

TRAP DOOR





Issue #6, December 1986. Edited and published by Robert Lichtman, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen CA 95442. Send all trade fanzines and letters of comment to this address. Assistant editors: Jeanne Bowman, Donna Nassar and Paul Williams. Founding members: fwa. You are receiving this fanzine because we sent it to you. We are interested in The Usual: fanzines in trade (all-for-all, please; we do), letters of comment, written and/or artistic contributions, and other forms of showing support. On a one-time-only basis, \$2.50 in cash or US stamps. A red "x" by your mailing address on the back cover means this is your final issue unless...

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I BEGAN READING SF when I was very, very young, almost as soon as I could read at all. The first sf I read was in comic strip form in the newspapers. I read Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. I used to look forward to the Sunday paper when they would be in color. On the radio--this was before TV--I listened to "Space Patrol" and "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet." When I was about six I sent away for a "cosmic smoke gun" that was being offered on "Space Patrol." It was bright red plastic with molded "futuristic" lines. One loaded it with some powder that came with it that might have been corn starch or possibly talcum powder--I don't know for sure, but I am pretty certain it was not cocaine--and then when one pulled the trigger, a puff of white "smoke" came out and it made a soft whooshing sound. Hot stuff for a six-year-old! During those same years, when I went to the movies for the Saturday matinees, the highlight for me was not the twenty cartoons, but the sci-fi (they were definitely not sf) serials like "Flash Gordon" and "Superman." (Does anybody else remember the "mole men"?) This all took place, as I said above, when I was around five or six years old and was living in Cleveland, Ohio, a town which was later to become famous as the home of Howard the Duck and the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame.

By the time I reached nine or ten, I began reading hardcover sf from the public library. I read the early Heinlein and del Rey juveniles, stuff like Marooned on Mars. Somehow, I didn't notice at that age that prozines existed. When I went to the newsstand, it was to Murray's Liquors about a mile from my fanciest residence at 6137 South Croft Avenue, Los Angeles 56. Murray had a large selection of comic books and would permit me to sit there for hours on end reading as many of them as I wanted. This was in the pre-Comics Code days, so I happened into this level of reading just in time to see and voraciously consume the likes of Weird Science, Weird Fantasy and the irredoubtable Mad in its comic book form. In exchange for this unlimited reading privilege I would, upon request, do things like haul out empty boxes and stock the soda pop in the cooler. (The latter was a special treat during the hot Los Angeles summers.) I never bought any of these things--my parents would never had approved; during the same time period they had a longterm sub for me to Walt Disney's



DOORWAY

Comics & Stories. But I spent many an afternoon after school reading and reading and reading, and the science fiction and/or weird/horror/fantasy stuff was by far my favorite. During this same period, classic movies like "The Day the Earth Stood Still" and "Forbidden Planet" showed up at the theaters. Naturally I went to see them all. I was being primed for my life in sf. The mass culture was providing this sort of mind food just as I was becoming intellectually ready for it.

A few years later I hit my early teen years and discovered magazine science fiction. Galaxy and F&SF were my early favorites. asf at that age was too dry, too scientific. In the classic pattern, I read all the available current issues and then began haunting the used book and magazine shops. At first I hit up the local stores and then, as my appetite expanded beyond what they could provide, I branched out around the area to book store after book store and soaked up what they had to offer. I finally discovered what was for me the Ultimate Used Bookstore for my budding sf interests. In far off exotic (and seedy even then) East Hollywood I stumbled across Larsen's, which no longer exists, but in those days of the early and middle '50s had thousands of pulp sf magazines from (mainly) the 1940s. It also had other sf magazines and paper and hardcover books, but the pulps were the big attractions.

Thus it was that, in the same way I had previously sat at Murray's avidly consuming comic books (a habit I had largely discarded with age and the advent of the Comics Code which made comic books far more boring and insipid than they had been pre-Comics Code), I would spend hours at Larsen's perusing the science fiction, and especially the likes of the old Amazings, Startling Stories and Thrilling Wonder Stories. It was in these magazines that I first discovered the existence of something called "fandom." But it was the fandom of the '40s, of Sarge Saturn and Rog Phillips' "Club House" column in Amazing. I read with fascination of "fanzines" with titles like SPACEWARP, VAMPIRE and SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES. Of fans like Con Pedersen, Jimmy Taurasi and Art Rapp. Of the "Torcon" and the "NFFF." I wondered a lot about those fans and fanzines and fannish events, but it never occurred to me that something like that could have been happening in the present time.

Around this time I got into early and fairly feeble attempts at writing science fiction and had shipped off batches of these short stories (emphasis on "short") to, mostly, Galaxy and F&SF. As one might expect, this netted me a fulsome harvest of rejection slips. (One of the stories I considered at the time not quite as horrible as the general run of them appears in PSI-PHI #1, my first fanzine, and those of you with good memories and/or extensive fanzine collections can remember and/or check it out. You will not see it in a "Best of PSI-PHI" should such a collection ever come into being.) After some months of this, I began to experience the frustration that every young would-be writer must undergo and endure. I wanted to get published in the worst of ways and was impatient with myself for my limited sf writing skills.

With this knowledge of something called "fandom" that I'd read about in the old '40s prozines coupled with the Urge to Write, it can only be chalked up to karma, or fate, or whatever, that sometime during the summer of 1958 I went to a local newsstand and the October 1958 issue of Imagination Science Fiction, edited by William Hamling, caught my attention. It was probably the cover blurb that proclaimed "Special Science Feature: What We Will Find On Venus" that captured my neo-cosmic mind's attention. The cover was one of those spaceships and asteroids covers that doesn't quite grab you. It was primitive and uninspiring, nothing like the covers that dazzled me each month on Galaxy and F&SF. Hamling's editorial stated that "juvenile delinquency was on the rise" and that annoyed me, because I was something of a borderline juvenile delinquent myself, despite my habits of reading and writing. The other magazines I read at the time were Dig, the original hip magazine for teenagers (especially in its early issues) and various magazines about the budding new musical phenomena, "rock 'n roll." (What I did with my money back around then, so that my reading habits involved using libraries and "hanging out" at bookstores and newsstands, was buy 45s. Although I was a card carrying member of the "Elvis Presley Haters of America" (I'd sent off for my membership card after reading about the club in Dig), I bought Elvis' first hit 45, "Heartbreak Hotel," when it came out. Other favorites at that time in my life were Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly, the Coasters, and the like. In the stereotypical way of the American '50s, when I wasn't

reading and writing, I drove my parents up the wall playing my 45s and listening to my radio at considerable decibels.) The article on Venus was pretty dull stuff. I'd read more interesting speculation elsewhere. What really grabbed me about that issue was a column, tucked away at the very rear of the magazine and in even smaller type than the stories. This column was called "Fandora's Box" and it was written by Robert Bloch.

Not only did the column mention fandom in its very first paragraph ("It still exists!" I exclaimed) but it went on in ways that were very interesting to a would-be writer like myself and which (with apologies to Mr. Bloch for not asking permission first) I want to quote at some length here:

"Serious critics of American letters (viz, those who get paid for writing their opinions) often complain about the lack of freedom available to writers today who seek publication in commercial media. On the basis of personal experience and observation I'm inclined, however reluctantly, to agree.

"The writer of short stories is confronted on almost every hand (most of us have two) with editorial taboos. I do not speak solely of the problems of 'good taste' or censorship, but of the myriad prohibitions based on commercial considerations--advertisers must not be offended, various racial and religious groups must not be offended, certain professions must not be offended, etc. And the so-called 'little' or 'literary' magazines which make a great show of disavowing such restrictions have elected, in turn, to set up aesthetic canons of their own which in effect prohibit auctorial freedom in terms of form and viewpoint. ...

"The writer of non-fiction is even more impeded in his efforts to attain magazine publication today. It is an odd irony that while most readers are at least vaguely aware of certain 'formulas' governing the production of short stories, few of them seem to realize that even more rigid formulations do exist to control so-called 'factual' material. Even when a general magazine makes a great show of presenting a 'controversial' article which purports to give both sides of a question (and it's odd, come to think of it, that most vital issues are supposed to have only two sides) you can usually depend on a definite bias being exhibited. Prevailing political, social, economic, legal and theological doctrines are seldom if ever controverted.

"In this connection, one of the most interesting phenomena has been the development of the 'expert.' While the ordinary citizen may be polled or partially quoted in an 'interview,' his actual opinions seldom find a place in print... Only the 'authority' or the celebrity seems to be given access to an expression of his viewpoint.

"Now where does this leave the average citizen? In most cases, it leaves him standing in the bar, exercising his much-vaunted 'freedom of speech' by sounding off to the bartender.

"But you and I have certain advantages denied most writers of fact or fiction, and nearly all of our fellow-citizens. We have the fanzines.

"Even the most militant and self-consciously 'liberal' little magazines that are published professionally devote most of their efforts to speaking *for* the average man--they seldom, if ever, allow him to speak for himself. But in the fanzines, almost everyone has a voice. If editors and publishers exercise their rightful privilege of selection and refuse to print your personal opinions--you can always start a fanzine of your own and speak your piece.

"Now it so happens that I'm highly prejudiced in favor of this business of freedom of communication and self-expression. And for this reason, I'm inclined to be highly appreciative of fanzines and the role they play... Even at their worst, fanzines are outlets for individual outlook, and anyone who believes in freedom of speech cannot fail to realize that the lowly fanzine is highly important...

"Fandom has its arch-reactionaries and its ultra-liberals, it has its puritans and its hedonists, its avowed intellectuals and its militant slobs. Within the field, the pragmatists clash with the occultists, the idealists with the cynics.... The honest intensity of self-expression here is singularly refreshing in an age where a few thousand professional 'spokesmen' and paid publicists apparently monopolize the commercial media and speak to and for 170,000,000 citizens like ourselves who never get a chance to talk back.

"In case you happen to think I'm making a big production out of all this, just think back for yourself and try to remember. When was the last time you read a book or an article on religion which wasn't by a professional clergyman? When did you read an extended opinion on satellites, Sputniks, nuclear warfare, civilian defense or other projects which could

conceivably affect the welfare of all of us which wasn't written by a government official, a high-ranking military man, or an 'important' scientific 'authority'?...

"The answer, I'm afraid, is that you just haven't, and aren't likely to, unless you read amateur press publications such as our own fanzines. In an age where everybody with an idea or a product to sell seems so anxious to find out 'what people think,' it's almost ludicrous to realize that nobody is willing to let the people express themselves freely and openly except in the obscure pages of obscure and privately-printed periodicals...

"Our own prejudices and attitudes may be assailed by those who uphold opposing viewpoints; our sensibilities may be offended by what we may privately believe to be juvenile, vulgar, or even pathological outpourings; we may deplore the feuds and the use of fanzines for the pursuit of private power-drives. Still, in the broad analysis, today's fanzines taken as a whole offer the best exemplar of 'democratic give and take' in an era which badly needs more of the same.

"If the time ever comes when nobody is allowed to talk except the 'experts,' then God help us all."

Well, my 15-year-old self was quite taken with all of this, and I immediately shipped off a couple of sticky quarters to obtain copies of OOPSLA #24 ("has always won a high rating in fanzine polls. Calkins is one of the best editors in the field.") and GRUE #29 ("If you don't know GRUE, you aren't a fan--but chances are you will be after reading an issue like this. Maybe not a science fiction fan, but a GRUE fan, anyway. It's the ever-living end."). And thus the die was cast. My life as a fan in the active sense began shortly thereafter. (Publication of this issue of TRAP DOOR marks my 28th annish.) But that's a topic for some other time.

I hope Robert Bloch will forgive me for reprinting so much of his column, but it affected me strongly then and, quite frankly, still seems entirely relevant to fandom today. It seems to me that what he's discussing in this column parallels in a lot of ways the discussion that was going on in the earlier issues of TRAP DOOR regarding art and literature and the differences between writing for a large audience and a small one. John Harvey in PULP #2 made a case for fanzines as folk art and his points were pretty well taken except for when he said that mimeography was somehow more "pure" than photocopying (it has, he said, "a far greater power to show the editor's personality behind the pages. Working within the constraints of an imperfect media brings out the true skills of the fan editor as Artist."). Excuse me while I throw up, but that's pretty elitist and, for me, beside the point. It simply sidesteps the issue of individuality in the form of what sort of editorship the publisher of a fanzine choose to exercise and condemns all those who don't mimeograph, no matter how excellent their publication may be. The issues of free expression are far more important and should not be constrained by reproduction methods. Let a thousand fanzines bloom!

"HOW LONG HAS IT been since your last issue?"

This question reminds me of times when I'm visiting a friend who doesn't have to get up the next morning as early as I do. It'll get late and I'll reflexively lift my arm to take a peek at my watch. "Mighod," I'll begin to exclaim, "it's..." But before I can finish my sentence, my friend will lean over and urge me, "Please don't say. I don't want to know." Since I've known (and miss) that place myself, I always cooperate. It makes leaving more pleasurable for both of us to have it be so timeless. So, too, the time between issues of a fanzine is timeless. How long has it been since my last issue? Don't even ask.

