

SOULFUL FIDO DESPAIRS



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What is this I see before me? "Easy", you say. "It is the colophon of SMALL FRIENDLY DOG 24, conveying the information that it is published by Skel and Cas, and that they are still domiciled at 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 5NW, somewhere in England's green and pleasant land." Well yes, I guess you're right at that, but then you do have certain advantages over me - you can see my future! As you read these words you are holding SFD 24 in your hot little hands (will hands still be hot and little in the future?) whilst as I type them the issue you have just received hasn't even been written yet. I sit here at the typewriter, stranded many months (please, God, don't let it be years...) in your past. Here it is April the eighth, and what I see before me is, or was until a few moments ago, a frighteningly blank stencil - and I haven't typed on one of those for over three months.

Of course I haven't been entirely inactive, it's just that you haven't been able to see what I've been doing. I have been writing articles for other faneds. These articles are now all in my past, but as yet they are still in your future. Many of them will still be in your future when even this fanzine is in your past. That's pretty wierd when you think about it - I mean, the articles are in my past, I am in your past, and yet the articles are in your future. The temporal flow in the Fanzine Dimension can sometimes be harder to follow than a Joseph Nicholas sentence. Sorry, that was a cheap shot. There will be no more of those. In future such shots will cost you an arm and a leg. C'est la Cost de Living. Nous faisons le best that nous can, mais j'afraid il y a rien that je can do about it, sunshine. C'est l'excrement tough.

27 AUGUST 1984 (Skel)

Now what was I telling you about a freaked-out temporal flow? Well, actually, I've cheated. I've started all over again, just kept the original colophon. Listen to the ripping sound as six stencils vanish as if they never were. Just the maunderings of a fannish sense of direction looking for somewhere to go. The fact is that since the first occasion when I typed the above colophon, SFD has folded twice, for two completely seperate and distinct reasons. Come to think of it I

never re-instated it between folds. If I'd folded it one more time I would never have been able to bring it back without changing the name to ORIGAMI. So, what finally caused me to get up off my arse and sit at the typewriter again? Apart, that is, from a desire to mangle the English language. Well I'll tell you. It's like this.....

If You Cut Me, Do I Not Tear?

In a way I guess it starts with Bergeron, as I suspect do more things than we realise. It also starts in HOLIER THAN THOU 19. To be precise it starts in Dick's 'Fangdom' column in that issue. In commenting upon what may only appear to be an unrelated topic, he writes :-

"Everyone wants attention but our voices are often drowned out among the other actors on stage. In a paper world where you don't exist unless you create something the volume is already all the way up and some of us mistakenly conclude that it will take an outrageous spectacle to get our playacting noticed against the background noise. But in fandom we have a unique opportunity. In a fanzine we can create a self enclosed universe with something equally as rare: an interested audience with an inclination to participate in our strangeness."

Ah yes, our paper world. We are paper fans moving through a paper world. An obvious statement, but even obvious statements deserve their brief hour upon the stage, for all that it is only a paper stage in a self enclosed paper universe.

'Enclosed' and 'Paper' - those are the key words. It is a paper world, and what is more it is a small paper world. As we circle through it the paper fan that is ourself keeps meeting other paper fans. Often the same fans, and also, often the same ideas - for what are paper fans if not ideas on paper? It is 'La Ronde', and as the paper fan that is each of us moves on its way it interacts with the paper fans that represent others, finding relationships between our own ideas and theirs. And,

as they move round our paper representatives become involved in relationships with each other. In each separate relationship our stand-in assumes a particular role, but not necessarily the same role in each relationship. Sometimes our paper identity will wear the mantle of 'hero', sometimes it will play a bit part and, though we might not like to admit it, sometimes it will play the villain. As we move through the circle we eventually wind up back where we started from - though hopefully somewhat changed by the ideas and concepts which we have encountered.

It is of course inevitable that we should end up back at the beginning, because our starting point is ourselves. All our journeys begin and end with ourselves, and we have only ever really 'been' anywhere when the experiences of the journey are reflected in changes to our 'self'. It is the same with fanzines - we shape the paper fan and send it forth to circle through fandom in order for it to be changed in the process. During that process we learn and are changed by the ideas and ideals that our paper representative is encountering on our behalf. We embody these changes in our Paper Fan Mk II and send it forth once more. Fanzine fandom being what it is there are many versions of each of us in circulation at any one time. We have sent out Mk II (and Mk III, Mk IV, Mk V, etc.) whilst some fans are still encountering Mk I.

Of course some circuits take longer to travel through than others. Let us follow a particular paper Skel as he moves through one such circle, one apparently so self-enclosing that it almost hints at having been contrived to serve as an example.

Fanzine fandom is like an enormous computer data-base. There is an old saying to the effect that all knowledge is contained in fanzines, but that isn't quite the way I meant the analogy. In a computer data-base you can read through it in different ways. It contains pointers to help you find a route through the masses of raw data. The Fanzine Data-base is just the same in this respect. A computer data-base may have more than one type of pointer - likewise fanzines. The first time you read a particular fanzine you tend to follow the pointers

which take you straight on through it. For instance, in the section from which I extracted the above quote Dick went on to talk about Linda Blanchard's fanzine, and about Tom Webber's column therein, and then there was a section on 'Convention Fans', followed by others. Now the first time I read Dick's column I followed the pointers that took me right on through, one section after another. The next time though I see that Dick is pointing to Linda's fanzine, and to Tom's 'Semi-Column' therein, and this time I follow those pointers.

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Linda's fanzine is of course called THE MOVING PAPER FANTASY (at least it is now, although it seems to have had more different names than Robert Silverberg), which she agrees may be abbreviated to THE PAPER FAN. Didn't I tell you it was a small world, in which we continually meet, and meet again, the same ideas and concepts? Now do you believe me? Simply by passing through the neighbourhood that is Linda's fanzine I am re-stating and underlining the theme of this piece. However, we are not just pointed to Linda's fanzine in general, but to Tom Webber's column in particular. On page 10 Tom writes :-

"Somewhere along the line, when I'm writing a piece on the nature of reality, I'm bound to wonder (as most of you no doubt are) what is the point of writing about the nature of reality in a world where (D West notwithstanding) reality largely exists on paper? I haven't met most of you; those I have met have been considerably different than I would expect from their paper personalities. Marty Cantor, for instance. Marty coedits a fanzine that often for me ranges between dull and disgusting, and holds some views that I find offensive, and others that I merely disagree with. In person, Marty is polite, friendly, and intelligent. What am I to make of this? Are there two different Marty Cantors, or is it really possible that these two are sides to a widely divergent personality?"

Notice how we are not only pointed to Linda's fanzine from Marty's, but when we get there we find a signpost pointing back the way we came. This is a handy device and helps to avoid confusion which, in fanzines, can be rife. Particularly rife when you have been sent off on your journey by Richard Bergeron, one of the original 'Game Players of ~~Titaa~~ Puerto Rico'. Fortunately we are reminded of this by the reference to D. West, for references to D. West are something that Richard seems unable to refrain from making. He keeps returning to the subject of D with all the apparent fascination of a cobra for a mongoose - or should that be a mongoose for a cobra? Who is playing which role, in this particular phase of the cycle? But I digress.....

