

# TRAP DOOR



8/30/90



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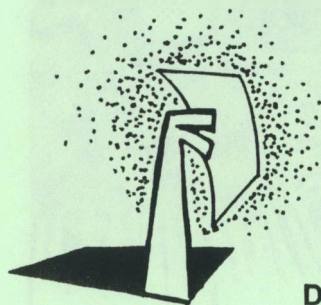
Issue No. 10, January 1991. Edited and published by Robert Lichtman, P. O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442 USA. Please send all trade fanzines and letters of comment to this address. Founding member: fwa. Local associates in fandom: Jeanne Bowman, Don Herron, Donna Nassar and Paul Williams. You are receiving this fanzine because I sent it to you. It is available for \$4.00 per issue (no long-term subs) or by editorial whim in response to The Usual. All contents copyright © 1991 by TRAP DOOR with all rights reverting to individual contributors upon publication. If a red "X" or a "?" (or both) appears on or near your mailing label, it indicates that I'm losing a sense of context for your position on my mailing list and you may not receive future issues unless you respond. Or maybe you will. Fandom, like life, is full of these little uncertainties.

## CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE:

Doorway  
I Was a Teenage WereWolfe  
Genealogy: A Convention Report of Sorts  
Penseroso  
Play Mystic For Me  
The Game  
We Never Sleep  
A Proud and Lonely Thing  
Son of Stuff  
The Ether Still Vibrates

Robert Lichtman	2
Terry Carr	7
Linda Blanchard	10
Redd Boggs	14
Bob Shaw	17
David Bridges	20
Paul Williams	25
Terry Carr	27
Carol Carr	29
the Readers	33

**ART & GRAPHICS:** ATom (2), Harry Bell (bcover), Jeanne Bowman (25), Grant Canfield (19), David Haugh (32), Lee Hoffman (14, 29), William Rotsler (19, 26, 28, 47) and Steve Stiles (everything else, including the cover).



## DOORWAY

LAST ISSUE, WHEN I waxed nostalgic about Arthur Thomson in my editorial and ran a cover of his paired with a back cover by Harry Bell gently lampooning his style, I had no idea that before I put that issue in the mail it had already become an early memorial. I was shocked when I first heard of Arthur's passing in an LoC from Terry Jeeves received early in March, but not all that surprised considering the previous years' reports of his seeing health. Arthur was one of the pillars upon which "our" fandom was firmly anchored. He was in fandom when I arrived and was a constant fact of life throughout my tenure (his drawings have appeared everywhere, his prolificness rivalled only, perhaps, by William Rotsler). I'm sorry he left us so early. His intelligence, quick wit, kindness and generosity are much missed — and of course his artwork.

New York area FAPA member Mark Richards called me November 3rd to report that Donald A. Wollheim had passed away in a Manhattan hospital early the morning of November 2nd. Wollheim was certainly one of the original architects and proponents of fandom for its own sake. Though not active in fanzines for the past several decades, his influence is ingrained in our subculture. Besides inventing science fiction conventions in 1937, later that year he founded one of our most enduring entities, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, of which he wrote in its first mailing: "There are many fans desiring to put out a voice who dare not, for fear of being obliged to keep it up, and for the worry and time taken by subscriptions and advertising. It is for them and for the fan who admits it is his hobby and not his business that we formed the FAPA." Certainly this statement was the spiritual precursor of The Usual.

Barely four weeks later I heard from Don Fitch that Rick Sneary had passed away in his sleep sometime the night of Friday, November 30th. He had moved to Nevada just a month earlier, turning his fanzine collection and fan-files over to the same university library that acquired Terry Carr's collection.

Rick was a giant among fen, who among many other achievements demonstrated through the South Gate in '58 campaign that each individual in fandom can make a difference. He was one of my earliest influences among those fans whom I considered the

"older generation" back in my neo days. His was among the names I gleaned from the earliest fanzines I received when I was compiling a mailing list for my first fanzine, PSI-PHI #1, in the final months of 1958. Rick was quick to respond, though on a questioning note. "... It is just not normal for a fanzine to appear like this, in an area, when the fan is unknown. In view of the things that have been happening, it almost sounds like a hoax. Your knowledge of fan-speak, and reviews of current fanzines proves you have contact with the field. Yet, I at least have not heard of you through either the Solacon, or LASFS. This doesn't prove anything, as I don't know everyone, or remember all those I may hear of..." (It was rough to have any credibility coming into fandom shortly after the revelation of two major hoaxes, Joan W. Carr and Carl Brandon, especially publishing my first issue somewhat versed in fannish lore but from only three or four months of reading fannish fanzines. I knew of the impending Solacon – my discovery of fandom was around June 1958 – but shyness kept me from making an appearance there. LASFS was totally unknown to me until a fateful call one evening from George Fields, inviting me to attend.)

I met Rick at one of the first LASFS meetings I went to. We hit it off very well, my earnest neoish interest in learning about fandom and fanhistory arousing one of Rick's most memorable qualities: his generosity. He invited me to come out to visit in South Gate, and I did several times. We passed many timeless hours talking about fans and fandom, present and past, and looking at old fanzines. Of his other collections, I remember mainly carefully kept files of the "Flash Gordon" and (I think) "Prince Valiant" Sunday strips. At the conclusion of each visit, he would send me home with shopping bags full of the most outrageous fanzines. Complete runs of VAMPIRE, SPACEWARP, QUANDRY and others. The first dozen SAPS mailings, all in a row. And much more. He also continued to encourage me in my publishing, responding to practically every issue of PSI-PHI. Though it was never acknowledged by either of us, I felt that he was in many ways one of my major fannish mentors.

In the distant days of 1959 and somewhat later, when I was an L.A. fan by accident of geography, various other L.A. fans would take me aside and inform me that Rick was "sickly" and was not expected to live much longer. When I looked at Rick's admittedly frail body, all I could see was his strength of spirit and I found it hard to believe the whispers about his mortality. But I guess they were right. It just took thirty years longer than expected. Too soon, at that!

In a 1988 letter, Rick mentioned in passing his idea of moving to Nevada to be near his family. When I read in Art Rapp's SAPSine that he was

actually on the verge of doing so, I wrote to Rick on November 25th: "In the latest issue of SPACE-WARP, Art Rapp reported that you are about to move off to Arizona. I remember your mentioning something in your May 1989 letter to me about the possibility of a move away from South Gate, but in my naive fannish way dismissed the possibility of a CoA ever being imminent for the Sage. However, we all must bend with the times, so in the interests of maintaining your free subscription to TRAP DOOR without interruption, please provide me with your new address as soon as it's known to you." Rick never received that letter, which was addressed to one of those fannish addresses I've not had to look up in decades: 2962 Santa Ana Street, South Gate. It came back in mid-December marked "Attempted – Not Known." The post office certainly has a short memory. Fandom's is far longer. Perhaps it's quixotic of me, but let's commemorate Rick with a new and yet hauntingly familiar slogan: "I can hardly wait for South Gate in 2058." A verbal time capsule into future fanhistory.

Finally, I heard from Carolyn Thompson on January 10th: "Don passed away December 15th. You may know that his cancer was found in his liver in October after he was home from Holland. His decline was rapid, which may have saved him some pain." I never met Don C. Thompson – knew him only as an interesting writer, editor and publisher whose fanzine, DON-O-SAUR, was one of the highlights of each FAPA mailing in which it appeared. His wide-ranging interests made for good, engaging reading. I liked him for what I knew of him as reflected in his fanzines, though I blush to admit I never wrote him a LoC.

All this writing about fan mortality tends to remind me that though in somewhat shaky health, my parents are still alive. My mother will be 80 this spring and my father 77 this summer. On occasion, I've wondered how I will react when one of them passes away.

Our relationship has been far from perfect. My relationship with my father could never have been described as close (well, maybe when I was very little, but I don't remember that far back very clearly) and at times I've wished I'd been dealt a better hand in the father department.

My mother and I were closer, and when I think about the death of one of my parents affecting me, I think more of her. She's suffered a few small strokes in recent years that've rendered her very absent-minded, but otherwise seems in better overall health than my father.

I don't see them often. Last time was over the July 4th weekend in 1989, when I also attended a few hours of the Westercon, and that was the first time in nearly three years. Because discussion of Real Stuff



is rarely on the agenda, we run out of things of any consequence to talk about after the first half hour or so. My ex-wife takes our boys around for a visit when she's traveled to Southern California to visit *her* parents, so my parents *do* have more frequent contact with their grandchildren than with me.

There were a couple of years in the early '80s, after my father had his cancer surgery and was having some heart problems, during which he seemed to mellow out. But normally I run the risk during visits that he will get into rehashing old unresolvable arguments. My mother will excuse herself on these occasions to polish the toaster. (Their house always looks showroom fresh – I suppose Joseph Nicholas would be keen on this, but I always find it rather antiseptic.) Between my infrequent visits, they seldom call. They send all the obligatory cards (birthdays, Christmas, etc.) and I reciprocate. At least a couple times a year I write them a chatty letter, keeping them informed of what their grandsons are up to, including the sending of clippings from the local newspaper. (No, they didn't get busted or become sports heroes; they were on honor rolls, received awards, won a bike, appeared in plays, were recognized for public service work, etc.)

When I was growing up, they were *always* one step behind tolerating (never mind liking) whatever I was interested in at any particular time. They were highly opinionated and intrusive, especially my father, who often has a very short fuse; his politics and views on race differ radically from my own. (I once described him as an unfunny Archie Bunker, but later realized I couldn't say that because I didn't find Archie funny, either.)

When I was very young and read nonstop comic books – both funny animal and sfnal/horror – they loathed my reading the things. "You'll rot your mind!" "You'll ruin your eyesight!" (Actually, reading faint ditto fanzines a few years down the line was probably far better for that.) When I moved on from comic books to automotive magazines (*Motor Trend*, *Hot Rod*, *Car & Driver*, *Road & Track*, etc.), they said, "Why do you want to read about cars?" and "You never read your comic books anymore." It was hard for me, even then, to imagine that my parents actually cared that I'd given up reading comic books.

After reading about cars paled, the next thing I got into was recorded music, specifically rock 'n roll and rhythm 'n blues. I had been an inveterate radio listener from earliest childhood, tuning in religiously to all manner of comedy and dramatic shows. A shift took place in radio in the early '50s during the course of which all the dramatic and comedy shows on radio either disappeared or moved to television. With those shows gone, music began to dominate the airwaves. All sorts of music. I began listening to music on the radio after school, tuning in a variety of stations oriented towards white and black audiences.

(My parents didn't get a television right away, based on their belief that it might turn out to be a fad and there they'd be: stuck with an expensive, useless receiver. They succumbed in 1955.)

At this stage in my life, I was also increasingly reading science fiction – lots of Heinlein, del Rey, Clarke and others from the local and school libraries. This was something that evolved from my reading of sf comics earlier, and by the age of twelve or thirteen I was well into my personal sfnal Golden Age. I took the sf out of the library so as to save my money for buying records. I wasn't aware of prozines yet. At first it was enough to hear rock music on the radio, but soon I faunched for a more permanent record, as it were. This was in the days before dubbing cassette decks (or even cassettes at all) – the days of reel-to-reel tape and wire recorders. As soon as I saved up enough money, I got a Voice of Music four-speed portable phonograph with "a large four-inch hi-fi speaker" and started buying 45s.

Now I wasn't just sitting around reading stuff (sf); I was playing strange music at high volume. It was not popular with my parents. "What is that racket?!" I would shut the door to my room and keep it as loud as I dared. When I came home with a new, hot 45, I'd lock myself in my room and play it a whole lot of times in a row, dancing and singing along. Just about anything by Chuck Berry or Little Richard would be subject to this ritual.

It wasn't long, of course, after getting heavily into this sort of music that my parents waxed lyrical over my former addiction to automotive magazines. I will simply note that they *didn't* get especially nostalgic when I eventually left rock music behind and moved on to fandom. However, it was fandom that incurred their hottest wrath. (The Farm was a dead-heat second.) Though I'd been reading beyond my age group, as educators say, for years, much of what I read was contained in "books" and "magazines". These unprofessional-looking publications suddenly dominating my attention made them feel violently threatened. The wide-ranging freedom of expression and some of the choices of subject matter really rubbed them the wrong way. Sometimes my mother would open them up before I got home from school and check them out. She'd freak out over some of their contents, but never censored anything despite threats. One time, however, they required me to republish one sheet of an OMPazine because of something I quoted from the writings of one Rich Alex Kirs in Boyd Raeburn's excellent A BAS (the part about "nice girls vs. vice girls" in #10, Boyd). Yes, in the early days I had to submit everything for their censorship. Naturally I didn't comply. They discovered my transgression while snooping in my stuff. (I had run off the sheets, but hadn't collated and stapled most of them yet – or hid them adequately.)



Later, when I was 19 and couldn't stand it any more, I split to Berkeley with the help of Calvin Demmon (who stored much of my stuff) and Andy Main. Andy rendezvoused with me in downtown Los Angeles one evening and drove me to Santa Barbara, where we holed up for a week with his friends, hearing daily reports from Berkeley of my parents looking for me, pounding on fans' doors at 5:30 in the morning, until we finally received word that they'd left town. Andy and I then drove north. There may still exist on tape somewhere the recording made of a phone conversation between me and my parents after I'd gone on to Berkeley and they were back in Los Angeles: a classic attempt at reconciliation through intimidation.

Later on, after I went to live on The Farm in Tennessee they hated everything about that, too. They never came to visit the entire ten years I was there, not even when I got married. Yet, I don't recall their being sentimental about fandom during my stay in Tennessee. They're less down on fandom these days — they were even impressed at my winning TAFF — but they've never apologized for their behavior back in '61. I can understand now as a parent the general drift of what they were up to, but also as a parent I feel their methods were appalling. I feel a sense of loss, but it's a murky one because of the mental stretching involved in trying to imagine what a less adversarial childhood would have been like. I think I've generally forgiven them, but sometimes I'm not so sure.

Returning to fandom. I've known (as we all have) for decades that fandom has been gradually but inexorably approaching that time when those of us who remember what it was like when it was a proud and lonely thing to be a fan — back before fandom became so large and successful — will be gone and it will move on as the huge all-encompassing amorphous entity it has become. Still each loss is no less painful. Looking ahead, one can ponder whether and how fandom's basic roots will endure after this drastic shift in personnel. Will the history of fandom from the beginning and the traditions set in motion by the earlier players on the fannish stage live on in the infrastructure of fandom as it moves into the next century? Or might fandom metamorphose beyond recognition? Tune in tomorrow...

This has been a commentary on family life, both personal and fannish.

**THE NUMBER OF FANZINES** sent to me declined again in 1990. No, this doesn't mean that people are cutting me off their list because I publish too infrequently; my review of other fanzines' listings of zines received indicates I'm still getting nearly everything I want and a little bit more. These figures do not include apazines or convention fliers, but everything else is counted. The figures are mixed this

year, but slightly positive in that, except for the U.K., the number of fanzines received was up from all countries. This may not reflect an increase in production; I took on several new trades this past year. In general, this year's results are inconclusive of any upward or downward trend. Fanzine fandom outside of the apas is holding steady at a snail's pace.

Enough chatter; here are the statistics:

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Australia	16	12	15	32	27
Canada	2	2	1	4	7
U.K.	30	61	51	33	33
U.S.	66	55	67	58	98
Other	5	0	4	3	1
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>166</b>

1990's Other consisted of one fanzine each from Czechoslovakia, France, Lithuania, New Zealand and Norway.

I've shifted TRAP DOOR from December to January publication, so as not to have to complete it during the height of the holiday season. An additional incentive is, of course, the impossibility of presenting figures for the entire calendar year before it's over. To me this ongoing tally constitutes a strong barometer of the health of our portion of fandom. I feel that I'm a representative fan in terms of what zines I get. Is anyone interested besides me? (Well, some of you are; see this issue's lettercol.) To be continued, no doubt...

**IF I WAS A** convention committee looking for a good way to spend some unexpected profits in a fannish way, I'd undertake reprint volumes of runs of fanzines. Imagine being able to buy a three-volume set of HYPHEN or QUANDRY, OOPSLA or perhaps all the Burbee issues of SHAGGY, hardcover or trade paperback, on acid-free Twiltone (or green quarto) in boxed sets, even as one can now buy *Mad* and other classic comics! If such volumes were priced comparably to the *Mad* reprints, "-" or Q would run about \$150-\$200 for a complete run. Expensive, but a bargain compared to attempting to purchase rare actual issues.

In addition to fanzines, our basic fanhistory texts — Sam Moskowitz's history of early fandom, the two volumes by Harry Warner Jr., and (when it's done) Rob Hansen's mammoth history of British fandom — should all be kept in print the way smaller classic texts such as Tucker's *Neofan's Guide* tend to remain available.

Wait, while I'm wishing aloud, there's more. I'd like to see a series of fanthologies put together, one for each year fanzines have been published, which as a whole would reflect the changes in fanzine content and scope over the decades. It should still be

possible to access both fanzines and fans' memories for even the earliest periods, but time is of the essence more and more as years pass. After the past is caught up with, an ongoing fanthology should be published. There are good signs here. This year's Corflu is undertaking one covering the year 1987. The publication of a fanthology would be an excellent Corflu tradition to establish. (Write Richard Brandt, address in this issue's lettercol, for information about Corflu 8's fanthology.)

Also, while of course I'd welcome anyone who wanted to tackle a fanhistory taking up where Harry and Sam left off, perhaps a less daunting task would be to tape record or commit to paper or diskette one's own reminiscences of fandom and fannish events in which one participated, from which — if participation is widespread — a picture of fandom as seen through the eyes of its participants will emerge. If a central editor collected such materials (which would, one hopes, be accompanied by copies of photographs, etc.), a large scrapbook of fanhistory could be put together for publication.

Well, despite the dearth of most of the above, bringing it all back home to here and now, there are a few recent, current and upcoming special publications deserving your attention. Send \$2 to Karen Cooper, 5230 — 33rd Avenue So., Minneapolis, MN 55417, for a copy of *Remember When*, a oneshot commemorating Art Widner's GoHship at Minicon 25; this delightful little volume contains everything from Art's first appearance in *Brass Tacks* in September 1934, to current commentary from Harry Warner Jr., Norman F. Stanley, Milton Rothman, Gus Willmorth, Don Fitch, Gerry de la Ree and Julius Schwartz. Proceeds from this volume go to DUFF. Also, soon to be available is *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator*... and ... *To The Enchanted Convention* by Walt Willis and James White, illustrated by Stu Shiffman. Send \$6 (\$15 for a signed limited edition) to Geri Sullivan, 3444 Blaisdell Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55408-4315. Proceeds from this volume go to various worthy fannish causes.

Various standard texts about fandom *do* continue to be available, and perhaps it would be timely to list some of them here. In April 1989 Hyperion Press (47 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880) produced a small printing of a hardcover edition of Sam Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm* which they offered at \$34. This may sound high, but it's less than most of the few rare copies available second-hand. So far as I know, Harry Warner's *All Our Yesterdays* continues to be available in hardcover from Advent:Publishers (P. O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690) for about \$15 post-paid. Harry's other history, *A Wealth of Fable*, is listed at \$20 (plus \$2.50 shipping) in Robert Madle's fascinating stf book catalog (4406 Bestor Drive, Rockville, MD 20853). Madle's catalog has other wondrous rarities: the first *Fancyclopedia* for \$200; the second

for \$45 (and the 1979 reprint edition for \$15); a complete run of THE FANTASY FAN for \$750; and of Bradbury's FUTURIA FANTASIA for \$1,500.

Mild warning note: TRAP DOOR doesn't maintain a huge research department keeping track of the actual day-to-day availability of these and other fan-historical volumes, so if you send off for any of them and your order is sent back with apologies, please drop me a pactsard to let me know.