"What's happening with fandom these days?"

The times is changing. In the early parts of this decade, when I and many other long-term gafflates suddenly re-emerged on the scene, it seemed to me that a new fannish consensus, or "gestalt," was in the works. Interestingly enough, this era was given a strong impetus by both Ted White (with the commencement of publication of PONG) and Richard Bergeron (with the publication of the Willis issue of WARHOON). (I hope both gentlemen will forgive me for naming them together in the same sentence.) Old time "fannish fanzine fandom" (incorrectly decried by some as "6th fandom fandom") as I and the others had known from the '50s and early '60s seemed to be making a comeback. It did, and it flourished for several years before it began to disintegrate with the feuding that commenced in 1984, in which feuding the same individuals who helped the era to start were to play leading roles in its

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CONSULTING FOR Physics International in the late 1960s, I tried to think of novel ways to use relativistic electron beams of high currents--over a hundred thousand amperes. There aren't many practical uses, it turns out. But somebody suggested that relativistic particles might age ordinary matter. I suspect this was based on a misunderstanding of the time dilation effect. Enthusiasm was high, however, and we did the experiment. We bombarded a bottle of screw-cap wine with several bursts, being careful not to shatter the bottle. Drinking it at about 7 p.m., without having eaten lunch, I would have sworn that the electrons improved the bouquet. Subsequent studies did not confirm this result, though.

ON MY FIRST summer job after getting my Bachelor's Degree, I had to modify a piece of experimental apparatus at the Naval Research Laboratory in Corona, California. I studied the maze of wires and arcane devices carefully, deciding precisely which moves to make in which order, so that I minimized the risk of getting things mixed up. Gingerly, I removed a part and cut a wire. There was a loud boom, sparks, and all the lights went out. Wiser heads came running. I had never noticed that the device was still plugged in, and I had shorted out all the high-voltage lines in the building. I was lucky to be alive. Thereafter I placed less faith in degrees.

REPEATEDLY, WHILE editing papers of mine, the editors of scientific journals strike out "I think" and substitute "It is hypothesized that," replace "I found" with "The experiment showed," and so on. They won't let you own up to your own findings. They hate "I" and love the passive voice.

I WAS ONCE paid to settle an argument over whether the moon was round.

I WAS VISITING the Very Large Array radio telescope to do research, high on an ancient lake bed in the mountains of New Mexico, when talk of radio astronomy lapsed and we began discussing baseball. It developed that an interesting game was being played in Cleveland. Bets were placed on the outcome. Within a few minutes, the astronomers had swiveled one of the massive radio dishes toward the right spot on the horizon and made some minor adjustments. There, on the data processing screen, the game leaped into life. It was stimulating to watch, knowing that the signal from

Cleveland had been picked up from some random carom and amplified a billion-fold by a system costing a hundred million dollars.

I KNOW A physicist who came into an office where five men were arguing about a mathematical point. Nobody could do the calculation in question. The physicist studied it for a long moment, and then announced that the quantity to be evaluated was probably between five and ten. Later, a laborious numerical calculation proved him right; it was 8.6. As time went by the physicist came to accept as true the reputation this incident gave him. He used it to get him a promotion in the firm's research group. Using the same canny, quick judgment, he quickly made the company a million dollars in new grants. Then he very quickly lost five million.

IN 1982, IN Los Angeles, I met a woman who did not remark that being an astronomer must be very interesting.

POPULARIZING SCIENCE is not as hard as many say. Carl Sagan has proved that it is a craft, using a taste and instinct for the gaudy. It can be fun. Still, I wonder how many would do it if there were no money in it.

I VISITED THE USSR for two weeks in 1984 as a guest of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The scientists were very cordial. They didn't seem to have the drinking capacity that legend described, but maybe, coming from California, I'm used to a high standard. The only time my hosts seemed disturbed was when I produced a camera from a coat pocket while visiting a laboratory outside the city of Karkhov. I hadn't remembered to leave it at the hotel and it had never occurred to them to ask for one at the gate. I left the camera in their reception hall and thought nothing more of it. In Moscow a few days later I took a cab back to the Academy of Sciences Hotel late at night. The driver spent the entire trip trying to exchange black market rubles for dollars. His rate of exchange got more and more generous as we approached the hotel. I said no and handed him three rubles for the fare. He gave it back, displaying a wallet containing thousands of rubles, saying "I deal only in big sums." His English was perfect. I then noticed that this "taxi" did not have a meter or a driver's ID, though it had the usual taxi markings on the outside. I got out hurriedly and walked toward the hotel. A man in a military uniform materialized from nowhere and began talking to the driver, gesturing at me, clearly angry. From inside the hotel I watched them talk, still glancing toward me, until finally the man walked away scowling and the cab drove off. The next day, my Soviet colleagues were puzzled by the incident. They discounted my suspicion that it was a set-up. A visiting scientist would not be the target of such a thing, they said. I still thought it a bit odd. When I returned to my hotel that night I found that my bags had been searched and all my exposed film was gone.

OCCASIONALLY I publish novels, though I spend most of my time on research and teaching. While I have never had anyone accuse me of lifting their ideas and using them in stories, one writer warned me in no uncertain terms about taking ideas from his stories and publishing them in the scientific journals.

GENERALLY, SCIENTISTS are better at sex than they are at money. They don't talk much about either.

THE HARDEST nationality to deal with in science is the Greeks. They often deny any validity to dissenting views, insist they must be right, and

scorn other theories. Apparently this is the last surviving remnant of the methods which gave us the achievements of Archimedes.

NOT MANY SCIENTISTS drink to excess--there is nothing harder to do while loaded than mathematics--but several very prominent physicists were alcoholics. George Gamow died of it.

I WAS ONCE engaged to assess the movements of a man struck in the eye by a .22 pistol slug. I determined that the body would have moved about a millimeter backward at most. In any case the slug's momentum could not explain why the body was found yards from the spot of the shooting. For this and the testimony to back it up I was paid by the District Attorney's office over a thousand dollars. It turned out later that the body had been moved by the victim's relatives to frame the defendant.

AT ONE OF OUR great accelerator labs, in the 1970s, rivalry among experiments was high. One team kept a TV camera trained on their high energy experiment, so they could use waldos to move equipment around. Late one night, two operators turned on the camera and saw the leader of another experiment enter their area, unzip, and pee with obvious relish all over their equipment. I was told this story while watching the leader himself give the American Physical Society an invited talk about his work. A few years later he won the Nobel Prize.

A SCIENTIST in fiction typically confronts a big question which has a decisive answer, whereas in real life there is always too much data, too many possibilities.

OF ALL THE physicists I have known, most did well on their qualifying examinations for the doctorate. This confirms the general methods physics departments use. But several of the most brilliant and original physicists I know did poorly at such exams, and two never took them at all. Freeman Dyson never even bothered to get his PhD.

WHILE I WAS a research scientist at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Livermore, California, I met a man who worked on nuclear weapons. He was acutely concerned about radiation hazards, more so than even the scrupulous monitors at the Lab. He thought that cosmic rays contributed an unsuspected health hazard. These high energy protons, constantly sleeting down on us, might make occasional cancerous cells. So he put heavy lead shielding in the attic above his bedroom, reasoning that for eight hours a day he and his wife would be spared this risk. I heard years later that one day the timbers in the ceiling gave way and the massive stuff crushed the bed. Luckily, nobody was home. I haven't heard whether he has replaced it.

I ONCE CHAIRED a doctoral review examination, after reading carefully through the student's file, only to find in the examination room that the file had omitted an important fact. The student did not speak English.

PROFESSORS EVERYWHERE deplore exams as an archaic technique, a fossil that recalls little red schoolhouses and memorizing the capitals of all the states. Regular progress and daily diligence matter more, they say, not an hour spent compressing months of learning onto a few sheets of paper. Far better to stress homework, classroom participation, term papers and the professor's judgment. None of these sentiments keep the professoriat from devising exams which cause sleepless cram sessions, caffeine addiction and bleak despair. The challenge is to find problems which will furrow any

student's brow while still being perfectly defensible as straightforward, clear, and illustrating a central topic thoroughly explored in class. It is hard work, but rewarding. And surely, several thousand dazed and tired young men and women are signs of a job well done.

WHEN SOMEONE knocks on my office door I am generally sure they fall into one of three categories: students from my courses, graduate students of mine working on thesis problems, or sf fans. The fans are fun, though they jar you out of your daily mindset with a centrifugal swirl. But occasionally the hesitant figure on the other side of the door will tentatively tug into view not a misgraded problem set, or a knotty calculation, or even the ritual paperback to autograph. Sometimes he or she fetches forth a frayed old fanzine (once, even, a VOID), and whispers "Are you the same person who...?" and with an oddly pleasant rush I remember that I am still, and despite the mad fraying forces of the world, a fan.

--Greg Benford

DOORWAY (continued from page 5)

demise. We are now in a transitional period with no clear focus, as I see it. If the fandom we are in now has any center, it's perhaps in the UK where the next Worldcon is going to be and where the highest preponderance of literate and entertaining fanzines is currently appearing. I sense no such focus in the US where fannish fanzine fandom is spotty and widely scattered and where clubzines seem the order of the day. I see some of these, and they are not about the same fandom I inhabit, by and large.

"What part of Last Fandom are we in now, Meyer?"

Fandom goes on, but it's worth noting that the second half of 1986 has seen about a third fewer fanzines show up at my door than the first half did. (Not counting apa mailings, of course.) Like as I may to rationalize it by saying it all has to do with the increasing costs of paper and postage, that doesn't cut it as an explanation. Are we in such a post-literate culture in the US and elsewhere that not enough new literate people come along? Are we too ingrown and no fun, as some would have it. Or is this just a natural turn of events as the consensus of the early '80s continues to decay? Who cares? Let's enjoy fandom for its own sake, not worry about its future and whether it has one, and rest assured that if we continue to have fun and make that obvious in our fanzines and our in-person communication enough people will continue to trickle in, over the years, to keep it lively and viable. Just statistically speaking, I observe this has happened all along. I looked over my mailing list cards and found that some 30% of the people on my list now were on my mailing list in 1964, the last year I published FRAP. Over half of that 30% was on my mailing list in 1958, when PSI-PHI #1 appeared. Everyone else has come along since then, some of them in the past year or two (hi, Victor!). Fandom turned sixty this year, if you count the beginning of Amazing and its letter column as the rudimentary beginnings of fandom. Some of its original participants are still on the scene (hi, Bobs Tucker & Bloch). What incredible timebinding. Last Fandom may last forever.

A FINAL NOTE: Much has been written in fanzines lately about how a fannish fanzine of whatever merit has little to no chance of winning a Hugo, even if nominated, because of the typically small circulation of such beasts. And besides, the decriers allege, fanzine fandom doesn't nominate or vote for Hugos. I've been jokingly telling some of my friends and correspondents that, given the apparent popularity of this fanzine here and in the UK, perhaps it could buck the trend. ("Vote for me for TAFF," I've said tongue firmly in cheek, "and send me over to collect my Hugo.") On a more modest note, I would simply point out that this fanzine is Hugo-eligible (as is another Glen Ellen publication, the PKDS Newsletter, in the semi-pro category) and hopefully even worthy. However, please also note that I will not take it personally if (a) I do not win the TAFF race or (b) TRAP DOOR is not nominated for a Hugo, or fails to win if it is. I'm more concerned at this closing juncture that up until this point, I completely forgot our ritual mention of Rich Coad for this issue. --RL

"I SAW GOD,
YOU KNOW"



BY DONNA NASSAR

experience with my two "angels" that GOD KNOWING begins to be communicated about that age and will continue, I think, as long as we are receptive.

One of my first glimpses into the nature of God as seen by a small child came one day as I was baking bread and being assisted by my then four-year-old daughter. I was making rolls and she was decorating each one with a face. After most of them had been "faced" I discovered some raisins and encouraged her to use them in her decorating efforts. She began to put them on some of the faces and soon noticed that they looked like tears. "This is silly," she declared. "It looks like crying and smiling."

"Sometimes people cry when they are happy," I explained.

She gave me a look as if to ask if I thought she really didn't know any better than that, as old as she was.

"Really," I insisted. Then I went on to tell her one of my personal experiences with that--her own birth. I completed the brief account with a hug and told her (was there a tear in my eye now, too?) "You still give me so much to smile about."

"Yep," she said, "sometimes God is God and sometimes People is God."

My sentiments exactly.

Another time, after Heather and Erik had gone several times to Wednesday night Baptist Bible school with their babysitter, I asked Heather if she enjoyed these evenings.

"Oh, yes, Momma," she replied enthusiastically.

"What do you like best about it?" I probed.

"I love to hear all about Jesus and his friend God!"

She was five at the time.

...SAID MY FOUR-YEAR-OLD son as we were driving to his pre-school early one morning.

"No, I didn't know that," I replied as I continued to mentally arrange my schedule for the day and negotiate a left turn onto Arnold Drive.

"And he wasn't like you couldn't see Him. I saw him!"