Tom's rhetorical question reminds us that the fans we encounter whilst moving through the pages of fanzines are not the fans themselves, but merely paper representations of those fans. We do not dissemble, not intentionally anyway, but with the best will in the world we cannot hope to make our paper representatives more than a tissue-thin sample of our real selves. The art of operating within fanzine fandom, or so it seems to me, is to be aware of and accept this constraint...and to ignore it. One can surmount it and ignore it only by being continually aware of it. A strange concept perhaps, but valid nonetheless - I think. For the fact is that we are, most of us, constrained to work within the limitations imposed upon us by the medium of fanzines. Our paper personalities are all that many of us will ever be known by. We exist in many dimensions, but it is only by our extension through the fanzine dimension that we are known to other fanzine fans. The 'me' you see on paper is the only 'me' you've got. In the fanzine dimension we are all paper personalities, and we must relate to each other as such.....in the fanzine dimension. (The title: 'In The Fanzine Dimension' is copyright of Skelton Megabuck Enterprises Inc., and may not be used without permission without making me exceedingly snitty.)

But we must, at all times, remain aware that the fanzine dimension is not the whole universe, and that our extensions in that dimension are merely a cross-section of the whole person.

You can believe this. Would my cross-section lie to yours?

And so we do not reach after the unreachable. We accept the constraints, and in the accepting, ignore them. As another columnist in THE MOVING PAPER FANTASY 7, Sharon Lee says :-

"The ink on the paper anchors Sharon Lee to the here and now, and makes her real to people she'll never see."

Exactly! I may not know the whole Sharon Lee, but I will cheerfully settle for the Sharon Lee I can know. I respond to the paper Sharon and send out another version of the paper Skel. But where? Where do I go from here? Where are the signposts, the pointers?

At the end of Sharon's column, in TMPF 7, Linda has re-printed a quote from SMALL FRIENDLY DOG 22. Obviously this is the sign, but what is it trying to tell me? Not, surely, that old chestnut about the answer lying within myself? Bloody Hell! If so, the old 'Kung Fu' TV show has a lot to answer for - "To find your answer, Glasshopper, you must seek within". Truisms, at twenty paces. Bullshit! But wait, the person being quoted, from SFD 22, was Eric Mayer, and didn't Eric have a letter in WIZ 11, which also arrived at the Skelhouse this same week as HTT and TMPF?

O-O-O-O-O

WIZ of course is Bergeron's zippy little fanzine. Little? Well, when you work out the word-count I suppose you'd have to describe it as a zippy not-too-big-and-not-too-little fanzine, but anybody who could feel comfortable describing it in those terms would have to have at least one foot in a reality somewhat distanced from the one I'm in right now. Mind you, I often have the feeling that WIZ and 'distant realities' have more things in common than simply sharing the same second letter. WIZ confuses me, usually, though I must admit to being easily confused. However it is noticeable that, having been sent off on our search for the meaning behind 'The Paper Fan' by Dick

Bergeron, we have come full circle and now find ourselves wading through confusions sown by that arch paper fan himself. We are back where we started, as I said we would be, but we certainly didn't leave from here. The paper Skel that has made it back is not the paper Skel that originally set forth. Nor is 'here' quite the same. You can never go back. You cannot step twice into the same river (OK, Glasshopper, you can have the truism gun back now...and ret that be a resson to you!).

But again we are not supposed to be concerning ourselves with the generalities of WIZ, but rather with Eric Mayer's comments therein. Eric was addressing himself to that paper fan par excellence - Cesar Ignacio Ramos, who goes further than existing only on paper - he exists only on someone else's paper. A neat and economically rewarding trick, if you can manage it. Eric was, in his letter, concerning himself with the problems of being only a paper fan :-

"These musings...are prompted by a recent letter from a fan who is on better terms with reality than I am. We had been debating certain points of fannish etiquette and finally the writer came out with it and told me my opinion didn't count because I'd never been to a convention and was therefore only a 'paper personality'."

This worries me. Of course I have not been privy to the original correspondence which Eric is refering to, and so must trust his reporting of it, but if that reporting is accurate then I must question my own fannish reality.

I exist, fannishly, only on paper. I have not attended a convention for mumblety-mump years. I haven't been to a meeting of the local (MaD) SF group for even longer. A sod of a long time in fact. I do not press the flesh. The 'me' you read is, as I said, the only 'me' you get. If you don't read me, then I don't exist. Not as a fan. My only connection with fandom is a paper connection, and that connection is paper-thin. If it is broken I am in trouble, for as a fan, if I am not on paper, then I am not. Period.

The really worrying thing is that I haven't been on paper very much lately. Oh, I've written far more private letters than ever before, but that only makes me exist for a very limited circle of correspondents. To fandom in general this cat from Cheshire has been fading away until even my smile is but a matter of rumour. Oh yes, I've written those articles I was talking about earlier, but until they exist for you then I won't either. And what of good old SFD? Well, SFD has, of late, been struggling out at a rate that makes blue moons look ten-a-penny. Just as Sharon's words anchored her to the 'here and now' of the TMPF 7 version of fandom, just so does SMALL FRIENDLY DOG form my anchor to fandom. SFD ties me, nay binds me to fandom. When you get right down to it, SFD is where I exist. I do not exist in the pages of other people's fanzines. There you blink, and I am but a memory (and not even that, it would appear, if Marty is editing the LoCol). No, here in SFD is where I have to maintain my fannish existence.

And so, before I fade away entirely, it is time to once more get this fanzine on the road. Not only will I bind myself to fandom, as in SFD's past, but this time I will do more. I will talk about fans, about fandom, and about fannish concerns. I will bind myself to fandom. Oh, damn, what a giveaway!

I may only be a paper fan but, goddamit, I do exist!

o-o-o-o-o

Of course, the fact that I am only a paper fan also causes me one of my greatest regrets - namely that I cannot, in the foreseeable future at least, meet some of you. Particularly those of you who live overseas. However, in my Walter Mitty-like way I manage to get around this. The fact that I am unlikely to meet you in the flesh simply means that I have to meet you some other way. So I invent these scenarios. If I cannot meet you in the flesh then I can always meet you in my imagination. In fact, seeing as Eric Mayer was the last

person I quoted it seems apposite to move onward with this, the very first of.....

The Meetings In My Mind.

You only had to look at her to see it - the woman was excited. She was also beautiful. Beautiful and excited, and in her it was one hell of a combination. She could conceal neither attribute, though of course the very idea of trying to do so would never even have occurred to her. The beauty and the excitement spilled from her as if some sparkling silver stream and splashed about her like spray upon rocks as she surged and coursed down the hallway.

She was not of course aware that those who saw her at this time might describe her in such a way. Oh, her husband frequently told her that she was beautiful, but she accepted this as one accepts any statement from those touched with the rare and magical gift of genius. Oh yes, that he thought she was beautiful she accepted quite easily, for did he not find beauty in almost everything around him, even in those silly, scruffy little magazines? This open and uncritical appreciation of the world around him was after all simply one of the many threads with which she wove the tapestry of her love for him. She did not spend much time looking in mirrors, as if any mirror could reflect what only the heart can see, and when she did she saw only with distracted eyes, with a mind that thought on others even as her eyes rested upon herself. It never occurred to her that eyes which could see beauty in the everyday surroundings of downtown Rochester would not fail to see beauty when it was so simply and gloriously there. She simply was not aware that she was beautiful.

She was however very much aware that she was excited. She rushed down the hallway, the bag of groceries clasped forgotten in her arms. She hugged them unaware, like the avalanche hugs the trees that it has swept before it. She burst into the living room and dropped the groceries onto the couch without any awareness of her actions. Her attention was turned inward, upon the recent past.

"Eric, you'll never believe what happened to me down at Grossman's."

Eric was over by the windows, holding the drapes aside and peering out into the street.

"Kathy," he said, "there's a limousine parked just outside and there's a woman inside it.....and I'm sure she's watching this building." Then, as his wife's words got through to him he turned towards her. "Wha...?" Even those touched with the rare and magical gift of genius can sometimes be caught with their jaws dropped and their minds out of gear.