We are entirely confident, however, that INNUENDO No. 12 — the 90-page final issue with material ranging from Arnie Katz to Philip K. Dick — is still very much available from Jerry Kaufman (8738 First Ave. NW, Seattle, WA 98117) for \$6 post-paid. This zine's proceeds also benefit DUFF. (By the way, I've received ten LoCs on that issue so far and will have probably have a special "InnVective" in the next TRAP DOOR.)

AS WITH MOST ISSUES over the years, this issue includes some material reprinted from various apazines. In fact, somewhat more than usual. If this makes TRAP DOOR the *Reader's Digest* of the fanzine world, we'll just grin and bear it.

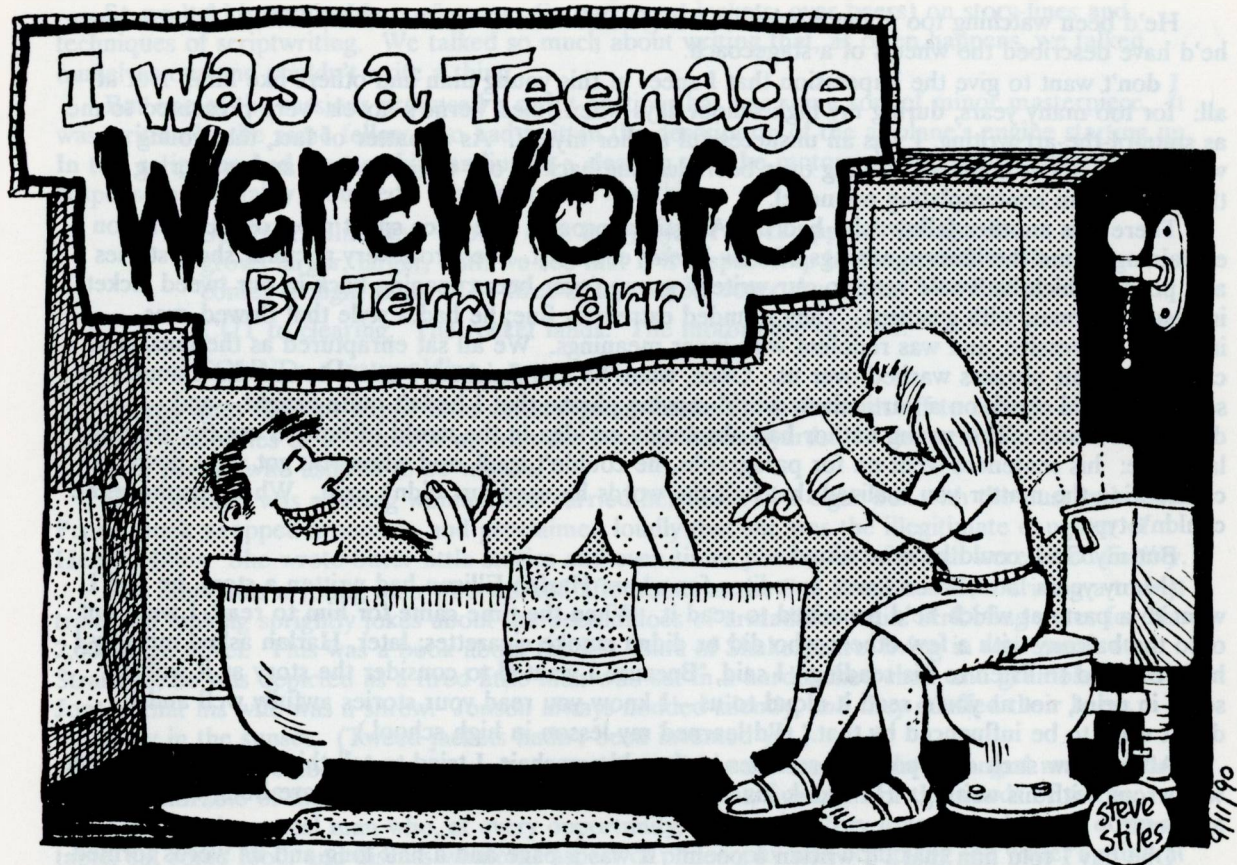
Linda Blanchard's piece appeared first in a 20-member apa. She complained in the zine about the lack of fanzines to which to send her writing, prefacing her article with "Even if I write a piece that's got some cohesiveness, it becomes an orphan with no home." And in a note following the article: "All written up, and nowhere to go. With fanzine fandom dead or dormant in the United States, I sometimes feel I should give up writing and take up some hobby to fill the time." Redd Boggs' column is, as always, cobbled together from his SAPSzine; though Redd quit SAPS several years ago, most of his writing there was timeless and there's enough left to fill at least half a dozen more columns before it runs out.

Terry Carr's two pieces appeared in his final FAPAZINE, which I don't believe was circulated widely, if at all, outside the FAPA mailing in which it appeared. (I found leftovers of this particular issue in his stuff only in collated but unstapled form. There were also quite a few copies, far more than of anything else.) Finally, Carol's "Son of Stuff" is gathered from her appearances in lilapa; it will appear here occasionally, not in every issue. In each instance, several hundred people will be reading each piece of writing for the first time.

On a closing note: This issue marks my tenth year of fannish reactivation. It's also the first time, after three tries, that I've published a genzine that has reached double digits in issue number. I've been in fandom for two thirds of my life as of my birthday last fall. The combination of computers and better self-perspective makes this time around more fun.

Meanwhile, back in the real world: I'm finishing this on January 15th. Pray for peace. — Robert Lichtman





I've just finished reading an article called "A Visit with Julio Garcia della Guerra y Paz" — one of those profiles of highly successful authors that include their opinions on everything from the state of Brazil's economy to their favorite word processors. I'm constantly reading articles like this; I'm an addict. I can reel off all sorts of fascinating data about authors, such as the precise term for the color of Norman Mailer's nose, how much money Elmore Leonard gets paid to speak at junior colleges, and Mary McCarthy's favorite sukiyaki recipe. What's more, I have seen with my very own eyes a photograph of J. D. Salinger's mailbox.

But whenever I immerse myself in one of these articles which go into such loving detail about how interesting famous authors are, I can't help remembering some of the highly *unsuccessful* authors I've known whose idiosyncracies were even more fascinating.

There's something terribly intense about people who are determined to write, write, write, and who keep at it for years despite repeated rejection slips. The feelings of aspiring authors can run high. One such young man used to keep a copy of the magazine to which he'd sent his most recent story suspended on a string over his wastebasket — if he got a rejection, he'd cut the string. Eventually he tired of the game when his wastebasket became too full.

This was the same young man who later wrote a novel in which he described the starting of an airplane's engine something like this: "The man on the field ran out and twirled the propeller; it spun clockwise once, twice, then finally caught and spun more and more rapidly in a rising roar. When it had fully caught, there was a fluttering of the prop that was too fast for the eye, and it settled down to a steady, humming revolution in the other direction."



He'd been watching too many movies. I was glad he didn't write westerns, because I knew how he'd have described the wheels of a stagecoach.

I don't want to give the impression that I sneer at this young man and others like him. Not at all: for too many years, during my high school days when Jules Verne's novels were presented to me as state-of-the-art writing, I was an unsuccessful author myself. As a matter of fact, that young writer and I spent many an evening over beers leaning back in our tweed jackets and muttering things like "I'm contemplating my novel."

There was another fellow who had the Artistic approach. He once spent most of an afternoon explaining to me the inner meanings of *New Yorker* cover art. He wrote very peculiar short stories and poems which he would read to our writers' group (over beers, leaning back in our tweed jackets) in resonant tones, with gestures. They sounded extremely fine; he had a style that flowed, was infinitely expressive, and was redolent with inner meanings. We all sat enraptured as the measured cadences of his phrases washed over us. Once, when he had finished, I asked to see the manuscript so that I could check on a particularly world-moving phrase that I hadn't quite caught – and disillusion struck. This young author had absolutely no idea in the world of how to use the English language: his sentences went on for paragraphs, he couldn't spell, and when you got right down to considering the matter you realized that half the words he used just didn't exist. What was more, he couldn't type.

But my God, could he read aloud.

(Many years later, when I was an editor for whom Harlan Ellison had written a story, he and I went to a party at which he'd promised to read it. When the time came for him to read, I went out onto the balcony with a few others who did or didn't smoke cigarettes; later, Harlan asked me why I hadn't stayed to listen to his reading. I said, "Because I wanted to consider the story as it would seem in print, not as you'd read it aloud to us – I know you read your stories awfully well and I didn't want to be influenced by that." I'd learned my lesson in high school.)

After a few such disappointing sessions in the old armchair, I tried to tell this young author what was wrong with his writing. He shook his head sadly, patiently, and said, "You are hung up on grammar."

One day I told him that I'd written a poem. It was a page and a half long and its words formed a fascinating pattern on the page. There were no initial caps, no left-hand margin, and nothing rhymed. Nothing meant anything, either, but I didn't tell him that. I handed it to him and asked him to tell me what he thought of it.

He read it with beetle brows and then told me that I had obviously been striving to capture the eternal struggle of the masses upward from the mud to the stars, and pointed out lines which referred to each agonized, enraptured, wondering expression that crossed the face of *Homo erectus* on that painful ascent.

"But Keith," I said, "the poem doesn't mean anything. I wrote it for a joke! It's deliberately meaningless."

He peered at me silently, calmly, for several seconds. "True writing comes from inside," he said. "From underneath, in the subconscious, or the soul if you happen to believe in it which I don't because I quit the Catholic Church last week and haven't managed to embrace Brahminism just yet. But your innards know."

"My innards?" I said, aghast.

"Your insides," he said. "You surrendered your usual rigid formality of language to the dictates of your subconscious, and have written the first truly meaningful thing in your life. Of course, the imagery's a little confused."

Some time after the above events, our group of teenage Wolfes and Saroyans met a fellow who had a sure-fire idea for a television series. He'd been watching his TV set closely, he said, and he'd decided that animated cartoons would be a coming thing in that medium. He wanted to get in on the ground floor and was looking around for someone to script a science fiction series on which he would supervise the animation.



So we held interminable conferences (in our tweed jackets, over beers) on story-lines and techniques of scriptwriting. We talked so much about writing that, as often happens, we talked ourselves out and couldn't write a thing.

But one of the sessions produced a script-portion that was some sort of minor masterpiece. It was written by the same fellow who had written the description of the airplane's engine starting up. In this script, he had a spaceship landing in a clearing and the motors slowly cooling while the suspense presumably mounted. His script read like this:

SCENE: Blue sky. Clouds drift lazily by. A speck appears far up. It grows larger, larger, until we see that it is a spaceship landing tail-first. It comes straight at us. The fires of its rockets cover the screen with flame.

CUT to clearing. The rocket lands. The motors are shut off.

SOUND: Gut-rumbling.

Shortly after this our happy little writers' group broke up as we went off to college or to join Catholic seminaries or to booze it up with the boys at the shipyards. In the next four years I met only two people who aspired to be writers.

One of them was a young woman who carried her lunch in a cigar box with the dust jacket of a Proust book wrapped around it, and proclaimed loudly that she was the illegitimate daughter of Henry Miller. She wrote bitter little stories and even tinier poems, all of which were titled *Futility*.

The other was a young man who worked afternoons at the San Francisco Zoo driving a tourist train and making sprightly jokes about the peccadilloes of armadillos while scribbling notes for his 2,000-page novel. This was a book about the last years of Shakespeare, living in retirement at Stratford; he was depicted as a tired little man who sat in a hardbacked chair and grumbled to Ben Jonson that his wife was a shrew. Jonson always nodded silently, and they quaffed their beers morosely in the sunset. (Tweed jackets hadn't been invented yet.)

Later on I ran into more young writers, and found that the breed hadn't changed much. The most memorable of them was the fellow whose entire output, hundreds of thousands of words, concerned an immortal man who, at every opportunity, halted the story long enough to sit down at a table, eat some food, and discuss whatever aspect of philosophy was occupying the writer's mind at the time. Pages and pages of manuscript were filled with these discussions, interspersed with detailed catalogues of the food he was eating, the sounds of munching, swallowing, licking of lips, and all that sort of thing.

Finally I told him, "Ray, I suppose I can understand why you feel impelled to put your philosophy in, but why all this stuff about food?"

He blinked his eyes in surprise. "I *love* food," he said.

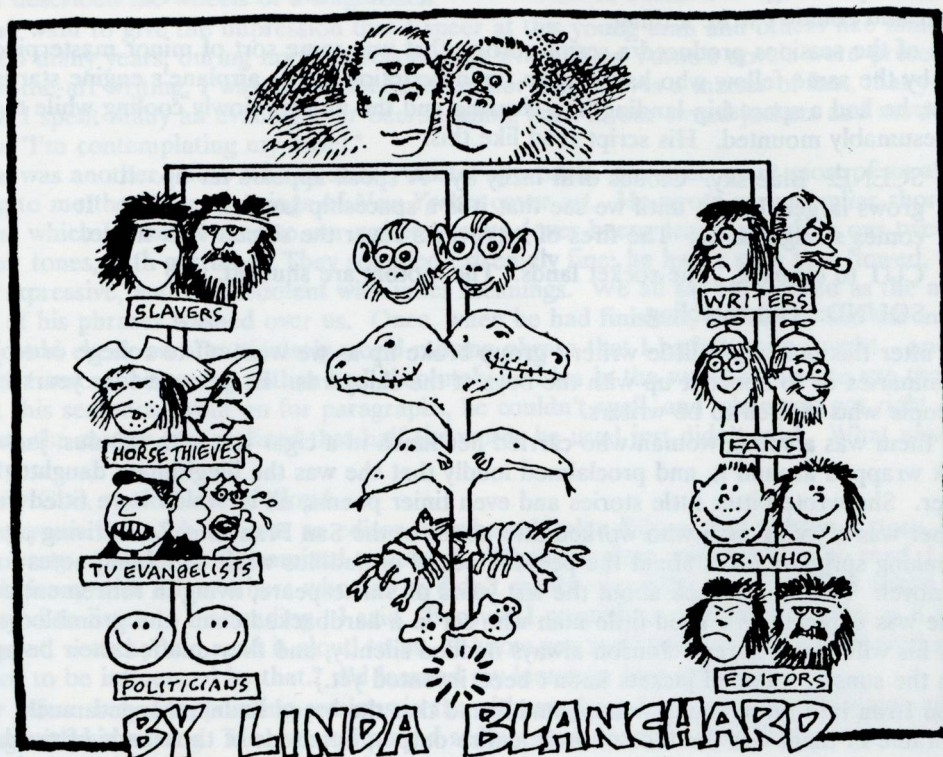
Later on I heard the story of how, when he got an enthusiastic note on one of his stories from an editor, he fixed himself three peanut butter sandwiches and ate them leisurely in the bathtub while his wife read the letter over and over to him. He said it was the most sensual experience of his life.

More recently I've heard that he's sold his first book, after receiving regretful rejections on it for two years. The rumor is that the editor who bought it spent two weeks expurgating the sex scenes from the book, but I don't believe it. The book may have been too hot to publish as it was, but if so I'll bet it was because the descriptions of meals were absolutely lewd.

— Terry Carr



# GENEALOGY: A CONVENTION REPORT OF SORTS



Steve  
Stiles  
9/8/90

I came to Boston, arriving from an entirely different state than the one I'd arrived from last time, and I'm not just talking about the differences between Texas and Washington State. Though I suppose it's that, too.

When I came to Boston in 1980 I was hurtling comet-like along my path through fandom, heading for the brightly lit and heavily populated center of the solar system and a brief moment of glory. (This same orbit has since thrown me back out into the darkness, where I have plenty of time to think about how long I'll wander on the distant edges of the system before I return.) I'd discovered fandom in a series of quick steps – Trekdom in 1978, regional conventions in 1979 and now my first Worldcon in 1980. Everything was new and wonderful and exciting. Full of possibilities.

Nine years, five Worldcons, one NASFiC and one fandom later, I came back to Boston feeling nostalgic for the simpler relationship I'd had to fandom that first time around. I felt like an old and tired fan this time, a feeling that had little to do with the chronological increase in my age. And more, I felt like a ghost, or a fan back from the dead, arriving as I did, from the darkness of gafia back into the light of active fandom. My head was full of cobwebs. Names and words I'd try to recall hung just out of sight, behind some closed doors I couldn't find the keys to anymore.

Old and tired. I'd seen too much in those nine years. Old and tired.

Yet happy. Reborn, perhaps.

In the mundane world in which I've spent far too much time during the past few years, I've found a new interest: genealogy. It's funny, because I found when I mentioned this to many fen, I got the same incomprehension from them – how could I devote my time to that? – that I get from mundanes when I try to explain my fascination with fandom. Still, in its way it's exciting stuff. Especially for me since I've always been a person who needed to know her place in the time line.



When I move to a new city, I read up on its whole history, settlement to the present, just as though I was (were?) some time traveler who'd been there at the start and wanted to catch up on all the gossip so that I could reconnect to the place. Studying one's family lines is just the same thing in a separate form – what lives and histories led to my life and my time?

Since one quarter of my family line came exclusively from Massachusetts (after they came across the ocean to America), coming to Boston was, in a sense, coming home, and I looked forward to this non-fannish return as intensely as I did to the Worldcon. Not only would I have time to do some research in Boston's New England Genealogical and Historical Society library which would increase my knowledge of my line very quickly, I also planned to return to my home town of Duxbury, Massachusetts, to visit my grandmother. My thought was that she might supply me with a few clues I might not find in any library book. Though I didn't get many clues, I got far more than that.

My grandmother, Nana Blanchard – Edna May MacQuarrie was her maiden name – came to Boston from Nova Scotia, where she met my grandfather, Kendall Blanchard. He was a chauffeur for a wealthy family and she hired on as a live-in nurse when one of their children was ill for a long time. Bumpa – that's what we called my grandfather – was ten years older than Edna. Nonetheless, circumstances put them together a lot and eventually they got romantically involved and the rest is pretty obvious.

I identify strongly with the Blanchard family line; that's part of the reason I kept the Blanchard name when I married. I consider Duxbury my home even though I was born in Albuquerque and raised for more years in Connecticut. I lived in Duxbury only from age thirteen to eighteen – those are, of course, the most vividly remembered years one has "at home." But wherever we lived over the years, we always returned to Duxbury for holidays – the Fourth, Thanksgiving and Christmas. So it was that my father's family was more my family than my mother's, and Duxbury was the family home, where his brothers and sister and parents lived.

During the years I lived in Duxbury, though, my father wasn't with us. He'd died when I'd just turned twelve. My mother was never well loved by her in-laws and as a consequence I always felt somewhat more disconnected from the Blanchard family than I wanted, and a distressing misunderstanding between myself and a cousin during our junior year in high school seemed to cut me off from them completely, though I maintained my emotional commitment to the Blanchard line. The break was most painful because I'd always held my father's youngest brother, Howie, in my heart as my father's substitute since my dad had died, and since he was the father of the cousin I'd fallen out with – I finally felt like a truly fatherless child.

Coming home to Duxbury, then, I also felt old and tired and disconnected, just as I did returning to the convention. However, here, the family is smaller – it only takes ten people to turn their back on you to make you feel completely cut off – and the wounds inflicted run deeper than fandom can ever cut. I was, quite frankly, afraid to go visit my grandmother. And terrified at the prospect of seeing my Uncle Howie (so scared I hadn't even committed to doing so).

That's why the visit I had with my grandmother will live in my heart for all my life as a little miracle. Not only did she answer the door and ask me in, not only did we talk small talk for a while, working up to gentle catching up, through to family history, but ultimately we worked through family history to revelations about ourselves that I'd never had guessed were possible, and found connections I wouldn't have dreamed were there.

I'd done a little research before arriving in Duxbury – asked my mother and sister what they knew of Nana and Bumpa's lives – and I'd pocketed one gem my mother had passed on, and saved it to give to my grandmother:

"My mother says," I said cautiously, "that you and I are a lot alike, because we're the major breadwinners in our family." That was more unusual in her time than it is in mine. I thought it a stunning revelation of her strength of character. I had not considered, till she answered me, what it revealed of my grandfather.