"You mean he wasn't invisible," I said, beginning to enter the conversation. "When did you see God?" (Now I have to say her that had I been "thinking" I'd have never asked a four-year-old a "When" question. Invariably they have a favorite phrase that encompasses all events that are not taking place right now. Erik's was "last night" --which included everything from last night to a month ago last Tuesday. It was only later that I realized how miraculous this next reply was:)

"Before I came to be your boy," he said.

To continue a life lesson that was begun several days before, I took this opportunity to explain: "Before you came to be my boy, you were growing in my belly." I patted my abdomen by way of demonstration.

He paused. Looked straight ahead as he gave this some thought. "It must have been before God planted that seed in your belly," he concluded.

Erik is my second child so this is not the first time I've been blessed with the four-year-old version of God. I don't mean that to sound so clinical, but it does seem to me, based on my

"When someone want to kill Him, He won't die." My son had come in while I was typing and asked what this was about. I told him I was writing about God and asked him to tell me something important people should know about God. The above quote was his answer to that request.

I also asked him to draw a picture of God for me for Robert's fanzine. His first question was, "Do you have any white?" Apparently God has a white beard. Really. This actually comes as a surprise to me as the whole idea for this piece was sparked by a picture that he brought home from kindergarten. The kindergarten kids are learning their alphabet and had to make up and illustrate words beginning with the letter G. Erik had drawn a picture of God--a red center with yellow person-shape surrounding it. You can understand my surprise when a week later he asks for white.

About six months after the seeing God conversation with Erik, I decided to look a little deeper into the possible relationship of seeing God to the idea of choosing your parents. I don't remember exactly how the conversation went, but ultimately I got the information I was seeking when I asked him why he chose me for his mother.

"Because you're so beautiful," was the reply.

I was busy thinking of all the things "beautiful" means, when Heather walked into the room. "We were just talking about why Erik chose me for his mom," I announced proudly. "Guess what he said?" I quizzed her.

"Because you're so pretty."

Oh. So that's what beautiful means.

If you're a mother or father or even a doting aunt or uncle you probably already know that I could go on and on and on with these stories. But I'll spare you the time Erik said that he wished he was married to me and it sparked a conversation about reincarnation. ("We get another lifetime?!" he asked, incredulous.) And I won't go into the discussion I had with seven children in the carpool to their school about what God reminds them of. (Except to say that Matt, age six, said, "My mother.") Enough.

"What are you trying to say? What is this piece about? How are you going to complete it?" Good questions asked by Paul. "When are you going to complete it? (How about tonight?)" asked Robert (my editor) Lichtman. So, I've been working on it already. All but the last two paragraphs was written well over three months ago.

Recently in the "funnies" Lucy, of "Peanuts" fame, was asking Linus if he could remember what it was like before they were born. "Weren't we up in heaven with a bunch of other kids waiting to be born?" I'll spare you the entire conversation--suffice it to say that Linus (when prompted) verified that they had, in fact, not asked to be born. Then Lucy goes back (to where she had been in the first frame) and yells, "I didn't ask to be born!!"

When I read this comic strip in the Sunday paper I thought, "I'll end my piece with a rap about how when you talk all the time to kids about what they remember before they were born and ask them why they chose you and all such stuff, you're very unlikely to be confronted with "I didn't ask to be born!!" later on down the line. So I saved the strip and worked on that as an ending, until one day Erik declared that he wished he had a different Mom. (Because I wouldn't let him buy candy with his allowance and don't allow sweets in the house--and furthermore we don't have a TV. But this is a whole other piece.)

I began to point out that he had chosen me to be his Mom and must have suspected that I would have more respect for his body than to allow him to junk it up totally before he got too big to discipline. He didn't argue about the choosing part but stayed furious the rest of the day--at me--I suppose for putting forth such a good argument for self-imposed destiny.

"The first thing I remember is the disappointed look on my father's face as he pressed his nose against the nursery window. A girl. Another

girl, his eyes seemed to say." This was the way I began an autobiography that was assigned my freshman year in high school. I thought I was being cute. Now, years later, I believe I do still remember it. So why did I choose to be born the second girl and second child to a man who really wanted only boys? I mean, if we're talking "life lessons" here, didn't I have an inkling of what was in store for me? Didn't I know that I could use this seemingly unfortunate circumstance of birth to cop out on the rest of my life? "He never loved me anyway. He loved my brothers (born later) better. He will do anything for them but let me ask him for something and--blaahhhh..." This scenario has gotten very old (almost 40 years). I had no idea that I was leading to this when I saw down to the typer tonight. And in fact I could just scrap it and start over--maybe from the very beginning.

And what does it have to do with children's thoughts about God, you may well ask. Anticipating Paul's and Robert's friendly inquiry, let me just say this: I think that my fascination with and interest in children's reports about God and life before birth has to do with my seeking to really take responsibility for the way I have perceived my life and the circumstances of my life and how those perceptions have flavored my choices and how those choices have brought me here, now, in this time and space and being exactly how and who I am.

Maybe there's something here about control, too. How much control do any of us really have? Could it really be that God told Erik, "I know you're a sugar freak so I think you better go spend some time with Donna and clean up your act this lifetime." And down he was sent--protesting all the way. Or maybe, "Donna's a really nice person when she can stay away from the sugar. Heather's helped her a lot, but I think she needs another reminder. Go down there and complain all the time about not being like other boys whose moms give them sugar so she'll have to constantly restate her position, thereby strengthening her resolve." And down he was sent--protesting all the way.

Sometimes I wonder: If I had never seen a picture of the Golden Gate Bridge in my fourth grade history book in a classroom in Louisiana and made a vow to someday see that bridge, would my mother not have divorced my father and brought us all to California two short years later? Maybe she would have divorced my dad and stayed in Louisiana, or not left him at all. Was the sight of the Golden Gate Bridge worth it? Well, yes. Could I have, would I have chosen it differently if I had been in control? (As opposed to whoever it was that was in control?) Was it me in CONTROL?

My father is driving out from Arkansas to see me and he'll be here day after tomorrow. I hardly know my dad and what I think I know about my dad has a lot to do with how my mother sees him and feels about him. I'm only recently in touch with my own perceptions and feelings towards my dad. Most recently we've been in touch by phone to nail down details of his visit to California to see me, my sister, my two brothers and my brother's new baby boy. I live about three hours drive north of my sister and brothers and I ask that he and his wife make a special trip up here to see me in my home. That seemed like a lot to ask at first, especially since their visit would be so short. And I was shy at first to ask. But, as a result of asking for and getting what I think I want, I'm feeling better about myself. More at home with my choices. And I feel my dad's love for me. Not because he's willing to drive all the way up here to see me--but because I feel my dad's love for me. It's always been there. Now I feel it. I deserve it. I choose it.

And I don't know if I have a "mission on earth" or if I'm responsible for my choices or if I have any control. Maybe God runs the whole show. What I do know is that, for the time being at least, I've stopped protesting all the way.

How I Gambled--and Won!

"We of the solar system gambled our system itself on victory. And we won! We won!"
--"Cosmos"

Once long ago (in the golden age, in the city of dreams) Jim Harmon and I were walking down Alvarado street in Los Angeles when I said, "Let's stop at this liquor store a minute. I want to buy a can of evaporated milk to go with my Wheaties in the morning." By the time I had paid for my purchase Jim had his interlineation ready: "Redd Boggs stopped at the liquor store to get something for breakfast." (Bete Noire #6, autumn 1963.)

I still patronize liquor stores occasionally, and very seldom to buy liquor--or evaporated milk either, come to think of it. Some months ago I stopped at the Jay Vee in El Cerrito to buy, as I remember, a six-pack of Coke Classic and a couple of candy bars. At any rate my purchase came to \$3, right to the penny, and I stood there proffering a \$5 bill. "Give me a couple of lottery tickets too," I said on impulse. They cost \$1 apiece, and thus I spent exactly the amount of money I had in my hand. The clerk wasn't surprised at my purchase, but I was. In the November 1984 election I voted against the state lottery, and I didn't expect ever to squander money on such a chancy enterprise. It's against my instincts and my system of morals. Now here I was, risking not only my money but my system, on victory in the lottery. I felt less brave than foolhardy.

On the way home I wondered glumly what I would do with the money if I won. The grand prize, then, was three million dollars, as I recall. "Whatever can I do with all that money?" I asked myself hopelessly. I remembered that Gretchen once remarked, "The only time I suffer the pangs of avarice is when I visit a bookstore or an office supply store." I feel about the same way. I figured that I could spend about a thousand bucks on books, and another thousand on mimeograph paper and supplies. But what could I do with the rest? Two million nine hundred ninety-eight thousand dollars, after all! That sounded terribly intimidating.

At home I used a penny to scratch off the plastic on the first ticket, glanced indifferently at the symbols thus revealed, and went to the kitchen to make myself a cup of coffee. When I returned I peered more closely at the ticket and realized that I was a winner! Yes, I had won (wow!) \$2. Then I scratched off the second ticket and saw that I had won again. This time I had won (wow!) a free ticket. (The freebie, obtained a day or two later, turned out to be a dud, by the way.) "At least I don't have to worry about how to splurge three million bucks," I exulted.

The state lottery allegedly supports a worthy cause: the educational system of California. But even though I am in favor of education as a general thing, I don't really care about some of the things they are intending to spend the money on, such as school athletics and school bands. And after all, the value of education can be overemphasized. I saw the actress Bo Derek on the David Letterman show a while ago. I had heard of her, and was curious to see what she looked like. From what I knew of her I didn't expect to be impressed, but I was. She turned out to be charming, attractive, and ingenuous. I liked her best when Letterman, learning that she had left high school without earning a degree, asked her if she intended to qualify for a high school equivalency diploma. She looked prettily mystified, and said, "Why should I do that?! Why, indeed. She is reasonably affluent, reasonably famous, and is not likely ever to go on to college. Whatever would she need of a high school degree at this time in her life?

PENSIEROSO



A Column by REDD BOGGS

(continued on page 16)



FANDOM TRIUMPHANT, ALAS

by TERRY CARR

DESPITE THE CLAIMS of cynical and boring oldpharts, of whom I'm often one, the sense of wonder is far from dead in the world of the eighties. Sensawundah shows up where you find it, and sometimes you don't even have to be looking for it.

For instance, I just did the week's shopping at our local supermarket, and when I got home and started to put a half-gallon of milk into the refrigerator I got an unexpected jolt--because there on the back of

the carton two large words leapt out at me: OCTOCON V.

"Say, what the?" I muttered, echoing a remark that Cynthia Goldstone had picked up from comic books several decades ago. I looked more closely at the milk carton and found that it had a drawing of a dragon and beneath it the words:

OCTOCON V

A Science Fiction &
Fantasy Convention
for Charity
October 11 & 12 1986
El Rancho Tropicana Hotel
Santa Rosa, CA

Information:
Spellbinders, Inc.
P.O. Box 1824
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

I stared at these words, a little bit stunned. An ad for a science fiction convention on a milk carton? What happened to the photos of missing children?

But I guess the times are a-changing. In smaller print at the bottom I found the legend "This message is provided as a public service by Clover Stornetta Farms," and I thought, Since when is advertising science fiction conventions a public service?

Since right now, evidently--as long as the conventions are held for charity, as indeed the Santa Rosa Octocons always have been. The Spellbinders, Inc., have always donated their convention profits to local charities, and those of us who have attended their Octocons have always thought

that was nice and then forgotten about it. They've set up facilities to collect blood for the Heinlein Blood Drive, but we never thought much about that either.

Maybe we should have paid more attention, because the donation of convention profits to charity just might become a wave of the future. Particularly in view of the somewhat dicey position of sf cons vis-a-vis the Internal Revenue Service recently, some con committees may decide to establish their non-profit status more solidly by this practice.

If that should happen, I can imagine future committees basing their bid presentations not only on the wonders of their cities and the efficiency of their staffs but also on the popularity of the charities to which they promise to donate their winnings. "Vote for us and the United Way!" I can hear them saying. "Let's use science fiction to support NASA!"

Bidders who promise to use their profits for such worthy causes--or for cancer research or literacy programs--would have a great advantage over those who just want to buy a meeting-place for their local fanclubs. For that matter, they could offer their donations to organizations that search for lost children, thus completing the circle. (And probably some of those children--the teenaged runaways--could be found at the conventions themselves.)

But that's all just part of what the Octocon ad suggested to me. That example of advertising our conventions to the general public rather than sticking to the convention listings in sf magazines like Analog brought home to me the fact that science fiction is no longer the province of a few thousand hardcore fans. These days, any Tom, Dick, or Hari Krishna may be sufficiently interested in sf to want to attend a science fiction convention, if only to play computer games for a weekend with people who may grow up to be Bill Gibson fans. In the broad, sloppy sense, it's no longer either a proud or a lonely thing to be a science fiction fan. (Just try feeling lonely at today's jam-packed sf conventions. For that matter, look at some of the people around you there and see how proud you can feel.)

