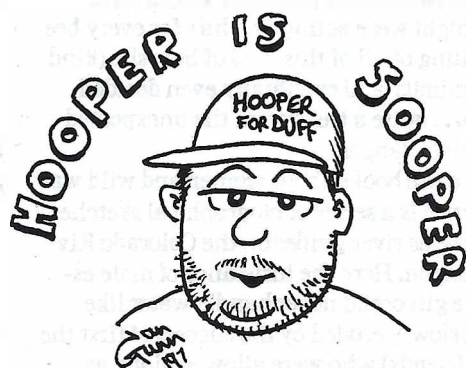


This is the 31st issue of an apparently annual fanzine, published by Andy Hooper and Carrie Root, members fwa, at The Starliter, 4228 Francis Ave. N. #103, Seattle, WA 98103. This Drag Bunt Press Production # 289. Material this time comes from Andy, Carrie, Victor Gonzalez and Bruce Townley. Art by Ian Gunn (pages one & seven), Bill Kunkel (title), Bill Rotsler (page three) and Dan Steffan (page four). *Spent Brass* appears rather irregularly these days, and one would do well not to anticipate the next issue too keenly. But as ever, we offer it in exchange for other fanzines in trade, letters of comment, submission of material, or a few bucks and a SASE. Thanks to carl juarez for additional typing services. Seattle Corflu in '99!

DON'T START ME TALKING By Andy



Corflu approaches; it must be time for another *Spent Brass*. This now seems to be an annual exercise for us, which is ironic; although *Spent Brass*' most golden era was our stint as a frequent fanzine back in 1991 and 1992, a full year passed between the first and second issues, and now we have returned to the periodicity of our nascence.

We will make a serious effort to get this issue out to the majority of our old mailing list. #30 was produced for the Nashville Corflu, and while we meant to do a second print run to cover everyone else, it was hard to justify the expense at the same time as I was doing *Apparatchik* every two weeks. We sent some copies out, but not very many, and probably no more than 100 people saw the last issue. If we missed you, and you'd like a copy, let us know.

We don't have a letter-column this issue, as a result of that sparse distribution. We received four or five letters, but I don't think I can lay hands on them; they are under a year's worth of postal precipitation in the strata of the apartment. Thank you all the same to those who took the time.

It was observed last issue that my sister and occasional columnist Elizabeth was expecting a baby. Elias Joseph Hooper-Lane is eight and half months old as of this writing, and just had his first visit to the New Orleans Zoo. Elizabeth and her husband Chris are expecting to leave the bayou in the near future, so they won't have to sweat through another hurricane season.

I'm standing for the Down Under Fan Fund at the moment, and the voting deadline is quickly approaching. You'll find a ballot enclosed with this issue. My opponents are Joel Zakem and Janice Murray. Joel is a long-time fan and writer, but I'm not personally familiar with him. I'm sure he'd be a fine delegate. I have known Janice for quite a while, and I know that she has already done a lot of work for US-Oz fan relations, hosted visiting Australians, distributed Australian fanzines in the US, and stood for DUFF before and lost by a vanishingly small margin. While I am a relative newcomer to the DUFF community, Janice has been part of it for some number of years, and I think she has surely earned the right to actually make the trip and visit Australia. I'm flattered by any votes that I receive, but I know how I'm going to cast my ballot.

We don't have any fanzine reviews this issue from our columnist Mark Manning, partly because we decided to put out the issue at the relative last minute. Mark's output has been slowed by a bout with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, but the collection of back issues which he kindly gave me at Potlatch Six last weekend confirms that he was doing some remarkable work for a bewildering variety of apas through early 1996. Not to mention *Shrontz's Nightmare*, a strike newsletter that stung Boeing management during the fall of 1995 and beyond. Excerpts from much of this unsung fanac are to be found in *Mark's Soup Pot*, a gorgeous little digest-size fanzine that Mark also produced for Potlatch, a superb introduction to mark's sensibilities and his writing. You might try writing to him at 1709 S. Holgate, Seattle, WA 98144-4339 for a copy.

Dr. Fandom has transferred his flag to *Apparatchik*. And we seem to have given up the idea of running polls. But Carrie is still walking, and lists some literary inspiration to help keep going. I've become an obsessive walker too, and detail some of the odd things that come to mind while walking the borders. Victor Gonzalez, one of my partners in *Apparatchik*, offers us a vintage piece that considers a dark night in baseball history. And we welcome Bruce Townley, editor of the fanzine *Oblong*, who offers a series of images from his recent trip to the British Isles.

We want to go on publishing *Spent Brass*, even if it's only once per year, but we need material. Our once considerable files are empty! We'd love to hear what you think of this issue, and invite your submissions of art and prose for #32 — out in the fall, all things being equal.

There's a fat white rabbit watching you much of the day

Pygmies don't ask questions even after they've killed you.

Extreme Reading by Carrie

Way back in Spent Brass #18, I talked about finding variety even on the most familiar routes. I'm still driving the Evergreen Point Bridge, and still enjoying it, but (with my pal, Karrie Dunning) I've also joined the Mountaineers, a Seattle-based outdoors club, and done a considerable amount of hiking in the foothills and heights of the Cascades. Mostly these are just daywalks, but Karrie and I have bigger ambitions . . .