"Dad," she said, for she always called my Bumpa 'Dad', "didn't like to work. After we married he never got a job for himself. The only two jobs he got – carpenter and plumber – he got because I

went out and got them for him. He wouldn't go out. Wouldn't even try. And if he thought I'd done it he would have refused. So I had them come ask him to come work for them and never mention my part in it."

So there we found our common ground. Our men were very much alike, and our relation to them similar. Not identical. Dave did go out and get a job, but he hated every second of it and made no bones about hating it. What seems a closer connection between the two men is their lack of worry. "Dad would always tell me if I didn't have anything to worry about, I'd make something up," Nana said. "He never worried in his life." And a little later, when we'd discussed the charms of men who drifted through life believing always that the next moment would take care of itself with no intervention from them, she said, "Oh, yes, dear. I loved him. Obvious I loved him for all those years. But there were still days when I just wanted to give him a good kick in the pants." And, I imagine, days she did. Some days I do, I know.

It's funny. You look through old family photographs and look for resemblances along the line. My father inherited his mother's features, and I some of his ... but you don't know about the other resemblances, those of character, or of habit, unless you get to know the kin involved.

At night – I hadn't been too hard to talk into staying the night – Nana gave me her bed to sleep in, and as we were putting down fresh sheets she asked if I slept with a pillow. Before I had the chance to answer, her daughter Ann said, "Mother sleeps with two pillows." I thought, so do I, but then Nana said, "I have to have two. One of rest my head on, and the other to curl around." Then I said, "So do I!" I'd never thought that I'd inherited that habit – or any habit – from someone specifically, but there it was; I'd picked up my sleeping habits from my paternal grandfather.

What else has been handed down to me from previous generations?

There was, then, a sort of irony in coming to Noreascon III which represented, to me, my birthplace in a larger fandom. I came to visit my fannish roots and quickly discovered that the convention turned on just this theme because it was the fiftieth anniversary of the first Worldcon. I had not only the chance to recall my fannish birth, but to discover my fannish ancestors and their history.

As part of my fannish rebirth, I got the chance for the first few days to attend a Worldcon the old-fashioned way. Well, my old-fashioned way, anyway. Incognito. I looked over the program guide and picked out panels I wanted to attend. I sat through every panel that held my attention and a few that didn't. Because of conflicting schedules I missed panels I would've liked to see in favor of ones able to keep me interested. I sat down when weary, ate when hungry, and at the end of the day sat around considering going to parties. Wishing I knew where there was a party I'd like to attend. And finally, giving up and going back to my room. Just like my first convention.

Then something happened. My disguise failed me. People who'd never seen me skinny recognized me and started talking to me. People who never thought of seeing me fat again joined the conversation, read my name tag, and pretended to recognize me. Suddenly I was back in the fannish mainstream again. And happy there. Reborn. People kept saying I ought to do a fanzine again and I kept saying I might. And believing it.

One of the first panels I attended was a convention theme panel called "First Fandom Speaks (does anyone listen anymore?)" during which 4E Ackerman, Dave Kyle, Bob Madle and Art Widner reminisced about First Fandom and the First Worldcon, and answered questions like: What does First Fandom want to say to modern fans? Why should modern fans listen?

It seemed to me, from my view at the edge of the audience, that what they, up there on the platform, thought was that Fandom Has Changed. Once we had a mission, they said, to convert the world to science fiction. Today the world is converted already (and look where that got us; not where we expected!). Once we came to conventions to be with others of our kind for we were a lonely breed. Once there were no girls who were there along, as fans (not as wives, sisters, daughters), though we wished there were more female fans.

Well, there are many female fans now – and, I thought, how wonderful that once there was an all male institution that was infiltrated by women who were greeted by men who welcomed them



rather than fought them off in courts. The other changes, though, seemed to me more a matter of degree of change than absolutes. Media and costume and gaming fen were mentioned – non-readers being the line drawn here; though we'll all acknowledge that they do read, reading sf isn't their primary attachment to fandom – as being highly visible now and non-existent then. This is a by-product of the world having been converted to sf but it didn't work out the way we planned. At some point in the panel, I got to protest that the changes weren't total but a matter of degree, but never did find the words to say that maybe we still have our mission: to convert those who are converted to sf to being readers. Through steady exposure, at conventions, to others who read a lot, some of them begin to read more. I've seen it. Some who started out as non-readers even end up learning to write for their own fanzines.

And, surely, we do all still come here to be with our own kind. Even when I was an eofan who attended conventions and did nothing more, I came to conventions to be with my own kind if not, perhaps, to interrelate with them. To have people talk about the things that interest me, to toy with farflung ideas you can't get mundanes excited about. There are just a whole lot more of us now than there were then. More varieties of us. More room for variety. Which I personally think is not a bad thing.

Perversely I attended the Hugo ceremonies. Sometimes I go to masquerades too. I know you don't do these things if you're fannishly Hip, but I've never been Hip in my life, so why start now? Anyway, I got a great view of the side of the stage from the balcony above, and was watching Art Widner when he won First Fandom's Big Heard Award – I think I knew he was the winner before he did – and I cried because he deserves it. He's someone I know who deserves it.

Later, at a party, Art and I had a chance to talk. Now I want to start out by saying I never thought of Art as my fannish grandfather. Though certain people might tell you differently, I'm not an ageist. I think of people as people, and only if they bring their age to my attention do I place them on a time line of their lives. My impression of Art is that he, too, is not an ageist; he's never made an effort to portray himself as Old and Wise, and so I've never seen him this way. But between me doing genealogy as a hobby and the focus of the convention being on First Fandom of which Art is a member, I couldn't help but have moments when I came keenly aware that he is one of my fannish ancestors. And I'm very glad he's around with stories to tell of his life inside fandom and out, then and now. Even without being an Esteemed Ancestor, I'm glad Art's around because he does have great stories to tell.

Anyway, Art and I talked for an hour or so during which we found we had common habits, just like I have with my genealogical grandmother. No, I don't mean Art sleeps curled around a pillow (maybe he does, I don't know), but we share an interest in astronomy. Both of us have the same kind of nifty, middle-high tech telescope (a C-8) and both use the same lackadaisical way of observing. Not like most C-8 owners who polar align their scopes and then use the setting circles to dial in the objects they've chosen for their night's viewing program. Art and I tend to be "hunt and peck" sorts of astronomers. Okay, I admit that sometimes I do use setting circles, but not always, and what's more important is the attitude. People in my old astronomy club used to laugh at me when they'd see my telescope set up "facing the wrong way" – not aligned, in other words, and me there with my view of the heavens just wandering till I tripped across something interesting. There's a certain carefree attitude of adventuring in it.

The last panel I went to see was another Art was on, this one called "Worldcon – 2039" with the same cast less Bob Madle, add Sam Moskowitz (with a wonderful, science fictional voice) and Moshe Feder, moderator. Here, First Fandom discussed what they imagined the Worldcon fifty years hence would be like. Some thought there would be no Worldcon then because fandom would necessarily have splintered too much ("Let a thousand conventions bloom") but the only thing they felt was certain was that there would be no First Fandom there. True in fact, I'm sure, but not in spirit. Whether Worldcon or Corflu, there will always be those who remember their ancestors, whether they met them or not; those who'll do the research and read the stories; timebinders timebinding.

– Linda Blanchard



## AMONG THE DUPES AND SCOUNDRELS

I woke suddenly and looked at my watch. It was 3 a.m., or just after. The Omaha-to-San Francisco Greyhound bus had chugged to a stop and its motor was silent. The lights inside the bus had been turned on. The passengers were debarking with unusual haste. Momentarily puzzled in my state of drowsy nescience I roused up to peer out into the night. After traveling in the dark down miles of winding highway amid tumbles of dimly seen mountains, we seemed to have arrived in the midst of carnival. I glimpsed swirls of colored lights, brightness, movement. The 3 a.m. darkness had opened like the door of a fiery furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the rest of the passengers were rushing into the heart of that seething magic. I hoped that they were as inviolate as the Hebrew children. I read the name above the glittering portals of the place, and all became clear. We were at a Nevada casino. We were evidently just barely across the state line, but we were across it nevertheless. This was a rest stop for the passengers, but of course none of them intended to rest for a minute.

As soon as they all had descended from the bus, I followed much more sedately. "The least the bus could do," I grumped to myself, "is stop at the Cottontail ranch." But here we were at a casino where in the darkest hour of the morning the lights were twinkling like a Thrifty drugstore in Los Angeles. In the cool desert night the stars were twinkling too, but the nearer lights had much the best of it. The Nesselrode glare festooned the scene where one expected only sagebrush and silence. The place certainly was showy.

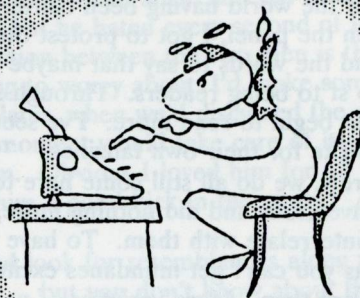
I wambled slowly inside to behold an amazing sight. The bus passengers, mingling with a throng of other people, were already hopping madly here and there like wallabies among the slot machines that crammed the room to the very doors. In a swoon of wonder I paced up and down the aisles with my hands thrust into the pockets of my tattered Carhartt jacket, the only hands in the whole casino that were not occupied in feeding coins and pulling levers. I had unexpectedly invaded a strange world that I alone was not a part of. I felt so much a solitary alien that I half-expected that things around me would give way and collapse as with Richard le Breton and Reginald Fitzurse. But nobody paid me any attention. Everybody was playing the slots with the single-minded devotion of a water witcher and (I suppose) just as vainly.

Somehow I was miserably pleased that I was here to see it. The whole scene reminded me of pleasures, long ago and more innocent, in the way that a sour belch at midnight may remind one of a dinner partaken hours before. I remembered the tawdry but alluring charm of a traveling carnival, a small rag-show I visited in my youth. I was even happy that all these people, who otherwise would be sleeping in their beds in Medford, Oregon, or Grass Valley, California, were busily making merry at 3 a.m. The brief sling of unconventionality for these ordinary people amused me. But I wanted no part of it.

After a while I departed the casino and walked a little in the open air, far enough down the road that the stars shone a bit brighter. "What's the matter with you?" I asked myself sternly. "You, of all people, are a prude! A bluenose! You really do object, don't you, to these tourists having fun?"

"No no!" I replied hastily. "Here I am talking to myself like Mr. Flood — and in fact, I wouldn't object at all if the people in there were getting as joyously drunk as old Eben. Or if indeed we had stopped at the Cottontail ranch .... At least then you'd be getting some momentary pleasure in

## PENSEROSO



A Column by REDD BOGGS



exchange for your bucks. But throwing money away on the slots! What a mad milking time it is. I do object to people being lured to squander hard-earned money so carelessly and foolishly – with the Greyhound company in cahoots. There ought to be a law!"

I squared away and walked more briskly back to the bus. "By god," I vowed (and this is a vow I kept), "I will not contribute to it! I will not spend a single dime while I am in Nevada." I did not of course suppose that the state will go broke as a result of my boycott.

#### IN THE DAWN OF THE WORLD

"... I'm on my way to heaven;  
Gonna tell you just how I feel,  
I'd rather ride a wagon and go to heaven  
Than to hell in an automobile."

– Uncle Dave Macon, "From Earth to Heaven"

One of my earliest memories is of riding on the high, swaying seat of a small wagon drawn by a horse. The horse was being driven by my grandfather, Chalmers Robinson, and we were on our way to throw away some household trash in a dumping ground somewhere out of town – the town of Staples, which is in north central Minnesota, where we lived. I must have been no more than three or four years old. We glided gently along to the clip-clop of the horse on a country road where the sun shone brightly, the wind was fresh and clean, and the dirt road was untraveled, at least just then, by any other vehicle besides ours. We could hear the warble of meadowlarks that sang from the fenceposts along the way.

I wish that I had realized then that it was a historical moment in my life, and engraved all the details on my mind. All I remember are the general impressions. Maybe it was the last time that my grandfather, an old farmer in the years before he moved to town, ever held the reins of a horse. He died only a few years later. And surely it was the last time I ever rode in such a primitive contraption, back in the bright morning of the universe.

Another of my first memories is of accompanying my Uncle Wint to the farm equipment dealer in downtown Staples to pick up a farm tractor he had just purchased, or else to test drive a tractor, I am not sure which. I don't know why I went along on this occasion; I don't remember any other similar time. At any rate, after I climbed up on the tractor with him, we trundled slowly down the street with the motor roaring and the vertical exhaust spouting dark smelly fumes. But only a short distance away, the tractor conked out in the middle of what seemed to me to be a very busy intersection. After trying in vain to get the tractor started again, my uncle jumped down from the big saddle seat, and strode away to get help, leaving me in sole possession of the stalled vehicle.

I looked fearfully at all the traffic whizzing around me. Cars of all shapes and sizes seemed to be rushing past in all directions at reckless speeds – surely a misapprehension, for the town was small and quiet – and I could stand it for only a few alarming minutes. I descended from the tractor in haste, scampered to the nearest curb, and hurried home, much shaken by the experience.

These two memories seem somehow to bracket a change that was going on in the world back then – a change surely not entirely for the better – a long long time ago, when I was still in knepants.

#### THE NIGHT BEFORE NOVEMBER

They're starting earlier than ever this year. Just today as I write Abby Van Buren published a column headed "Safe and Sane Halloween." It's still nearly six weeks till Halloween and already the apostles of fear and dread are popping up with dire warnings about the dangers of trick-or-treat. If you believed this alarmist blather you would as soon send your child out to play on the freeway as to allow him or her to go trick-or-treat on Halloween. The odds of a child being victimized by "razor blade apples, poison candy, gasoline balloons" are probably about the same as those of being hit by a meteorite, but I'm afraid that the enemies of fun will succeed in destroying the trick-or-treat tradition, and that would be unfortunate. Trick-or-treat is at any rate a big advance over what came

before: trick and no treats.

Trick-or-treat isn't really a very old tradition. It was unknown, at least to me, when I was a kid, although it came into currency in time for my younger siblings to enjoy. When I was a boy Halloween was a night of anarchy. Wanton destruction and defacing of property were commonplace. In the small town I lived in there were still Chic Sales to be tilted over, unguarded wheelbarrows and lawn chairs to be hoisted into trees, and other such things. Perhaps the most inoffensive manifestation of this juvenile vandalism was the practice of soaping windows.

Once when I was very young I was invited by an older and wiser kid to accompany him Halloween night on his odyssey of pillage: namely, to go forth and soap every reachable window in the neighborhood. I was flattered by the invitation and quickly agreed to go. "We'll go out right after super," he said. "I'll bring the soap."

"And I'll bring the water!" I said enthusiastically. He looked at me scornfully. "You don't need water to soap windows," he told me. Being completely ignorant of the art of soaping windows, I felt abashed. I supposed soap and water went together. I thought fast and remarked, "We'll need the water all right – when we're caught and have to wash off the windows we soaped!" I have always been proud of my snappy come-back. I noticed that for an instant my older companion looked just a bit worried. I don't remember whether we went forth on our expedition as planned or not, but I don't think we did. I guess we didn't want to tote around a bucket of water.

#### NOTES FROM MY LITTLE BLACK BOOK

I wonder who it was that had the bright idea – some advertising genius, of course – of calling the Statue of Liberty "Lady Liberty" or even (in reverent tones) "The Lady," as if the statue were our own Virgin of Guadalupe. The statue is an engineering, but hardly an artistic, marvel – thought superior to the bedizened wooden effigies of the Madonna in some churches – and chiefly today it is a mere tourist attraction. As such it hardly compares with the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, San Francisco's cable cars, or Muir Woods. (Redwoods are far more impressive than any statue; some of them are taller than the Statue of Liberty, including its pedestal, and most are at least a thousand years older.) Whoever started calling a goddamn statue "The Lady" ought to be taken out and shot .... In the days when she was starring in such films as "The Petrified Forest" and "Of Human Bondage" Bette Davis was one of the most famous of movie actresses. She preferred her given name pronounced "Betty," but it was not uncommon, then, to hear people say "Let's go to the movies tonight. There's a *Bet* Davis movie at the Bijou." In more recent years an actress named Bette Midler has appeared. The other day on the BART train I noticed a couple of people consulting the movie ads in the *Chronicle* and I heard one of them say, "Well, there's 'Ruthless People' at the Piedmont theater. It's got *Betty* Midler in it." .... After I had shaved regularly with it for seven or either years, my Norelco electric razor gave me some trouble, and I faced the possibility of shaving again with a blade razor. Against that day I hurried to the Lucky supermarket to buy a tube of lather cream. There was no such thing on the shelves. A young woman clerk happened to be restocking the drugs and notions section, and I asked her where the tubes of shaving cream were. She indicated the numerous brands of shaving cream in pressurized cans, and I explains that no, I wanted shaving cream in a tube like toothpaste comes in. She looked puzzled. "I never heard of anything like that," she said.

#### The Tin Woodman

I was walking along  
the Yellow Brick Road  
the other afternoon  
a little drunk on sunshine  
looking for

Dorothy, the Scarecrow,  
the Tin Woodman, and the  
Cowardly Lion, but it seemed  
they'd all stopped somewhere  
for a hotdog.

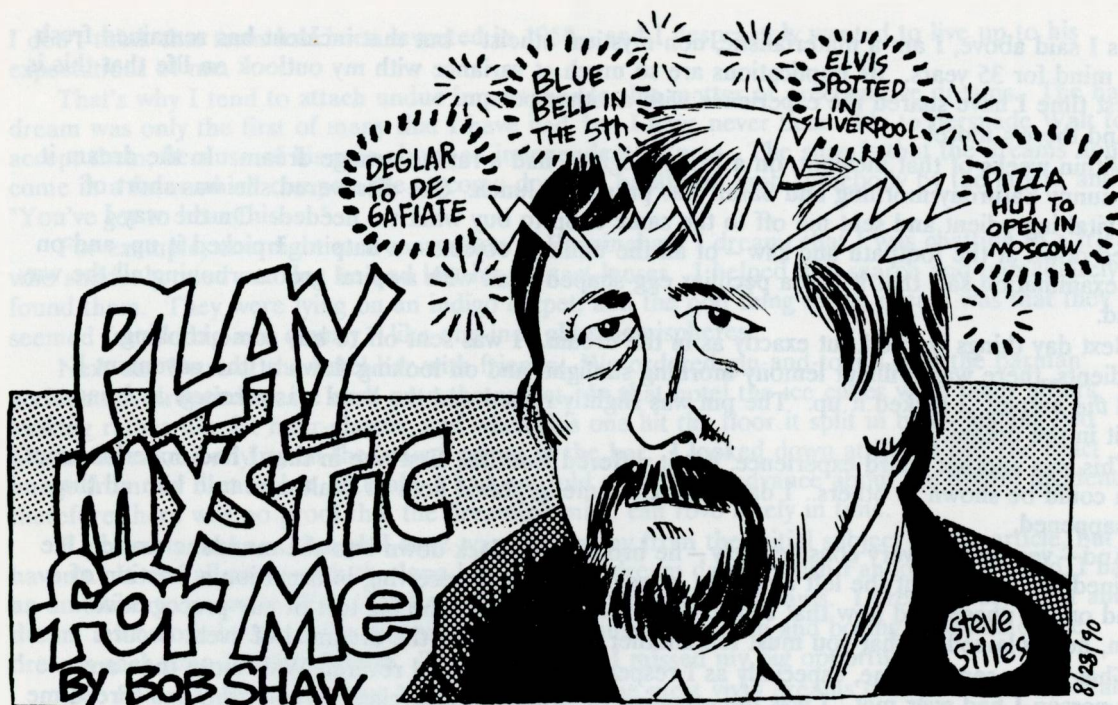
At last I saw a woman  
a long way down the Road.  
She looked pretty familiar.  
"Hey, you must be Dorothy!"  
I shouted.