So I began to think about sf conventions advertising themselves to everybody in the nation, and the possibilities seemed not only weird but sometimes scary. I mean, today milk cartons, tomorrow television commercials. I can see it now:

"Hi. I'm Michael J. Fox, and like anybody who's planning to make a lot of money in the future, I read sci fi because it tells me the things real Americans ought to be thinking about in advance. I'll bet you do too, when your wimpy sisters give you the time. So I'm here to tell you about FutureCon, where you'll be able to meet plenty of forward-thinkers just like yourself, and hear the lowdown highlights about tomorrow from Jerry Pournelle and Mr. Robert A. Heinlein. Just call the toll-free number on the screen for information, and you can join us. --And by the way [wink], you might even get to hear John Norman tell you what to do about your sisters!"

Or:

"I am Catherine Deneuve. Naturellement, I am very interested in the fashions of the future. If you want to see tomorrow's look today, come to FutureCon, where the Masquerade will show you [lifts a bare shoulder] everything."

Can you imagine the conventions that might result from such advertising? I hate being an alarmist, but I Have Had a Vision, Yes I Truly Have:

There they are at the Masquerade, two typical sf convention members of 1989, in their J.R. Ewing T-shirts, idly looking for displays of bare female skin that don't seem de trop (some of the women's costumes strike them as

aesthetically anarchistic), and meanwhile talking about whether the new AIDS vaccine will cause the stock market to rise or fall.

One of them, Edogawa, changes the subject: "You know," he says, "sci-fi is a growing market right now--maybe we should invest in it."

The other young man, Bash Mohammed, replies, "But should we buy Tor Books or Arbor House?"

Edogawa's face takes on a very serious expression. (A male Masquerade participant is on stage, showing off more futuristic tattoos--mostly computers blasting through space--than can be found in any recent issue of Heavy Metal Rock & Fact.) "I think we could get controlling interest in both right now for even less than Pan Am would cost," he says. "Of course, at our first staff meeting we'd have to announce that we plan no major changes [chuckle snort] and promise not to fire any of the secretaries."

"Certainly," says Bash Mohammed. "We'd just fire the bookkeepers."

"Thus probably enabling us, in a couple of years, to make enough money to buy into Stephen King futures," says Edogawa.

They lick their lips as a young woman steps onto the stage wearing nothing but cyperpunk eye-implants and a few ceramic chains.

--Terry Carr

PENSEROSO (continued from page 13)

One evening the phone rang and when I answered I heard a sexy female voice speaking to me in familiar terms. No. it wasn't Bo Derek, to set your minds at rest on that point. She said at first, in hollow tones, that she was "the bogeyman" (I wasn't too scared), then admitted that her name is Ketti and she is a 16-year-old high school student. She explained that she had taken a break from studying by dialing a number at random, which happened by chance to be mine. She told me that she lived with her father and has her own private phone. I suspect that she (or her father) is quite wealthy. Anyway, they seem to live in a big house somewhere up on the hill. In the course of our rambling conversation I asked her about her studies, and she told me that she is one of the smartest people in the school. Possibly she is mistaken, of course, but I don't think she was bragging. (Do women ever brag?)

"What are you going to do after you graduate from high school?" I asked. With due respect for her intelligence, independence, and energy, I envisioned her majoring in astrophysics at UC Berkeley, or perhaps in computer science. "Oh," she said blithely, "that's all set. I'm going to go to cosmetology school." Instead of studying the s process and the p process in the creation of elements in the cores of red giants and in supernova explosions she will learn how to give facials and manicures, the technique of brow tinting, haircutting and styling, and the craft of applying the proper makeup for day and evening wear.

I stifled a sob--for her, for science, for the future. Like Isaac Asimov in his F&SF essay "The Armies of the Night," reprinted in X Stands for Unknown (1984), I worry about the fact that our American school system is "particularly weak in science." That is, I do whenever I get around to worrying about education at all. But science and the future can take care of themselves. Mainly I was concerned about a girl I don't even know. Cosmetology rather than cosmology! Talk about modest aspirations. Who needs a well-financed educational system to qualify the best minds of the younger generation to attend cosmetology school?

When I returned to the Jay Vee to redeem my winning \$2 ticket, the clerk asked, "Do you want a couple more lottery tickets or do you want the money?" "The money, by all means," I said, and you may be sure that I squandered every penny of it on riotous living.

Where the Heck is Roger?

I have been scanning eagerly the lists of cabinet appointees of the new Aquino government in the Philippines to learn if my friend Roger has been made Minister of Information. So far I haven't seen his name mentioned anywhere, but he may be masterminding the whole thing from behind the scenes.

Roger was a scrawny Filipino Gretchen and I knew a few years ago. Besides his rather minimal build he had two other physical characteristics that marked him indelibly in any gathering: he had long coarse hair that swept down his back in a great black cascade, and

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HERE COMES THE



by L. HUNTZINGER & K.D. PLASKOM

A PALE BLONDE WOMAN sits alone in a Polynesian bar, sipping a Rangoon Ruby. A woman dressed in magenta and black drifts into the room. She is looking abstractedly about her when her gaze falls upon the blonde.

"Oh, it's you," she says, "I thought you'd gone off to Australia after all the excitement last month."

"Have a Singapore Sling," offers the blonde, "It was Fremont, not Australia."

"Don't mind if I do. What's in Fremont?"

The blonde signals the bartender. "Not much, actually," she says, "I was exhausted from the strain of my first wedding. I needed a rest."

The brunette crosses her legs, admiring her ankle-high boots as she does so. "My dear, you were only the minister. I was the one getting married."

"Only the minister... Well, you may think it was as easy to stand up in front of all those people knowing that my sari was improperly tied. I tell you my nerves were in tatters. You were the lucky one; everyone knows brides are always beautiful." The blonde sighs and picks the pineapple chunks out of her drink.

The brunette spears the cherry in her drink with the sharp end of her miniature paper parasol, places it in her mouth, and beckons the bartender. "Excuse me, may I have some more cherries?"

The bartender looks at her, stonefaced, then walks away to do her bidding. The brunette leans back in her chair and sucks her straw thoughtfully. "To tell you the truth, the groom was the one who really looked gorgeous at the wedding."

The blonde turns her head towards the lagoon. "Yeah, I never thought he'd clean up so well."

Her friend replies, "Black and lime green really suit him. Though it did clash with my white and rose dress."

"The hardest part for me was writing the vows. I didn't have a chance to consolidate the notes you two gave me until the morning of the wedding as I was riding BART back to Oakland." The erstwhile minister looks accusingly at her empty glass.

"I don't understand why you were in San Francisco the day of the wedding, but never mind... You did a marvelous job. And it was nice to have a minister who'd join me in dying her hair to match her attire."

Across the room, lightning is beginning to arc above the lagoon. A sullen rumble of thunder is heard. The women order another round of drinks.

"We were both pretty nervous, weren't we? I thought the funniest part of the ceremony was when your turn to put the earring on your groom came and you dropped the backing. With most of the wedding party on its knees, I lost my cool completely."

The brunette laughs. "You sure did, especially when you told us to go off and 'hump like crazed weagels.' At least my sister saved the day for me by giving me the back of one of her earrings. Phew!"

The drinks arrive and a lush falls at the table. As the oriental waiter departs, the brunette winks at him and turns to her friend. "What ran me ragged," she says confidentially, "was trying to put it all together at the last minute. I'd planned everything carefully, and kept telling myself it was just another party. But it wasn't like that at all. I wasn't even dressed when my first guests arrived."

"I noticed that your guests were happy, but with champagne and beer flowing like water that's not surprising."

"Oh-huh, they really liked the cake too. Even if it did arrive an hour and a half late. I remember my friend Arlene telling me that she'd worry about the cake for me when I was panic-stricken at 5:30. What did you think of it?"

The blonde throws the fruit from her drink into the lagoon. It floats on the surface, the juice from the maraschino cherries staining the water red. A flurry of thrashing erupts and the fruit is gone. She turns back to her friend. "As a nontraditionalist, I really appreciated seeing Hello Kitty and Tuxedo Sam as the bride and groom figurines. And it tasted great although I only got one piece. Talk about feeding frenzy..."

"Well, I'm just glad I got to dance at my wedding even if it was to old swing tapes. I actually managed to get my hunk of man-flesh to join me. I was amused at the cowards dancing in the driveway, but I'm sure they had fun."

"Hell, I had fun! I didn't even see you guys leave. Jeanne, Robert, Sharee and I were really shocked when you came back in the middle of our cleanup efforts. Especially when we found out you came back to get a book."

The brunette looks abashed. "Well, um...er... It wasn't just for a book, we wanted to get something to drink and bring the dog back over too."

The blonde rolls her eyes. "Some honeymoon you must've had--a dog, a book, and thou."

The oriental waiter returns. "Happy hour in the Tonga Room will be ending in five minutes, ladies. May I get you anything else?"

The brunette turns suddenly and stares wild eyed at her friend. "Omi-god, I just realized... The whole thing is on videotape!"

The blonde stares back visibly shaken. They both look up at the waiter and speak simultaneously.

"Double Scotch on the rocks. And make it fast!"

--L. Huntzinger & K.D. Plaskon



WE NEVER SLEEP

by PAUL WILLIAMS



IN ASTROLOGY, SCORPIO IS the sign of sex and death. I'm writing this in mid-November, sun passing through Scorpio, and what's on my mind is the changes that are now and will be taking place in the sex lives of people in our culture as the reality of AIDS sinks in...specifically the fact that it can be transmitted through normal heterosexual intercourse, and that there are almost certainly carriers of AIDS (and future victims, in all likelihood) among us who are neither male homosexuals nor intravenous drug users. In other words, sex with a stranger (and for that matter, with someone who isn't a stranger--how much do we ever really know about our friends' and lovers' sex lives?) seems now to be a game of Russian roulette, for heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. All the current reports agree that this is so; the only question is, what is the current degree of risk? How many chambers for each live bullet?

And the personal question: what degree of risk is acceptable to you? To me?

I have been in a sexually faithful relationship for more than three years and am very happy here, so I don't feel pressed by this issue in any immediate sense. Probably this leaves me a little freer to raise the subject, although I still find it difficult. Imagine! What must it be like to be single and horny in 1986-'87? The truth is I can't imagine. I've never much liked wearing a condom, but I'm sure I'd change my attitude on that in a hurry. But even so, I have to believe I'd be far more hesitant to pursue a sexual opportunity than I ever was when I was single (or, to be honest, when I was married).

Among other things, contemplating the effects of this radical change in the sexual environment makes me kind of wistful. Suddenly a whole world that was very real to me, that I lived in many years and had always thought I might somehow, some way, visit again, the world of sexual adventure (by which I do not mean necessarily loveless sex but something more nearly the opposite, the pursuit of sexual love), that world seems to be disappearing...dying...available only to the totally reckless or foolhardy, which in any case rather limits one's choice of partners...perhaps to return someday when the magic potion is found that will make the boogie-man go away, if it's found, when it's found... My God, we are living through an extraordinary science fictional shift in the social fabric, an abrupt and rather awesome change in the nature of personal and collective reality. And like I say, I feel wistful, and a little guilty that the great freedom (and pleasure) I enjoyed may be all but out of reach of people coming of age today and in at least the foreseeable near future.

When they complain they missed all the great rock and roll shows I can kick their asses, from my lofty position as a sixties survivor, and send 'em down to see the Meat Puppets or Green on Red or Los Lobos or dozens of other great bands now appearing at your local club. But when they say they missed out on the world of, um, earnest adventures in intimacy, I may have to admit that indeed, they've been ripped off. And it seems very strange to me, putting aside the tragedy involved (and I do have a friend who's dying of AIDS right now, that I know of, and quite probably others I don't know about), that my

world, that is the subjective world I'm familiar with, could change so suddenly.

And maybe it won't change. Girls will go on falling for and falling into bed with boys who meet and exceed their standards of beauty and attractiveness, and vice versa boys for girls, and lots more condoms will be sold (that's happening already) but otherwise the change will not be a radical one, due to inertia or denial or whatever, until or unless the statistics catch up, the first big gestation cycle reaches maturity, as it has in the gay community (and in Africa) with a degree of impact and dislocation and suffering that even novelists and poets must despair of ever describing.

I don't know. I've never been good at predicting the impact of seemingly significant social changes (we thought Woodstock was a big deal, didn't we?), and also it's in the nature of my generation to expect apocalypse and see it around every corner. And yet-- the idea of a sexual contact having a significant chance of resulting in the destruction of one's immune system and slow, inevitable death... It is (and I apologize to the gay community for being a johnny-come-lately, but you know it is different when they start building the power plant in your own neighborhood) a horror out of a bad movie, a concept that defies getting used to. How can this be? It isn't so, the facts are being misrepresented, anyway science will find the answer in a month or two...

The thing is, the sexual drive is a very, very, very strong force. It can be channelled, it can be kept within certain guidelines, in many people and most of the time, more so in a stable society with strong role models probably and less so in an unstable, rapidly changing one-- but it can be done, and so on one level it is possible to suppose that what we'll see from this is simply a swing towards what we would call conservative sexual values: monogamy, chastity, longer virginity and more fidelity (a lot more fidelity!) and so forth. And those who don't adapt will die out, as it were, natural selection at work in a particularly nasty and immediate form.