She glanced out of the window, took in the limousine, and dismissed it. When you are the wife of a struggling legal editor Rolls Royces parked down the block do not have much relevance. Eric let go of the drapes and with them his Secret Agent fantasies. Attractive foreign agents in expensive cars just didn't belong on Ridge Road. With a strange and guilty reluctance he flicked such thoughts from his mind, in much the same way as the beautiful and mysterious woman in the limo had flicked her long dark hair a few minutes ago. He turned to his wife. "At the store? Something happened down at the store? What happened? Wouldn't he take the coupons?"

"No." she said.

"No? He wouldn't take the coupons?"

"No! Yes! No! Look, will you forget about the damn coupons! It was nothing to do with the bloody coupons, OK? Will you just shut up and listen to me?"

"Yes dear," he replied, concerned. Kathy was obviously upset. Well, it was about time. He'd read about women getting upset and behaving irrationally, after giving birth, and now it had finally happened - The Blues of The Birth. It was somewhat overdue, but he could handle it. He moved to her. "Tell me about it," he said, solicitously.

She looked into his concerned eyes and suddenly, amazingly,

it was all over. Just as an avalanche, with all its power and fury, has to end sometime - leaving a sense of anti-climax at having survived so much sound and fury, so too the events of the afternoon began to seem unreal, to distance themselves from her life. She was no longer swept up in them. She could recount the events of the day as things that had happened. She was no longer caught up in them, a part of them. She could tell him about it as though she was simply repeating something that she had read in a newspaper.

O-O-O-O-O

"There was this guy at the store. I didn't notice him at first. Oh, that's not right. I guess I must have noticed him, otherwise I wouldn't have noticed him, if you know what I mean. Anyway, he was there. He seemed to be following me around from aisle to aisle, you know..... He wasn't buying anything, he had no shopping kart. He was just looking at me. Every time I looked up, there he was, looking at me. Not staring, just looking. I mean, he wasn't sinister, or anything like that. I wasn't frightened. It wasn't like in some scary movie.

Actually, he was quite handsome, in a rakish sort of way. Like some pirate, you know. But he kept looking at me. It was a bit embarrassing. He was looking at me like I was some movie star, and it was kinda nice, except that I felt guilty because I wasn't the person he obviously mistook me for. It was weird.

Anyway, there I was at the checkout, and that rat of a checkout clerk went into his regular schtick - 'Oh, Mrs. Mayer, so pleased to see you again. And how is Mr. Mayer? Does he still work for that company that pays entirely in coupons? Oh yes, I see he does. What company is that, Mrs. Mayer? Hey, would you like to see a real dollar bill?' God, how I hate that creepy little shit!

There I was, feeling about six inches high when I looked around and there HE was, right behind me in the checkout line. I'll swear his eyes were smiling. All the other women in the line were sniggering, as usual, and he was just looking at me,

you know - and then he said it.....

'Excuse me madam. I couldn't help overhearing the clerk call you "Mrs. Mayer". Are you the Mrs. Mayer, Mrs. Kathy Mayer? Eric Mayer's wife? Yes, I see you are. Whow! What would all the folks back in England say if they could only see me now? Me! Talking to the Kathy Mayer! Whow, what would they say?'

Right about then Grossman himself came out of his office. He marched straight upto that shitty clerk and said, 'Now Finklebaum, what's going on here?'. Needless to say, The Fink just stuttered, the smarmy little creep. Then this guy chips in again.

'Oh, I'm terribly sorry sir, but I'm afraid it was entirely my fault. I'm afraid I may have inadvertently caused a scene. Inexcusable really - except that I was simply overcome with amazement. I mean, here I am, over half a world away from home - I walk into a grocery store in a suberb of Rochester which is, if you'll excuse me for saying so sir, hardly the hub of the universe - and I find myself in the checkout line right behind THE Kathy Mayer.'

This was all too much for poor old Grossman. He took out his handkerchief and dabbed at his forehead, knocking his spectacles askew. 'THE Kathy Mayer.....?' he asked, perplexed. 'THE.....?'

'Yes, yes, THE Kathy Mayer. They'll never believe me. My friends will never believe me when I tell them about this - when I tell them that I met THE Kathy Mayer they'll.....'

'THE.....?' muttered Grossman again, by now going down for the third time. 'You mean she...SHE is famous?'

'Famous? Is the Pope a catholic? Of course she's bloody famous! Surely you know...oh...' He turned to me, a look of abject contrition upon his face. 'They didn't know, did they? Oh my God, I've done it now, haven't I? I've committed a terrible gaffe. You were living here in secret, weren't you? In

quiet seclusion. You had found a haven of private anonymity and I've let the cat out of the bag, put you back in the goldfish bowl, as it were. Me and my big mouth. Can you ever forgive me? Oh dear, it's as if I've somehow given away your secret identity.'

Old Grossman siezed upon this remark like a drowning man siezes upon a lifejacket. 'Secret Identity?' He hustled right on up to the till where I was standing. I was frozen by the unreality of these events, still stupidly holding onto one end of my coupons whilst Finklebaum was fixed stone-like onto the other end.

'No, no, Finklebaum.' he admonished. Oh, it was lovely. Finks let go of those coupons as if burnt by them, and cringed away. 'No, Finklebaum. There will be no charge for groceries for (*wink*) Mrs. Mayer. Always a pleasure to be of service to you (*wink*) Mrs. Mayer. I trust you will continue to honor us with your valued custom, Mrs. Mayer. Quick Finklebaum, help Mrs. Mayer to her car.'

I just had time for a quick glance back at the guy who'd caused it all. He was standing grinning at me, still in the checkout line. I was ushered out of that store like, oh, like a movie star, I guess. It was really Far Out!"

O-O-O-O-O

"Yes." thought Eric, stunned, "Far Out indeed! Here I am, a working stiff, with all the usual responsibilities. I go out to work all the hours that God sends, to earn a crust. I have two kids to bring up. I have a car that thinks it belongs in the repair shop, and now to top it all off I have a wife who's flipped her lid. Far-fucking-Out just doesn't even begin to say it. How am I going to be able to maintain my 'Mr. Nice Guy' image with pressures like these? All she has to do is go to the grocery store, and she cracks up. She can't even handle that. What am I going to do?" Suddenly ashamed of such maunderings he mentally shook himself and all the dark, creepy, self-pitying thoughts went scurrying back into the cobwebby

corners of his id. "Some 'Mr. Nice Guy'." he thought mockingly, as he moved protectively towards his wife. "Here dear, sit down in this nice chair, while I ring Doctor Fonebone."

"Don't give me that '...ring Doctor Fonebone' crap. And since when has this been a 'nice' chair? You were all set to throw it out last week, except that you couldn't find the coupons for the furniture store. You don't believe me, do you? Look, I'm telling you, it happened! If you don't believe me call the store." In her anxiety she was pacing about the room. How could she make him believe her? How could she convince him? In some strange way it had been kind of weird and wonderful, but now it was all going wrong. She found herself by the windows, where Eric had been standing when she first came into the room. What was it he'd said? Oh yes, he was worrying about some stupid limousine. Had she looked? She thought so, but couldn't be sure. Unfinished business. It wasn't neat. Distractedly she poked the drapes aside in order to verify that the car had gone...that at least that incident was tidily over, could be dismissed. Suddenly she was snapped back from her inner turmoil. Far from being gone, the car was still there. Very much still there, for in fact it wasn't the only thing still there. Another element had been added to the scene. HE was there.

"Eric, quickly, come here. It's him."

"Who?" he asked, still primarily concerned with trying to remember Doctor Fonebone's number. Why could he never remember telephone numbers?