Sometimes when someone has a brush with death, it triggers a sea change in their friends. In the last year since my pal Karrie Dunning had a heart attack, Luke and Andy have become walking fanatics, Victor quit smoking (at least twice) and Karrie and I have started planning The Long Walk. I'm not going to talk much about that here (bad luck to announce a pregnancy before the rabbit has died), but it has started me reading about women who have pushed the physical envelope, who, in the name of adventure, have attempted and usually succeeded in some "Extreme" endeavor.

I'd heard hints of these women before. For several years Andy has been buying Vintage Departure books, first, I think, because of some odd compulsion to complete his collection of Vintage paperbacks, but later because he noticed that I was actually reading them. There was *Bad Trips*, but that was mostly stories by men, and tourists at that. And *Running the Amazon*, although the activity was Extreme enough even for the Discovery channel, was still men, with a woman tagging along as support. I liked *Maiden Voyages*, a collection of excerpts of women's travel writing ranging from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's experiences in Constantinople in 1717, to Vita Sackville-West searching for rose gardens in 1925 Persia, to descriptions of contemporary Japanese country life by Leila Phillip.

With few exceptions, though, these were writings of ordinary travels by extraordinary women — and often in extraordinary locations that are now lost in time. But Dervla Murphy tent camping through Madagascar — that was pretty interesting! And although Osa Johnson (*I Married Adventure*) was accompanying her photographer husband when she was chased through the Borneo rain forest by a tribe of head-hunters, I think you have to give her credit for being there in the first place.

Another anthology finally set me on the trail of the true adventurers. Marybeth Bond's collection *A Woman's World* has its share of lady travelers and bus rides with Mama through Siberia, but also has a whole section of more adventuresome writers. Tania Aebi setting the record for the youngest person to complete a solo circumnavigation of the globe. Helen Thayer skiing to the magnetic North Pole, accompanied only by her dog, and story of the four women who skied to the South pole. Robyn Davidson crossing the Australian Outback on camel (I think the complete story *Tracks* was made into a movie). Stacy Allison, the first American woman to do Everest. And Marybeth Bond herself, somehow ending up the only Western woman on a camel safari in the Indian desert.

But the one that really grabbed me, and sent me scurrying to the bibliography in the back, was an excerpt from Tracy Johnson's *Shooting the Boh*. Some years before, I had seen a documentary on PBS which had been shot by one of the men on that horrendous trip — a number of average tourist-types had signed up for a raft trip in Borneo, only to discover that no one —

even the natives — had ever run this piece of river, and it was commonly assumed to be impossible. But naturally, for the usual stupid human reasons, they all decided to go on with it. The story from the male perspective was harrowing enough — bugs, jungle rot, and class VI (the class above "Extraordinarily Difficult") rapids for tens of miles at a time. But for Ms. Johnson, these "normal" challenges were multiplied by the loss of most of her gear by the airlines, forcing her to start out with whatever she could pick out in the native market (not much polypropylene there), by the physical and psychological challenge of being a middle-aged woman in a group of young athletes. And then to add [insult to injury] she discovered that the reason she was so attractive to the sweat-bees that plagued their every move is that her hormones had decreed that menopause was NOW, and the sweats that normally would have only kept her awake at night were acting as a lure for every bee on the river. Her recounting of all of this, and of how she (kind of) maintained her equanimity and eventually even decided she had enjoyed the trip . . . quite a treatise on the unexpected benefits of extreme physical danger.

I've found a couple more books about women and wild water. *Breaking Into the Current* is a series of biographical sketches of the first women to serve as river guides on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. Here the insistence of male establishment that "a little girl could never handle water like that" was painfully and slowly eroded by the success of first the few women (mostly girlfriends) who were allowed along as cooks and only under duress as boat handlers, and later the gutsy women who (here, as in many other areas) showed that it's more than brawn that makes a great athlete, that cleverness and experience are just as important.

Down the Wild River North broke the woman/water barrier in a way that spoke to me personally. Not only did Constance Helmericks take a canoe up the tributaries of Mackenzie River in Canada from the first navigable miles of the Peace River in British Columbia and Alberta, north via the Slave River to the head of the Mackenzie in the Great Slave Lake and then on into the tundra of the Northwest Territories, and its outflow into the Beaufort Sea, far north of the Arctic Circle (something like 2500 miles from its source), *she did it with her two teenage daughters!* This to me seemed like an accomplishment on a par with climbing Everest. When my daughter was thirteen, I could only get her to sleep overnight in a tent if there was a hot shower in the campground. I'd tell you more about this book, except that I gave it to Gwen for Christmas this year, hoping to inspire her...

But for pure idiocy courage in taking a child into, shall we say, challenging circumstances, the Irish adventurer Dervla Murphy takes the cake. What I didn't know when I read the excerpt of *Muddling Through in Madagascar* in *Maiden Voyages* was that her companion, her fourteen year old daughter Rachel had previously accompanied her mother on a pony trek in Baltistan on the Kashmir plateaus, and at the age of nine and a half, had walked and ridden the route of the conquistadores in Peru — 1300 miles of high roads, trails, and pure cross-country guesswork. Ms. Murphy's story of that trip, *Eight Feet in the Andes* (two people plus one charming mule called Juana) is one of the most remarkable and honest accounts of misguided adventure I've encountered. There are actually a couple of places where she wonders whether she should have brought her child into such danger. Rachel is 24 or so now, and I'd really like to

ask what she thinks. Although, as she is the child of her mother, she'd probably reply that it was the most wonderful trip she took in her life. And given the descriptions of some of those sunrises over the endless Andean peaks, and the trails on the top of the world, I'd probably believe her.