Maybe. But the dislocations! Life in the transition. I wrote a book once called Time Between, about life in the transition between old world and new, and intuited then that such would be my fate and my generation's fate all our lives... It does seem to be true, and a better fate certainly than being the last generation rather than the transitional one. I prefer a difficult future for us than none at all.

It's weird. I often think about the Hebraic stricture against eating pork. It sounds arbitrary, sounds like the rabbis trying to tell the people what God wants 'em to do--but it can also be understood as a necessarily oversimplified health warning, stated as a law because indeed the well-being of the tribe needed protecting... I mean, people don't cook the meat enough to kill the worms and can't seem to learn, so those concerned with the community put it forth as an order from God, do it like this or be ostracized. And what results is a net social gain, in the short run anyway, even if it's tough on the pig farmers.

And similarly, Biblical strictures about sexuality, although they come to us laden with hypocrisy and righteousness and layer on layer of guilt-mongering (and yes, that St. Paul was Mr. original asshole, no question about it), can be seen in the horror of what's overtaking the gay community and perhaps the wider community as well, as having some historical basis in practical community health considerations... Humans have been around this planet as humans a couple million years at least, according to recent estimates, and it would be vain of us not to suppose that some things that are coming around now have been around before. I'm not saying therefore do as the Bible says, it is after all a pile of news clippings and old speeches like everything else, with truth and absence of truth both to be found in abundance... all I'm saying is what has become righteousness may once, in some rather different fashion that has since been twisted, have been common sense. And alas, we who felt as Gods and flew so free towards the sun, may now be plunging with melted wings back to earth. That doesn't make us wrong or bad. It's all part of a learning process, and no simple conclusions can be drawn. I don't know what I want to say. I'm just kind of commenting that here we are in the middle of things, less certain of anything today than we were yesterday...again. And yes I know people will go on risking everything for love, just maybe with a keener sense of the risk (and a deeper experience of love? he asked hopefully, idealistically), is all.

--Paul Williams



CHATTING RECENTLY about timeless values of human culture such as the price of booze, I had a moment of feeling desperately old. In a relative sense: Chuch Harris remembers with a gloat how he achieved beer bloat for only half a groat or a quarter of a goat, and doubtless Harry Warner's early memoirs record the first hairy eofan rubbing two yeasts together and crying "Eureka! I've invented hangovers!" My own sense of crabbed antiquity comes when young fans hear with open disbelief my senile reminiscence of, "When I started drinking beer, this stuff was one and fourpence a pint...."

It wasn't "this stuff," of course, but some foul fizz served in the pot-houses of South Wales to schoolboys who didn't know any better. Knowing better and making my lemon-sucking face at the mere memory of the bouquet, I mused that even at 7p a pint I wouldn't fancy the muck now...though one does pay thirteen or fourteen times as much for something very similar in the average con hotel. Then memories started trickling back: Proust sailed into the wastes of lost time at the remembered nibble of a biscuit, but Langford is made of sterner stuff. The remembered taste of iron filings.... In beer veritas.

There would be half a dozen of us in those smoky pub sessions, all from the now vanished Newport High School, thrown together by vague friendship, throbbing absence of girlfriends, and the natural human urge not to be home with one's parents. Long evenings of this noble if negative pursuit had to be got through; it was my ever-evil pal Dai Price who introduced the familiar and direly hazardous game Fizz-Buzz.

If you are very lucky, you won't have met it. Semi-drunken cretins sit in a circle, counting in turn, clockwise round the ring: "One." "Two." "Three." At five, and every subsequent multiple of five, the current sucker must instead give a stentorian cry of "Fizz!" At seven, and its multiples, the word is "Buzz!" and the order of play reverses direction. Anyone failing to make the right noise at the right time must take a huge swig from his beer (amateur rules), drain the glass and buy another (tournament rules), or knock back any drinks in front of him and buy a round for the entire party (insane idiot rules).

Well, it beat South Wales's two permissible conversational topics: women (deeply frustrating since none of us knew any) and rugby (even more frustrating since, precociously beer-raddled, we couldn't play the national game without wheezing and falling over).

There was actually a weird satisfaction in doing this daft business right, "the solemn intoxication which comes of intricate ritual faultlessly performed" (thus Dorothy Sayers on bell-ringing)--except that the ritual wasn't that intricate, and even the double thrill of "Fizz Buzz!" at multiples of 35 failed somehow to reach orgasm level.

Thus Dai and I concluded that the "game" lacked intellectual challenge, at least until so late in the evening that remembering one's name also began to present difficulties on the order of Fermat's Last Theorem. Tentatively we started attaching electrodes to the hitherto sluggish rules. An early experiment, which even the thickest of the gathering could handle, was to add "Oink!" as the, er, buzzword for all multiples of three. Dai soon developed a particularly obscene "Oink!" whose mere enunciation came under the heading of gamesmanship. The corpse of the rotten game began to twitch slightly.

"Burp!" for multiples of eleven was the next remorselessly logical addition. By now, some of us were sweating, concentrating intently, and falling over a good deal sooner than of yore (see above, under Tournament Rules). Then came a quantum leap into genuine mathematical abstraction: "Clang!" was what you had to say each time the count reached a prime number. (After savage debate, the dogma of pure mathematics was cast aside and I was ruled to be a prime.) It was around this stage that I stopped remembering petty things like closing times or how I'd got home afterwards. Sanity was finally eroded by the two-pronged introduction of "Pow!" for perfect squares and "Zap!" for powers of two. Was one a perfect square? (Yes.) Was it a power of two? (We decided that $1=2^0$ was a special case and didn't count.)

By now, the alert and intelligent reader will have gathered, there were no bloody landmarks. Pale, strained faces ringed the table, suddenly trying to follow a count which began not 1 2 3 4 but "Clang Pow!" "Clang Zap!" "Oink Clang!" "Pow Zap!" (There was some rule about the order in which you had to pronounce the shibboleths, but this luckily escapes me.) And it was a supreme moment of triumph if, swaying and incapable, we successfully galloped into the straight with "Oink Buzz!" "Burp!" "Clang!" "Oink!" "Fizz Pow!"...and, at last, the first number in our counting system which came through in clear. "Twenty-six!"

I have never quite worked out what the other pub regulars thought of us, but they used to look worried.

The suggestion of "Ping!" to mark cubes was perhaps unnecessary. Perfect numbers also received short shrift. The whole thing broke up with a serious Dai Price plan to insert a special term for members of the Fibonacci series. ("As you well know, Professor, this runs 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34...not that you need to be told, but we must assume there are some ignorant readers out there." "Quite, Carruthers. Shut up..") An appropriate word in this context might have been, "Argh!" Rather than debate whether one should now be intricately coded as "Argh Argh Clang Pow!" owing to its double appearance in the series, we all went to university instead.

I arrived in Oxford, and many splendours and miseries duly followed, but the demented game wasn't so easily escaped--not merely because I inflicted it on university SF group fanatics who madly programmed the Nuclear Physics Dept. computers to generate all the correct responses, up to ten thousand. (When I write Advanced Fizz-Buzz--the Dungeon Master's Guide, I'll know where to do the research.) Though in a weird way I owe a lot to Fizz-Buzz, such as a lifelong interest in maths, those nonsense sequences were bloody hard to shake off. Tenser, said the Tensor...Tenser, said the Tensor.... People claim to have been driven half round the twist by obsession with Charles Hinton's coloured cubes for visualizing the fourth dimension (circa 1904). Not being quite intellectually up to that, I still suffered years of fizzes and oinks and clangs running round in my head like

mathematically-minded squirrels. It didn't even have the vague aesthetic respectability of something like Twain's Punch, brothers, punch with care! Punch in the presence of the passenjare!

(En route I also invented numerous variants like Cantorian Fizz-Buzz, played with all the real numbers between zero and one with special grunts for transcendentals--you go first, thanks; Big Fizz-Buzz, in which anyone reaching the first transfinite ordinal during the course of a normal pub session must pronounce the rune "Someone's Been Cheating!"; and, after a crippling attack of Douglas Hofstadter, Self-Referential Fizz-Buzz incorporating Strange Loops....)

The funny noises within my skull did eventually fade away, thanks, but as a possible side-effect I seem to have spent most of my working life doing vaguely mathematical things, from doomsday-weapon simulations to back-of-an-envelope futurology. This abysmal nostalgic wallow has therefore given me the final answer to those who mumble about wasting time in pubs. Placing a hand on my chest and speaking in manly resonant tones, I can say: "I owe my whole career to lousy bitter and Fizz-Buzz." (Death comes on swift wings to anyone who responds, "What career?") Of course it's kept me from certain pinnacles: my failure to write The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy can be blamed entirely on my schoolday conditioning to think that, for the reasons above, 26 is an infinitely funnier punchline than "Oink Buzz!" I mean, funnier than 42, damn it....

--Dave Langford

PENSEROSO (continued from page 16)

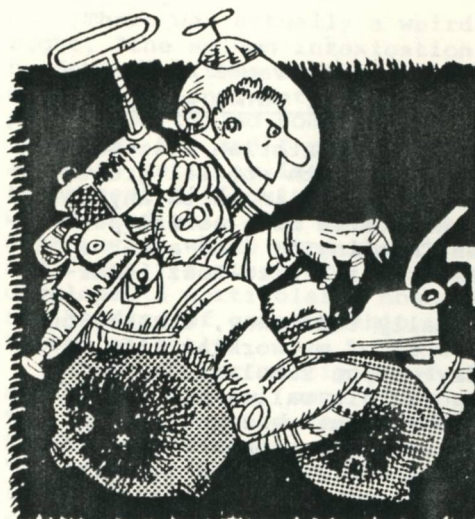
he always wore a dark mocking smile. He didn't take things too seriously after all, even though he was a passionate rebel, perhaps even a professional rebel, and as a symbol thereof he always wore a Mao cap. I don't think that The Chairman would have approved of the way he wore it, however. It was cocked flauntingly on his head, atop a bright scarf that was wrapped with careless insouciance around his flowing hair like a turban, with the tails flying in the wind.

Gretchen always encountered all the colorful radicals of the campus in those times, from Mario Savio and Bettina Aptheker to Jefferson (Fuck) Poland, so that it was inevitable that she would bump into Roger. On this occasion she was arguing vociferously some point of procedure one night on the floor of the Graduate Assembly on the UC Berkeley campus when to her surprise she heard another voice raised in her support. It belonged to Roger, a newcomer she had never seen before. He had been attracted to her side less, perhaps, by the force of her rhetoric (though that was considerable) than by the fact that she too wore a Mao cap, and a Mao jacket as well. She looked like a page out of China Reconstructs.

Gretchen and Roger soon became allies, and friends, and we had him over to our house on many occasions. Once he ate Christmas dinner with us, although he didn't really bother with celebrating holidays, not even Chairman Mao's birthday. In fact, he wasn't a Maoist at all. It was just a ploy. Nevertheless, he was a tireless fighter for many radical causes, and although skinny he was sinewy and energetic.

Among his pet projects were the formation of groups of Philippine expatriates. As he pointed out, however, the "Ph" sound isn't used in his language, and therefore the names of these groups included the term "Pilipino," not Filipino. He also told us that "Roger" was really an anglicization of his given name, which was Rogelio. "My god," I said to Gretchen one evening after learning this, "just picture the arrival of a jetliner at the San Francisco International airport. The captain of the jetliner calls the control tower and says, 'This is Pilipino Airlines flight number one, asking for landing instructions.' The air controller calls back and gives them the number of the runway to use, whereupon the jetliner replies, 'Rogelio!'"

--Redd Boggs



LETTER COLUMN



THE ETHER STILL VIBRATES

Steve
Shiles

DICK ELLINGTON (*commenting on the first 5 issues:*) Good fannish Disclave report.
(Have I mentioned I'm browsing through the first issue? Thought not.)
Herewith my own favorite Disclave story, from sometime in the late '50s:

We had a room next to Lee Hoffman and at one point both doors were open and there was the ever-popular balcony party going on outside with 15 or 20 fans elbowing each other. After an hour or two people began to melt away and we Seized the Moment--Pat and me to shut the door and do a little loosening up, LeeH to shut hers and absorb some fancy picking of a local banjo player who had showed up to meet her (she was in her folknik phase at the time). Coincidentally, both doors opened about the same time, to reveal a lost-looking Dick Eney perched alone on the balcony rail. "Where did you all go?" he queried idly. Unable to resist the temptation, I replied like a shot, "Well, they've been folking in that room and we've been fucking in this one." Eney turned beet-red. (He shocked easily in those days.)