"Him, the man from the store. Who the hell have I been talking about for the past five minutes, The Great Pumpkin? It's the guy from the store, HIM, talking to the woman in the Rolls Royce."

Galvanised by this sudden switch from one madness to another Eric rushed over to the window, banging his shins on that damned stupid coffee table on the way. Blast, that settled it. That coffee table was going to have to go. He peered over Kathy's shoulder, down into the street. He sighted along the

barrel of her arm, past the sights of her fingers as they held the drapes aside, and found himself staring directly at the limousine...and yes, there was a man leaning over the window and talking to the woman inside. All his Secret Agent fantasies came back to him at that moment. They were watching the house. Suddenly he found that he accepted Kathy's version of the morning's events. They were watching. But why, and who were 'They'? Then he had it, the insight that made it all fall into place. He was the hero of a Philip K. Dick novel. Things like this were always happening to heroes in Philip K. Dick novels. Why, the very fact that none of this made any sense was further proof. Phil Dick novels never made any sense. That was it. Somehow he had become the hero in a Phil Dick novel and now 'They' were playing with him, as a cat plays with a mouse before devouring it. Somehow he had to explain this insight to Kathy. He must make her understand.

"Do clockwork mice dream of electric cheese?"

"Pardon?" said Kathy.

"I said, 'Do clock.....'"

"I heard what you said. But did you hear what you said? You say things like that and yet you have the nerve to imply that I'm crazy? Oh my god, they're looking up at the window. They've seen us." She jerked her hand back and let the drapes swing closed. Eric grabbed them open again, afraid to look and yet more afraid of the uncertainty of not-knowing.

"Look, she's getting out of the car." The woman climbed sexily from the limousine and once again flicked her long dark hair from her shoulders. She talked animatedly to the man for a few moments, and they both glanced from time to time at the window, smiling all the while. Eric felt a sudden chill. He knew. He'd read the books - he knew. Killers were ordinary people. These were ordinary people and their smiles were killers' smiles. He looked again at the woman but saw only the beautiful smile on the beautiful face. The beautiful killer's smile on the beautiful killer's face. The man and the woman seemed to come to some sort of decision because, as one, they

Actually I was amazed at how many folks responded to the 'Wazzy Aussie' section. Even Walt Willis said that he liked: "...with some exceptions, the quotations..." Why, one of the quotes must have pushed one of Joseph Nicholas' buttons 'cos he splenored at me at length. Unfortunately I can't quote him because I consider his response so wrong-headed that even thinking about it makes me fly into such a rage that I want to rip off my own head and use it for *unspeakable acts*. Jean Weber too missed the point, pointing out what Jack Herman "really meant". I know what he meant. My point was that 'what he meant' isn't 'what he said' (OK, 'what he wrote' you pedantic readers, you). David Palter, whilst agreeing that: "Those Australian quotes...are truly grotesque", also rushed to the defence, this time of Diane Fox.

"Here, what's all this Aussie bashing huh?" asked Marc Ortlieb. Well, I suppose some might look at it that way - Ted White did, and wrote: "My, you really let those Aussies have it with both barrels, didn't you? The opening and closing sections of SFD 23 are, cumulatively, as damaging -- if not more so -- as my 20,000-word article in SIKANDER. You may not practice KTF reviewing openly, but you do know how to slip a stiletto right in past the ribs."

But I didn't say anything - I merely held up a mirror, and chuckled a bit.

Glen's response was far more in line with my intent, as was Mal Ashworth's: "James Styles on 'lesser races' was sheer delight..." "Gee, I jes' lurv your lil ole lesser races!". Even more in line was Pamela Boal's: "I'm still chuckling over your examples of writers suffering from the mong-brain virus. A timely reminder to write what we mean as well as mean what we write." However, the 'Nail On The Head' award for this issue goes to Steve George, who wrote: "Your foot-in-mouth examples were hilarious. I expect that if I poured over my own fannish output of the past few years I could glean enough foot-in-mouthers to keep a two ounce monthly fanzine in production for years to come." You and me both, Steve. Oh, and take a bow those of you who noticed that I edited the letters a bit more tightly this issue. Yep, that was the letter-col.

All The Gaudy Toys

We finally gave in, surrendered. We succumbed and capitulated. Our resolve weakened. Our backbone finally went. We knuckled under. We bowed down before the inevitable. Not to put too fine a point on it, we sold out. I mean, I don't want to leave you in two minds over this. I don't want you shaking your head and asking yourself, "Well, did they or didn't they?" We did, we did indeed. WE FUCKING WELL DID!

We went out and rented us a video.

"But how could you do this?" you are doubtless asking.
"How, when you don't have two pennies to rub together?"

Well, that was one of the reasons, actually. We did have a couple of pennies to rub together but...have you any idea how mind-numbingly tedious rubbing pennies can be? Oh, it may not seem so bad for the first few months or so, but the delights of rubbing pennies soon begin to pall. Let's face it, when you've rubbed two pennies, then you've rubbed them all. Well, there we were the other night - I was reasonably content but Cas was sulking one of her fifty-megaton sulks, on account of it being my turn for the pennies. Well, by about eight o'clock in the evening I'd been the recipient of so many black looks that I felt, could I but have saved them up, I could have made myself fifteen Darth Vaders, four black holes, or Gerald Lawrence's beard.

I suggested to Cas that she find something else to rub. I even made some more specific, if somewhat risqué suggestions - but she said she had a headache. "Besides," she added, "I might awaken the Genie - and believe me, a Genie that's spent eternity there I don't want to have anything to do with. Anyway, he'd only be able to grant small wishes..."

"We could," I suggested, hastening to change the subject, "have a penny each." She didn't seem too thrilled at the prospect. "Here!" I said, flinging the pennies at her feet in high dudgeon (well, it was my turn). She sat hunched and unmoving as they bounced off her legs and flopped silently into the

shag-pile carpet. The silence was ominous and solidly threatening. It made the quiet before the storm seem every bit as dark and brooding as a recording of 'My Boy Lollipop'. "Well" I said desperately, "If you don't want the damn pennies, what the hell do you want?"

"A video-recorder." she replied.

I marshalled my arguments. "Penury," I said. "Over the limit on the Budget Account," I asserted. "Bleeding overdraft!" I shouted. "Abject fucking poverty!" I screamed.

"A video." came the quiet reply. "We are going downtown on Saturday and we are going to get a video."

Well of course I had to put my foot down at this. Firmly. One has to draw the line somewhere. I wasn't going to let myself be dictated to like that. No way! We went downtown Friday afternoon. After all, we don't want her forgetting who's boss around here.

O-O-O-O-O

The thing is, Cas has got herself a job. Yes, our Cas, the Queen of the Silver Dole Queue. What's more, it's a night job - three nights a week. Three twelve-hour nights - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday...plus three hours Tuesday evening. All things considered we should be significantly better off than when she was in receipt of unemployment benefit. However, there is a drawback. It plays hob with her TV viewing. Hence the video.

We got the damn thing just a few short weeks ago and already we've spent a small fortune in renting films. It's unbelievable - I never knew there were so many films. We were watching four or five feature-length films every weekend. There was no time for fanac. Werewolves were in London, Heros were local, Crystals were dark, Good Fridays were long and Men were elephants. That was a typical weekend's viewing. It was heady stuff, and it didn't leave much time for fanac.

Anyway, I'm back now - and yes, I lied about the LoC-col.

WALT WILLIS 32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, BT21 OPD, N. Ireland.

I read your old fanzine.

