play a game, particularly when we were riding along in the back seat of the family car. The game was called "I've got a new hero." There was a great competition between my brother and I to see who could think up a hero with an interesting name, or some sort of unusual super powers, or some striking personality trait. Then, when one of us thought of a good hero, he would make up stories to tell about him. We knew then, as children, an ironclad rule that many adults, who should know better, have forgotten. First comes the hero, then comes the story.

Today so-called respectable literature has been over-run with anti-heroes and, worse yet, anti-persons... alledged protagonists who have either no admirable traits or even no traits at all. Would be serious writers tell me that this is all done in the name of realism, and that everyone they know is like that. I can only suggest that they move to a better neighborhood.

from KPFA - script 3-A

Today, I'd like to talk about Phillip K. Dick.

I was going to review Phil's latest hardback from Doubleday, a book called "A Maze of Death", but after I had read it I told Phil I was going to comment on it, and he said, "No, don't comment on that one." There was a definite note of panic in his voice. He loaned me instead another Doubleday hardback called "Ubik."

I think I'll review them both.

They are, in fact, surprisingly similar books. They both have, like so many of Phil's books, a theme of dissolving reality, and I don't think I'll be killing the suspense for anyone if I say that in both of them it turns out in the end that everything that has been happening is just a dream. To my way of thinking, the best of this series of "Life is But a Dream" stories is "The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich." Now there, for my money, is a masterpiece. But Phil now says he hates "Palmer Eldrich". He just can't stand it. How does an author decide which of his books is the best? Does the author's choice ever coincide with the choice of the public, or the choice of the critics?

In the case of Phil's books, the problem is even more complicated. It's hard for anyone to say anything about a book where everything that happens is a dream. You can't complain if the plot is illogical, since anything can happen in a dream. You can't complain if the characters are unreal, since they are all figments of the protagonist's imagination. All your objections are silenced in advance, and there's nothing you can do but love it or hate it, depending on your subjective reaction.



ray nelson:::

In both "Ubik" and "Maze of Death" there is an element of the mystery story, the kind of mystery story Agatha Christie does so well, where a small group of people are thrown together and one by one are murdered by some unknown killer - the kind of mystery where you suspect everybody. You've heard of the locked room mystery? Well, in these two books we have a sort of locked head mystery, since all the action takes place in the protagonist's head up to the point where it is revealed that it is really all a dream. The dream plot spoils it as a mystery, since the dream world has no logic that you can figure out, no matter how hard you try.

The first time I ever came across this dream plot was when I was a kid in grade school. There used to be a comic strip in the Sunday funnies, and every Sunday this kid named Little Nemo would have a dream where he would visit some sort of fantastic otherworld and meet all sorts of fantastic dream creatures, but no matter what happened it was all right, because in the last panel Nemo would fall out of bed and wake up and realize he was only dreaming. When I tried to write a dream plot story for English composition, the teacher told me the dream plot was a dumb idea. He told me it was almost like cheating. I thought that maybe he was right, but still the drawings in Little Nemo were so beautiful I didn't mind the dumb basic idea. Little Nemo, I realize now, was unintentionally preparing me to enjoy the work of Phillip K. Dick. Little Nemo taught me how to enjoy the beautiful pictures and ignore the basic idea.

Many writers, from L. Ron Hubbard to Jack Kerouac, have tried to write dream stories, but all except Phil have failed to completely overcome the reader's tendency to say, "This doesn't make sense, so to hell with it." Phil has learned how to tantalize the reader, lead him on, make him believe that the story is going to start making sense any minute now. There's a special kind of suspense in Phillip Dick's books that is completely missing in Kerouac and only present to a mild degree in L. Ron Hubbard's classic story, "Fear."

To read a book like "Ubik" is literally a trip. Either you relax and float with it, or you're wasting your time to read it at all. It's a book for heads, and I mean old heads, heads who have outgrown the candy-coated facism of "Stranger in a Strange Land" and the feeble-minded simplicity of Richard Brautigan. Phil Dick is a dream-spinner, but unlike the other amateurs of the dream-spinning art, Phil has kept at it long enough to get good at it. When Phil hands you a dream, you can't help saying, "Hey, why didn't I dream of that?"

I suspect that Phil Dick was impressed with A.E. Van Vogt's formula for sf, as expounded in "Of Worlds Beyond." Van Vogt claimed that he thought in terms of scenes about 800 words long, and every 800 words he would throw in another idea, throwing in eventually every current thought he happened to have in his head. As Damon Knight pointed out, this lead Van Vogt to include a great many ghastly inconsistencies and digressions, not to mention outright blind alleys. Still, it made for exciting reading. It was only later, when you got to thinking about it, that you smelled something fishy. The fact is that the Van Vogt method, as Van Vogt practiced it, doesn't quite work. If you are going to pour out on paper everything that happens to turn up in your head, the end result is bound to be somewhat inconsistent, simply because nobody's head is that consistent. To make Van Vogt's Method work, you need some sort of all-purpose escape clause, some sort of omnipotent cop-out, so that if the parts in your story don't fit together, you can say triumphantly, "They're not supposed to fit together!" The dream plot is just such an escape clause.