Of course, the trail that is nearest and most accessible to me is the Pacific Crest Trail, which extends from Mexico to Canada 2600 miles along the ridges and reaches of the Sierra Nevada range through California, and the Cascade range in Oregon and Washington. About ten years ago, a young woman in her twenties, Cindy Ross, wrote *Journey on the Crest*, describing through-hiking the entire trail. I found the first part of this trip particularly impressive, as she tackled it alone, walking with a changing group of men and women who were on the trail at the time. Unlike the Appalachian Trail in the East, there are no trail huts on the PCT, the trail is occasionally only sporadically marked, and often requires a great deal of bushwacking and orienteering to get from one supply drop to the next. Like many hikers (all except the most gonzo speed-hikers, in fact) Cindy took two seasons to do the trail, starting at the Mexican border in May, and working her way up into the Sierra during the summer months when the snow (supposedly) was melting. Unfortunately, this was one of the years (much like the current one) where the snow pack was extremely deep, and she spent weeks snowshoeing and snow camping and learning how necessary a good relationship with your ice axe is. And apparently crying on the trail most of the first month. After that ordeal, the next season, completed with her new husband, seemed to me like a Sunday stroll.

Cindy, Dervla, Tracy and the others have been a great inspiration to me. I hope that, like them, I can challenge my internal and external wildernesses, and despite the fact that I was born too late, and too female, become a *real* explorer. But

There they find warm, succulent homes inside your mouth

Adventures in Secret Mental Cartography By Andy

Borders have always fascinated me.

When I was a small child, looking at a globe

or a political map, it struck me how countries or provinces were rendered in different colors. As a child of the sixties, I think I brought a nascent distrust for things which divide us by race, language, class and nationality with me when I began to attend school. This led me to openly wonder who drew those lines on the map, and who they were to tell someone they were Norwegian, and not Swedish. The problem eventually proved to be somewhat more complicated than I thought at first, but in my own rudimentary way, I know I was groping toward a vision of the world without borders. I can remember standing in Mrs. Howland's 2nd grade classroom at Mt. Pleasant Elementary in Morgantown, West Virginia, and elaborately explaining to several classmates that the different colors on the globe were just there to help us see the borders between countries — that if we walked over the border between the United States and Canada, the ground would not change from green to pink. In fact, I told them, having been to Canada that summer, I could assure them that aside from a strange proliferation of signs and books written in French, there was no immediately discernible difference between the two countries.

The problem was, no one seemed to be interested in this interpretation of geography. Astronauts had orbited the Earth, they had even gone to the moon and shown us the swirling white and blue face of our world, but the degree to which their

maybe not *that* extreme.

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observations pointed out the absurdity of the relentless partitioning of the planet had not quite trickled down to the second grade yet. Far from being encouraged to envision a world united by fundamental constants of humanity, we were given gold stars of praise for being able to identify nations by the shape of their borders alone. I far preferred it when we were assigned to create relief maps with flour paste and watercolors. When we were told to trace in the political boundaries with a pencil point as the finishing touch, I seized on the opportunity for some small rebellion. One of the grossly outdated geography texts on the classroom book shelf had a political map of Africa as it stood in the 1940, and I amused myself by tracing in the names of Bophuthatswanaland and Italian Somaliland. Unfortunately, Mrs. Howland did not notice my commentary, and the map, once dry, hung from the wall on a pair of sturdy brads for the rest of the year.

Eventually, I forgot all about the issue, and happily traced the same political borders for the next ten years. I did retain a fascination for border-jumping, however. On canoe trips in northern Minnesota, when traveling lakes and rivers along the border, I always took some perverse glee in crossing to the Canadian side to eat lunch, even though our use-permits expressly forbade this. I've had my picture taken with my feet in two different states on several occasions. I've never been to Four Corners, where Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado meet, but it's on my list of things to do. And I imagine it is very satisfying for natives and visitors alike to visit places that have been partitioned through most of their lives, like Berlin, and play

The party was going along splendidly — and then Morty opened the door to the wolverine display.

hopscotch past points that once bristled with machine guns and barbed wire.

I had occasion to ponder all of these things for the first time in years, just a few weeks ago. I have been walking for exercise for about the past six months, rambling all over the near-north side of Seattle, getting to know all the local neighborhoods in the process. One afternoon, I was striding along 45th street in the heart of Wallingford, when I encountered Mark Manning and his wife Getsu-Shin. They were in the neighborhood for some function that tied in with Marks' recent interest in Greek Orthodox religious music (or something like that; Mark's myriad of interests and hobbies are a constant reminder of the sort of intellectual adventurism that attracted me to fandom in the first place), and we exchanged pleasantries for a moment or two. Then Mark asked me, "What are you doing in this neighborhood? You live way over in Fremont, don't you?"