"No," she said, looking sad,  
"and not the Scarecrow either,  
if you'll bother to look at me,  
and not the Cowardly Lion  
for heaven sake!"

-Redd Boggs

- Redd Boggs





Jim White's article in TRAP DOOR #9 brought it home to me that although I determinedly follow the doctrines of materialism, as befits a science fiction writer, I have been plagued for most of my life by little episodes – such as the one Jim described – which cause a considerable degree of strain when I try to fit them into my model of the universe. It's a bit like the situation I used to encounter as a kid when doing a difficult jigsaw puzzle. I would cram a piece in and try to ignore the alarm bells which were triggered by barely perceptible mismatches of the spigots and sockets. (Those are general engineering terms. Has the jigsaw puzzle industry generated special words of its own to describe the interconnectors?)

One early example came about a year after I was married, when Sarah and I were sub-renting part of Walt and Madeleine Willis's house in south Belfast. It was a Saturday morning. Sarah was preparing lunch and found she was short of some ingredient, and she sent me on a purchasing expedition to a shop a few hundred yards up the road. When I went into the shop there was a group of people, obviously tourists and strangers to the area, already at the counter. One of them was a woman in her fifties (*i.e.*, about thirty years older than my wife was at the time) but – for some reason I will never be able to explain – to me she *was* my wife!

I swear on my honor as a Knight of St. Fantony that I almost spoke to her in virtually the same words as Jim used to the ghostly George Charters: "What are you doing here?" And I remember very well that she almost spoke to me. She seemed to know me. There was a moment brimming over with karma potential, when two strangers might have made contact, but it passed and I bemusedly left the shop clutching my pot of pepper or whatever it was. I know how daft this sounds, but I had a feeling that I had just encountered a time-variant version of my wife who had come "back" to visit her own past. It was a bit like that story in *Astounding* where time travelers arrive to rent houses which will give them a good view of the nuclear attacks of World War III.

As I said above, I am a materialistic, non-mystical atheist – but that incident has remained fresh in my mind for 35 years. Its implications are so much at variance with my outlook on life that this is the first time I have shared the experience with another person.

And there's more!

Within weeks of that incident, on a Friday night, I had a rather strange dream. In the dream it was a sunny Saturday morning and Sarah was preparing lunch. She discovered she was short of some vital ingredient and sent me off to the same shop to buy what we needed. On the way I glanced down at the footpath and saw – of all the unlikely objects – a hatpin. I picked it up, and on close examination saw that it had a peculiar egg-shaped head with a spiral groove running all the way around.

Next day things worked out exactly as in the dream. I was sent off to buy some cooking ingredients, there was brilliant lemony morning sunlight, and on looking down at the pavement I found *the* hatpin! I picked it up. The pin was slightly rusted and the head was *precisely* as I had seen it in the dream.

This was another weird experience, but it differed from the first one in that I had material proof which could be shown to others. I dashed back home, grabbed hold of Walt, and told him all that had happened.

And – very gently, very considerably – he brought me back down into the mundane world. He explained the stuff about the left and right halves of the brain receiving information a fraction of a second out of phase, and how that can lead to memory tricks. The big test of any precognitive dream, he explained, is that you must tell another witness before the dreamed-of event occurs.

That made sense to me, especially as I respected, admired and revered Walt more than any other person I had ever met. I was the offspring of stolid, working class parents who had forced me into engineering against all the indicators of my school results – top of the class in English and art; bottom of the class in maths, chemistry and physics. Many of what should have been my most fertile years were spent in the misery of analyzing load paths in steel frames, when I should have been gorging myself on arts courses.

I knew in my heart that my life was going to waste, but there was nothing to be done about it because there was nobody in any branch of the family to whom I could turn for guidance or support. For instance, my grandmother moved to a new house when I was about fourteen and found that a previous owner had left behind a typewriter in perfect working order. I was already experimenting with writing, and to me that huge old desk typewriter had roughly the same allure as a Porsche would have today. I asked if I could have it, but my mother and grandmother – aware that I was contaminated with airy-fairy literary ambitions which might stop me from becoming a draughtsman – said it wasn't theirs to give. The previous owner might come back for it at any time and they were honor-bound to look after it for him.

That sounds fairly reasonable, but their idea of looking after the typewriter was to leave it lying in the open air in the back yard! There was a family visit to my grandmother once a week, and for months I had to watch that typewriter slowly turning into an oblong block of rust. For a while I tried dousing it with oil each time I saw it, hoping that somebody would have a change of heart before it was too late; but it was all in vain, and eventually the typewriter was consigned to the garbage can.

The above anecdote might enable you to understand what it was like for me – at the age of eighteen – to encounter Walt Willis and to be introduced to a liberal world in which reading imaginative literature was considered a plus, rather than as a sign of some deep-seated degeneracy.

There is no way in which I can adequately explain how much Walt's friendship for me changed and enriched my life. He lived in a house which was four times as big as the one I had been brought up in; he had the best and most subtle sense of humor of anybody I had ever met; he was cool, urbane and infinitely knowledgeable – *and he was a science fiction fan!*

Suddenly, out of the blue, I had proof that it was not absolutely essential to gain City & Guilds engineering certificates in order to make one's way through life. I had a new role model – although



I don't think that term had been invented in 1950 – and I desperately wanted to live up to his expectations of me.

That's why I tend to attach undue importance to this matter of precognitive dreams. The hatpin dream was only the first of many that I have had, but I have never been able to persuade Walt to accept them, because of his rule about an independent witness. The snag is that the dreams don't come in a form which compels me to come down to breakfast, grab somebody by the lapels, and say, "You've got to hear this ..."

For example, one night at a convention in Birmingham I dreamt that I was chatting to a friend who suddenly cried out that he had lost his contact lenses. I helped him search and immediately found them. They were lying on an indigo carpet, and the odd thing in the dream was that they seemed far too big and clumsy – like one-inch glass hemispheres.

Next day I was at the hotel bar with friends. We ordered gin-and-tonics, and the barman accidentally dropped an ice curb onto the carpet. In that hotel the ice cubes were fancy affairs, looking rather like fat hour-glasses, and when this one hit the floor it split in two – leaving two hemispheres of ice lying on the indigo carpet of the bar. I looked down at it and saw the exact image from my dream, but naturally I had not told anybody in advance about the dream incident; therefore there was no proof that the dreaming mind can rove freely in time.

It probably looks as though I have wandered away from the initial subject of this article, but I haven't. It was all to do with the long-lost, summer-dream days of Irish Fandom. As I said, I had an ambition to prove to Walt that I really did have precognitive dreams. I dream every night and I dream a lot, so it is out of the question for me to launch into long and boring accounts of the dreams each time I meet a friend. Thus it was that I missed my big opportunity.

One Saturday night in about 1960 I had one of the most vivid dreams of my whole life. Walt and Madeleine and their two children had been on holiday in Donegal all that week. I dreamt I was with them, and in the dream I was sitting on a small hill overlooking a small bay which curved away to the right. Madeleine and the children were swimming and splashing around in the water, and the remarkable thing was that the water was so clear that I could hardly see it. It was as if they were somehow magically suspended a few inches above the silvery sunlit sand. The vision was so clear that it sticks in my mind to this day.

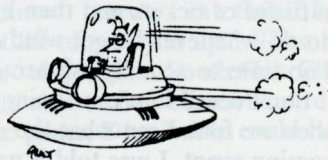
On the Sunday morning I decided to cycle over to Oblique House, knowing that the Willis family would have returned from holiday, and that dream was on my mind during the whole of the bicycle ride. When I got to 170, Walt invited me up to the Fan Attic and we chatted for a while about plans for the next HYPHEN. Suddenly, with no preamble, Walt decided to tell me an interesting little detail from his holiday. It transpired that he had been sitting on a small hill, with a tiny bay curving away to his right, and Madeleine and the children had been in the water. He had been struck by the fact that the water was so clear that he could hardly see it, and his family seemed to have been suspended in mid-air ...

To this day, I still revile myself for not having spoken first. I *know* what happened; I *know* there were no hemi-cranial psychological tricks involved – but I will never be able to prove that to Walt.

Similarly, Jim will never be able to prove to anybody that he saw George Charters long after his death. He can't even prove it to himself, but the big lesson that science has learned in this century is that the universe is infinitely more complicated, subtle and strange than anybody ever previously realized.

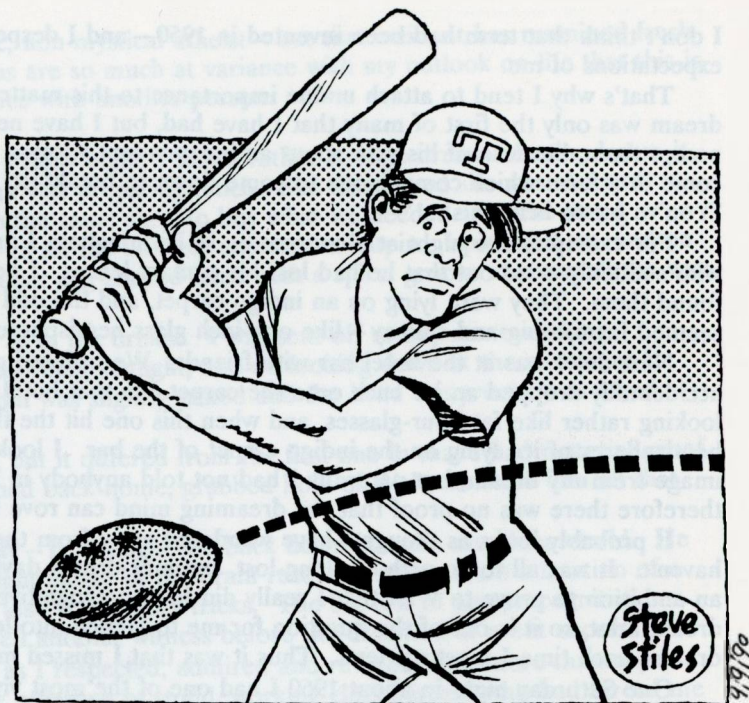
It's all food for thought ...

– Bob Shaw



# THE GAME

BY  
DAVID  
BRIDGES



Glen, an assistant manager at work, called me up one day: "I noticed you have Tuesday off next week?" He turned the statement into a question the way Americans often do, so I affirmed his observation: "Uh huh."

"Are you still interested in going to a game?"

"Sure," I replied.

"Well, I have a spare ticket for Tuesday and needed to know if you were interested. Should be good. The Rangers are playing the A's. Tickets are already sold out."

I thanked him and went back to sleep. The words "already sold out" meant nothing to me. The only public events I have much experience with are rock concerts, where it's not at all unusual to have the tickets sold out.

I had not needed to ask what kind of game Glen was referring to. One night he'd approached me, ashen faced, as I was working. "Dave," he said, "it's come to my attention that — well — that you have *never been to a baseball game?*" By his expression, I guessed he expected me to hotly deny the accusation, but I couldn't because it was true; I never had. "Dave, Dave, Dave," he admonished me. "You can't just come into our country and not go to a baseball game. It's ... it's *un-American!*"

Thereafter he would ask me about once a week if my plans for the following week included a visit to the ball park. My reply always seemed to be that I did want to go sometime, but that I wasn't sure when it would be, at which Glen would shake his head as if in despair.

Paul, one of the lads at work, had also been promised one of Glen's leftover tickets. We surmised that Glen had bought a fistful of tickets and then looked around to see who was able to go, much as my brother Mike used to do whenever he got wind of a big concert coming up in London or Birmingham, knowing he had no time to actually ask around before calling in for tickets in case they sold out in the meantime. I don't recall him ever being left with spares, though occasionally he may have *wished* he had some when we found out what the scalpers were charging.

When I asked about the upcoming event, I was told it was just a mid-season game: the Texas



Rangers playing the Oakland Athletics. It was hoped that the Rangers would win, but it was not crucial that they did. I asked if it was normal for a mid-season game to be sold out and was told that this was only the second time in the history of the stadium that all tickets had been sold out. I was given no explanation for this and for some reason neglected to ask for one. I wondered if it might be because they perhaps only played once a month or something. But no; I recalled numerous consecutive nights when the guys would arrive talking about the game they'd been listening to on the radio, wondering how it was going as they'd had to leave early to get to work. It had been a great source of amusement to the others when, in a feeble attempt to join the conversation one time, I'd said, "This is football you're talking about, right?"

We were sitting around at work Monday night, talking about our plans for getting to the stadium. Paul made a great show of martyrdom, telling me he'd give me a ride much as he'd rather be taking a girl. He admitted that he had no specific girl in mind, but — whatever — if he had me along his chances were blown. He then went on to tell me that he hoped I had a good shirt to wear, one which wouldn't embarrass him. "Dave, there are going to be ten thousand little kids wearing Batman T-shirts; wear something else, okay?" Then he asked me if I was going to be wearing my work shoes, which had loose, flapping soles and had never been cleaned since I'd bought them six months previously. "Because if you are," he continued, "you'll be walking. This is a baseball game we're going to, our national sport. You'll have to dress up if you're going with me."

By this time the others were getting into the act, telling me how important it was that I dress properly for the occasion. I told Paul that the only other shoes I had were a pair of pumps. Suddenly I found myself the absolute focus of attention. Mouths dropped open. Paul began to shuffle his chair to put more distance between us. "No, no," I told them, remembering, "not pumps. What do you call them in America?"

Linda had told me one time how a workmate had observed that more and more women these days were wearing CFM pumps. Not recognizing the brand name, I asked Linda if "CFM" stood for anything in particular.

"It stands for 'Come Fuck Me'," Linda told me. I was amused, even though I felt I had somehow missed the point. Where I came from, a "pump" was something like a tennis shoe, generally made of canvas with rubber soles. Try as I may, I couldn't conjure up an image of a "come fuck me" tennis shoe. Some weeks later, Linda and I were in a department store and Linda commented, "Look at the price on these pumps!"

I looked at the shoes she was holding and said, "Those aren't pumps; those are high-heels."

Back at work, I explained my confusion with the American language and ended by saying that what I had *really* meant was that my only other shoes were a pair of, well, not so much tennis shoes as house slippers. "Oh god," Paul muttered, "that's nearly as bad." I then told him that instead of a T-shirt, I was thinking of maybe wearing my kaftan. "I know I'll regret this," he said, "but, Dave, what's a 'kaftan'?"

Paul had been vastly amused at the prospect of collecting me from our house in Oak Cliff. As we were setting off towards the first street corner he said, in a theatrical voice designed to carry out of the open window and across the street, "Dave, why is that girl waving to you? Do you know her? Maybe we should stop and see what she wants."

Getting to the stadium took us a while. Paul made the mistake of asking me the best way from our house, and I began to direct him. After a short while I thought to say, "It is the Texas Stadium we're going to, isn't it?" At which he cursed and missed the turn onto the highway.

"I keep telling you," Paul told me, "this is baseball, Dave, not football. We're going to Arlington Stadium. Home of the Rangers. You know? Heck, I can find it from my own place with no trouble. Instead I had to stop by Oak Cliff to pick you up." Then he laughed as the road took us further from the highway. "Oh god," he said, "lost in South Oak Cliff." A moment later he commented, "Well, at least we should be able to find somewhere to buy beer, if we can make it past the hookers. You still want to go to the game, Dave? We could have ourselves a real good time, here in South Oak Cliff."

After buying the beer (running a crowd of spare-change bums rather than hookers) and after a couple more false starts, we found what we hoped was the right highway and drove along it. Paul had the radio tuned to the Rangers' station, where they were telling us about the upcoming game. I learned that the reason it was sold out was that the Rangers' pitcher, Nolan Ryan, was expected to get his five-thousandth strike-out. In his career, Nolan Ryan had so far racked up 4,994 strike-outs. That's an awful lot. No one else was even close. So this game was a big deal – not for the game itself, but for the hoped for and expected event of Ryan topping the 5,000 mark.

I also learned that, although sold out to the tune of 42,869 tickets (with scalpers charging \$50 a pop) the game would not have as many paying attendees as on that other sellout occasion, which had been a "bat night," because a section of one of the stands was closed off tonight.

The announcer did not explain what the phrase "bat night" meant, so I asked Paul.

"Everyone with a ticket who turned up at the gate was given a free baseball bat," he told me, then shrugged his shoulders as though to avoid finishing with the word "obviously."

After my initial disbelief on hearing this, it occurred to me to wonder if the bats had been given to people as they went into the game or as they came out. Paul had not been there so didn't know for sure, but he assured me they were probably handed out as people went in, because such things usually were. Of course, the prize was normally somewhat less substantial than a baseball bat: a cap, maybe, or a T-shirt. Some big company would put up the money and, on a "cap night," for example, you might get thirty thousand people, many of them on work outings or church socials, happily wearing an advertisement for Kodak.

Paul wanted to know what difference it made as to whether the bats had been given out before or after the game. I thought for a moment, then told him that if this were Britain, the game soccer, and the prize a pair of football boots, one would expect either method to result in a goodly number of heads being kicked in before the evening's entertainment was over, as people grabbed the first opportunity to test the efficacy of their new acquisitions; but that the later the weapons were handed out, the less would be the amount of damage that could be done with them.

"The notion of arming a capacity crowd with baseball bats just goes against all of my English sensibilities," I explained.

Paul turned to look at me for a long moment, until I began to worry that we might drive off the road. Then he shook his head and laughed.

We arrived with almost an hour to spare, and the parking lot was still relatively clear. This is not to imply that we were among the early arrivers, but that in Texas a parking lot is often built to hold the same number of vehicles as the building it adjuncts will hold people. If ever the Rangers fall on hard times, they could always rope off a section of concrete and rent it out as an airport.

Paul drove around the back of the stadium, finding a spot not far from our entry gate, and – grabbing a couple of beers for the short walk – we got out of the car into the blazing early evening sun.

I had decided against wearing the promised kaftan and instead wore my baggy pants and a "Nuke Your Parents" T-shirt. Paul noticed how baggy my jeans were and suggested I sneak in a bottle of beer. When we got into the grounds and sat down, I handed him the beer and he was shocked. "I didn't mean you to actually *do* it!" he told me.

When I came back from a quick visit to the rest-room, Paul had a happy smile on his face and seemed to have finished the beer. Holding up the empty bottle, he whispered, "I shared most of it with the guy sitting in front of you." I looked at the indicated person, who was wearing a wet shirt. "It all spurted out when I opened it," Paul informed me. He went on to surmise that it had probably gotten warm from being in my pocket. "It's a hundred degrees out here. God knows what the temperature is in your pocket."

Then, as was his ability, Paul struck up a conversation with the three women sitting next to us. Pretty soon we were all pooling out money for one of them to make a beer run to the concession stands.



Time was getting on and Glen had not yet arrived. The game was due to start any minute, and we began to wonder if maybe he had forgotten to save himself a ticket in his enthusiasm for ensuring everyone else got one.

Idly looking around, I noticed a number of people wearing "Nolan Ryan 5,000K" T-shirts. There were also a few "5,000K" banners being held aloft by groups of spectators. I made the comment that Ryan had a long way to go before reaching five million strike-outs, at which Paul gave me one of his theatrical blank looks. Conceding the point, I asked him what the "K" in "5,000K" stood for, and he told me it was short for "KO," meaning "knock-out."

I also commented on the fact that there seemed to be as many women here as men, something I had not expected. Paul just smiled and nodded.

Our bench partner came back with a tray of beers just as the teams began to drift onto the field. They did this to no applause or even recognition. Indeed, they seemed to be wandering around as though lost. Some of them had baseballs, which they tossed in the air and caught, or threw to one another in a leisurely manner. Some had bats, which they swung back and forth as though testing the viscosity of the air.

Then Glen arrived. He'd been waiting outside with a couple more of his tickets for friends who'd arrived late. He mopped his brow with a handkerchief and settled into his seat. After being introduced to his other friends, I told Glen how glad I was that he'd got me to come to the game, and thanked him for my ticket. He nodded: "No problem."