Freed, then, of the need to be logical or consistent, Phil can open up his mind and let it all pour out, giving the story an appearance of unity by something like the murder mystery plot that holds together "Ubik" and "A Maze of Death."



ray  
nelson:::

The result, which could so easily have been just a dull mass of mismated imagery, like the later works of William Burroughs, becomes in Phil's hands a frightening, funny, suspenseful rollercoaster ride through the subconscious mind. That's exactly the feeling I get from most of Phil Dick's work these days. Whenever I finish one of his books, I'm always just a little dizzy.

"Ubik" is a special kind of dream. It's a dream of nostalgia. It's a return to the year 1939, but not a smooth return. The story begins in 1992 and sort of sags back into 1939 in bits and parts, with an elevator that sags back even farther in time. In the middle of the nightmare of murder and creeping madness, I found myself looking around in the world Phil Dick recreates with such loving detail and saying to myself, "You know, it's not so bad back here in 1939. Maybe I'd like to move back here permanently." And I got to thinking that maybe Phil should sag back a bit further. If we can take a dream trip back to 1939, why not a dream trip to the Victorian Era, or the Middle Ages, or the First Century AD? The escape clause in the dream plot allows us to evade all the annoying paradoxes that clutter up the average time travel story, and avoid the tiresome research that tends to clutter up the average historical novel. Thoughts like that make me not only enjoy Phil Dick's books while reading them, but look forward to his future books with the question, "What will he think of next?"

But Phil says that he has already said all that he has to say on the nature of reality, which is the underlying theme of this whole series of dream stories. He says he has lost interest in writing, and all he wants to do now is work on his hi-fi set in peace. There's one more of these books coming. It's all written but hasn't even been sent to the publisher, let alone published. After that, what will there be? A whole new series on a whole new basic concept? Or a return to the dream trip and dissolved time? Or nothing? I refuse to believe it will be nothing. There's so much more to do, so many more unexplored secret passages into the unknown that require a guide like Phil Dick, a seasoned and experienced professional madman. Phil has already shown us what things might have been like if the Nazis and Japs had won the Second World War. Now I'd like to know what things would be like if Antony and Cleopatra had beaten Augustus. Now I'd like to know what things would be like if the Catholics had lost the Albigensian Crusade. And I'd like to see Phil sail his sagging time ship made of taffy candy back further and further into the past, to give us what Felini calls a True Historical Science-Fiction. And I'd like to see the dream ship turn about then and sail into the distant future. But in the meantime I think I'll read "Ubik" over for a third time. It's so full of ghostly sunlight of my childhood, so full of old home movies of a dead boy who used to be me, And who knows... on the third reading it might start to make sense.

THEME MUSIC UP AND OUT

Next issue the second and concluding portion of Cosmic Circle where Ray takes up such topics as the Victorian Era and Sword and Spaceship Novels. Till then.../

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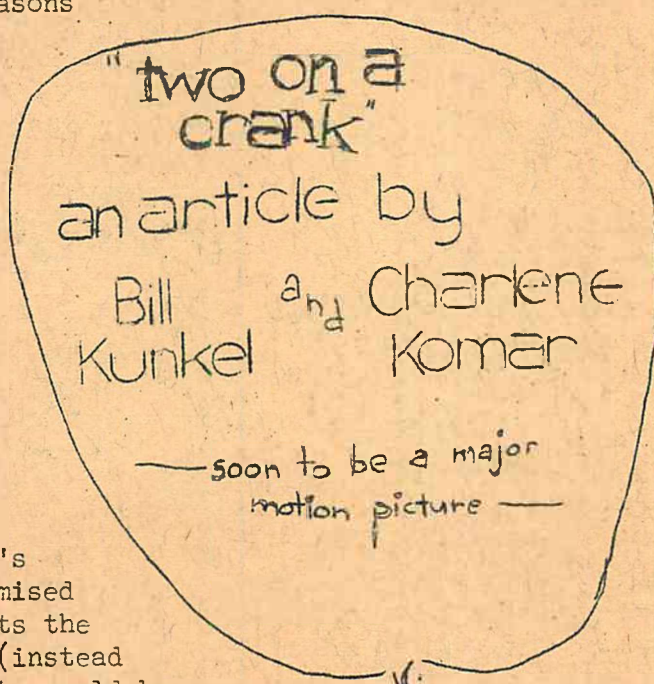
conclusion of PLOY:::

A couple of weeks ago, Jerry Kaufman came by to visit us. This was the first time either of us had met Jerry (who is a very nice guy) and we had a good time getting to know each other better. Well, we had a good time for a while, anyway, until poor Jerry was driven out by Bill's abominable television habits. He actually lasted through "Gomer Pyle USMC" but as "The Hideous Sun Demon" was about to get rolling, he managed to pull himself together long enough to flee up 61st Street, heading for the relative pleasures of the BMT Canarsie Line. We've seen him since at the Katz apartment and he seems, luckily, to have survived the experience with any permanent scars. I wish I could say the same for myself. - C.K.