I have considered sending you a postcard. I might even have done so if I'd had a copy of the one I sent to Vince showing me pointing out to sea while talking to an attentive young bicycle, but I think I would have written some sort of a letter as well if only because after making excuses for myself there would not have been enough room to tell you how enormously impressed I was by your piece about 'Through Paris in a Sports-car'. I have been thinking about it ever since the second time I read it and I have come to the conclusion, measured and deliberate, that it is one of the finest things I have ever read. And I don't mean just fannish things, though it is indeed the apotheosis of fannish writing. On any level, human or literary, it ranks in my mind with the best there is. No, don't argue, my mind is made up.

6th. October 1984 (Skel)

Me? Argue? Whatever gave you such a silly idea?

Arthur Thomson sent me a few old fanzines he'd discovered mouldering away somewhere, and added: "No, seriously...as Alan Hunter used to say after he'd made one of his unfunny jokes... a letter out of the blue from Brokham because the Skel presence hasn't seemed to be around fandom these past few months. Why, the only thing I've seen is the Skel tale in HTT 18, which is really the main reason for this letter because I thought it so bloody good. I'm not yer in-depth reviewer who can sort the nitty from the gritty but I know what I like, and I liked 'Through Paris...'. The bathos and the pathos all came through for me. I thought it a damn fine piece of writing."

Shucks

OK, so generally I try to cut the egoboo and suchlike out of the letters I print, on the basis that it is really only of interest to me. So why the two examples above? Well actually

these are the very first instances I can recall where folks have written to me about things I've had published in other editors' fanzines, and I like it! This is a practice that I very much want to encourage, thus the two concentrated dollops of pure unabashed egoboo on the previous page. So, if you want to write reams of glowing praise about any of my material you've seen outside the pages of SFD, then by all means feel free to do so. Adverse criticism should however continue to be addressed to the editors in question. Bad news travels fast enough. ATom also complained about the stencils again (Oooh, he does go on), saying that they'd repro'd even worse than he'd expected. Well, the only other ~~these nit-picking perfectionist~~ person to comment on this aspect was Terry Carr, who wrote:-

"Speaking of ATom, I loved his drawings, even though there is some deterioration evident in the ancient stencils you gave him. His drawings for your trip opus were especially good, I thought. The piece itself made for good reading -- effective descriptions, too: I found myself getting winded as I read through it.

Your remarks about not being willing to sell your good name for a measly twenty-five bucks prompted the thought that that's not a word-rate to be sneezed at."

Someone else who picked up on that same point was :-

MAL ASHWORTH 16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, North Yorks.

Your account of New York fandom trying to buy you was both fascinating and confusing. I got the impression that it was your name they were trying to buy for 25 bucks - but then you say "If I'm going to peddle my arse it's not going to be for a measly twenty-five bucks". Well of course, if that's what they were after, I do so agree with you (though quite how they'd use your arse to support a convention bid is a little beyond the imagination of a naive old Fifties fan like me). I wouldn't peddle my arse for twenty-five bucks either, attached or unattached. But if, after all, it's names they're buying, well by all means you stick to your principles - just point 'em my

way. Not only can they have my name for twenty-five bucks, but I'll offer 'em a whole string of topnotch names at the same rate - Hugo Gernsback, George Orwell, Cyrano de Bergerac (might be worth double that one, I reckon), Claude Degler. I dare say I could drum up a pretty good stock. In fact by a little discreet browsing around in telephone directories I could probably come up with some like Bertrand Bumhole, Bessie Backside, Barry Backend, Daniele Derriere, etc., etc., and then I'd be covered whatever it was these guys were buying. Yessir, you just head them Big Apple hucksters thisaways, old son. I reckon we kin do a deal.

I did enjoy that phrase telling us that a certain kind of material "...isn't fannish at all except in the sense that it is written by fans and published by fanzines". He may be right but it sounds kinda giggly.

8th. October 1984 (Skel)

Steve George said much the same about that phrase, and added: "'Saddled With Us' was great. I read it as a fan, as a cyclist, as a lover of humour, as an interested spectator, and as a past Scot."

Not what you would call an unbiased response. Apparently he intends doing a cycling tour of Scotland in the near future and the article failed to dissuade him. Another Canadian, Mike Glicksohn also went over the top in responding to that article, saying: "The whole article is easily the best piece of fanzine fare I've read this year..." This comment was really appreciated until I noticed that he'd penned it only partly into January. And they talk of perfidious Albion...

Those two responses just about summed up the responses to 'Saddled...' (except for Mike Ashley who wrote: "Obviously that sort of thing is dead easy to make fun of...", but then he would THE SCROTTY LITTLE TOE-RAG! Truth to tell he did continue that sentence with :- "...but I at least appreciated the attempt to write in a style different to the usual witty (ha ha) fannish anecdote, told in cynical fashion."

I though am not mollified. However, getting back to the general response - as I said, this was generally of the 'shit brilliant' nature (well that's at least a 50% accurate description) which, whilst welcome and appreciated, isn't the sort of thing I want to fill these pages with. That two-word summation however does lead us to Pamela Boal's LoC which included some none-too-gentle hints (laid on lightly with a sledgehammer) that I swear from time to time - well OK, quite a bit - when writing for SFD (and Terry Hill will confirm that I slip the odd 'wee swearie' into the articles I send him too). Well, pointing this out to me is rather pointless because I am aware of it. Believe it or not, I can read, and I invariably check over the things I write. I yam what I yam. Take me or leave me, but do not try to change me.

Pamela also complained about me not doing a WAHF column, on the grounds that her memory and records tend both to be in roughly equal disarray, and she doesn't want to get dropped from the SFD mailing list because of her failure to keep track.

OK, whilst I don't intend to waste space on a WAHF column, I will promise to warn you, Pamela, before wielding the axe. I don't generally warn people, on the basis that if they are only responding because I'm threatening them, then the whole exercise becomes completely pointless. I tried to explain about my attitude to lack of response once before, but I got sidetracked into talking about 'obligations' and 'owing' and all that wrong stuff, and completely ~~blatantly~~ ~~it~~ ~~he~~ made a ~~balls~~ hash of it.

The thing is, I am making the positive step, hence it is up to me to elicit a response from you, all of you. If I am not making you want to respond, then I am wasting both our time and will cease doing so forthwith. It isn't your fault, it's mine. If I can't generate a spontaneous response then I have failed. When Jon Wallace writes : "There were lots of things I wanted to say when I first read it, but I put off LoCing so long that I don't have time to do it properly now.", then I have failed. When Maureen Porter writes : Well, where to begin, especially bearing in mind that I did actually read the SFDs quite closely when they first arrived, but the com-

ments have slipped from mind in the time-honoured fashion.", then I have failed again. I'm not too bothered by specific instances of failure because you can't connect with everybody. If you try at all you are bound to fail sometimes. The only way to never fail is to never try. However, I'm not a total masochist. If I fail repeatedly with specific individuals, then I go away and try SFD on somebody else. Brick walls are useful things, but not for banging your head against. I may be 'nice', but I'm not stupid.

STEWE GREEN 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham.

This debate on the merits of 'nice' fandom puts me in mind of a chat I had with Vinç Clarke a few weeks back concerning the relative pros and cons of 50s and 70s fandoms, I having entered SF fandom circa '77 (after a dubious apprenticeship in the murky depths of comidom) with Vinç obviously beating me by a good quarter-century. The major difference I perceived when reading back issues of HYPHEN dating from just before he quit fandom was the casual atmosphere which pervaded the pages even 30 years on. The 'critical standards' purge of the 70s had a certain validity, but the zines of that period sometimes sacrificed fun on the altar of Great Literature, the humourous interludes more exercises in sarcasm than wit.