A moment passed. "These seats," Glen announced to no one in particular, "are the best in the stadium." I voiced an opinion that we certainly did have a good view, at which he laughed. "Good view nothing," he said. "See where the sun is?" He made as though to look over his shoulder, without actually doing so. "In ten minutes, these seats will be in the shade. Over there" – he languidly waved a hand – "they have to bake for another thirty or forty minutes before the sun begins to go down."

Down on the field, which was already getting into the shade, some of the players had quite tossing balls to one another and were standing around chattering or sitting on the sidelines. Suddenly the sound system came on and everyone stood up to sing the Star Spangled Banner. Being used to sitting out the National Anthem in Britain, I was slow enough in getting to my feet that Paul felt obliged to assist me. He then took great delight in turning to me at the end of each significant phrase and commenting, "This is you we're singing out."

I pointed out to him, "Surely the kids of today don't remember that war."

"Yeah," he replied, "they probably think it's about fighting the Nazis. But *we* know it's about fighting the *English*."

I hadn't the heart to tell him that the Star Spangled Banner is sung to the tune of an old English pub song. He probably wouldn't have believed me anyway.

Then the game started.

In terms of simple enthusiasm, it was a tremendous introduction to baseball. Whenever Ryan got a strike, everyone cheered. By the fifth inning Ryan was up to 4,999 career strike-outs and the tension in the crowd was incredible. All around the stadium, groups of people hung huge scoreboards over the rails keeping tally, in case anyone might forget, of how many strike-outs Ryan had made.

A couple of times Ryan got up to 4,999 and two strikes, but didn't manage that third strike. Whenever he pulled back to pitch what might have made a third strike, and as the ball then flew through the air, the stadium floodlights were matched by an eruption of camera flashbulbs. Also, each possible third-strike pitch was accompanied by the loud rumble of stamping feet. Very unsettling, I would imagine, if you were the one trying to avoid being struck out.

Ricky Henderson was the unfortunate batter at the plate when Ryan pitched that fateful third-strike ball. At 96 miles per hour, it was the fastest ball of the game.

Nolan Ryan had made his five-thousandth career strike-out, and the crowd went wild.

A few moments later, President Bush – who was watching the game on satellite TV – came on

over the giant monitor screen to say a few words in honor of the event. I half expected fireworks to light up the sky, or for Ryan to do a lap of honor or something, but when I looked back to the field the game was continuing as though nothing had happened.

The "seventh inning stretch," when it came, amused me. Having previously heard the phrase, I'd surmised it was probably some kind of an extended innings or an intermission, but it turned out simply to be the point in the game, between innings, where everyone stands up and stretches. The loudspeakers started up with a burst of rousing music and we all got out of our seats to do a little jig, easing the stiffness out of our joints and the numbness out of our backsides. Ten seconds later we sat back down and the game continued.

I was also amused by the "waves" which went around the stadium, started when one person or group raised and lowered their arms and those next to them on one side followed suit a fraction of a second out of phase. Some of the waves had people getting out of their seat to raise their arms, and one such wave passed around the stadium four times before everyone got distracted by events on the field.

All throughout the game, vendors were wandering around selling ice-cold beers, hot dogs, nuts, popcorn and programs. It was like I would imagine an auction to be, where you nod your head and find you've bought something. Bags of popcorn and trays of hot dogs sailed through the air. To get beer, you actually needed to yell loud and often, as it had to be poured into a cup before being carefully handed to the purchaser. This took time and while one beer was being served, there would be two or three people calling out for the next one. If baseball ever catches on in Britain, I am sure it will work out that the vendors will stand at the front, blocking everyone's view, while snaking crowds form patiently in the aisles, waiting to be served.

After buying the beer earlier, and giving Glen \$5 for my ticket, I was left with 47 cents in change. I consoled myself with the thought that not having the money for a hot dog meant I didn't have to suffer the embarrassment of picking mine up off the floor after failing to catch it. I watched as other people caught items of food thrown to them, and then passed their money along the row to the vendor. I was quite surprised at how friendly everyone was. Folk would get up to go for a beer at one of the concession stands and ask strangers up and down the bench if anyone else wanted something brought back.

The game ended with the A's winning 2-0 and Ryan having 5,007 strike-outs under his belt. The A's had a fast pitcher too, and I don't think the Rangers ever got beyond second base. The crowd walked away with an awful lot of sliced balls and the outfielders only saw two or three balls during the entire game. The best hit of the evening, as far as I was concerned, was a ball which actually left the stadium between the press booths and the giant advertising hoardings. Paul made the comment that this was why he always parked his car around the back of the stadium. I guess you learn tricks such as this, and such as which seats get the shade first, by being a regular attendee.

A voice had come over the speaker system to tell everyone to save their ticket stub and either mail it in or pop around in person to receive a free certificate, signed by Nolan Ryan, commemorating the event of his five-thousandth strike-out. Having no intention of parting with my used ticket, I forgot about the offer until Glen arrived at work a few days later with his autographed keepsake. He asked me if I had collected mine yet, and I explained that I wished to keep my ticket stub as a memento of my first baseball game. He laughed. "They only want to *see* the stub; they don't take it off you. Look." And he showed me where the sheet had four diagonal cuts, like a photograph mounting, into which the ticket could be placed, presumably prior to framing.

Glen offered to drop in at the stadium for me. "No problem," he said, "I'll be driving by anyway."

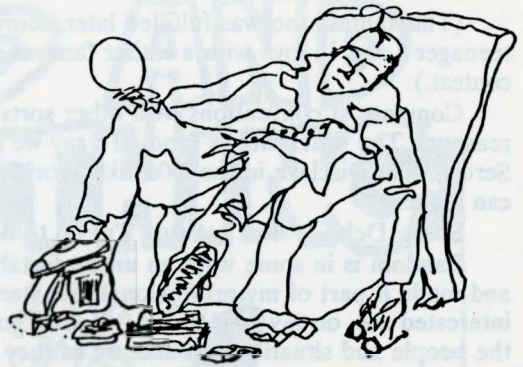
The following day I brought him the stub, and a couple of days later I was the proud owner of a certificate telling me that I was there on August 22, 1989, the night Nolan Ryan racked up his five-thousandth strike-out.

— David Bridges



# WE NEVER SLEEP

Paul Williams



25 November 1990. Hello again. I had this thought that sometimes fandom is a place to jump off from — an inspiration — and sometimes a place to retreat to. It can be both at the same time for different people. Possibly both at the same time for the same person.

My children are at this moment 17, 15, 13, and 10. I was 14 when I met Harry Stubbs in Boston (we were both speaking on science fiction to a college class of would-be librarians; I got the job through a librarian I met in my youthful sf fanatic role) and arranged to ride with him and his wife to Chicon III. How amazing to be able to be part of another world at such a critical age! I was already publishing a fanzine. I have never forgotten fandom's hospitality. It opened doors in me.

Now I am invited to be a guest speaker at Mexicon IV. I am surprised. I am delighted. I am not a science fiction writer. But still somehow I am fulfilling my youthful fantasies.

One such fantasy was to be included in one of Judith Merril's *Best of the Year* anthologies. I didn't become a story writer and she eventually stopped the series, but in 1972 we met not quite by accident in Tokyo and I gave her a copy of the manuscript I was working on, *Apple Bay* (a commune story), and later, 1975, she selected it to be adapted for a radio series she was doing for Canadian Broadcasting. Wow.

I once promised Debbie Notkin I would write an article for her fanzine KITH about fandom and amaeru, based on Takeo Doi's book *Amae no Kozo* (the English translation is called *The Anatomy of Dependence*, available in paperback from Kodansha/Harper & Row). I don't know if I'll ever write that article. I do know I'll think about Doi-san's book for the rest of my life, and wonder why its insights into general human psychology are not more widely known and discussed. The essence of the matter is this: the Japanese have a word for "amae" and we don't. The best we can do is approach it from a number of different directions. The best translation of "amaeru" is, "to spoil" (or to ask to be spoiled), as in, "Darling, please spoil me a little tonight." Amae is in particular the unconditioned love that a mother has for her child, and amae relationships have to do with the universal human need for this sort of love and acceptance, and the ways this need, in its healthy and unhealthy forms, dominates various aspects of our lives. Doi's book discusses the constellation of Japanese words that relate to amae, and as we begin to grasp the meanings of these various words and how they are connected, certain previously mysterious aspects of both the Japanese and the human psyche begin to come more into focus.

The relationship of amae and fandom is, I suppose, that to a certain extent (despite all the sturm and drang) in fandom we are loved and accepted simply because we are fans (if we are) (hence all the conflict about who is and who isn't). We are welcomed, we can relax, we can amaeru. Amae is also translated as "feelings of indulgence." We all have a very deep need to be indulged. One of my young teen fantasies was to meet and fall in love with a female sf fan. She would be friendlier (more willing to indulge me). I would be free to be myself with her. I had a memorable dream — very strong feeling of community — in which this happened.

(This fantasy too was fulfilled later, more than once; indeed while I was still technically a teenager I was in love with a rather famous gafiated femme fan whom I met by accident in a non-sf context.)

Compare sf conventions with other sorts of conventions one might attend for professional reasons. The difference is (and let's say we're talking about small sf conventions, like Corflu or Sercon, like Disclave in the '60s, like Worldcons if one goes back far enough) that at an sf con you can amaeru.

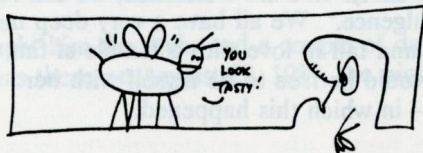
Sorry, Debbie. I'm not sure I'm up to doing the work of explaining this right.

Fandom is in some ways an uncomfortable place for me because I took what I loved in fandom and made it part of my professional life: started a magazine in which I could talk about what interested me, on my own terms (till it all got too crazy); wrote books that were/are as much about the people and situations around me as they are about their purported (sercon) topics; if I admired a musician or writer I often made a point of going and meeting them, regarding them as potential friends, correspondents, kindred spirits. Both *Crawdaddy* and *The Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter* are, in different ways, little reinventions of fandom. Meanwhile I never quite left the mother ship — the original model, sf fandom — altogether. Never quite retreated back to it, either, though I'm glad it's here and offers whatever degree of refuge for those of us who need to talk to others on paper and perhaps just can't stand the marketplace anymore, or never gained access to it in the first place. There are other reasons for retreat, of course, and all of them valid at the right time. Not only can one get tremendously burned out saving or otherwise interacting with the world, but it's a well-known fact that one's greatest impact may come through something tiny rather than something apparently big. May come, for example, in a letter or article published in a zine with a circulation of 200. Less than that is fine too. Recently I was visiting a friend in Portland and was very struck by a poem by a pal of his (handwritten and illustrated) that I found on the wall in his basement. I copied it down, sent it to a friend who is also a poet. She was as moved by it as I was, and got in touch with the author, and they have entered into an intense and supportive correspondence. What I'm saying is, you can have an impact on the world even with an edition of one that's posted only in some guy's basement storage room in Portland. It's an interesting universe.

Recommended reading: *Geek Love* by Katherine Dunn. *Carmen Dog* by Carol Emshwiller. *Downtown* by Viido Polikarpus and Tappan King. (No connection to the preceding discussion; they're just the best books I can remember reading in the last few years, each superb and recommended without reservation. Funny that I think of myself as not liking fantasy; I guess I don't like the category — whereas I do like the sf category — and yet, today as throughout history, many or most of the truly exceptional works of literature are written as fantasy, often *sui generis*, which is certainly true of the Dunn and the Emshwiller, though one could claim the Dunn is a "Sturgeon novel" in the sense that *Stranger in a Strange Land* is a "Sturgeon novel," and the Emshwiller has some subtle roots in the opus of Cordwainer Smith. *Downtown* is identifiably in the tradition of classic children's fantasy novels, and arguably the first such classic to be published in too many years. Why isn't it being read aloud in every literate household?)

Recommended listening: *Ragged Glory* by Neil Young, best album of the year, and a contender for best Neil Young album ever. Fuck the '60s. Whether you know it or not, you've got "Love to Burn" right now. Also recommended: *Shahen-Shah*, by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan — Qawwal and Party. The voice of mystical Islam. Also of my spirit and soul, and yours. Time to get in touch with our Muslim roots, friends.

— Paul Williams





# A PROUD AND LONELY THING

BY TERRY CARR



The last fan on Earth sat alone in a room. Suddenly his computer began to print out an incoming letter.

Dear Joe,

I got your address from the records of the last worldcon, so I'm writing to ask if you're still alive. Don't bother to answer if you're not. Nobody else on the list was. Nobody at all seems to be alive any more -- those dumb bombs! But if you are, please write to me. I'm so lonely!

Cathy Murdock

There was an address, and Joe saw with excitement that she lived only a dozen miles away. Setting aside his tattered copy of the last issue of *HOLIER THAN THOU*, he sat down at the computer and replied:

Dear Cathy,

Yes, yes, I'm alive! I thought I was the only one, so you can imagine how excited I am to hear from you. Are you really a fan? We must meet!

Trembling, he sent off the letter. Then he paced back and forth in his small fan-den whose walls were lined with shelves filled with every fanzine since the beginning. Who would have suspected that Twiltone would be impervious to radiation? And how could he have expected that there would be anyone else alive — and a fan, at that! A woman, too. She sounded kind of young ... but he was in no position to be choosy.

His computer hummed and clicked, and Cathy's second letter appeared:

Dear Joe,

Oh, I'm so glad I found you! Yes, of course I'm a fan, silly. I've been to over twenty cons and I read fanzines all the time. You're right, we've got to get together. I think it's safe out now, so I'll start over to your place as soon as I get dressed. We've sure got a lot to do.

By the way, I'm 22. I'm sending a picture of me -- it was taken two years ago at some college thing, so don't worry if I don't look fannish. Please send me your picture so I'll be able to recognize you even if there are a bunch of corpses around. (Just a joke, I hope.)

Cathy Murdock, in the photo that assembled itself on Joe's printout, was very pretty. He could hardly believe his good luck. Visions of the two of them repopulating the world with trufans swam in his head. He'd make sure they were the right kind of fans, too ... bring them up right.

He quickly sent off a photo of himself taken at the SMOF party at the last worldcon — he thought he looked very fannish in his beanie, holding a bottle of Jim Beam and smiling as he cried, "Smoooth!" Then he wrote one last quick note, in a giddy euphoria:

I'll be waiting for you. And by the way, since we're going to start a new world, we can take new names. Just call me Adam.

He chuckled, and got up to pace again around his room. He saw his Gestetner, clean and gleaming, and thought of the fanzines they would publish together, to be read by the neofans that would spring from his loins, and Cathy's. A whole new world, populated entirely by trufans!

His computer printed out a final message from her:

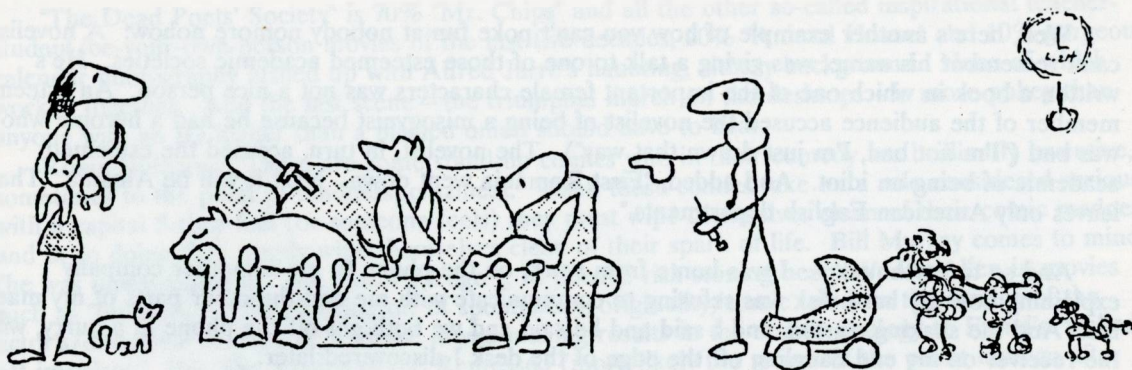
I'm just leaving -- it took me a while to find some clothes that still fit me. I love your idea of taking new names. Okay, I'll call you Adam. And you can call me Princess Leia. See you soon!

The last fan on Earth screamed.

— Terry Carr







SON  
OF

# STUFF

BY CAROL CARR

My mother's dead spaghetti. My mother loved Velveeta because animal-product foods that were reminiscent of their source made her unhappy. She had a kind of visceral gag reaction to meat that was not killed dead in several different ways before she ate it, and didn't like what she referred to as wet, slimy stuff. So the way she cooked spaghetti, and therefore the way I defined spaghetti till the age of Eating Out, was as follows:

Cook the spaghetti in a pot until it's helpless enough to be broken easily with a gentle tap of the back of a wooden spoon. While it's dying, saute in a frying pan tiny bits of onion. Add to said onion canned tomato sauce and a large hunk of Velveeta. Simmer and stir until the Velveeta has melted and all ingredients are smooched together into a new ingredient. Drain and add dead spaghetti to tomato sauce. Simmer and stir for the better part of the afternoon, or until wet mixture has thoroughly coated dead spaghetti and coating has dried to a paste and under no stretch of the imagination could resulting pancake be called wet and slimy. I *loved* this so-called spaghetti. For years I considered real spaghetti alien and untrustworthy. I would like someday to taste dead spaghetti again but, no, would not go so far as to make it myself.

The lottery. There are two kinds of people in this world: THOSE WHO THIS and THOSE WHO THAT. Let's assume that THOSE WHO THIS are aware that their chance of winning the lottery is about the same as their chance of getting hit by lightning. They buy tickets anyway. But why aren't these people afraid of being hit by lightning? That is, since they put their *hopes* into low odds (of winning the lottery) why don't they put their *fears* into the same low odds (of being struck by lightning)? I'm one of THOSE WHO THAT. If I felt hopeful of winning the lottery, I would definitely be afraid of being struck by lightning. Stay a minute, because I think I'm coming to a point. (*Help me ... help me ...*) THOSE WHO THIS seem to be more contented with life than THOSE WHO THAT, probably because they put their energy into positive stuff and ignore negative stuff. And who could help but notice that it's men who accent-u-ate the positive and women who are always being slapped in the face by both sides of things. There's a study being done right now at UC-Berkeley on the relationship of male hormones and the ability to deal with negative emotions, the premise being that for *physiological* reasons most men can't tolerate much negative stuff without getting rilly anxious. I'm curious to see how the study turns out, since that particular male/female dichotomy has been responsible for a lot of couple-conflict through the ages: She: "There's something we have to talk about." He: "Aaaargh, I'd rather die, you're after me again, where's my plane ticket, my drink, my dope, my earphones. And why are you always bringing me down?"

Well, here's another example of how you can't poke fun at nobody anymore nohow: A novelist, I can't remember his name, was giving a talk to one of those esteemed academic societies. He's written a book in which one of the important female characters was not a nice person. An esteemed member of the audience accused the novelist of being a misogynist because he had a heroine who was bad ("I'm not bad, I'm just drawn that way"). The novelist, in turn, accused the esteemed academic of being an idiot. And added, "First Romania went down. Next it will be Albania. That leaves only American English departments."

And so to earthquakes. I was home from work, on the phone to my computer company explaining how my hard disk was refusing to communicate with me and the other parts of my machine. And the shaking started, and I said and he said and we both got off the phone in a hurry, with the receiver on my end dangling off the edge of the desk I discovered later.

For some reason I put myself belly down on the floor, maybe because at times like this even undulating ground is better than no ground at all, or maybe because I was afraid I'd fall if I remained upright, or uptight (I'm writing this when I should be sleeping), or something. The house shook for at least three weeks (more hyperbole talk) during which I think I was talking out loud, sort of urgent requests for it to stop. I remember being pretty certain that if it continued to do what it was doing the house would fall down around and on top of me. (From what I gathered later about a thing called harmonic resonance (?), that wasn't such a bad guess.) But it did stop short of harmonizing with the seismic vibes, and the damage was confined to a few unimportant things that fell off shelves. Claudius and Jennifer, in the dining room, were still bushy-tailed and totally spooked when I got out there, but they calmed down in due time; I'd say their recovery rate was the same as mine. The electricity stayed on throughout, which is amazing because up here in the hills if somebody walks by a power line whistling a tune, that little extra breeze is enough to (serious hyperbole alert) ...