I was confused for a second. People do have a lot of pride in their neighborhoods in Seattle, but I was unaware that some restriction on travel between them had been imposed. As it turned out, Mark wasn't referring to that at all, but rather my stamina in crossing the valley between Wallingford and Fremont. Since he isn't all that familiar with my part of town, he had merely overestimated the distance I had to walk. But he had unwittingly touched a nerve as well. For there is a struggle raging for the soul of North Seattle, one which is completely invisible to the outside observer, but which could have incredibly negligible and short-reaching consequences. The question is, at the heart, where does one neighborhood begin and the other one end? You won't get beaten up for crossing into the wrong neighborhood here, but local chambers of commerce and neighborhood associations are eager to claim as much territory as they can, and point to as much neat stuff as possible when defining themselves.

We can start with my neighborhood, Fremont. It's largely defined by the passage of Fremont Avenue through its heart. We're only three blocks off of the avenue, so we are clearly in Fremont proper. But where does the neighborhood end? Fremont Avenue itself disappears as it enters the Woodland Park Zoo at 50th Street, and does not appear again for at least 12 blocks. Yet the Fremont Business council claims the zoo itself

as part of the neighborhood, as does the Phinney Ridge neighborhood association, which borders Fremont to the north. Fremont also has an ongoing conflict with Wallingford over the corridor between Aurora Avenue, Stone Way, Lake Union and 45th Street. In essence, neither group really wants the corridor, which is dominated by lower-income homes and apartments, and crumbling commercial property (as well as our friends Randy Byers and Denis Howard, but I'm sure this is only a coincidence). Fremont lists those blocks on its maps, but shows little worth going there for, even though Shorey's Books, a huge used book cavern that stood downtown for more than forty years, has moved into the area in the past year. Perhaps both groups are more comfortable maintaining the corridor as a buffer zone between them.

Because the western edge of Fremont is bordered by the precipitous back end of Phinney Ridge above 40th Street, and the former fish and scrap processing centers of far-eastern Ballard below 40th, this has traditionally been the one border that they did not have to worry about. But, with the construction of the new Hale's Ale brew-pub on Leary Way, and the appearance of other new businesses like the Office Max (thank you, Roscoe!), a brand new neighborhood consciousness has come into being on Fremont's western border. Both Fremont and Ballard, its Norwegian comrade to the west, would love to list these new businesses and trendy apartment buildings as part of their neighborhood assets. And as yet, the new region does not have enough self-identity to resist being claimed by either: in fact, most people refer to the area as either Freeland or Balmont, no doubt in an effort to defuse the smoldering tensions between the two established neighborhoods. President Carter may be called in to chair a summit on the subject this summer.

Fremont is an attractive case for this kind of speculation, because it is basically a rectangular piece of land, and fairly easy to define. Far more challenging is the Green Lake neighborhood, which, by virtue of conforming to the irregular shore line of the lake, is shaped like a big blob, penetrated by other neighborhoods at several points. A few months ago, I was walking along Green Lake Way at the base of Woodland Park, where the pitch-and-putt golf course splits the road in two. I noticed that a very attractive new sign, proclaiming "Welcome to Green Lake," had appeared on the traffic island between the two roads. I wondered, was this an effort to reclaim the often disputed area between 45th St. and the shore of the lake itself? While proximity to the lake would seem to suggest the neighborhood's iron-clad claim to the area, some people might have other ideas. Wallingford, not content to have largely consumed the Latona neighborhood to the east, so that it now stretches all the way from Aurora Avenue to Interstate Five, seems to be expanding north of 50th street, an area which Green Lake traditionally calls its own. The lack of a commercial center on the southern and eastern shore of the lake makes it difficult to see any defining identity to the area, in contrast to the north shore, which is studded with restaurants, a library, the only place in town that repairs mimeographs, and so forth.

The one element that really defines Green Lake as being different from Wallingford is that the streets of the former must conform to the irregular interruption which the lake causes in the city's grid plan. Streets around Green Lake travel at odd angles, and often seem to loop back on themselves, making it very hard to find your way around if you are not a local. This sort of natural defense is always the best protection for a



neighborhood identity, and there is nothing that makes you feel like a native as much as being asked for directions and being able to give them.

But in this maze-like tangle of streets to the south lies the next major challenge to the Green Lake Neighborhood Hegemony. Running diagonally north-west from 50th, streets like Keystone, Kirkwood and Kensington Place aim like an arrow into the heart of south Green Lake. They feature the kind of things that a neighborhood needs to coalesce around; local pubs, a laundromat, a school, and a produce market. Bordered to the northeast by Meridian, a neighborhood on a ridge that overlooks the lake, it is connected to the "rest" of Green Lake by a slender thread only three streets wide. All that is needed at this point is some raising of the local consciousness to create a new neighborhood, which I have provisionally named "Keystone." It would be an admittedly very small neighborhood, but it could be considerably enlarged by the seizure of that disputed area north of 50th that Green Lake is trying to hold on to. The real question is, does Green Lake honestly want to hold that area, or is it simply more concerned with slowing down the Wallingford behemoth? If it is the latter case, they might be best served by the presence of a tiny "free state" on their southern border, who would do all the work of holding off the invasion for them. And as Wallingford Avenue runs through the disputed region as far north as 57th Street, that claim is unlikely to ever be relinquished.