Of course this is an arrant generalisation which ignores such writers as Bob Shaw and Dave Langford, but I still feel it holds true for many of the zines I encountered in my first brushes with SF fandom. More recently, fanzines such as Pam Wells' NUTZ and John and Eve Harvey's WALLBANGER (not to mention Terry Hill's HYPHEN lookalike MICROWAVE) have attempted to bridge the divide, with varying degrees of success, a development I heartily welcome.

TED WHITE 1014 North Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, VA 22046.

I suppose the thing about Nice Fandom comes down to a question of extremes. I have enjoyed all the issues of SFD I've seen without considering overmuch whether you were in one camp or the other. SFD opens the door into your world, your life, and you write interestingly about it. Certainly not everything

you've related has been 'nice' (especially for you), and you speak your mind on a variety of subjects well enough that it never occurred to me that you might be part of the Everything's Nice In The Garden school (as it was once described). If I considered the point I guess I thought of you as an iconoclast of no particular school or camp. On the other hand, I find Terry Jeeves' fanzines, and Eric Bentcliffe's, bland almost to the point of Keith Walker-like boredom. The content-level is too low. They strike me as more typically 'nice'.

I'm reminded of Archie Mercer's attack on Walt Willis for his brilliant review of a fanzine edited by Mercer's intended wife. To me that drew the lines. Mercer was of the Say Nothing That Could Ever Be Construed As Unkind school -- or at least he criticised Willis in those terms, although he himself was often cranky -- while Willis, generally thought of as a kind person, was not afraid to point out the Emperor's nudity. Willis stood in the center (as I think you do). Mercer was in right field.

In far left field is Michael Ashley, who apparently appreciates little or nothing in fandom and has never been heard to utter a kind or thoughtful word about anyone. He recently wrote me to tell me how inadequate my new fanzine, EGOSCAN, is. I appreciated the letter. Now I can save the postage I'd have spent sending him further issues.

I suppose what annoys me most about him is his air of unreasonableness. Since my name was used I couldn't help noticing that he characterized me in terms that better suit himself: "...chucking out meaningless, baseless value judgements." That sums up Ashley to me. He's as bad as bland: he spews out vitriol without purpose or effect. He's not even entertaining."

A WIMP'S EYE VIEW

My problem is that I am very easily hurt by adverse criticism, and find it too easy to put myself in the shoes of anyone I might wish to be critical of. So in the past I have tended to take the easy option and say nothing. Even this course however can box you in. As a case in point take Georges Giguere.

Now I started trading with Georges when he published an interesting fanzine called COMPOUND FRACTURE, but almost immediately after I established contact with him he folded this and became the editor of the ESFACAS clubzine, NEOLOGY, which he invariably airmailed to me at some enormous cost. Unfortunately I find this unbelievably dull and tedious, but at first I thought it was just something he was sending me between issues of his own fanzine, so I didn't say anything. But as NEOLOGY kept coming (airmail) and his own zine didn't it finally dawned on me that I was now trading for NEOLOGY, a zine I found every bit as interesting as a two-hour LP-recording of earwig's bowel movements. What to do? If I told him now he would quite rightly want to know why I hadn't mentioned it sooner and enabled him to save all those dollars in postage.

And yet...when wearing my editorial hat I feel that, if people don't enjoy my fanzine, I want to know about it. Elsewhere in his LoC Steve Green wrote that : "Anyway, too much patting on the back results in terminal complacency". I agree 100% and this is in fact why I've always valued Michael Ashley's opinion - he has been a token thorn in my flesh, a constant reminder not to get complacent. I rarely agree with his criticisms and find his overall approach abhorrent, but he certainly prevents me from thinking that everything in my garden is lovely. His letters usually make me mad as hell, but later I begin to feel a warm glow of satisfaction at being able to put up, for one more issue at least, with my token shit-head.

But then I get to wondering - is there really any point? I mean, what the hell do you get out of it, Mike?

And is it really worth it? Should I keep on sending out issues of my fanzine to someone who doesn't really care to receive it? Should Georges? I think the answer is "No!"

...OF CABBAGES AND KINGS...BUT MAINLY CABBAGES.

Fan Funds seem to be the hot fannish topic these days. Well, maybe not all fan funds, but TAFF is certainly getting some fairly heavy coverage in the pages of fanzines these days.

If you subscribe to the view that there is no such thing as bad publicity, then you have got to see this as a good thing - always assuming that you are in favour of TAFF. Me? I dunno. As I cast my eye over the battlefield I fail to see a single unblemished escutcheon. This in itself does not bother me - unblemished escutcheons being reserved for comic-book heroes and as such are strictly for the birds - but I see no need to be drawn into the whole tedious contretemps. The problem with everyone climbing onto their high horses, is that everyone is liable for a nasty fall. I intend to keep my feet planted firmly on terra firma. You wouldn't get me up on one of those things if my life depended on it.

However, in all the brouha over TAFF, DUFF seems to be in danger of being ignored. So, this fanzine is going to take a fearless and controversial stand as regards the current DUFF race :-

This fanzine supports Marty & Robbie Cantor for DUFF.

This fanzine supports rich brown for DUFF.

This fanzine supports Joni Stopa for DUFF.

This fanzine supports Mike Glicksohn for DUFF.

This fanzine is confused.

In all honesty I think I can narrow that down a little. This fanzine is all in favour of either rich brown or the Cantors winning DUFF, primarily because a little bird or two has whispered (whispering birds?) that both Joni and Mike will, should they loose, make a consolation trip over here instead. Much as I would wish my friends Mike and Joni every success in their DUFF race, sheer selfishness causes me to hope that they lose and thus give me the chance to meet them again/properly. Yes, I hope my friends get the chance to meet me and Marty, Robbie, and rich will have to make do with the consolation prize of winning DUFF.

You will note that my approach is somewhat heavy on the 'selfish'. OK, so I'm a louse. The truth is that some of us paper fans aren't worth the paper we're printed on.

HAZEL ASHWORTH 16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, N. Yorks.

'Gobsmacked' is a word very much on our lips (or, how you say, gob) these days. It seems to creep in everywhere, and of all the catchy Skelisms that have crossed our path since we started reading you, it has a sort of universal applicability that saves you from searching further. (I am still indebted to 'chuffed-to-little-butties' and 'dischuffed t' t'knickers' for euphony and economy of expression, of course).

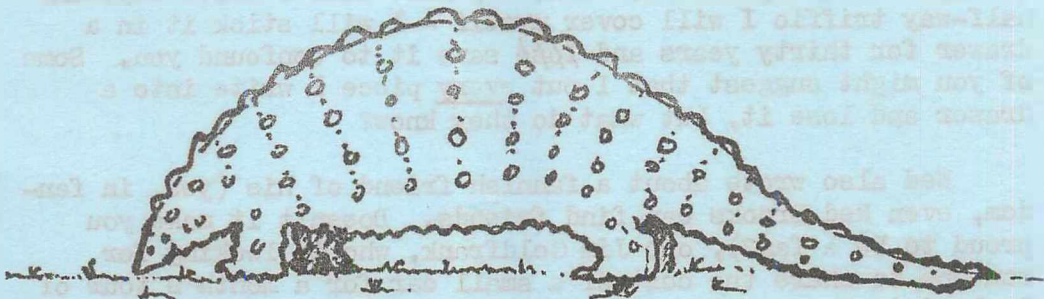
While we were down at Oddwoves, for instance, we went down to the pub and got...gobsmacked (can you say that?) - and then there was further gobsmackment (conventional usage here) the following morning when we heard that tape we'd recorded for you the night before. Dave promised to erase most of it (under threat of gobsmacking, of course), but now we've left I'm not so sure...