Afterwards I allowed myself to be mesmerized by the media and also called a lot of friends even though it meant I was one of those bad people who clog the lines. What I learned: (1) I want to live in Texas; (2) In the midst of terror it doesn't matter much whether or not you're alone but later is when you need to connect with the people in your life.

Even though the media portrayed the earthquake as a tragedy of epic proportions, it was a crapshoot of an earthquake in the sense that you were pretty much okay unless you happened to be in one of those discrete pockets of death and destruction (I-880, the Bay Bridge, the Marina, Santa Cruz of course). I think a lot of the ghoulishness afterwards ("Hey, Clyde, they're running the tape of the car falling into the bottom layer of the bridge again!"; "Hey, Maude, want to take one of those guided tours of the Marina?") came not so much from the seamy side of our natures but from the part that wants to be connected. This huge awful thing had just happened and there I was warm and safe on a hill, watching TV.

The University of California, where I work, announced it was going to be open the next day. Apparently in a very short time, in the dark, UC engineers (I assume they were engineers; maybe they were the custodial staff, or assistant professors of linguistics) were able to ascertain that all the buildings on campus were safe for occupancy. We won't dwell on it. The official messages were mixed: (1) Don't go out tomorrow; let the assessment and clean-up people do their work unimpeded; (2) Hey, we're open, come see us, come buy, come work. Typical cultural doubletalk. Since I don't take freeways or overpasses or underpasses or anything, I had no excuse to stay home.

Next morning I looked up at the 90-foot pines that look down on my house. I did leave the house a tiny bit later than usual since I knew I'd be one of the first people on the road and I wanted the sky to be light enough for me to see the occasional huge chasm, beach of broken glass, etc. It was none of the above. *Nobody* was on the road at 6:45 that morning, but almost everybody in my office came in. We traded stories and eventually got down to a bit of work.



"The Dead Poets' Society" is 70% "Mr. Chips" and all the other so-called inspirational teacher-student/be-your-own-person movies of the last five decades, 20% "Animal House" and 10% gorgeous calendar photography lushed up with Alfred Jarre's haunting, zithery background. None of which worked together. And the last scene – the triumphal march on the desktops – is more pukey than anyone with an IQ higher than a pickled onion should have to bear.

Robin Williams: There are some stand-up comics who in their comedy are brilliantly inventive, sometimes to the point of madness, craziness. When these comics take on a role considered serious with a capital S they feel (or someone feels) they must wipe themselves clean of their comic madness and in so doing they simply wipe themselves clean of their spark of life. Bill Murray comes to mind (he was unwatchable in "The Razor's Edge"); so does (I risk stoning here) Woody Allen in movies such as "Interiors." This blocking off of spontaneity/originality/comic talent in the service of the actor's/director's concept of "serious" movie-making results in the artistic analogy to Freud's "walled-off impulses." But The Return of the Repressed (more likely the return of the profit motive; after all, people *expect* these comics to be funny and might be disappointed if they're not: half the audience for "Dead Poets' Society" was laughing the minute Williams came on screen, even though there was nothing to laugh at) can be spotted in the fragmented, many-toned nature of films made by or acted by comics. In "Good Morning, Vietnam," for instance, Robin Williams stops the clock for chunky bits of stand-up; every Woody Allen movie I've ever seen is really two movies: the "serious" story and the cartoon insets where Allen gets to play out his other persona. So here, too, Robin Williams comes alive only in those scenes where he's allowed (or allows himself) to let fly with juicy impersonations of Shakespeare a la John Wayne and Marlon Brando.

The camera and Alfred Jarre's score: What point is Weir trying to make with those lyrical shots of the campus and surrounding countryside often accompanied by music that was only appropriate in his previous movies to the Aborigine bush but which slather this one, given its context, with an almost Lord-of-the-Flies flavor?

The movie is an essay on morality, with illustrations lifted shamelessly intact from our film history of classic tearjerkers. The larger moral point embedded in it is understandably ignored: that suicide is a legitimate method of seizing the day. Therefore Robin Williams, the inspired and inspiring teacher, *was* culpable, not of literally coaching the ill-fated young man to follow his dream of acting, but of encouraging him in more general terms to follow his heart. When the boy's heart takes the path of deep despair, he follows it to its logical end. In Berkeley we would say the teacher inspired his young charges to manifest their feelings of empowerment. There are times those feelings touch bottom. But since this is a movie deliberately designed to touch the sky, the hero must be exonerated of all responsibility, to the accompaniment of cheers and tears from the audience. Easy to do when you eliminate all moral complexity.

[To be fair, the boy actors were very good, and there were some nice bits of business. But even being fair, that's all I can say in its favor.]

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"We must believe in free will; we have no choice."

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Yesterday a San Francisco bus went out of control during prime time rush hour, killing several people, injuring more, plowing into trees and telephone poles and finally crashing to a stop in front of the Bechtel building. Today some people put flowers on the spot where the bus finally landed. A TV reporter asked a San Francisco Man on the Street what he thought about the flowers. He said, and I quote verbatim: "It's a tribute more type, or whatever."

I want to parse this. "It's a tribute." Pretty straightforward so far. "More type." It's more of a tribute type of thing? One might ask: more than *what*, but one won't. "Or whatever." This last proves that he has insight into his deficits, some awareness that on a better day he might have said something really coherent. But all in all you can see he gave it his best. He was, of course, paying

homage to Dwight D. Eisenhower's famous comment on the assassination of John Kennedy: "There hasn't been such a tragedy since the Archduke Ferdinand, or whoever, was assassinated."

I recently (well, sometime this year) cancelled (well, *tried* to cancel) one of my credit cards.

I cut up the card and sent it to the credit card company with a letter requesting that my account be closed. It wasn't.

A month later I received a statement telling me I owed nothing.

A month later I received a statement telling me I owed nothing.

[THIS IS NOT A TEST.]

I called the credit card company. Before I could say what I wanted to say, they asked me for my account number, my name, my address, my home phone, my work phone, and would I hold.

When they allowed me to say what I had called to say, they told me they had no record of my account having been closed but that they would do it right away. I said thank you — and by the way, don't forget not to charge me the next annual fee. They said no, of course not.

A month later I received a statement telling me I owed nothing except the next annual fee.

I called the credit card company. Before I could say what I wanted to say, they asked me for my account number, my name, my address, my home phone, my work phone, and would I hold. I said, Not now, but maybe later. First I want to say what I *called* to say. When I finished, the credit card person, in a voice shaky with suppressed umbrage, said that she'd been about to grant me all my wishes at once when I had so rudely interrupted her. Was there an implication to be drawn? Would I be punished in the next unwanted statement?

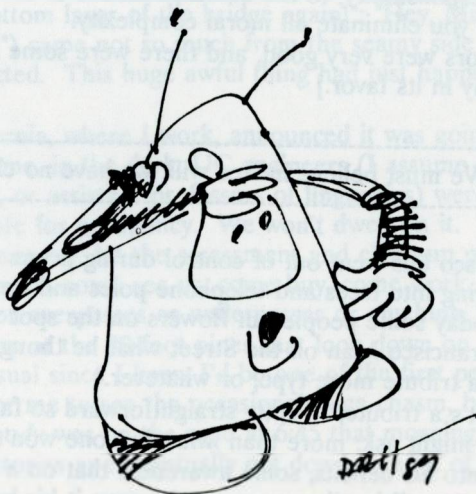
Apparently not (in the usual way). A month later I received a statement telling me I owed nothing; however, the credit card company owed *me* a mysterious \$5.

This morning I called the credit card company and asked if it had any suggestions as to how I might collect the \$5 since I had no card to charge a \$5 purchase to.

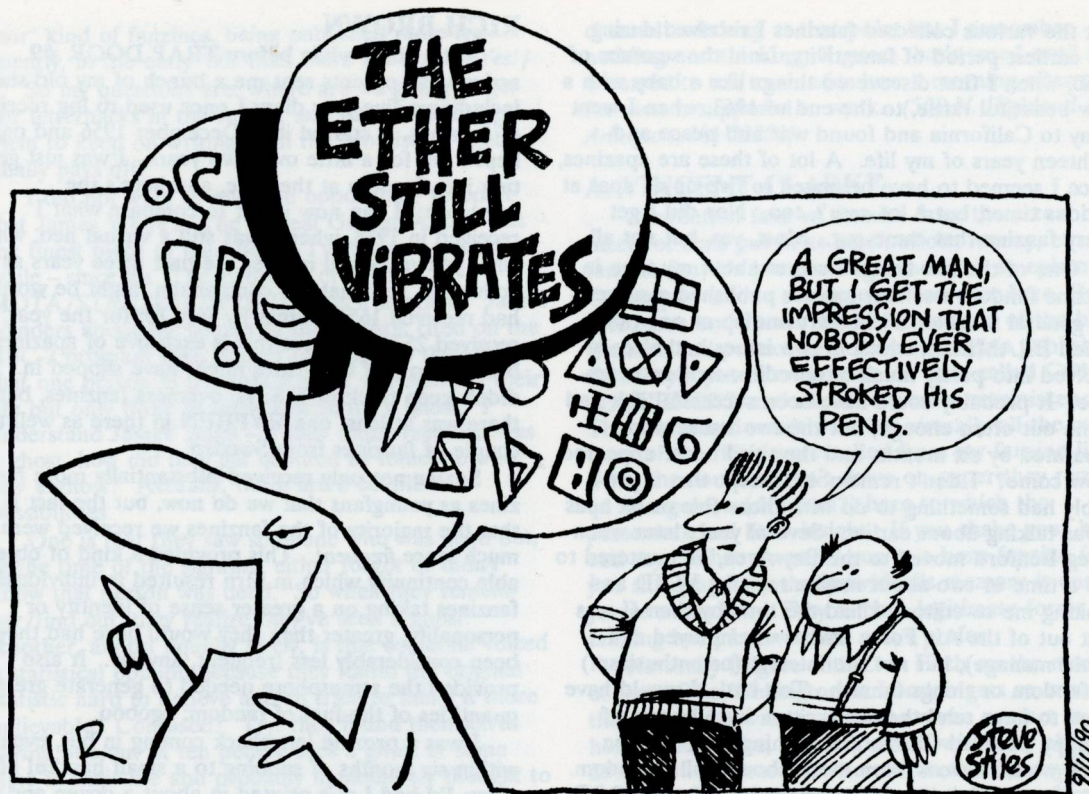
This is what the credit card company said. The credit card company said this: "Oh, no problem. We automatically send you your check if you call and request it."

For your convenience, this story is closed.

— Carol Carr







## IRWIN HIRSH

I don't know if you published this issue before or after hearing of ATom's death but it is appropriate that your covers be by Arthur and a humorous tribute to Arthur from a fellow artist. This issue arrived on the day we go to Wendy's parents for our weekly family meal, and I took the copy along with me. My eleven-year-old niece Danielle saw the cover, said "Hey, that's really good," and asked to have a closer look. She pondered the drawing for a bit and pointed to the bottom figure. "Look at his face. He's really worried." As I looked at Danielle, I could tell she was impressed by the use of line. She's been drawing for as long as I've known her (since she was three) but it is only recently that she's developed her own style. It was nice to see her casting a critical eye over someone else's art. "Have a look at this one," I said as I turned the issue over to show her the back cover. She let out a chuckle. "They're cute."

But as I looked at the drawing I began to sense that something was wrong. All I could see were ATom's black figures, but they didn't look right. Then I noticed that the lettering wasn't ATom's, and having a closer look at the man I realized that he wasn't an ATom figure. I showed the drawing to Wendy and asked her who drew it. "ATom," she said

as if I was stupid for not knowing. Kudos to Harry Bell for one of the more successful pastiches of another artist's style, particularly for hiding so much of his own style within the drawing.

Between your editorial and the letter column, the topic of whither genzines gets good coverage. You know, it's taken quite a while (only about ten years) but I've reached the point where I don't think I can be alarmed by the statistics you present. These sort of things tend to go in cycles and I feel all that has to happen is a couple of spontaneous events to occur and things will get going again. I also feel you can't go looking for those sparks to happen; they just will. (On the other hand, I find it kinda sobering to realize I am responsible for more than a quarter of the Australian fanzines you received over a four-year period.) (26 Jessamine Ave., East Prahran, Vict. 3181, Australia)

## GORDON EKLUND

Your editorial musings on the progressive vanishment of fanzines over the years: I can't speak with any firm authority on the situation today but you do seem to have your numbers right as far as the past goes. There were a lot of fanzines coming out back then. I know. I've got a good half-dozen cardboard boxes jammed in a nearby closet containing nothing



but the various collected fanzines I received during my earliest period of fanactivity, from the summer of 1960, when I first discovered things like a baby with a new beautiful rattle, to the end of 1963, when I went away to California and found war and peace and eighteen years of my life. A lot of these are apazines, since I seemed to have belonged to five or six apas at various times, but a lot *aren't*, too. Nor did I get every fanzine that came out. Most, yes, but not all.

One of the few things I regret about my time in fanzine fandom was that I never published a successful general fanzine. I did start one up at one point called BRAMBLE, which in two issues had already evolved into pretty much of an editor-written letterzine. It probably could have been successful if it had come out often enough, but the two issues were separated by six months and the third never appeared. How come? I don't remember, except that it probably had something to do with those five or six apas I was talking about earlier. Several years later when Greg Benford moved to the Bay Area, he muttered to me a time or two about maybe reviving VOID and making me co-editor. I had the time by then (I was just out of the Air Force and as unemployed as I could manage), but not the interest (or enthusiasm) in fandom or things fannish. Too bad. I would have liked to have read those unwritten installments of "Happy Benford Chatter," if nothing else. Maybe Greg would have written more about Dallas fandom. Not that I didn't like his piece in this TRAP DOOR, though, because I did. Still: from Rich Koogler to Stephen Hawking. A long strange trip, yes indeed.

In the letter column I was particularly taken by various people's musings on the ever-popular subject of whither fandom. If fanzine fandom is indeed shrinking, then I think Sam Moskowitz in his letter comes closest to explaining why: fandom has changed because science fiction itself has changed. Once for all serious purposes a totally literate, print medium, which if you read it got you at least looked at oddly by others, science fiction attracted fans who were a lot like the literature itself: young, bright, verbal, and more than a little weird. (At least a lot of the people around them, parents and teachers especially, thought they were.) But that's changed. Not only is science fiction now more or less respectable but in terms of sheer numbers exposed, it is probably more of a visual than a print medium. Movies and television dominate. And so, it appears, do the bulk of today's new fans. They may not have read a damn thing. Because of this, it strikes me that Sam Moskowitz, who entered fandom in the 1930s, and I, who came along almost thirty years later, have far more in common than either of us has with most of today's media-oriented fans. Sam and I are of the same genus. Those new people aren't. (15815 40th Place S., Seattle, WA 98188)

## RICH BROWN

Just a short while before TRAP DOOR #9 arrived, my parents sent me a bunch of my old stuff, including a five-year diary I once used to log receipt of fanzines. I started it in December 1956 and only kept it up for a little over two years. I was just getting into fandom at the time, and here's the relevance: I can now use it to compare what I received in 1958, when I was still a virtual neo, with what you've logged in over the past three years as an active fan, for what the comparison might be worth. I had received 165 fanzines by July 15; for the year, I received 257. I believe this is exclusive of apazines but a couple of Cult titles might have slipped in. I didn't keep track of U.S. vs. overseas fanzines, but there was at least one HYPHEN in there as well as a couple of fanzines from Sweden.

So, we not only received substantially more fanzines as youngfans that we do now, but the fact is that the majority of the fanzines we received were much more *frequent*. This provided a kind of observable continuity which in turn resulted in individual fanzines taking on a greater sense of identity or personality, greater than they would have had they been considerably less frequent, anyway. It also provided the atmosphere needed to generate greater quantities of the fuel of fandom: egoboo.

I was a prozine letterhack coming in but, even so, within six months of subbing to a small handful of zines, I'd had LoCs printed in about a dozen and was starting to receive some response on some of them. I also had some pretty terrible art and a dreadful piece of sf in fanzine print and was on my way to publishing one of the silly things myself. This contrasts with a time seven or eight years back when, after I'd folded *beardmutterings* for the second time in as many decades, I decided once again to take up the humble mantle of the letterhack. After my first six months of this, engaging in *intensive* and practically full-time fanac, I had two — count them, two — LoCs that had actually made it into print, and neither had been in print long enough to generate any responses.

I kept on plugging along for a number of reasons. I knew, based on past experience, that sooner or later most of the stuff would see print and, thanks to the word processor, I also knew what I was writing was better than what I'd been churning out in the mid to late '50s. However, I had to ask myself if, had I been a neo, I would've had the willpower to keep turning out letters for six months straight without seeing them in print or getting much in the way of egoboo, just with the promise of possible egoboo, as I did in the '80s; and I had to say no, probably not. Letterhacking has become like Don Marquis' description of publishing a volume of poetry: "It's like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo." And my feeling is that there were more of



"our" kind of fanzines, being published more frequently, in the early '80s than there are now. {Yes!}

So my questions are: where are we going to get our letterhacks in the future; and what will prompt them to keep on writing until the promise of egoboo finally pays off?

I did not want to miss the opportunity to opine that James White's "The Unreal George Affair" was the finest piece of faan fiction I've seen in quite a while – since his "The Exorcists of IF" in MOTA/STARSHIP/HYPHEN, as it happens. James wonders about the source of the statistic cited on the BBC-2 program with respect to ghosts to the effect that one person in ten sees a ghost sometime in their life but only three of them realize it's a ghost. I understand James' point – if they didn't *realize* it was a ghost, how did they get counted as someone who *saw* a ghost? Actually, there are a couple of possibilities.

One is that they saw someone who was dead but, at the time of the sighting, either forgot or didn't know that person was dead. So when they remember/find out, they realize they've seen a ghost. Another, almost equally likely, is that someone voiced a statistical opinion because they found the original statistic hard to believe and so tried to make it more believable. Confused? Try: they found themselves saying one out of ten people sees a ghost at some time in their life and probably immediately thought to themselves, But if that were really true, we'd hear about this sort of thing a lot more than we do. So these people, citing a statistic but feeling misgivings about it, may be tempted to tack on a qualifier to the effect that x number of these people don't always *realize* it's a ghost they're seeing, not because it's true but because that makes the original statistic seem more believable to them. They're just not immediately aware of the humorous implications.

Now that I've helped James with that little problem, maybe he can help me with one of mine. I was switching TV channels a few months and Sundays back and stopped briefly on one of those programs where Vital Issues are forever being discussed and/or debated by panels of experts: the budget crises, dope, crime in the street, pornography, women's liberation, the mean annual rainfall in Zimbabwe during the Mesozoic period, etc. One of two women on this particular panel was speaking a bit stridently just as I switched to it: "Men! That's all we ever hear about from them – how far we've come toward developing a 'morning after' pill for women. That just goes to show how often the women's movement gets coopted by mentalities that can only support the masculine agenda – we're just a short way from actually developing and producing a morning after pill for women and yet we haven't even *begun* to do any research on morning after pills for men ..." I continued my

channel switching at that point but I remember nodding and thinking, "I guess that's true," until it occurred to me to wonder how a morning after pill for men is supposed to work. (508 N. Highland #B4, Arlington, VA 22201)

## A. VINCENT CLARKE

Convention fans vs. fanzine fans: the actual organizers of cons put in as much effort, money, etc., as a fanzine fan; it's just that the product is so ephemeral. Once upon a time a couple of fans over here, Bridget Wilkinson and James Steel, decided out of the blue (neither had previously been into fanzine publishing) that they'd put out a fanzine on cons called CONSEQUENCES, and asked for verbal reminiscences. The actual end result was that virtually all the contents of the thing were culled from my fanzine library; if the memories weren't down on paper they remained in a golden (drunken?) haze to which the possessors had little insight. If you shake your head and say, "What a waste!" you're a born fanzine fan; if you shrug and say the individual's memory is enough, you're a con fan. They're both legitimate forms of fanning but I know which one I prefer.