For a while, I was actually toying with the idea of finding a way to encourage this proto-neighborhood into existence. I could rent a Post Office box at the Wallingford station, and use it as the return address for a new neighborhood newsletter. With a certain amount of aggrieved moaning about how the city is unresponsive to the needs of the local population (points to press: dangerous intersections, suspected crack houses, stray dogs and cats, and the nuclear weapon of neighborhood relations, the potential placement of a halfway house or bus barn in the district, or even worse, the arrival of a registered sex-offend-

er), and reference to things like threats to the local watershed and how the streets are full of potholes (EVERY neighborhood's streets are full of potholes) I bet I could collect quite a few members for the Keystone-Kirkwood-Kensington Neighborhood association. Hell, I bet I could charge some modest annual dues and turn a profit on the deal. I eventually decided that I had at least a few slightly more worthy things to do with my time, but the prospect remains tantalizing.

There are dozens of other neighborhoods I have discovered on my walks, some of which I had never heard of before I stumbled on them. Even people that live there may have some trouble defining where Licton Springs is, for example. And imagine the misery to my feet when I discovered that there were not just one, but two neighborhoods which I had to cross to get from the Roosevelt district to Lake City. I was prepared to walk the ragged eastern reaches of Northgate, but who even knew there was an area called "Maple Leaf?" Of course, the huge gray-blue water tower with white maple leaves painted on the side might have been characterized as a clue by the less charitable, but remember, I just got here five years ago. And I haven't even touched on the characteristics of Greenwood, Haller Lake, Bitter Lake, Blue Ridge, Crown Hill, Loyal Heights and North Beach. After I discover a new neighborhood, there are hours of entertainment potential in the study of its characteristics, its people, and its borders. Even after all these years, I remain fascinated by the divisions which we use to define ourselves and others. Although this entire exercise may strike the reader as foolish, I feel like it is appropriate, and safer overall, to sublimate our inherent territoriality in this kind of loopy thought experiment. Who knows, had Hitler been a dedicated walker, might he have been satisfied to confine his hunger for conquest to writing the definitive guide to the districts of Munich, saving us all a lot of grief? The answer, I think, is obvious.



Under the revivifying influence of cherry bounce, the treaty proceeded.

Baseball in Boston by Victor M. Gonzalez

[The following piece was written in 1990 for a college creative essay class, about six months after the Boston worldcon. I couldn't help

but clean it up a little, but it's largely the same.]

There is an aspect of the air on the East Coast that distinguishes it from the rest of the country; a forever-industrialized big-city smell combined in the summers with torrid humidity and high temperatures. If blindfolded and put on a jet, I'm sure I could tell whether I was on the East Coast when I deplaned and got my first breath of unconditioned air. Not that the other senses wouldn't tell the same story: compared to the West Coast, the east simply burns with hyperactivity and tension. Human events, business or pleasure, indoors or out, are approached with a dedicated seriousness that we in the West either lack or disguise. I had the luck last summer, while in Boston for a different event [as mentioned above, the worldcon; can you tell this was written for a class?], to see the way that its residents treated the game of baseball. Boston's team, the venerable Red Sox, were to match up with the Seattle Mariners in Fenway Park.

Baseball is a strange sport. Rather than relying solely on muscle and quickness, it incorporates subtleties and precision of mind and body that have enchanted people for a century. For the most part, baseball players are required to perform more roles than the players of other sports; thus the gigantic image of

the dumb linebacker that so easily emerges from football is not found in baseball. In football, the players are assigned to either offense or defense — they very rarely help the team in both tasks. In baseball, with one minor exception that is still controversial, all players must do both. Perhaps it is this sense of finesse and well-roundedness that has drawn so many intellectuals to the game. A sparkling example, A. Bartlett Giamatti, formerly Yale University's President, gave up that highly prestigious position to become the National League Commissioner, a job he held for three years before ascending to the office of Commissioner of the entire league. Giamatti loved the game of baseball, especially the Boston Red Sox, whom he idolized from childhood.

Last year [the 1989 season] was not a great one for organized baseball; Bart's first task as commissioner was to deal with the Pete Rose gambling issue, which he did by expelling the man from baseball. He was more broken up by passing the sentence than Rose was in receiving it, to judge by their respective press conferences. That kind of arduous exercise was not what Giamatti signed up for; what had been a happy man was reduced to a stressed-out lump. The waves created by that debacle were just beginning to decay when I visited Boston.

Two of my friends had planned to see the game, and they invited me along. Both are baseball nuts: they can spend hours consulting and discussing thick statistical abstracts covering

seasons that are sometimes decades past; a friend of mine once wrote a poem describing me as I listened, interminably, to Tom and Donald [Weber and Keller, respectively]. In the final image of this poem, there is nothing left of me but a hat, sitting on a couch; the bored slouch had melted away in osmotic absorption.

I wasn't brought up a sports fan; my father, though athletic, always had a sarcastic comment for the idiocies of organized sports, and for years I maintained that attitude traditionally. But when I fell in with Tom, I was forced to find an interest, or be regularly reduced to headgear. It was an acquired taste, but now I enjoy watching the game. So when they asked me along, with the special incentive of seeing our hometown team compete, I gladly accepted.