One little instance to show you just how far you've penetrated the Ashworth vocabulary: I was reading 'The Hobbit' to my class this morning. We came to Bilbo's meeting with the dragon. It goes, if you remember :-

"To say that Bilbo's breath was taken away is no description at all. There are no words left to express his staggerment, since Men changed the language that they learned of elves in the days when all the world was wonderful."

'E were gobsmacked, weren't 'e? That was the word old Tolkien was searching for. So, see how you've enriched our lives?

You may be interested (gobsmacked, even) to know that among our school collection of British Museum-approved models of dinosaurs, we have...wait for it...a Skelidosaurus (It's really spelled with a 'c', but never mind), maybe the flatulent dinosaur par excellence? My researches haven't yet ascertained whether the crittur was herb-, carn, or omniverous, /probably beanivorous/ but will let you know as we progress. It wasn't particularly big, maybe 3 metres long, and the model I have is dark brown and knobbly all over. A bit like this:-



mighty handsome, isn't he?

Phew I'm gobsm..... tired out after that.

all best,

Hazel

28 October 1984 (Skel).

Well, far be it from me to suggest that your school has been conned, Hazel...but from your description and from the accompanying drawing (particularly from the drawing) I'd say that what you have there is a model of a very large turd. I do however have nothing but awed admiration for the super-slick salesman who managed to sell it to your school-board. It's guys like that who've left the world arse-deep in encyclopaedias.

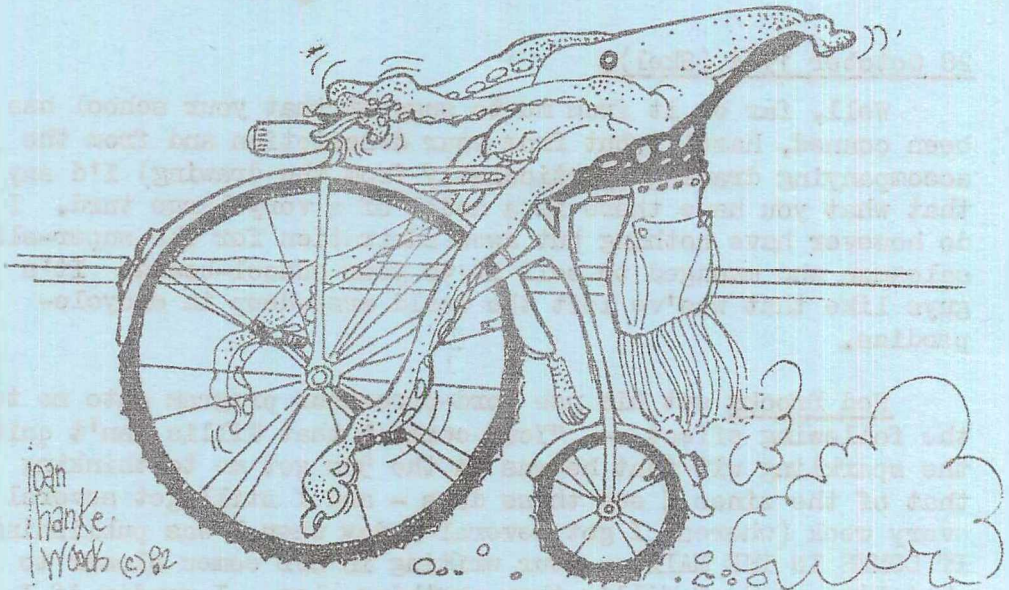
Ned Brooks set his new word-processor program onto me to the following effect :- "Your comment that Willis isn't quite the sparkling wit that he was in the 50s got me to thinking that of the zines I see these days - and I still get several every week (whereas I got several a day when I was publishing IT COMES IN THE MAIL) - your writing in SFD comes closer to what I've read of Willis than anything else. I wonder if I will be around in 2014 to see how you have retained your sparkle?"

Ouch! Actually, that wasn't quite how I meant that comment to be taken (for the full story see OUTWORLDS 39) but you

have put me on my mettle. The very next time I write anything half-way triffic I will cover myself - I will stick it in a drawer for thirty years and ~~hope~~ save it to confound you. Some of you might suggest that I put every piece I write into a drawer and lose it, but what do they know?

Ned also wrote about a fannish friend of his (yes, in fandom, even Ned Brooks can find friends. Doesn't it make you proud to be a fan?), one Jim Goldfrank, who is looking for someone to share the cost of a small car for a month's tour of Ireland in June of '85. Jim can be reached at 11859 St. Trinians Court /Oh, the belles, the belles/, Reston, Virginia 22091, U.S.A. Well, now I've got to try and get this out by then.

Joan Hanke-Woods made her own unique comment on the various cycling tales I've told of late :-

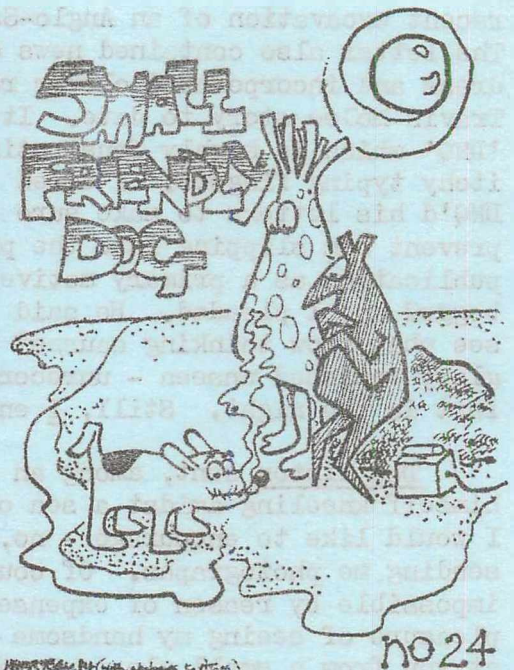


Not the greatest likeness I've ever seen Joan, but definitely passable. You have captured Cas' cycling technique to a 'T', too. I also liked the touch of the somewhat fanciful

saddlebag combined with the near photographic realism of the rest of the illustration.

This seems to be the issue for graphic responses. As a glance to the right will reveal, Harry Bell's flattery of Atom's cover is sincerity itself.

In case you are wondering about this sudden flurry of electro'd artwork, I suppose I'd better explain. Thanks to the good auspices of Vinç Clarke (Bespoke Electros and Ferret-fondlers to Royalty) I finally got around to having electro-stencilled all the pieces of artwork that kindly, if not overly bright artists have been sending me since the late Cretaceous.



no 24

Tony Tomkins admits to being another ex-cyclist within the ranks of fandom. He not only used to cycle around the West Witten area himself, back in the fifties, but did it amidst the winter snows. God, they were men in those days! He also enclosed his phone number in case I wanted a chat. Ha! I do not telephone people. On the phone my conversation sparkles and scintillates to such a degree that the person on the other end of the line is forced to conclude that they are talking to a lobotomized brick.

Still on the subject of cycling, Alan Dorey, John Owen, and Anne Warren all made a connection between 'Saddled With Us' and Dave Bridges' 'The Ragged Trousered Pedacyclist', an old but still widely and fondly remembered piece. Mark Bennet sent a fascinating letter (which is just like a 'fascinating' letter, but slightly shorter) which dealt with his recent archaeological experiences whilst acting as site-assistant at the

recent excavation of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Nottingham. The letter also contained news of his recent move to a new address and incorporated clever references to just about every Travis McGee story to date. It also included a bloody great 'DNQ' which is highly frustrating for appreciative faneds with itchy typing fingers. I taxed him on this point. He said he DNQ'd his letters to make sure he kept them personal and to prevent him slipping into the practice of writing them with publication as a primary motive. Ha! I ranted and I raved, I begged and I pleaded. He said he'd think about it. See Mark, see what slow thinking causes? The chance of fannish fame and glory vanished unseen - unrecorded and unappreciated, like a fart in the night. Still, I enjoyed it.