Naturally I agree with Don Fitch on the numbers of fans. The Wellington in London gets so crowded that, even if it were possible to make contact in the horrendous noise, I'm acquainted with only about 20% of those present, whereas "in the old days" with a fifth of the numbers I'd know the name, address and personal details of everyone present. All I can say is that whether it's mountaineering or ice hockey or stamp collecting, a hobby is more interesting if you're aware of the history of it. A few of us stick to the Old Ways and feel all the better for it. We have met the Society for Creative Anachronism – and it is us! (16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN, U.K.)

## HARRY WARNER JR.

It took me a while to read all those pages with the smaller typeface, but I enjoyed very much the latest TRAP DOOR. Of course, it had a momentary saddening effect on me because of the knowledge that there won't be many more of the wonderful ATOM illustrations in fanzines that make your covers so outstanding this time. It's sad to think that his post-humous fanzine appearances will become rarer and rarer and will finally stop altogether. {Alas, yes – though I'm regretfully out of covers, I have enough of Arthur's smaller-sized work on hand that he will continue to have original work in these pages for some years yet. Also, much some of his work is rather generic and reusable. For instance, the creature with the balloon heading Jeanne Bowman's article last issue also appeared back in TRAP DOOR #1, and you probably haven't seen the last of it. ATOM's artwork will be remembered

*in fandom in the same way Frank R. Paul's is remembered: as a classic and an enduring standard.}*

James White's contribution impressed me as a wonderful reversion to the myth-making era of fanzine writing with its perfect combination of fact and fancy. It's also a much-needed reminder of what a good guy George Charters was, needed because a whole new generation of fans have emerged who read the latest words of other giants of IF who are still active but have never seen George's prose.

And I suppose only fans who have been members of FAPA or have lived in the Los Angeles area during the past two or three decades have had any real knowledge of Elmer Perdue. So Ed Burbee's article is important, too, not just for the bits of previously unpublished information about Elmer that it contains, but also for the summary it will provide to the fannish multitudes. It would be good if someone took the time, trouble and money to publish a medium-sized anthology of Elmer's fanzine writings as a permanent tribute to him. In recent decades much of his FAPA material was ephemeral in nature, but he did some substantial pieces in his younger years which I think would stand up today as examples of good fannish writing.

You and Paul Williams probably wouldn't care for the way I reacted to "We Never Sleep." My first thought about his proposal to get rid of the nation of lawyers was: it would be swell if there were no more lawyers to defend criminals in court and get them acquitted because of some stupid technicality or sheer force of the attorney's personality, no more Supreme Court to legalize abortion and deny police authority to enforce the law, nobody to participate in hearings to accuse government authorities of this or that peccadillo invented by their political enemies.

I take considerable satisfaction out of the fact that nobody in the letter section found any real objection to my contention that people who make weapons of war are just as guilty as government authorities and financiers who cause the factories to be operated. To say that I'm naive or idealistic in expecting the employees of those factories not to accept the jobs is to say that it's just as naive or idealistic for anyone to claim that the people on top shouldn't participate in the arms race. Presidents and dictators, chairmen of the board and Wall Street executives, and the man or woman at the workman's bench have exactly equal amounts of guilt. Anyone who complains about the people on top and tries to find excuses for the little people on the payrolls is discriminating, and we all know that discrimination is the worst thing that can happen in today's world. (423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740)

## PAMELA BOAL

I pen this epistle of complaint more in sorrow

than in anger ... or to put it another way, the old gray matter ain't what she used to be. I forget things. I am, however, certain that I would not have forgotten TRAP DOOR, so where has it been all my life or at least for the eight issues I did not receive? Despite the modernistic computer generated typeface, you can't fool me; I recognize a genuine fanzine when I see one. The right spread of articles, the lively letter column, the whole interspersed with the right illos and above all the names, some of which were already legends when I became involved in fandom twenty years ago. Yes, it's all there, just as surely as if it had been typed up on a stencil and cranked out on a manual mimeo. *{More surely, to tell the truth, since if I had to rely on stencils and mimeos I wouldn't be doing this at all. And welcome aboard the mailing list; hope you stay a while.}*

I suspect Dick Ellington's youthful diet stood him in good stead. Today's hygiene doesn't allow people to build up a natural resistance to infection and certainly people in the early 1940s did not suffer from obesity and all the health hazards that condition engenders. Dick's atmospheric, nostalgic piece demonstrates that our (American and British) cultures are not or at least, were not, so very different. The sad thing is that the hygienic banishment of greasy spoons also banished natural meeting places for young people. Today the only meeting places are pubs, thus fostering a living for "experts" on the problems of teenage drinking who are almost as insufferable as the so-called lager louts.

Recently I dined out with my sister who, being considerably my junior and a business woman, is far more in touch than I with what passes for humor today. As I listed to the barbed and acid-tipped comments and watched my sister and our fellow diners falling about with laughter, I began to wonder if I had lost my sense of humor. All too often I read items in fanzines and muse that while they may show the writer to have a quick wit, they simply do not make me smile. Thus it is wonderfully refreshing to read a contribution from James White, to admire the skill with which he takes a fact familiar to all computer users and turns it into not only an homage to a fan many of us may not have had the pleasure of meeting but also a tale full of gentle humor. Thank you, James, for providing me with a smile or three.

And thank you, Greg Benford, for your article. I can enjoy and admire the work of living artists, authors, entertainers or sports persons; however, I cannot make heroes of them. Stephen Hawking is not only an intellectual giant; he is for me a hero in an age sadly lacking the heroic quality.

Interesting as the items I haven't mentioned may be, I must get on to one of the subjects raised in the letters. (Apart, that is, from remarking that we "Green" gardeners have great difficulty in persuading



nature that while we wish to live with it, some of it is less welcome.) That subject – well, two actually – time and apas. As others have observed, there is life outside of fandom, life that involves demands on one's time. I presume most people prefer to use the time they have to spare for fannish activities on those affordable aspects that give them the most enjoyment. For me that is written communication with other fans. For many years I have been on the point of joining an apa. Then zines would start to arrive and I realized that while contact through apas might have greater depth, zines provided considerably more numbers of more places and that I still receive enough zines that I really want to LoC to take up the time and ever-diminishing energy that I have to spare. I presume those who complain there are not enough zines have a lot more spare time that I do or have something to trade and do not feel the urge or need to LoC. The zines I receive are diverse enough and are of a broad enough geographical spread that they make me feel in touch with the wider picture even if only slightly active in a small part.

So many LoCers, contributors – even editors – mention belonging to apas that I doubt that apas are the reason for the decline in the number of zines published. Costs, especially postage, are I submit the biggest factors. Then the size of fandom. It is possible today to find fannish activity to suit the individual's preference within comparatively small regions. Fans no longer have to reach out so far to find other fans, nor does such a large percentage of the whole have to be involved to make things happen. Whatever the reasons for the decline in numbers, TRAP DOOR is living proof that good zines are still published and my sort of fandom still exists. (4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, U.K.)

## LESLEIGH LUTTRELL

Since TRAP DOOR is the only fanzine I receive, I can't really comment on the current state of fanzine fandom. But it has occurred to me, the few times I've dipped into computer mail networks, that a lot of the sort of writing I saw in fanzines when I was active (and particularly in apas) is turning up on computer screens. I really don't know if the writers are fans or have any connection with fandom, but the kind of communication that goes on there seems much the same. So perhaps some of the fannish writing is disappearing into places like that. Which is good because it is still written words, but of course lacks the kind of permanence of a fanzine which arrives in your mailbox and can be kept for years – until you pass it along to be recycled or donate it to a fan fund.

Dick Ellington's piece was the kind of gem you'd expect to turn up in a nostalgia magazine or an historical society newsletter. In fact, all your contri-

butors displayed the facility with words which you can only acquire by doing a lot of writing at some point in your life. Fanzines provided that outlet for a lot of us, so your observations on the decline of fanzines are rather depressing. The other depressing piece in this issue is "Goodbye, Elmer." It leaves the reader with an overwhelming impression of, well, not the futility of life but the loneliness of it. I suppose a similar article about any celebrity who has died recently could give the same impression. On the other hand, Greg Benford's piece and his picture of Stephen Hawking is not at all depressing. I don't think it is because Hawking is famous in the larger world and Elmer was not. I think it was Greg's description of Hawking living in a "matter-of-fact way." One would almost like to think of Elmer having lived that way, rather than as being a mythic figure who came to a pedestrian end.

It is nice to see Steve Stiles still drawing for fanzines. The only other place I see his work these days is in *Xenozoic Tales* from Kitchen Sink Press. It seems to me, from this distance, that the professional writers and artists who still contribute to fanzines might actually be getting the most out of it. Busmen's holidays are always the most fun. (1906 Kropf Avenue, Madison, WI 53704)

## ARNIE KATZ

Your genzine statistics are a little chilling to a newly revived fan. The comparison to 1960's "top 20" fanzines seems particularly telling. Without an actual count to verify my hunch, I'd say there were as many genzines in 1974 as in 1960. That suggests the decline in the genzine population is of more recent origin, though downturns have occurred throughout fan-history (i.e., at the end of First Fandom and during the first apa boom of 1963-1966). {The second may have also been due to the Breendoggle; I suspect the current one is due at least in part to the TAFF Wars.}

James White's "The Unreal George Affair" was my personal favorite in a generally outstanding issue. His delightful humorous style speaks for itself, but this piece has something seldom found in fan humor: sweetness. His affection for George Charters suffuses every line. The ghosts of fandom's past danced in my head as I read it.

I met Elmer Perdue several times, though we weren't anything more than casual fan acquaintances. I remember our first meeting especially well, possibly because it suggests Elmer's larger-than-life personality. Felice Rolfe and I were having a quiet lunch at a Westercon when Elmer strode up to our table. He was wearing one of his celebrated eye-searing shirts and seemed to be in high convention spirits. He greeted Felice warmly, and she introduced us. He sat down at the table and we talked trash for a few minutes. During the desultory conversation,

Elmer carelessly extracted his wallet from a pocket, opened it with a slow flourish, and pulled out a dollar bill. With exaggerated deliberateness, he placed it on the table and smoothed it flat. "The Lord giveth," he boomed. The three of us continued to chatter amiably for another ten minutes or so, and then Elmer decided to continue his progress through the restaurant. As we made the usual good-bye noises, he reached across the table and took the dollar. He stood up, beamed down at both of us, and said, "And the Lord taketh away." And that's how I met Elmer Ghod Perdue. (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107)

## JEANNE MEALY

I love Judith Hanna's non-political writing, and so enjoyed "Nature Moves In." I'm going to remember the "science project" angle, let me tell you, but I could do without hearing more about wolf spiders. Jeeze. I can just imagine how she and Joseph coexist, especially with little stories about how he exterminates any bit of flora or fauna that gets into the house, and she tells him, "Stop beating up the ecology, dear." I've got my share of nature-inside tales, from the population of centipedes in the basement (who occasionally make the mistake of venturing into the kitchen). If we see them before the cats "play" with them and remove the poor things' legs, they're either escorted outside with a capture-and-release jar or quickly dispatched if it happens to be the wintertime. And then there was the bat hanging on the shower curtain ... I didn't know it between the inner and outer curtains until I leaned in from the outside to turn on the water and pushed them back. CLUNK! went the bat. BOINGGG! went the eyes (mine). I let out a strangled yowl and eventually was able to capture the bat by putting a bowl over it and a piece of cardboard under it, then *carefully* reversing the two. The bat woke up about then, and was *not* happy to have been knocked cold, then imprisoned in a Tupperware bowl. Once outside, I gently dumped it out and flattened back against the house as it took wing. Whew, another mosquito-eater off to do its job!

Berni Phillips's letter made me more than a little sad: a tale of the difficulties of discovering fanzine fandom. I'm not sure how long it would've taken me to find it, if Minicon's policy of including a subscription to RUNE with every membership hadn't existed. As it was, I felt as though I was being presented with a plethora of wonderment — especially in the fanzine review column, with more neat publications to write off for! When someone says they don't care for fanzines, I tend to ask what they've seen and what they *do* like. If they're really turned off to the whole idea, I won't pursue it — but at the very least I'll try to give them a zine with a number of other zines listed in it. There are a lot of unique zine flavors out

there, and an interested reader is likely to find one (or too many) to like.

Hang in there, Gary Deindorfer: There are a lot of us enthusiastic fans! I too have gotten strange reactions from my writing/in-person personas. What can I say? It depends on who I'm talking to, where, and when. Many folks think I'm shy (and friends guffaw); others think I'm gosh-wow. Both are right! (4157 Lyndale Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55409)

## ERIC MAYER

It was strange to see that Cafe Fandom piece mentioned again. How many years has it been now? Really, it was not particularly well-written to begin with — not focused enough — and so much has happened since it was written. I just took it out of my desk drawer and reread it. Most of it I wouldn't write today. I see I mentioned John Lennon a few times. At this point in my life I'm more inclined to go along with that song of his, "Whatever Gets You Through the Night" although I didn't understand it when it first appeared. It struck me as a cop-out. I suppose I should be grateful to still be able to learn from experience. Well, there's one area where in-person fanac has it all over the written variety — you can blow your top and rant and rave about something and it doesn't go into print for several hundred readers who'll still be dissecting it years later. I do believe there are a few fans around who take advantage of (or misuse) the dichotomy between in-print and in-person activity; but I'm certainly sorry if I offended anybody who felt they were being tarred with the same brush.

Paul Williams writes very interestingly this time. I write articles on the law. I'm a law school graduate. I wouldn't be doing such a thing aside from the family. Lawyers are a scourge, as are banks, insurance companies, corporations, doctors — you name it. I was thinking, when I paid my taxes, about how many thousands of dollars in interest I paid to the bank that has my mortgage. I had to put in time, effort — my life — to earn those thousands. What did the bank produce? How much human sweat and effort goes to those who produce nothing? This strikes me as a bad situation. Productive effort benefiting nonproducers. More to the point though — why should money be the measure of everything? People, at least in this country, take that for granted. But it isn't some natural thing. Animals don't have money. Money isn't a product of evolution or anything. It is *not* some natural law that a corporation's sole purpose is to produce money. Corporations could instead strive to improve the environment, improve the lives of their employees, help their communities. Rather than these being secondary goals or goals to which lip service is paid, these could be the primary corporate goals. And why not? Wouldn't more people benefit? Aren't people what's important?



It bothers me to hear that the Eastern European countries seem intent largely on moving towards capitalism even as their people assert their freedom. Even as it was an accident that communism happened to become burdened by dictators (and was never tested truly), it is an accident that certain freedoms have existed in countries operating on capitalist principles. Capitalism is anti-freedom. Private corporations curtail freedom more than government does. How much freedom of speech do you have, for instance, if your supervisor can fire you for saying something he or she doesn't like? What does the "right" of a minuscule greedy percentage of the population to make as much money as they choose at everyone else's expense have to do with freedom? Personally, I say abolish profits. The theory is that the greedy bosses won't work unless you allow them their fat profits. But most people work their butts off for wages. If the fat cats won't, then there are millions of just as capable people would gladly take their places. (*Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, Aqueduct Building, Rochester, NY 14694*)

## MIKE GLICKSOHN

I was pleased to read that you've at least paved the way for a TAFF report and I look forward to read it when you throw off the doldrums and find the time from your other fanac to actually set it down on paper. Since I grew up in Britain, the kinds of culture shock you mentioned wouldn't have existed for me if I'd won the TAFF race I was in, so I'm especially interested in what things TAFF winners are struck by that I'd've already been aware of.

About every ten years or so, I get briefly interested in keeping some sort of track of the fanzines I receive, but sooner or later I forget to keep the records up to date and the whole project peters out. So despite my definite tendency to be a list-making sort of person, I've never successfully managed to keep any lists on incoming fanzines. This probably increased my interest in your own statistics which appear to match the general trends I've noticed in my own incoming fannish mail in the last few years. The only thing I'm not at all sure of is whether or not apa-participation is the real root cause of the decline in the volume of generally available fannish fanzines. I've never had any real love for apas and haven't been in any since I dropped out of FAPA more than a decade ago, but it is really true that Ted White, the Nielsen Haydens, Moshe Feder, Dave Langford, Paul Skelton, Dave Locke, rich brown, Dan Steffan, John Berry and others of that ilk are apahacking like crazy to the overall detriment of general fanzine fandom? If it is, I hate to think of all of the really first class material I'm missing just by not being in any apas.

Dick Ellington's article is a delight. What can I say except that it painted a picture of growing up in

an alien world as well as any science fiction story I've ever read. If there was anything even remotely similar in my own formative years I've long since forgotten it, so Dick's evocative reminiscences were particularly fascinating to me. And I must heap praise on Steve Stiles for his wonderfully sfnal title illustration. This is the sort of fannish material that makes fanzines so special!

The only things I like to draw are beer from a keg and straight flushes against fours of a kind, so the idea of rubber stamps as art has always been somewhat of a yawner for me, but I will acknowledge that Donna conveys her enthusiasm for this hobby/mode of communication extremely well, producing an article that was enjoyable to read even if the content itself didn't interest me. Different strokes for different folks, obviously.

Excellent contributions from James White and Greg Benford. Once again this is the sort of stuff that makes fanzines a unique medium, even though the material itself doesn't lend itself to comment by me. It was a bit mind-boggling to recognize again just what sort of reputation Greg has in his non-VOID-boy persona: somehow his morning with Arthur Clarke seems quintessentially fannish — but conducting the last TV interview with Stephen Hawking!?! Wow! I tend to forget he's not just another pretty fanzine fan.

I like a man who can use "energumen" in his writing, but I hope Redd's disinterest in travel is a typically western trait. I still have over a decade to go before I retire and it'll take me at least that long to pay off the mortgage on this house and actually have the money for things like traveling. I'd hate to think that by the time I can finally afford to take a decent vacation I'll have lost interest in doing so.

It's rare indeed when I find myself in complete and total agreement with Joseph Nicholas, but when it comes to dealing with nature in the raw we appear to be on exactly the same wavelength. When it comes to bugs, spiders, flies and others of that ecological niche, I firmly believe that the most beautiful and natural object in the world is a large can of Raid. I stay away from *their* natural habitat, so let them invade *mine* at their peril.

Harry Warner Jr. does what he does in part by being retired and in part by being willing to devote the time to fanac that some others might spend on equally time-consuming hobbies. As Eric Mayer stated, we all make our choices. Personally I doubt Harry (Warner, that is) does much hiking and backpacking but on the other hand I don't buy that as an excuse for Harry (Andruschak, I mean) always being behind in his letterhacking. Let him carry one of those tiny little lightweight computers on a small stand hung around his neck and that way he can loc fanzines while he hikes. That's what a real fan would

do, surely? (508 Windermere Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6S 3L6, Canada)

## LEN MOFFATT

TRAP DOOR has material that is bound to appeal to fans of my generation (aka Old Farts). What a pleasure to read stuff by Ellington, White, Benford, and Boggs. Of the less elderly I found Ed Burbee's farewell to Uncle Ghod quite touching.