Despite the fact I have absolutely no interest in baseball and was never exposed to IQ tests as a child (I dunno why--maybe they hadn't been invented by then), Eric Mayer got to me with the bit about losing his brother. I put up with just such a story for years. It was 1940 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and we were about as poor as we were ever going to be. Mom worked as a WPA nursery school teacher and that meant you made not quite enough to live on. The only place we could afford to live was a portion of a house just barely inside the city limits, at the dead end of the Pulaski street car line. But being Catholic, I had to go to school in downtown Little Rock where Mom also worked. I was ten and my brother was five, and one day, due to a misunderstanding (admittedly probably mine), Mom and I ended up at home in the evening without Jimmy, each one of us having assumed the other was bringing him. A two-block walk to the nearest pay phone and a call to the sisters at school revealed that he was Gone. In desperation, I was dispatched back to the school to look for him. This meant a 40 minute ride on the street car back to town and just by luck I happened to be looking out the window at the right time and noticed my brother, wearily trudging along the sidewalk. Having no money and no sense of distance he'd decided to walk the ten miles or so to home and had already covered two or three miles. My mother was horrified at both of us but both my brother and I figured the stubborn little son-of-a-bitch would have made it. After that, no matter where we went, Jimmy had a street car token in his pocket, secured by a safety pin just in case.

Redd obviously feels the same way I do about academia's sudden fascination with science fiction. The feeling I get can only be equated with those I used to experience the first year Marie was in Walden. I would go to pick her up and there would be the kindergarten teacher and this one particular mother, deep in conversation, discussing learnedly the possible psychological implications surrounding some Event of the day concerning her son:

he hit someone; he was playing with some birdshit; whatever. The child in question usually listened to these analyses of activities (they casually ignored his presence) while regarding them with mild disgust and total boredom. I feel the same way about academia's studies of science fiction. But what the hell, it makes them happy, keeps them out of trouble, and maybe even makes a few extra bucks for some of our friends.

Paul makes an interesting point: fans are really quite reasonably circumspect about the inevitable intimacies at conventions, particularly in comparison to, say, West Coast poets, many of whom seem to feel a distinct obligation to write a poem about each and every sexual encounter, which they then have to live with for the rest of their lives, often with great embarrassment. But even the older ones keep doing it, particularly if the other party is a poet too.

I've met a few fans with--apparently at least--slightly subnormal IQs, but Terry Carr is probably right that in general we would run very heavily higher than the mythical average and of course, that generally means we were Outsiders as teenagers. I never knew I had a high IQ until I was 17 and then it was the army for crissake that noticed it, wooing me into a totally high-IQ outfit.

I do quibble with EST people being all that sharp. Someplace along the line some of them got the Great Idea of helping out convicts with their program. They got an In at a federal pen and started programs with cons. I have to tell you it was a farce. The cons ate them up alive, conned them up one side and down the other, and totally ignored their "message." In prison it's called "getting with the program" (said with a cynical smirk) and the cons wrote the book on that art.

Debbie hits the sore spot about EST for me neatly--their really annoyingly dogged persistence that (a) everybody who has taken a course Stay With Them and (b) everybody who hasn't, should. Donaho took one of their courses years ago and to this day is besieged with their publications, pleas and exhortations, some of which I have read and all of which annoyed the hell out of me.

I think Ashley's attitude is basically a healthy one--as the current bumper sticker says, "Question Authority." But, like Debbie Notkin, I find all too much in common with EST, Scientology, Marxism and even etc. (I'd include most "schools" of psychiatry, most religions, and a goodly smattering of pushy philosophies.) This doesn't mean I go around Actively Combatting them. Far from it. It's best to walk unaided, but sometimes I use a cane, because I need the damned thing. Similarly, it's best to make your own way mentally, but if you can't do it alone, pick the cane that fits you best and lean on it, particularly if the only other choice is a mental wheelchair.

I must say Gary Hubbard does a different kind of con report. The only thing I can recommend for him is that the next time he goes to Toronto he first complete the Raeburn-Clarke Advanced Course in Canadianese. Thus, when confronted by a lost stranger who has mistaken one for a native, one can cheerfully point in some obscure direction and tell him, "About thri block thataway, then right, eh?" and ruin his day too--misery loves company. Or maybe he could study with me for a while and learn how to speak Rastaman talk.

That's Gray Barker, Gary, not Grey Baker, unless I miss my guess. If Gary's really interested I have in the garage several issues of the Shaver Mystery "fanzine"--fascinating stuff. I first got involved with that strangeness mainly because of my long-time interest in Fortean phenomena which surfaced in mountainous piles via these two fandoms. I had enough sense to maintain a certain careful distance from most of the people involved as they included an extraordinarily high percentage of real cuckoos. I did delve deep enough and carefully enough to come out of it firmly convinced that, with all the tons of chaff and other possibilities sifted through, the only inescapable conclusion was that there was something happening. I have never seen any reasonable evidence, I hasten to add, that the phenomena were the result of extraterrestrials. There is no specific evidence that the Air Force actually knew--specifically--what was going on, but they sure went out of their way to do a whole lot of clumsy lying.

That produced a funny fannish incident. One of the relatively saner investigative groups around--maintaining a skeptical open mind about the whole thing--was a group called Civilian Saucer Intelligence. Just about the time when all the saucervolk were really getting wise to the Air Force's snowjob, there was a big CSI meeting in New York. I went to it with Ruth Landis. Dave Kyle (like me, curious about the whole thing) had duty that

weekend and showed up late. The duty was one of his weekend stints with the Air Force Reserve and, without thinking about it, he showed up still in his Lt. Col.'s uniform. The saucervolk assumed he was there from the Air Force and he created more than a little quiet consternation among them before he realized what was going on. I found the whole thing hysterically funny.

Ashworth well deserves lead spot. Yet I have to admit the article annoyed me. After the first page I had braced myself and I kept waiting throughout the article with ever-increasing tension for what I thought would be the obvious, but I guess old age has afflicted Mal too and he never did get around to what I thought would be a punch line about a pint of origin.

As to manqué, as usual, truth often beats one's imagination all hollow. I used to be an avid reader of Harvey Breit's columns in the New York Times when he was editing the book reviews and for some reason one stuck in my mind. It was a gentle look at the strange posturings of a certain class of Indian intellectuals, mostly on the fringes of the white collar world, hopelessly influenced by British ways of doing things. It seems that business or calling cards were an Absolute Must for this somewhat seedy class, and of course one had to put down one's credentials, so to speak, preferably degrees, medals, etc., and Breit had come up with a couple of real ones, including the gentleman who, in desperation, had after his name "Failed B.A." Now that is manqué. The absolute topper was another one who couldn't even reach that high and after his name had, simply, "subscriber to the New York Times." (6448 Irwin Court, Oakland, CA 94609)

GARY HUBBARD Well, I went to Corflu, you know, and had a pretty good time of it, too. I will write at length on the subject in an article, but let me tell you this one little story, because it's the heart of the whole experience.

I was thrashing around about whether to go or not, when I heard about this living fanzine business. Seems they were going to have people stand up and present articles in person, just like they would in a fanzine, and the audience would loc them right on the spot. Well, that decided me right there. The idea was amazingly appealing, and I had to see it. Need I add that I was also hoping that I'd be asked to participate?

I sat down and started throwing some notes together, but I didn't have nearly anything like an article put together when suddenly it's Friday night, and I find myself in a hotel outside of D.C. in a room full of some pretty strange customers. I located Dan Steffan and introduced myself. He was pleased to see me, and I was pleased that he was pleased. Then he introduced me to everyone, and I recognized a lot of the names if not the faces, including Ted White.

So we're talking, Ted and I, and I'm hoping, praying, that he'll ask me to be in the living fanzine. But he doesn't say anything about it, and I see that I'm going to have to bring up the subject myself.

"Bla-bla-bla, Ted, living fanzine."

"Bla-bla-bla, Gary," he replied. "Would you like to be on it?"

Ah, success! Ego gratification!

But now what am I supposed to do? I've committed myself to stand up in front of every BNF in the world tomorrow afternoon and be brilliant. But all I have are a few crummy notes. Well, I'll worry about that when the time comes. Right now the party is in full swing, and I'm meeting all sorts of interesting characters. I meet Frank Lunney. Frank and I go way back, but I've never seen him. He turns out to be about the way I always pictured him--only not quite as tall. So, anyway, we talk about the old days when I was writing for his fanzine, BEABOHEMA. Only not too much. In fact, Frank is very reticent on the subject and prefers to talk about other things. I gather that fanzine publishing was not the most thrilling experience in the world for Frank.

So, anyway, I hang around, talking to people who, previously, had only been names on paper to me, when, around 4 a.m., I hit the wall and decide it's time to go. I slept for a couple of hours. Then I woke up and slipped back into third person. It was 6 in the morning and my head hurt, but I had to write this article. So I got up and started going over my notes.

Somehow, I managed to get the thing worked out in time for the presentation. It was pretty well received. The audience had a pretty good time with it, and so did I. But when

it was all over, I was just drained. That evening, at the room party, Frank came up to me and said, "Like, wow, really heavy talk, man. How long did you work on it?" At first I was going to explain how I had worked on and off on this thing all week, but then a little voice in my head said, "Why should I?"

"Oh, it didn't take long, Frank. I just whipped it together over breakfast."

"Oh wow! Hey, Ted, Gary wrote his living fanzine article over breakfast."

"No he didn't," replied Ted. "He told me he'd been working on it all week."

Oops! Caught in a contradiction! And by Ted White, too. I could feel my whole fan-nish career going down the drain. I couldn't let my reputation for integrity get sullied. If people started realizing that the things I say are less than the pure, unvarnished truth, they might figure out what the words "cracked eye" mean, and I can't have that.

So I cozened Frank and Ted with an explanation that accounted for both versions of how I did it. They believed it. Had a jolly old time the rest of the evening.

(2203 Amherst, Kalamazoo, MI 49008)

TERRY CARR In your editorial you say, "I mean, do you read F&SF?" Sure I do, every issue...but then, as editor of The Best SF of the Year I have to. I think you may be surprised at the results if enough of your readers answer that question, because my impression is that those fans who still read the sf magazines usually read F&SF primarily (see LOCUS poll results of recent years). But you're right, of course, in thinking most fanzine fans don't read much science fiction of any sort anymore, F&SF or anything else. When Carol and I moved from NYC to the Bay Area late in 1971, we stopped one night in Boise, Idaho, and spent an evening with Guy and Diane Terwilleger; Guy had been gaffiated for a decade or more then and he told me one of the main reasons he'd quit fanpublishing was that he'd found that it caused him not to read science fiction. I mentioned this in a fanzine shortly thereafter, and F.M. Busby commented, "Guy Terwilleger is right about fanac stopping people from reading science fiction. In my view, that's one of the purposes of fanac." Of course, that was before Buz became so successful as a science fiction writer, so his opinion may have changed since then. He's no longer very much involved in fanac, so maybe today he'd say, "Writing science fiction causes people to do much less fanac. In my view, that's one of the purposes of writing science fiction."

Harry Warner wonders who gave the longest speech at a con banquet; I suspect the answer is Philip Jose Farmer as GoH at the 1968 worldcon. You probably remember that convention; it was held at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley and about half the audience at the banquet was seated behind pillars so that they couldn't see the speakers. Bob Silverberg was toastmaster and he did his usual wonderful job, but when Phil started his speech Bob had to go pee yet he couldn't leave the head table out of politeness; certainly to him, he's said, Phil's speech was the longest he's ever heard. But the experience was quite different for me: not only did I not have to go pee, but I'd also ingested one of the "THC" pills that were omnipresent at that worldcon (actually they were horse tranquilizers or some such). I listened to Phil's speech with superhuman patience, and was enjoying it very much when Alex Panshin snuck across the floor from his table and asked me, "Terry, is it just me in my current state (he'd ingested some "THC" too) or is this really the greatest speech I've ever heard at a science fiction convention?" I assured him that it was indeed a great speech and he went away satisfied.

Eric Mayer's comments in the lettercolumn about how he seldom uses fannish terms in conversation reminded me of the time, back in the mid-sixties, when Ron Ellik was visiting us in NYC for several days, during one of which he went to a FiStfa meeting and returned chuckling uncontrollably because at that meeting he'd met a young fan who'd told him over and over, "I'm going to pub my ish! I'm going to pub my ish!" Ron knew as well as I that fans seldom if ever use fanspeak in actual conversation: much of fanspeak, so-called, is just abbreviated English, employed when typing letters to shorten one's typing time. But trust a neofan to think that all such terms in fanspeak were really used when one fan spoke to another. {Well, didn't you?} Subsequently, both Ron and I began to use the phrase "pub my ish" whenever we could, even in print, so that before many years had passed the phrase became very common in fanzines and at conventions, etc., too. But I notice that even now when it's used in conversation there's always a note of irony employed. (11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611)

DARROLL PARDOE I can sympathise with Redd Boggs' predicament at striking terror into the heart of a car driver. I have much the same trouble at our local post office, where (I'm told) the spirits of the counter staff sink as they see me coming in through the door. Yes, kindly inoffensive me is the terror of the Runcorn post office. It all started a couple of years ago when Ro had a long running battle over the interpretation of the overseas printed papers packing regulations. These state that printed papers must not be sealed, but packaged in such a way that they can easily be opened for customs inspection. Several times a year Ro has occasion to mail a fairly substantial (20-25 lb.) parcel of magazines to Dick Fawcett in Connecticut, and she normally ties the parcel up with string and a double knot. For some reason the local postal staff took it upon themselves to interpret the rule to mean that only a single knot was allowed, and a double one was inadmissible. So I used to take in the parcels and have a long argument over the interpretation of the rule across the counter. Finally, we took up the matter at a higher level, and it was agreed that yes, Ro's double knots were perfectly OK, whatever the Runcorn people might think. Soon after this, I happened to go into the post office and the supervisor asked me to step round the back for a word. "They're all afraid of you here," she said. "A lot of the counter staff are fairly new and they think you know the regulations better than they do." So whenever I go in there now, even though it's usually just for a few stamps, I imagine the people at the windows thinking, "Please don't let it be me, please let him go to some other window." I'm not sure it's a reputation I really enjoy having.