Doc Hinton sent, among an avalanche of letters, a photo of himself kneeling amidst a sea of lupins. This too is something I would like to encourage - no, not kneeling on lupins, STUPID - sending me photographs. Of course, for me to respond would be impossible by reason of expense, so you would have to forgo the pleasure of seeing my handsome and rakish features staring back at you from a small glossy square of England's green and pleasant (and sun-baked) land. Which leads me into this comment from R. Laurraine Tutihasi :- "I'm surprised that anyone could get sunburned in England. After all, even on the few sunny days, the sun comes in at such an acute angle because of the latitude. You must have very sensitive skin."

Ah, so perceptive, for someone who has never met me. Yes, I think 'sensitive' describes me perfectly. Why, at formal dinners I am always careful not to gob on the wrong side of my plate. Which makes it difficult for me to understand how Paula Lieberman could describe SFD as :- "...the fannish hotbed of militant politeness." Militants are such nasty, insensitive brutes. Nice sensitive Dave Rowe wrote asking for a copy of 'The Paul Simon Songbook', but much checking (I asked Mike Meara) failed to turn one up. Yes Dave, it's tough at the bottom too.

Kim Huett wrote :- "At my side lie no less than a dozen fanzines - CRYSTAL SHIP 7 and 8, TYPERS 4, EPSILON 13, 14, and 15, ANSIBLE 38, MICROWAVE 6, PREWERT 9, EMPTIES 4, NUTZ 2, and

TWILL DDU 20. Not a bad selection of British fanzines, you might say, but not perfect - and you would be right. While good, that list lacks a certain something, that indescribable flavour needed to turn it from a good list of British fanzines to a truly great one.

A pity that you couldn't supply it."

Damn! Gotta stop leading with my ego.

Harry Bell has a different opinion...or does he :- "SFD... still the inspiration for the fanzine I haven't quite got round to doing yet." Whow, that's obviously some 'inspiration'.

Keith Walker writes that he doesn't seem to get around as much as we do, never getting any further than Manchester these days. OK, but next time you're due into Manchester, why not give me a ring first and we'll arrange to go for a pint and a chat. The number is (061) 456 5129. The rest of you, remember the number. It's no good trying to look us up in the directory because we're not in it! (or in Superman III) I always figured that anyone who needed to look up the number in the directory probably wasn't anyone I wanted to talk to anyway. However, such an approach failed to take into consideration the possibility of phone calls from Wisconsin that begin :- "Hi...you won't believe the trouble I had getting your number..."

Speaking of numbers, both Sam Long and Terry Jeeves pulled me up over the wrong number for the USAAF bomber although Terry came close to the truth when he remarked upon the Brooks B19 saddle that his bike used to have. It is of course unthinkable that I should have made a mistake. Why does Terry not even consider that I was referring to the ultra-secret B15 bike saddle that fearless American airmen flight tested over enemy territory during WWII. The assumption that I was talking about airplanes is completely unfounded - a fabrication - prove it Terry, prove it! (Now where have I seen that technique used before?).

TED WHITE 1014 North Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, VA 22046.

Richard Faulder is one of the more sensible and intelligent

Aussie fans of today but his letter does contain some serious misconceptions. "Post-industrial society" means "high-tech society", and generally refers to a society which has replaced heavy industry with information and service systems -- a transition which is taking place in this country, albeit none too smoothly. And I somehow doubt that he's read much by Arthur D. Hlavaty if he thinks Arthur is "a Republican". And he too narrowly defines "fan writing" as dealing with "science fiction and the subculture which has grown up around it". Actually, fanwriting is whatever fans write for fanzines. Period. And much of it does resemble in tone and nature the non-fan writing cited by Eric Mayer and you. Conceivably a collection of carefully selected fanwriting could be sold to the general book-buying public. Indeed, I proposed something like that to Terry Carr and Greg Benford at one of Dave Hartwell's parties at the 1978 worldcon. "My idea," I told them all, "is that we do VOID 30 as a book! Dave can publish it. We'd have a five-page front cover in the tradition of Bhob's, the usual clever editorials, and the rest of the material would be the usual high-quality stuff we used to run in VOID, but not so ingroupish as to be unintelligible to the general reader." I was sure (well, as sure as one could be under such circumstances, three or four days into the con and several hours into the party of the evening) it could really be done, but Terry poo-pooed me.

HARRY WARNER 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.

I can understand how Richard Faulder feels about your use of fannish writings. But there are several other considerations which he didn't look into. I think it's proper to describe the informal essays about fans' daily lives and habits as fanwriting because it predominates in fanzines. Next, I see no reason why "fan writing" couldn't become a term descriptive of the professionally published material of this sort. There's so little appearing in professional places nowadays and so much being published in fanzines that we might have the bulk of it on our amateur side.

"True fanwriting deals with science fiction and the subculture which has grown up around it," Richard writes. I'm not sure what he means by the last half of his sentence, but a

great deal of writing about science fiction appears in semi-professional and professional places nowadays: publications like Science Fiction Review, academic journals, books issued by mundane firms, newspaper and mundane magazine articles. The bulk of this sort of writing does not appear in fan magazines. I don't suppose there's any immediate probability that the mundane world will consider fanwriting to be the sort of material you and I think of when we hear the term. But who knows? I would never have guessed during my first years in fandom that "fanzine" would find its way into dictionaries and become an accepted generic term.

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Your comments on Thurber and the nature of his writing led me to realize that I differentiate (to myself usually) between "fanwriting" and "fanzine-writing". I think of "fanwriting" as that fanzine material which directly relates to fanzines and to fandom and would hence have practically no appeal to the general reading public. D. West's 'Performance', for example.

"Fanzine writing" is writing by fans on topics of general interest which just happens to get published in fanzines. Much of Eric Mayer, any of Bob Shaw's pieces on his various jobs, etc, etc, etc. It's the latter sort of writing that Thurber, Benchley and the like used to do since we're basically talking about the personal essay. And you're right that there's still a paying market for that sort of material, although perhaps not as large a market as when Thurber was writing. (For that matter a great many newspaper columnists are writing fanzine material and getting paid for it, even if they're constrained to make their themes more topical/relevant than are writers in the fan press.)

Still, there ought to be a market for fanzine-writing but by its nature it would have little if any actual science fiction content so aiming it at the masses of sf and fantasy readers wouldn't seem to me to be the way to go. Eric puts his finger on it when he says such material isn't genre-specific and I suspect that's one of the reasons no such anthology has ever been done. (If memory serves me though, the concept has been

re-read them all) that I was loathe to sling them out unused. Alas, such is the parlous state of SFD these days (every ish an annish) that theirs appears to have been a tide which was not grasped at the flood. Until the very last minute I had been hoping to salvage at the very least a couple of quotes from Chuch Harris and Joan Sharpe, but alas, 'twas not to be.

It is too late. I am left with an envelope of old LoCs whose time has passed. But, look on the bright side. SFD 25 is a virgin canvas (for sail to the highest bidder?), and all you have to do in order to violate it is get in quickly with some ace response. Easy, nicht war?

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"The architecture of her face had collapsed under the weight of flesh and years. Still her black eyes were alert, like unexpected animal or bird life in the ruins of a building."

from : 'The Chill' by Ross MacDonald.

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SFD Quarterly
 Issue No. 24.

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