The sultry air of Boston tasted good. It said to me, You are in the heart of America, the heart of industry, the heart of activity. I soaked it in as we made a half-hour trek from the hotel to Fenway, through Boston's downtown core. There were the usual numbers of punks, businesspeople and students. I was struck by the number of people interested in the game: we were coming in a couple hours early, and a mile from the stadium we saw the first hawkers of Red Sox paraphernalia; as we got closer their numbers increased, and when we reached the park the barking had become incessant (I was also struck by the pathetic nature of that job during the walk, but, alas, that belongs in another essay). By that time, we had to struggle through the milling throngs of fans, like flies swarming a dung-pile. We buzzed along, knowing that tickets might be scarce. We were hours early, and already the sidewalks overflowed onto the street, stopping automobile traffic.

We bought tickets and went to have dinner in the first place with open seating: a half-mile away. When we came back, the crowds were overwhelming — it felt like a city beach on the first hot day of summer, with the vendors selling, the patrons drinking and carousing, and, of course, the aromatic mugginess that remains so clear in my memory. It was entirely unlike baseball in Seattle; here we have a team that has never won more than half its games, and an average attendance that wouldn't fill one-fifth of the Kingdome [*this has changed*]. The Kingdome itself is enclosed and claustrophobic, with all the ambiance of a parking garage [*has not changed, but probably will before the turn of the century*]. The Mariners have had a history of failure, crisis, and collapse that will soon break records in itself, if it remains unarrested [*no bitterness there*]. In Boston, baseball is a way of life — enthusiastic would be too small a

word, unless perhaps preceded by aggressively. The stands were filled to the brim; we found our seats, good but distant, over the right field wall. Fenway's dimensions are atypical of modern stadiums: left field is very short, and would be very easy to hit home runs over, except that a tall player next to the wall measures only one-sixth what it does. They call the left field wall the Green Monster, and so it is; Fenway, however, is still considered a hitter's park.

Night was descending, and the brilliant lights that encircled us were illuminated. Moths, big ones by the look of them, could be seen in silhouette; above, drawing ellipses in the last light of dusk, were several orbiting seagulls. A light breeze had taken up as the heat of the day casually vaporized. I sat waiting for the first moment of the game, joining the crowd in fervent anticipation; Tom and Donald even stopped reciting statistics. Instead of hearing the National Anthem, we saw a picture appear upon the giant pointillistic scoreboard — a picture of Bart Giamatti, who, we were informed by the aged, distorted sound system, had died two hours earlier.

I had never heard the silence of fifty thousand people. Giamatti was Boston's hero; their team his love, and their affections emerged clearly in the epiphanic quiet, disturbed only by the squawk of a seagull, and the announcement of a moment of silence. Giamatti, after a life of enjoying and giving to baseball, and just two weeks after a painful but heroic handling of a disaster, less than five months after taking the top job, was dead of a heart attack at 51. The bugs continued their dance in the halogen glare; the seagulls did not leave their ecliptic — they would find seats after the game, and help clean up. The sky got darker, and presently the National Anthem was sung, the flag at half-staff. The game got underway.

Afterward, as we walked in the cooling air, commenting on the Mariners unexpected victory, the hawkers still hawking and the crowds thicker than ever, I caught that scent of East Coast industry again. I reflected on the event I had witnessed, learning something, perhaps, about devotion to baseball — or devotion to anything. I felt a little hollow inside as I heard the litany of the vendors, but even those shallow messages remain a part of the gestalt that any hot summer night in any eastern city will recall in a sniff.

[A note for the record: Steve Swartz, now a Seattle fan, also saw this game with us, and has written about it.]



And that's right, Ozzie will be pulling double-duty . . .

Postcards From the UK by Bruce Townley

During October of 1996 I took part in a fourteen-day-plus guided package tour of the Southern part of England. This was my first-ever trip to that part of the world. What follows is a summary of my responses to the sceptered isle. It is based on my more or less immediate attempt to pigeonhole what my then somewhat jet-lagged brain retained of that experience, a series of e-mails sent out shortly after I got back. This virtual writing grew from postcards sent back to my buddies stateside. At least in this zine version of these thoughts and impressions you don't have to muddle through my cryptic handwriting or the misspellings and mis-attributions of the e-mails (I promise that there'll be an entirely new set of mis-attributions).

At least two group members utilized electronic assistants, mini-tape recorders, to log site and date data so when they got

back home there wouldn't be a significant percentage of apparently subjectless "mystery" photos (which can be interesting for reasons wholly other than the original impulse to photograph). Not wanting to be burdened with cameras and their attendant gizmonic aids I, instead, glommed onto fistfuls of postcards at nearly every opportunity presented. Some of these I sent back to the states. Most I kept for my own amusement and memory enhancement. The best thing about postcards is that they pretty much always come with a caption (which may or may not overlap with your memories).

Early on in the tour Mark Twain's phrase about the US and the UK as 'two cultures separated by a common language' was cited. Only towards the end of the trip did I find out why I kept on getting funny looks when I asked the publican drawing my pint for a *napkin* to blot off my mustache the precious droplets of cask-conditioned real ale. Turns out that's what Brits wrap

around the bottom of their infants (probably most commonly referred to as a *nappy*). A *serviette* is what they use to dab excess ale off of their upper lips. Also, apparently *serviette* is the term used in some other European country (Italy, I think) for *sanitary napkin*. Sheesh.

Almost enough to drive one away from drink.