I can't think of any person's name here in Britain that was shared by as many as five fans. We have several pairs, though, most notably Mike Ashley, who is a fan who was most active in the 60s and keeps a low profile nowadays, and also a more recent fan with a talent for writing the grumpiest LoCs of anyone I know.

And I'm sure that fans of less than a decade's standing who get hold of a mid-60s copy of the BSFA magazine VECTOR will assume that the Malcolm Edwards who then wrote the fan gossip column there is the same Malcolm Edwards well known today; but it isn't so--the BSFA's Edwards was a pseudonym whose real identity has (so far as I know) never been publicly revealed. Historians of fandom a couple of centuries hence are going to get very confused. (38 Marina Village, Preston Brook, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 3BQ, UK)

MIKE DECKINGER Rotsler and ATom certainly are at the top of the charts when it comes to "Most Prolific," but I can recall when every single fanzine you opened featured art by Dan Adkins. Covers, interiors, spot illos, headings, you name it. Adkins was everywhere, and while his output, in sheer quantity, may not match these two, I'm sure he had more contributions within a single duration than anyone else. His pro counterpart would be Ed Emsh, who was equally prolific and now shares Adkins' obscurity. (I guess today's candidate would be Brad Foster, whose work is definitely everywhere.)

Same address for the longest period? One contender has got to be Gerry de la Ree of New Jersey.

Suggested category: Most Boring convention speaker. It shouldn't be difficult to narrow the choices down to three or four select individuals. Run-offs could be held at the next Worldcon with the winner determined by the person causing the most walk-outs. The winner would be officially congratulated by Stephen L. Pickering, who would then launch into a probing and insightful discussion of "the sociological aspects of S.F."

Nor should Harry forget recognizing some of the true pioneers in fandom. Who ingeniously doubled his fanzine's word count by switching from double to single-space typing? Jack Cascio, long forgotten. I can almost see Belle Dietz laughing about this when she told me. She was reviewing fanzines for FANTASTIC UNIVERSE at the time and Cascio, with great flourish, made this announcement to her, seeking publicity for his innovation. Taking pity on him, she didn't release his pronouncement, and now it awaits rediscovery by some other aspiring chap. (649 16th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94118)

NIGEL RICHARDSON I like the idea of a Fannish Book of Records--but only if I can be Subjective Editor in charge of the insulting and abusive categories like Most Stupid Fan, Least Interesting LoC Writer, Most Obnoxious Convention Committee, Dullest Fanzine, Fan With Worst Taste In Music, Feminist Fan Most Likely To Set The Women's Move-

ment Back Twenty Years, SF Author You'll Least Like To Be Stuck In A Lift With, et al. This could provide hours of harmless fun and years of recrimination, violence and hate-mail. I'd leave the Fannish Sexual Exploits, Excesses and Eccentricities to someone with a stronger stomach than mine.

K. Dawn Plaskon sounds like the sort of woman British fandom needs. Over here being stylish means either washing your hair at least once a month or else spending £300 on a godawful jumpsuit. The only British fan I can think of who uses make-up with any degree of competence is male. Oh, you're so cruel, Nigel... (91 Mexfield Rd., Putney, London SW15 2RG)

ART WIDNER Warner's article on the Fannish Book of Records could lead to a wonderful irony. What Harry didn't tell you was that he threatened to take away my record of 34 years between issues of a fanzine (YHOS #13 and #14) by putting out another ish of SPACEWAYS just to be Mean. Other fen are also capable of such a dastardly deed, but they forget that this is seven-card stud and I have two aces in the hole. If Harry makes good his threat, I simply counter with FANFARE #11. I could one-up him again, and this is where the irony would come in. I could simply take off on his excellent article and put out the Fannish "Book" of Records--only I'd call it THE POLL CAT and take the record back again. (231 Courtney Lane, Orinda, CA 94563)

LUCY HUNTZINGER In response to Paul's query, I have found that smoking marijuana was helpful for rewriting things but not so hot for initial creative efforts. I look back at my small folder of fanzines and writings and find the most successful ones were not written under the influence of pot but of caffeine. (RUDE BITCH for instance was fueled by lots of Coca-Cola and coffee. Also, of course, the general weirdness of living at Ted White's house and trying to get to England.) Dope always distracted me from what I was trying to say and I'd go off and play with phrases or words regardless of their usefulness to what I was writing about. (2215-R Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94114)

JON SINGER I used to do a fair-to-middling amount of grass, and I liked it reasonably well, but after a while I started being increasingly annoyed at being unable to recall the beginning of the sentence when I got to the end, and I also found myself getting these odd gut pains, when I was thoroughly ripped. I couldn't tell exactly where it hurt, and it pretty well wrecked my fun, so I gave it up. The last time I smoked was August 28, 1982, and I spent 2½ hours recalling quite vividly why I had quit, so I'm still quit. (433 Michigan Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94707)

KEN RUDOLPH Paul Williams asks about our experiences of writing (or creating) under the influence of grass. Now my credentials here are pretty formidable. Maybe some of your readers will remember the mid-60s, and the fanzine that I and some friends in LA fandom produced in that era, one incarnation of SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES. It must have been common knowledge that entire issues were produced with most of the writers and editor stoned out of our minds. The reader's column was filled with the pot controversy. Lines were drawn in LA fandom--Bjo prominently in one corner, we the "hippie invaders" in the other. Personally, I credit pot and LSD with turning my life around--providing a creative spark to a personality which probably would have stifled in mundanity without it. And luckily for me I could play with fire and not get burned, not being an addictive personality. Today I hardly ever smoke grass. And I feel somewhat the worse for that. I've reverted to a dismaying lack of creativity in my life. But I like the feeling of a "straight" head more than I feel the need to jack up my creative juices. (6220 Hollymont Dr., Los Angeles 90068)

GRANIA DAVIS Coffee is the drug-of-choice for carving a manuscript out of the paper/screen void. All brain cells must remain focused and linear while composing. {Grania's latest caffeine creation is a novel, Moonbird, an enjoyable fantasy and her first hardcover book, from Doubleday. Check it out at your local skiffy store.}

Group minds make me feel uncomfortable and I try to avoid them. That's one reason I like fandom. It's a group composed of loners. (557 Whitewood Dr., San Rafael, CA 94903)

HARRY WARNER, JR. K. Dawn Plaskon's article was a revelation to me. It had never occurred to me that some fans receive help from others to make their coiffures ready for cons. I'd thought they would do it themselves, but I suppose it's all over their heads. Don't entrepreneurs pay for long hair anymore, the way they did in The Gift of the Magi? Dawn should have been able to finance attendance at another con from having her long hair cut if she lived in O. Henry's day, but I suppose wigs and transformations are manufactured nowadays from recycled mattresses or something similar.

It's strange, how a phrase or even a single word will sometimes arouse my sense of wonder when I see it in a fanzine. It happened this time in ATom's LoC when he described Avedon and Rob Hansen ferrying across the Thames to attend a KTF meeting. Somehow, that passing reference shook me up, made me realize how far away UK fandom really is, how all the references to the Thames in English literature over the centuries are linked in a way to this mention in a contemporary fanzine, caused me to wonder what it would be like to cross the Thames as a routine, unexceptional part of a journey. I cross the Mason and Dixon Line every time I drive four or five miles north from my home and think no more about it than Arthur Thomson must pay heed to going over the Thames and maybe my experience seems as fabled to fans far away as Avedon and Rob's crossing does to me. (I cross the well-known Golden Gate Bridge every time I go to the Third Saturday Party. That bridge is a major symbol of San Francisco, as much so as the cable cars, and yet I think of it merely as an interesting structure rather than a significant landmark.)

I have that eavesdropping impression that Judith Hanna mentions when I read most fanzines these days. It's partly due to the increased number of fans and my total lack of contact with some of those that get mentioned in fanzines, partly my altitudinous age which makes it hard to feel at home among fans who are merely middle-aged or even younger, partly my unreliable memory, maybe even a trifle related to my hermit tendencies although I should have adjusted to hermit status by now.

Peggy Rae's pitiful attempt to escape the invasion of fanzines in her mailbox reminds me of an old speculation. I keep wondering how long it takes for an active fan to stop receiving fanzines after gaffiation. Hers is a special case, of course, because she has been going to cons and holding membership in FAPA, which must cause some fans to send her fanzines out of friendship's sake. But suppose I decided to quit fandom tomorrow, dropping all my activities, not answering my mail. Would I receive my last fanzine a year later, three years later, or when? Maybe an occasional fanzine would trickle in as long as I lived, whenever another gaffiated fan returned to activity and decided to send me his revived fanzine before learning about my non-fan status. The only comparable experience I've had is my retirement from newspaper work. I had much of my mail sent to my home address during my final years on the job, because some of the mail sent to me at the office was being intercepted, and I notified almost everyone I was no longer eligible for press releases and review copies, but after three years, one farm magazine keeps coming, the last survivor of all the mailing lists I used to be on for my work. (423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740)

ALUN HARRIES I found Dawn's piece particularly interesting because I have taken to going to some local punk concerts recently. Now, some of the kids come from miles down the once industrial South Wales valleys and they really go to town, multi-colored mohawks and chains and stuff. I think they look quite good and have sometimes had comments (not unpleasant) that I look a bit normal. I would love to have the nerve to do something to my hair but wonder if I could get away with it at work and put up with all the stick from my mother.

Your letter column surprised me by being more cosmopolitan than I expected. Plenty of Brits, most of whom I know of, and some of whom I know pretty well. In essence your fanzine struck me as being like a visit to a party at which I did not actually know anybody but all the people there knew people that were friends of mine. You know what I mean? I felt quite at home, among my sort of people...well, practically. (c/o Pickersgills...)

STEVE MILLER I'm sorry K. Dawn Plaskon and I never met at BaltiCon. For example, last year she might have provided a bit of enlightenment for the people at Art Explosion, a card store I used to work for in the vicinity of the Hunt Valley Inn (Balti-

con's former locale). The problem there was that everyone including the manager (and excepting me) thought that they were fully into punk and that punk excluded everything in SF except Harlan Ellison. So the manager, with purple hair streaks and multi-eared ears, said that "those sci-fi slobos we get over here every year are a little bit strange, aren't they?" (On the other hand, perhaps fandom excludes everything in SF anyway, so why does it matter?) I lasted a few weeks at the store as assistant manager; I suspect that my failure to run off to Georgetown and do the scene with the rest of the crew had as much to do with my failure to fit in there as the fact that I was the only one married and the only one who read fairly regularly. Or it may be that the twelve years' difference in age and outlook did it...I'm too old to be in! (56 Lower Gate Ct., Owings Mills, MD 21117)

MAL ASHWORTH I dunno about Chuch Harris. I can't figure out whether he desperately needs a Yorcon alibi, for some reason I don't know about, or whether the old feller has really got a bad case of the creaking senilities and failing eyebones. Whichever, he keeps on writing to people over a large area of the earth's surface telling them that I was sitting next to him in the audience at the Yorcon masquerade. The truth is, I was up on the platform (with Madeleine Willis and others) helping to judge it, as a last-minute substitute for GoH Greg Benford ("perhaps because you look a bit like him," suggested Hazel). Greg, depending on which version one chose to believe, was either still in a pub, imbibing alcohol, or at a kebab-house, masticating who-knows what, or at a secret site planting Cruise missiles for the CIA. Anywhichever, he got done before too long and joined us part way through the judging. Now during all of this, Hazel was sitting between Chuch and Walt Willis. And I just can't bear the thought that such an eminent old lecher as Harris is so far over the hill that he can no longer distinguish between Hazel and me. For one thing, that would mean I'd have to start being kind to him (though not as kind as he'd be bound to suggest!). (16 Rockville Dr., Embsay, Skipton, North Yorks., UK)

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON I've never been greatly enamored of the faanish fanzine because I am always reading with an idea in mind, a quest in mind, of finding something that qualifies as art, that has universality. Centralist fans have as much jargon as the medical profession, and having been a medical secretary, I understand medical writing quite as easily as I understand fan writing. And as a rule, both are equally artless and devoid of universal traits. The milestones of triviality on which most centralist fans pride themselves are rarely funny or worth remembering. The current or recycled obsessions and topics are incomprehensible to an outsider, and ridiculous to anyone who does understand what's going on but just cannot relate to it. The devices of centralist fandom seem aimed at insularity and community, and as such, are worthwhile in much the same way, I suppose, that it is worthwhile to get together with all one's relatives on Christmas, though most are drunks, child abusers, thugs and cretins. They're family just the same. There are occasional exceptions to the rule when one is made to think of EBWhite, Garrison Keillor, Fran Lebowitz and all the other great comic writers (even Woody Allen), and when I encounter these among centralist fans, it makes me slightly sad that they're not widely read, apparently don't seek to be widely read. Though perhaps they would indeed inspire to being EBWhite but can't stand the odds against success in the real world, and would rather be appreciated by 200 or less centralist fans than be rejected from every syndicate or magazine. In any case, Charles Burbee's article has at least the makings of humor and humanity that has universality and art. It was a funny essay and it made the reader feel compassion for some inadequate bozo, someone we might otherwise despise on the surface and never see his sad and inadvertently whimsical life and his foolish death. There are problems with the essay, certainly, that would keep it from professional publication. But it has the makings. And one wonders what Mr. Burbee would be writing in a more competitive environment where polish and an ounce of subtlety is essential and keeps one on his toes. (P.O. Box 20610, Seattle, WA 98102)

DON D'AMMASSA Burbee's piece reminded me of an incident at work recently. There's a young lady (21) who is about to get married to a slightly older man who is generally considered a definitely bad egg. She mentioned the other day, for example, that the only things that bother her are his immaturity and his compulsive lying, but she

plans to cure him of those faults. My own opinion is that she's desperate to get out of her parents' home and this is the first thing she's thought of, but I'm not about to stick my nose in her business.