We have decided to get married next May (or maybe August - anyway, sometime or other). There are a couple of good, sound reasons for taking this measure. We were going to move in together anyway, what with being sick and tired of running back and forth between the Kunkel basement apartment and the Komar third-floor living quarters, especially since we both still live with our parents and although we're both pretty free from interference, it can't help but be a drag. Anyway, marriage came to seem preferable for economic and social reasons. Economically, we wouldn't have too much beyond the money we can save and the \$2,000 Charlene's people have promised (in lieu of a circus-style wedding) when she sets up her own place. But if we got married we'd be getting gifts from Bill's family (considerable - his parents have promised us the bedroom furniture and his grandparents the living room) and from relatives in general (instead of the poison-pen letters, Charlene at least, would be getting). Then, this summer we had planned a couple of short vacation trips together, and Charlene has made herself into a nervous wreck (something she's quite skilled at) worrying about hotels and the like. Of course, we could just lie and sign ourselves in as "Mr. and Mrs. Kunkel" but if you're going to have to lie about it anyway, all the benefits of "living free", so to speak, disappear and you just feel a bit shoddy. And, finally, we've both always felt that it didn't really make any difference whether you were married or not, and so why should it matter, conversely from the regularly accepted interpretation of that, if you are married? So, anyway, we're getting married.

The first question that arose was what kind of wedding we'd have. The traditional church-and-priest-with-reception-following-in-a-catering-house was out of the question; we didn't feel like playing exhibits A and B for a group of semi-drunken relatives we saw so rarely we'd have to be introduced anyway. At first, we thought we'd get married in City Hall, but after some thought that just seemed much too cold. And why surrender to the bureaucracy after refusing to yield to the theocracy? From the frying pan into the fire, it seemed, and so we scrapped the idea. Ultimately, we decided to do the honors in the Komar backyard. This is a somewhat comic idea, since although it's a very nice yard with a couple of mimosa trees and a large fir, it borders on an apartment house parking lot as well as a mammoth accompanying structure. It would be not much removed from being married on the exterior set for "Death of a Salesman". Something will have to be done about that... But we'll have a small party, then (max. 50 people) with all sorts of groovy foods - lots of fruit 'n' nuts 'n' 'n' soups 'n' stuffed cabbage 'n' pierogies 'n' lasagna 'n' manicotti 'n' casseroles 'n' stuff. Also lots of wine, but little or no liquor. The bride and groom will both wear white -of course- and everyone else will wear whatever they're most comfortable in. And everybody'll have a lot of fun.





two on a crank:::

To perform the ceremony we'll hire a hip clergyman. This means we'll get to write it ourselves. Lots of possibilities here. It could be a parody on the standard wedding -- there's a certain point, for example, when the priest tells the bride and groom that the next few words are so beautiful he's going to say them quietly so just they may hear. Instead, the minister could announce, "The next few words are so insipid that I'll say them quietly so your friends won't hear them and you won't be embarrassed." But seriously, this gives us the advantage of being able to eliminate offensive portions of the text, things that have always annoyed us, while still being legally and religiously wed.

After we're married we intend to live in Kew Gardens, which is where Charlene lives now. It's one of the few livable parts of the city and not overly expensive. Also, luckily, it's near one of the more pleasant subway lines - if you can use a word like pleasant in connection with the subways. It's also convenient to just about every bus line we'll ever need to use. Public transportation is very important to us since we don't have a car and have no intention of getting one of the smelly things. We haven't too many definite ideas about our apartment, except that we hope to get one in one of the big old houses there. Ideally, we'd like to have either a porch or the use of a yard, someplace to relax in the cool of the evening. We'll get a waterbed and probably a water couch, an electronic over and one of those little washers with the spin dry parts.

And who knows? Maybe even a mimeograph or two!

At any rate, it's all shaping up into a big, funny adventure and we're both looking forward to it as a very old experience to which we might bring some new ideas. And that shouldn't be bad, eh?

- Charlene and Bill

((This was our first collaboration, but Charl wrote the bulk of it. We took turns at throwing in lines here and there and hope the result wasn't too confusing. We should get smoother with practice.

Anyway, be sure to write. We hope you enjoyed our first real mutual attempt at editing a somewhat faanish fanzine and till next month, chow. ))

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We hope to get the next issue out before Noreascon, but if we don't, I guess we'll see you there! Ta ta.