Postcard: A series of four cards representing selections from the Tate Gallery's collection of Francis Bacon paintings. Went to the Tate fully expecting to see works by homegrown surrealist Bacon, the visionary William Blake and the visionary (in their own way — having to do with the *process* of vision) railway paintings of J. M. W. Turner. Every single Bacon piece was "on loan" (apparently traveling in a show to other museums but where, huh?). The wing that usually held the Blake paintings and prints had its doors locked, no explanation available. Looked around in the Turner wing and could see a single locomotive in the otherwise comprehensive selection. Not complaining, mind you. This left plenty of other fabulous works of the Modern Period to admire, including Max Ernst's *The Elephant of Celebes* (looks like something offa an old *Fantasy and Science Fiction* magazine cover) and Epstein's *Torso from The Rock Drill* (looks like something offa an old *Analog* cover).

British food was surprisingly good. Admittedly I dined mostly in prettyfancy hotels and shunned seaside stands offering jellied eels and steamed whelks as well as the dreaded black pudding on the otherwise savory and groaning breakfast buffets. Only saw Spotted Dick on one pub's menu and (wisely, I think) opted for the prawn salad sandwich instead. Did find myself getting a little home-sick for drippy, greasy Grilled Steak SuperBurritos from San Francisco's Mission District's Taqueria La Cumbre, though. Fish and Chips did go a long way to filling the void (fresh scones with clotted cream and a pot 'o tea were also a peak moment in the charming town of Romsey in Hamp-

Postcard: It pictures the 1963 brochure illustration for the F.X.4 Model Austin Taxicab. The card bears the rather stern legend of: *All taxis operating in London must be constructed in accordance with Metropolitan Police specifications and comply with their regulations*. This is redolent of the London cab ride experience (although it's no longer the exact same all over ebonic look, a good number of the cabs are coated with a super-graphic, eye-catching paint scheme that advertises an unfamiliar brand of throat lozenges or somesuch). There's always that same omnipresent neutral smell, not as aggressive as a hospital's sanitation but as undeniable. There's also the comforting sensation of the vehicle's boxiness, of being enfolded in a steel womb, guarded from the hurtling, jostling street traffic outside. The London cabbies themselves also guarantee a sense of security, what with their vigorously tested and certified knowledge of the Metropolis' twisty byways. One cabby I had assured me that taxi deregulation was imminent. Just don't do it!

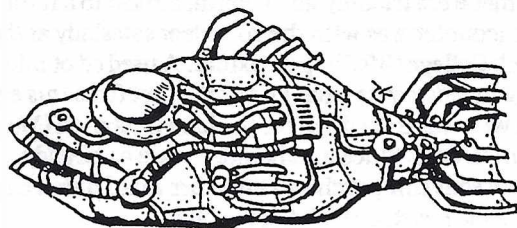
shire).

The friends that I've talked to since I've gotten back have asked me questions like: Did you get to see the Victoria and Albert Museum or the great Rembrandt self-portrait at Kenwood House in Hampstead Heath? My answer, unfortunately, is no. Hey, London's a pretty big town, y'know.

Well, I'm intending on going back so mebbe I'll fit those suggestions in NEXT TIME. As it was my peak London experiences were the London Transport Museum (thanks Candi), the aforementioned Tate, the British Film Institute, a sunset Thames ferry ride and the Princess Louise and British Museum pubs. Speaking of pubs, there's something ineffable and almost untranslatable about 'em. I mean, we've got more or less the same thing over here, you'd think, bars that serve up various potent potables in a soothing atmosphere. But, y'know, it just ain't the same. I think Rod, our redoubtable tour guide, got the closest to it when he pointed out that the Brits tend to live in fairly narrow quarters, housing that's difficult to make space in which to entertain friends in. So the local takes on the role of a sitting/living room that's not in your house. This was shown by the fact that on my last night in the metropolis I was sharing a pint of real ale with my folks in a local near the Thames and in walks this dame with a tiny Jack Russell terrier tucked under one arm and a hulking German Shepherd that came up to her hips leashed to her other arm. Needless to say her and her pooches came right in and made themselves at home.

The scale of Britain seems rather like that of Disneyland, that is, about five-sixths full size. I guess the explanation is, other than the obvious one that it was constructed by an ancient race of well-meaning Munchkins, that the UK is contained within the circumscribed margins of an island. I live in a town that is confined to a peninsula so I know first-hand how this works. This is added to the fact that the UK has organically matured over the centuries (from way before Roman times and the advent of the bus or motor-coach) rather than being slapped down in less than a hundred years as it is with most gridded-out US neighborhoods and burgs. This still does little to explain *why* every furshlugginer street I walked on in London and Bristol changed its name *every third block*, crikey!

Postcard: A rather cheery editorial-type cartoon/illustration from the Imperial War Museum of a statuesque hausfrau (oops, I mean *housewife*) stepping up to A. Hitler and pasting him with a big, juicy slap across the mush. The caption is: *Just A Good Afternoon's Work*. The woman has stenciled on the lower hem of her dress: *Part-Time War Worker*. Herr Hitler doesn't appear to have any messages written on his uniform.



Oh, bad, wicked, naughty Zoot!

Mr. James K. Polk, Napoleon of the stump!