Anyway, she was talking about her plans with several people, including the Controller, who's about 40 and has a teenage daughter of his own. He kept telling her that she was making a mistake, that if she was really serious about the guy she should move in with him on a trial basis and find out whether or not it was worth making the effort involved to have a marriage work. After several minutes, she told him that it was fine that he was so liberal about how his own daughter should manage her life, but that it wouldn't work with her. He recoiled instantly. "What do you mean, my daughter? If my daughter ever suggested living with a guy, I'd break every bone in her body." And he stalked off in a rage.

Norm Hollyn's remarks about where all the hippies have gone also rings true. The few "hippie" friends I knew from college are now book store managers, lawyers, freelance tough mystery writers, housewives, and such. One even joined the Air Force. Time does work its changes on us all, doesn't it? (323 Dodge St., East Providence, RI 02914)

GEORGE "LAN" LASKOWSKI The story related by Charles Burbee was an interesting study in human relationships. In some respects Frank sounds like me, in that I went through a period wherein I did no dating, and although some people tried to set me up with dates, I pretty much refused the contact. After that period of depression, I went back to school (post-grad work and teaching certification) and then found fandom. In both places I met intelligent women, and started going out. Eventually I found one who made worse puns than I could, and we made our pairing permanent. Then I have known some other men who were the spitting image of Frank. After moving from one job to another I lost track of them; I wonder now if any of them broke out of their set ways. (55 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013)

BRIAN EARL BROWN Charles Burbee's "My Janitor Is Dead" never got the laugh out of me that he was expecting. I identified with that janitor too much to laugh at him the way Burbee did. A life wasted through hesitation and sloth. Too close to home, Meyer. (11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224)

PETER SMITH That is a good point in Noreen Shaw's letter. The fringes from which ideas are taken to be recycled are many and varied, e.g., foreign cultures. I was glad to see that Kurosawa's film, "Yojimbo," is known in the US, half fearing that it would be obscured by Leene's remake of it, "Fistful of Dollars." Eastwood later watered down Leene but it doesn't stop there--Kurosawa was influenced by American westerns (Ford among others). Sometimes the watering down of ideas from the lunatic fringe is a public service. The most boring thing I have ever seen was a rare early Warhol short film--which I wished was rarer and shorter--and the avant garde films of Kenneth Anger are less than gripping. Yet ideas from this lunatic fringe revitalize the main stream. {Yes, now you can buy beach towels in America with prints of Campbell's soup cans on them.} So while fandom and society may be vampirish and recycle ideas, I don't see that as bad at all--everything is recycled, nothing new under the moon. (16 Tresta Walk, Woking, Surrey GU21 4XF, UK)

ROBERT BLOCH I am in receipt of your geriatric journal and still can't believe it--a fanzine containing material (if that's the word) by Ashworth, Boggs, Harry Warner Jr., Burbee, ATOM, Harris, Willis, Noreen Shaw--and mentions of Tucker, Perdue and Laney, plus an old Lee Hoffman illo! Now I know Lee is alive; at least she seemed to be when I saw her in Fort Lauderdale last December, but I couldn't vouch for the others until now, and truth to tell, I was beginning to have my doubts about Mike Glicksohn. I mean, would you buy a used safari wagon from this man? But for the sake of the record I started adding up the ages of the 12 contributors and LoC-writers mentioned above, and Glicksohn aside (out of the way, and take that fake sword with you) the total of their years on Earth comes to 1,182. And if you want to throw in Harry Warner Jr, it's 1,256, or slightly older than Forrest Ackerman. Hoping you are the same... (2111 Sunset Crest Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90046)

JEAN YOUNG I am a complete sucker for the Group Mind (or social or peer pressure; do you think there's really any difference?). I realized this when I was in my teens and was horrified with it, reacted with terrible self-disgust (it was triggered by my father pointing out how "adaptable" I was, when I insisted I wouldn't fit in with something), and it has taken many years to begin to tolerate this characteristic (which is by no means as simple as "conformism"). But I can feel the tug of ideas that repel me and values I reject; I expect that what most people perceive as a negative and argumentative nature is a device to avoid being completely swept away by this tendency. Or perhaps it is just that in this, as in many other areas, I have two characteristics that appear opposed. I particularly remember my early days as a hippie (1970-71) and the incredible pressure to smoke dope (the pressure for other drugs was considerably less) when the J was going around--the suspicion that anyone who didn't was a narc, my own feelings of isolation (I was a lot older than "everyone else," didn't quite "look hippie" enough, and couldn't bring it off, though I tried), and smoking for social acceptance...learning to pretend to smoke, while not inhaling (easy--I never learned to inhale)...god, what a conformist lot the hippies in these parts were! No wonder most of them grew into conformist, ordinary citizens when the craze had passed. Myself, I never claimed to be anything but an unsuccessful conformist. I understand about "keeping your guard up," as Jane Hawkins says, and I'm only too aware that it doesn't work, and of the tremendous shift in one's self-perception that occurs when one has only one or two other people one sees, ever (writers in the Valley, alone with Lee, were real bad for me--I terribly need to get a range of other people's perceptions on highly people-related stuff, like Relationships, f'r instance). It's not quite so bad when I'm living alone, because my dogs (with one exception, now long dead) don't talk to me. (Communicate, certainly--talk, no.) I know I usually don't care to read a lot about a subject that is one approachable by "just thinking about it" (philosophy in particular--and gosh--rootie, folks, I didn't know Mal Ashworth was a Professional Philosopher; one of my very closest friends here is, likewise), for fear of getting "prejudiced," and whether from this reason alone or from other associated physical/neurological/psychological hangups, I almost "can't read;" I have to "fight with" every word, look for the underlying assumptions, decide if I think the statement or assumption or whatever is likely and/or acceptable (to me--who else is trying to read this mess, anyway), and if the conclusion follows.

Well, this means I don't get a whole lot of heavy reading done, although I claim to do a lot of heavy thinking. I read a lot of cheap escape literature that I don't "need to" argue with as much (I do it sometimes, anyway) and get into a lot of arguments with my friends. I have this wonderful reputation for independence and eccentricity, and it's all frustrated conformism and the operation of the Group Mind.

I was interested in a bizarre sort of way at the lengthy description by Dawn Plaskon of a convention spent mostly in tinting people's hair and such. It's a perfectly fine thing to be interested in and care about, but so far removed from anything in my life that I'm constantly brought up short by a different set of cultural/subcultural values. Back in Iowa City, in my graduate assistant days, I was required, for most of those years, to wear a skirt or dress for teaching. I also lived for a year or two with a family where the lady designed and made clothes. I got "into" it, sort of; in fact I too had loved to "dress up" as a child and adolescent--costumes, makeup; did a lot of theater. But I was never successful socially at putting on a persona with clothes, at least, not with any of the clothes I tried. (RR 4, Box 47, Decorah, IA 52101)

WALTER A. WILLIS After reading TRAP DOOR #5 I felt something like what I did after seeing my first photograph of the Earth from space. "What do you know," I thought then, "the mapmakers got it right!" Similarly I was crogged to learn from your report on the current prozines that not only does Harlan admit the "mad dogs" quote, but he realizes its fame. It is as if all us old mythologists are suddenly vindicated.

I almost feel like inquiring whether your cover is of John Van Couvering, who was briefly famous in the 1950's for walking through a glass door in Los Angeles. (Hi, Judith. Don't make it bad.) (32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 OPD)

GARY DEINDORFER "Local Scoop" confirms my intuition that Donna Nassar is a potential top fanwriter...she at least does not suffer from the D. West, T. White or John Holmes syndrome of length for length's sake. Some gremlin such as you must have whispered in her ear that terseness is the soul of brevity.

"Terseness is the soul of brevity" is the kind of thing I would like to see catch on as a fannish running gagline, akin to "That's not too many;" but it has been my experience that the ones you want to catch on never do, and the ones you don't want to catch on, do. A few years ago I coined the term "metafannish" in the pages of IZZARD's letter column, hoping it would immortalize me by entering the lingua fannica, and it sunk like a sick rock. On the other hand I am cursed always to be remembered as the snotty youth who picked on poor old Seth Johnson, who then Died, making me look Cruel. After I die, I expect that I will have to answer to the Karmic Tribunal for this ill treatment of that mild-mannered ice cream man who never, it must be said, meant any harm to anyone.

Someday I hope to make a lot of money selling snow to Eskimoes so I can get on a plane and get beautiful at Dawn's Salon. She could give everybody in fandom makeovers. I would like to see Harry Warner and Walt Willis with punk haircuts. I think the world is finally ready for that now that punk is dying fast if it isn't dead already.

Then there is pseudo-telepathy. I remember certain LSD trips in the flower days where we all sat around convinced that we were reading each other's minds. Looking back on it, I get the feeling that we thought we were reading each other's minds, but actually were merely in a heightened state of suggestibility. A bunch of heads lounging around on acid muttering to each other "We Are All One" is not telepathy, it's pseudotelepathy. But I won't deny that telepathy exists, because I've experienced it, although Sturgeon's "telempathy" is more what I mean for, after all, people pick on on each other's emotions all the time without necessarily being able to recite a phone number someone is thinking of.

You might reassure Kate Schaefer that when I was Young I was Weird but now that I'm Old I'm Normal in a boring sort of way. My fantasy is that Kate Schaefer looks like Raquel Welch. I'd like to meet her someday so she can see how normal I am and I can see if she's a fox or not.

But I should not judge a woman by her looks. A plain woman may actually be inwardly beautiful. Or so I am told. Haha. Just kidding. That is true. I used to know a plain woman who was a hundred or so pounds of condensed sex.

Sorry for all the capital letters; rather, Capitalized Words. Since Calvin Demmon is gafia somebody has to carry on. Though as you know I will never do it with the Flair that Calvin Brought To It. The previous sentence is an example of how he Does It Better.
(447 Bellevue Avenue, #9-B, Trenton, NJ 08618)

AND, "We Also Heard From": HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, MICHAEL ASHLEY, CY CHAUVIN, DANIEL FARR, DONALD FRANSON, ROBB GREGG (who said about my editorial last time, "I was disappointed that you are another of these fen who choose to attack the prozines;" but upon rereading what I said I could find nothing stronger than my statement that I didn't read them (the prozines) myself), MARGARET HALL, MARC ORTLIEB, SARAH PRINCE, JOHN PURCELL, RICK SNEARY ("Robert Bloch is still superb. The man can say more in five lines than most of us in two pages."), DAN STEFFAN, ARTHUR THOMSON ("founding member: fwuk"), TARAL WAYNE, TAMI VINING (who said, concernedly, about the "X?" on her mailing label last time: "You wouldn't really do that to me, would you; I mean I know I've just lived on my good looks and leather so far, but this LoC should carry me for a while, shouldn't it, and I'll tell you how much I like it the next time I see you at the next con anyway, too, and I hope I don't have to spike you the next time I see you 'cause I've stopped getting that great little zine called TRAP DOOR, 'cause a lot of good friends and allies are in there, too, like the infamous J. Bowman and same adjective for K. Dawn Plaskon, who I've secretly been teaching secret leather dyke guerilla tactics to. I'm sure something as traumatic as you following up on your threatened X? would set off a whole chain of events that we'd all regret later on. 'Nuf said, you're a smart boy, I know we have an understanding now, anyway, right?" Yes, ma'am!), ROGER WEDDALL, and finally our last issue's cover artist, STEVE STILES, who thanks to the Post Office didn't get the copy of that issue we sent to him along with the regular mailing, and accordingly was forced to circulate the petition on the next page. Needless to say, we straightened up immediately and sent him a replacement copy flat, in an envelope. ...

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