Found that such pop-cult touchstones as songs by the Bonzo Dog Band ("My Pink Half of the Drainpipe" in particular), XTC and the Sex Pistols and the humor of Monty Python, Petter Cook & Dudley More and P.G. Wodehouse really got me more than halfway down the road to appreciating the Brit mind-set. The downside of this was that I kept on expecting to see John Cleese in respectably aggressive drag popping out of the front door of one of the thousands of semi-detached homes we drove by and that such similar shortcuts to understanding of our mental condition would be the work of the Three Stooges and the Cramps. I'm not saying that this is a *bad* thing, mind you.

The scope of London's Underground transportation system is startling, nearly unfathomable (though probably not such a big deal to, say, a native New Yorker). It, too, is an artifact of an organic process, not something that was laid down all at once (like what they're trying to do with LA's subway). Even so, my brief encounter left me with a warm feeling. Highlights include the wooden slat-work flooring of certain trains (the stations used to be equipped with wooden escalators which tended to make a cheery fire, I'll bet), the omnipresent non-representational, but seductively comprehensible schematic map of the system, and the unlooked-for, delightfully charming quality of some of the stations' names (e.g.: Bakerloo, Elephant And Castle).

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Postcard: This card shows an 1873 placard advertising "The Celebrated Auxiliary Steam-Ship" S. S. *Great Britain's* departure for Melbourne. The stated purpose of our tour was to examine British maritime history. The fallout was that I got to see the first iron-hulled ocean-going screw-driven vessel which, as it turned out, was designed and constructed by one of my heroes, a driven character named Isambard Kingdom Brunel (a small man physically, his name's almost bigger than he was). Brunel was responsible for the mammoth *Great Eastern*, envisioned as a passenger liner on the Great Britain-Australia route but which ended up laying the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable. He also devised several critical early UK railway projects, including an "atmospheric" rail line that depended on pneumatic tubes for its motive force (needless to say, it was just a little *too* ahead of its time). I didn't realize that Brunel was in charge of the *Great Britain's* construction until the site's quite knowledgeable guide told us. Welp, live and learn.
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Guide books warn that British people can be reserved and somewhat unapproachable. I, indeed, found the opposite true. Most folks I met were friendly and helpful, almost to a fault. My coldest encounter was with the volunteer saleslady at the Christ Church College Gift Shop in Oxford. A used cd of mid-victorian organ music was what I wanted to get from this elderly matron who was a dead spit for Graham Chapman (*Monty Python* again) in drag. Since my shoulder bag was already crammed with souvenir purchases I told her that I didn't really need the bag. She insisted on giving me one

in a rather sharpish tone. I resignedly answered "Okay, suit yourself," to which she replied in an even more lofty manner: "I'm not suiting myself, sir! There are rules you know, sir!"

Did she think that the Oxford dons were gonna wrassle me to the ground and perform a body-cavity/strip search on yours truly? I got her back when I checked the jewelbox whilst dawdling in some old church nearby and found that it was empty, no cd. She was then helpful and contrite. I tried not to turn the knife too hard when I pointed out that maybe she should be a little more closely acquainted with her stock. There are *rules* you know.

The second encounter of the cold kind also involved a stiffish female. This one was a severely tweedy member of the gentry, equipped with a booming, well-smoked verbal technique well suited to penetrating the din of the British Museum. She was our guide to the almost limitless Brtsh Msm and didn't care who knew it. Certainly she knew her subject backwards and forwards and was a rather fine, if somewhat intimidating, speaker. Part way through our tour of the joint we stopped in front of a somber, basaltic slab of rock, the top side of which was crowded with three distinct written sections. This, of course, was the Rosetta Stone, the key that unlocked the enigma of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. The graphics displayed with the stone downplayed the primary French role in its translation (surprised?). Somebody in our group (my Dad, I think) asked where the real Stone was, since this thing in front of us *had* to be a model. To which the guide said in an only slightly withering tone: "Wel-l-l-l, it wouldn't do much good to have a *fake* Rosetta Stone, now would it?" Huh, guess not. If I'd known about it at the time, I'd've asked her about the so-called "Townley Room" in the Museum's basement. Only read about this accumulation of Renaissance impedimenta in the guidebook after we got back to the hotel, all cultured out.

Guidebooks of inestimable worth: Paul Theroux's *Kingdom by the Sea* (thanks, Candi, for the recommendation) and the Dorling Kindersly *London Guide* (as well as the *Rough Guide to Britain* cited below).

Stuff you'll just have to ask me about:

- How my mom nearly got crushed by the undertow byofhe crowd of get-a-life losers gawking at Michael Jackson who attended the same performance of *Oliver!* that we did.

- Why I found the stones at Avebury even more impressive than Stonehenge (hey, I'm not much of one for mysticism but that place *did* feel special). That organic real ale served up at the cafe in Avebury was just as impressive as the stones outside (though tapping the keg it was in took *almost as long* as it did to carve one of the blamed sarsens, I'm guessing).

- Favorite heated towel rack (omnipresent in British hotel rooms along with those trouser press gizmos).

- My fave restaurant name (ok, here it is anyway, The Texas Embassy for a Tex-Mex place in London, near Picadilly Circus).

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Postcard: "The Cerne Abbas Giant [described in *The Rough Guide* with the delectably scholastic phrase "enormously priapic" — how uplifting] - Dorset, cut into the chalk of a Dorset hillside over 2,000 years ago this proud giant dominates the landscape. Some women still believe that sleeping with the giant is a cure for infertility." Proud? I dunno, I think he's just *happy* to see us!
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