Speaking of farewells, I hope that fanzine publishers like yourself will help keep the memory of the late, great Arthur (ATom) Thomson alive by continuing to use his drawings. I see no harm in reusing previously published items when you run out of whatever backlog of ATom art you might have. There are always new fans to enjoy his work, as well as us nostalgic critters. {Yes indeed! See my comments above to Harry Warner Jr. on this subject.} (P. O. Box 4456, Downey, CA 90241)

## JOSEPH NICHOLAS

I was interested in the figures you quoted in your editorial for the average North American distribution of the average British fanzine, since they certainly don't apply to FTI. We currently print some 200 copies of each issue, of which approximately two-thirds are mailed to overseas destinations – 30-odd to Australia and New Zealand, half a dozen or so to various continental European fans, and the remaining 80-90 to North America. Our reasons for this are identical to those Rob Hansen once outlined to me for the high U.S. circulation of PULP: not just because there are more fans there, but because one gets a quantitatively better response, in terms of both fanzines traded and letters of comment. Of course, it's possible that this might be a direct linear consequence of the numbers involved, but I suspect that even if we were to double or treble FTI's British circulation (always assuming we could find that number of active fanzine fans in any case) the British response rate wouldn't increase by very much, if at all. {I'd be quite surprised if you could find many more active British fanzine fans; your circulation over there, based on the above, is about identical to TRAP DOOR's: about 60-65 copies.}

Explaining why brings us to the reasons why fanzine publishing has entered such a trough. You may have heard me say this before – I've certainly written it before, albeit to other editors who haven't published since (!) – but fanzines no longer serve the same functions as they once did. Ten, twenty and certainly thirty years ago, they were both the main form of fannish endeavor and the primary means of fannish communication; yet since then rising levels of relative affluence have supplied other channels for the latter while alternative models of activity have displaced the former. Affluence has not led to an increase in the number of fanzines published; it's resulted in an

increase in the number of conventions and – because travel is these days so much easier (and, indeed, so much of the modern cultural ethos is geared to the concept of travel *per se*) – thus an increase in the possibilities for face-to-face interaction. In consequence, the need to publish fanzines in order to get anything said has rather disappeared. Why, come to that, now bother to write at all when you can do so many other things instead? The last decade, in Britain, has seen an explosion in the number of – and the number of people participating in – other activities to which no one would once have given a passing thought: computer gaming, masquerade costuming, filk-singing, convention organizing, and more. For much of the '80s, these activities (although doubtless copied from North America) have been perceived as the new growth areas, where all the really exciting and interesting things have been happening – and on the principle that people always go where they perceive the main action to be, it's not surprising that fanzine publishing has attracted few new recruits to replace its older stalwarts as they drop out, seduced by marriages, mortgages, children and professional careers. (Complaints in some quarters that these potential new recruits are being actively driven away by the KTF fanzine reviews they read in fanzines picked up at conventions run rapidly aground on the rather intractable fact that no one in Britain has written such reviews since at least 1982.)

Thus an outline, at any rate, of my detailed theoretical and technical explanation for what's been happening in Britain during the past ten years, and I can't imagine that matters can be any different in North America – in fact, the smaller size of this country (and its fandom) has probably concentrated the effects of these shifts and speeded up the processes by which they occur. In short, if we differ it's because we're only a few years ahead of you, and if fanzine publishing is to survive then we must all start to look beyond the surface phenomena of rising postage costs and so forth to address the fundamental and far more causative issues – such as the new and/or different functions that fanzines might now fulfill, and how if at all they need to be restructured to do so.

I can imagine people reeling back at this juncture, throwing up their hands in horror and claiming that since fans are (supposedly) natural anarchists they're not about to take orders from anyone and people who attempt to impose conformist solutions like this should be beaten to death with a large rubber donkey (or some other suitable implement – an inflatable hyena, perhaps). But this would be to miss my point: it is not a question of devising some central orthodoxy to which all are then expected to cleave but of making fanzines relevant again. (Obviously, they were once upon a time; otherwise they might never have flourished in the first place.) One way to do so



might be to recognize that we are no longer unique: that over the past ten or twenty years the amateur publishing scene has expanded enormously, to encompass not just mini-comics, peace group newsletters, rock music fanzines, animal rights bulletins and other documents which focus on specific political or sociological issues and are aimed at specific audiences, but also (and most crucially) to include the sort of personal, anecdotal and reflective writing that if actually produced by fans would probably be labelled fannish in its scope and approach. (Each issue of Mike Gunderloy's *Factsheet Five* lists dozens of examples.) But this doesn't make the people who produce it fans, any more than the stuff fans write is necessarily fannish – like much of the stuff I wrote for FIT, for example, which not only has nothing to do with fanzine fandom *per se* but is aimed at a wider audience anyway. The difference between the two groups of writers (I'm not going to use the terms "us" and "them," for reasons which will become very soon apparent) is that while so many of the fannish writers became fans in the first place because they felt somehow isolated from and even persecuted by the ordinary world, the writers whose publications are listed in *Factsheet Five* are for the most part perfectly at ease with it and have never felt the need to retreat into a substitute. Thus, I suggest, for fanzine fandom to survive we fanzine fans must turn outward, away from ourselves and the inbred concerns generated by our consensually-constructed alternative to the ordinary world, and engage directly with it and with this larger terrain of personal writing – not in an attempt to dominate it or to remake it in our own image, but to remake and therefore revitalize ourselves. Otherwise, it seems to me, we are doomed to sink complaining into the past, out-evolved by other groupings and unable to comprehend why or how.

Some will no doubt complain that pursuing this line would mean diluting and even destroying what allegedly makes fanzine fandom "special" – but I'd respond by arguing that anyone raising this as a serious objection had better be prepared to explain precisely what these factors are and why they believe they are worth preserving. And why, come to that, they wish to remain cut off from the rest of the amateur publishing scene.

Which I daresay should be controversial enough – always assuming you have room in your next issue to publish all of it! (5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH, U.K.)

*{My reaction is that throughout the many periods of fannish history – and fanzine production – there have been multiple strains of fanzines, some sticking closely to discussion of the mother literature, others to the concerns of fandom, and still others (peopled and often produced by essentially the same fans) dealing with larger issues and crossing the line into a more mainstream consciousness. ILABAKKUK and KIPPLE did*

*this in the late '50s/early '60s, and in more recent times Dick Geis produced various publications meeting this criteria. Currently FTT certainly fits into this mold and does it admirably.}*

## KEV McVEIGH

I also send fanzines to people whose names stand out in loccols. When I put out my first ish a couple of years ago I had a long list of people whose fanzines I wanted to see, or were friends and acquaintances from the first three cons I'd attended and the apa I'd been invited into. This left me with a fair number left, but as the traded zines began arriving I picked up names in fanzine reviews, but more usefully from the loccol. Thinking back, though, it does all seem very *accidental*, and I can't explain how it happened. *{Except that I hadn't met any other fans when I published my first fanzine, this is pretty much how I built a mailing list back then – and still do! It's how I added you several years ago! If by "accidental" you mean "random," yes it is; but what else could it be?}* This isn't just fanzine fandom, though; I don't quite know how fandom and I really met and merged together. Even though it was only a handful of years ago, I can't remember what I did that worked and what didn't.

I do have an idea about what doesn't work, though, and it's one of the reasons why so many neos stay as neos, or disappear again very quickly: they come along expecting to talk about science fiction (not a fault, itself) and are unable to cope when they find out that fans don't do that. Actually fans do talk about SF, but about as much as they talk about politics, football, beer, travel, music, psychology or whatever the mutual interest of the conversation group happens to turn to. People who can *only* talk about Heinlein are of no interest to those of us who exhausted that years ago; but those who listen and realize the scope of fandom find other things to talk about and by the time someone does get around to talking skiffy the neo has realized that it isn't the absolute interest it once was back in the days when it was almost all they had. (37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF, U.K.)

## DAVID BRATMAN

In the most recent issue of my own fanzine, GIRABBIT, I gently ribbed Gary Farber for not having published anywhere near as many fanzines as his fame in fanzine fandom should require. He replied defending himself, and among other things cited a number of apazines he's produced. "Yeah, but the Secret Masters of Fanzine Fandom" (I have to call them that, in full, because SMOFs these days seems to mean a bunch of convention fans) "don't give you *credit* for apazines, do they?" I wondered.

And sure enough, just a few days later I received TRAP DOOR #9, and in your editorial lamenting

the decline of fanzine fandom, you claim that "U.S. fanzine fans have *disappeared* (my italics) into numerous apas in droves," with all the implications that apas are not fanzines. The best apas are much more close-knit than genzine fandom, which has both good and bad effects. They're incestuous and confining, where genzine fandom is more open and uncramped (except when we're arguing about TAFF); but I've made friends for life just by joining an apa, while I still feel distant and detached in the fanzine world sometimes after fifteen years of it. Apas have their place. They're easier and less work than real fanzines, though, which perhaps makes practitioners of the latter a bit jealous. *{I do three apazines and I do this genzine, and none of them are easy (nothing I write these days is strictly first-draft). I don't agree I'm implying "apas are not fanzines." Of course they are! My main complaint is the classic one: apazines are seen by few outside the apas to which they're directed, so that they have almost no visibility to general fandom—that fanac disappears from general view. But moving on to a subject you raise that's more enigmatic, just why do you suppose that after all these years you remain uncomfortable with general fanzine fandom?}* (1354 Crane Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025)

## CAROL CARR

My addendum to Jeanne Bowman's piece on billboard vandalism: On Guerrero Street in the Mission District, a huge, full-length depiction of Jesus captioned with the words "I LOVE YOU ALL." Underneath, in large spray-painted letters: "YES. BUT ARE YOU COMING?"

Jean Young: For those of us who find the words "art" and "artist" too gosh darn immodest, even hubritic, when applied to ourselves, I coined a palliative variant, along the lines of "idiot-savant" and "philosopher-servant." It's "artist-clerktypist."

## GARY DEINDORFER

Jeanne Bowman's article is clever. My favorite piece of graffiti, since I am a big fan of the band mentioned, is down in Devon, Pennsylvania, on Philadelphia's famous Main Line where the rich people live (such as an aunt and uncle of mine). Some rowdy covered up the final "n" on the sign so that it reads "DEVO," one of the great rock groups in my humble opinion. And oddly enough the sign has been left up there like that for years now.

George Charters was always a mysterious, hazy figure to me back when I was a youngfan and used to get the legendary HYPHEN. This James White article is muchly appreciated. (447 Bellevue Ave., #9-B, Trenton, NJ 08618)

## BOYD RAEBURN

With "Stamping Through Europe," by Donna Nassar, I felt as though I had come in on the middle

of a conversation between strangers. However, I shortly figured out what she was talking about. Even after the advent of the Walkman, for a while some youths continued to lug around Ghetto Blasters. Why? "To share the music, Man." They were convinced that all within earshot shared their enthusiasm for Motley Crue or Whitesnake, or D.J. Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince or whatever tape they were using for noise pollution. Thus I raised an eyebrow at Nassar's analogy, "I think it is very like a musician who loves to share his music, carrying his guitar with him everywhere and looking for or creating opportunities to sing." I never cease to be astounded at the sheer conceit of their guitar toting pests, who have the effrontery to believe that others want to "share" their music. They seem particularly prone to inflicting it on affiliated groups captive in a bus or railway car.

I was a bit surprised by Redd Boggs claiming eggplant to be "surely the most tasteless vegetable ever invented." I have eaten some tasty eggplant dishes, but (a) they were jazzed up with garlic and/or various spices, and (b) they were not eaten in a Turkish restaurant. So as research on the subject I ate Turkish eggplant dishes not once but twice. They were pretty good, but it was Turkish semi-home cooking, rather than a commercial restaurant. But eggplant by itself, without the input of other flavorings, is pretty bland. However, my candidate for The Most Tasteless Vegetable Ever Invented is Vegetable Marrow. Vegetable Marrow consists of a lot of water bound into an almost-solid by vegetable membranes. The English like it, probably because it is so tasteless. (A woman I once knew cooked for a couple of male English friends, at their request, some boiled mutton. But they found it "too spicy" — she had put some salt in the water.) But then, the English cook all their vegetables into tastelessness. Consider the following recipe. *Brussels Sprouts, English Style:* Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. Throw in required quantity of Brussels sprouts. Boil vigorously for one hour. How to test for doneness: place a sprout on a plate. Touch lightly with a fork. If the sprout makes a squishing sound, and exudes a teaspoonful of water, the sprouts are done. Serve with boiled liver. (189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)

## ED BURBEE

For some reason, which I cannot yet put my finger on, I found "Stamping Through Europe," by Donna Nassar, a most enjoyable and unusual story. I like rubber stamps, and always have. They exert a peculiar, inexplicable fascination over me. Obviously it's a personal thing not to be questioned. By rubber stamps, however, I've always meant the utilitarian kind that say, "Rush," "First Class," "Top Secret," etc. I never imagined anybody owning over two thousand stamps for recreational purposes, much less feeling "a



duty to take rubber stamping to Europe and wow the multitudes." This activity elevates itself above mere collections like bottle caps, old TVs, license plates, Barbie dolls and such, because it contains the dynamic element of original creation. I see that aspect now. More from Donna Nassar I hope to read.

A factual error exists in my Elmer Perdue piece. Elmer attended college after (not before) he left Wyoming and came to Los Angeles. My mother read my Elmer piece in draft and found the error mentioned above, but I learned of it too late. I assumed your publication stood ready for printing. Besides, I saw an opportunity to propagate another Elmer anecdote via correction. Since then I've also consulted my father for additional information. Dull Elmer rarely was, so a tale dangles from the fact.

Elmer Perdue became a traffic engineer this way. The City of Los Angeles advertised an opening for the position. Elmer applied for it. He then went to the library and read books on traffic engineering. In time he took the written examination and received a very high score. His self-taught knowledge enabled him to outrank other applicants. During the oral interview, the City discovered he had no formal education beyond high school. But it was wartime. A shortage of engineers existed. The City hired him anyway without a college degree, but required him to obtain a certificate of completion (similar to a two-year degree). So Elmer went to night school for three years, completed the educational requirement, and served the City of Los Angeles as a traffic engineer the remainder of his working life.

How much more he could have accomplished by continuing to apply himself as he did when a young man provides a basis to speculate, but I decline to do so. After all, perhaps he found his calling, even though it did not earn him glamour and glory. And of course he went on to other things that merit telling.

The other night I met Elmer Perdue in a dream. Expectant of conversation, he sat pensive in a folding metal chair on a patio near the entrance to a room peopled by animated, fannish party-goers. His outstretched arm rested on his knee, a drinking glass in his hand. He looked so healthy, aware, with his dark hair combed straight back. I walked up to the entrance, peered in to scan the talkative group (I saw familiar faces), then turned to Elmer, to question him about the accuracy of my correction regarding his job-hunting and education in Los Angeles during the 1940s. I greeted him and knelt by his side. We engaged briefly in small talk. I mentioned his early days in California. He took me aback with his deference to my opinion, which made me hesitate to ask him a pointed question, but I did so anyway, feeling our contact might fade momentarily, never to recur. He knew about my biographical efforts and appeared a little embarrassed by them. His exact words escape

me, but he made no objection to my efforts. (Spirits lack assertion.) He dwelt more on a minor but pivotal detail that would improve our view of him and that time. He spoke to me in a confidential manner, but his exact words escaped me; they came across more as an emotion. By his inflection, though, I concluded that he imparted a clarifying detail about himself and that time. I wish I could add more; the missing words left me wanting, too. The dream ended, but now I know where Elmer is: in fannish heaven. (*P. O. Box 509, Temecula, CA 92390*)

## JOHN FOYSTER

One point springs out of Greg Benford's article. For some years now I've been wondering about the influence of science fiction—specifically JWC and *Astounding*—on some of those who might have been most susceptible to his/its influence, and Greg and Sid Coleman are just about the only people I know of who could approach Sheldon Glashow, Steven Weinberg and Stephen Hawking (all keen of readers/fans in their youth) on the subject. But I've never been able to find any piece addressing this little matter, and wonder whether anyone will ever get around to it. (*P. O. Box 3086, Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia*)

## CHUCH HARRIS

I have to say White's "The Unreal George Affair" was superb. It's a great, almost paternal thing to read James' stuff without the hideous embarrassment of the odd grammar, the dodgy spelling, the mawkishness of the plotline—and the dreadful feeling that I was responsible for it all.

It seems only yesterday when James, after winning the Nebula award as Fandom's Most Negligible Bachelor of 1949, astounded us all by marrying young Peggy. (We never did find out what he'd been spiking her tea with.) I could hardly refuse the girl's pleas to accompany them as honorary honeymoon advisor, and did the best I could in the short time available. (It took us two hours, sitting on the arrivals platform at St. Pancras station, to convince him that socks go on before shoes, and that it's important to get the left shoe on the left foot, and the right shoe on the right, but Lord! the pride and the sense of achievement as he took his first hesitant steps in his new shoes all the way down the concourse.)

It's something to look back on and feel a sense of pride. I took this lad, I washed the bog from his feet; I gave him a plot that would eke out into an endless series, gave him the benefit of my extensive medical training (I was once, in a very junior capacity, a medico advisor on the staff of H. M. the Q.), told him to eschew the use of leeches, extrapolate the *General Hospital* TV series into an intergalactic mish-mosh, and base all his heroes on Dr. Kildare, or ... er, no, perhaps not ... my innate modesty forbids this.

And it worked. Since that day he has never once returned to the Salvation Army soup kitchen. (Peggy goes alone now with the large thermos flask.) The only thing I ever regretted was my foolish offer to rewrite each episode. It became pretty boring and repetitive after the first few years. In fact, I'm seriously considering writing a couple of episodes myself just to get him out of the rut again.

As the world's acknowledged expert on Seattle, I can tell Dick Ellington that Seattle's Skidrow is *the* Skidrow. They logged up at the top of the hill, hollered "Timber!" and skidded the logs right down the hill, across the Alaska Highway, and into the bay. Our good friend, Anna Vargo, told me about it, I bought a little guidebook that confirms it, and I frequently bore people to death with my encyclopedic knowledge of the city. (I'm pretty good on Minneapolis, too.) Further, there is still a mission hall on the corner of Occidental and Washington, the focal point of the down and outs and winos who give Skidrow its modern meaning — people with nothing in the world except a pair of old jeans, a blanket over their shoulders, and a bottle in their hand.

Well, even though I bought a stamp and a pad in Pike's Place Market, I still think stamping is a sort of substitute fandom for dyslexics. However, there is now a sort of stamping oriented fandom based on Dartmoor. Apparently there are 400+ "postboxes" hidden on Dartmoor. The "postboxes" are usually polythene gallon sized ice cream containers hidden under gorse bushes or down rabbit holes, etc. Inside there is a book in which the acolyte stamps his mark and (sometimes) samples of the "owner's" stamp so that you can take one away as a souvenir. There are guidebooks available to tell you the approximate locations. It's not exactly my cup of tea but it's healthy outdoor exercise, and in the summer the moor is a lovely place to spend a week or so rambling around, and it's all pretty harmless. At least it's better than the subliterate morons who, last week, started to daub "Liverpool" in three-foot high letters on the megaliths at Stonehenge and got up to "Live" before the constabulary arrived.

What can you say about anything by Redd Boggs except "Christ, I wish I could write like that!"??? And the other thing I keep saying is "I wish my kid could write like Burbee's." Is it something in the water? And I always love Judith Hanna when she writes about Oz. This was exceptionally good, and I sometimes wonder how long before she starts writing this sort of stuff for money instead of egoboo.

Finally, tell Mog Decarnin that sparrows do *not* peck through milk bottle lids all over Great Britain. I have four pints of milk on the doorstep every morning but nary a sparrow, nary a peck — not ever. Although, mind you, ours is semi-skimmed so perhaps they've learnt to read the labels too; but my neighbor, who has thrombosis milk chock full of butterfat and

cholesterol, never has problems with street-smart sparrows either. I *have* heard of this phenomenon before, though, and I'm not saying it has never happened in harsh winter weather. The tops are thin foil and most any bird would be through in one peck. What puzzles me, though, is why it is always supposed to be sparrows rather than finches or spotted red warblers. But even more puzzling, why haven't cats, who are smarter than birds — and who would be familiar with the shape and the contents — never slapped a claw through a foil top, knocked the bottle over, and drank the lot? (32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants NN11 5EB, U.K.)

## JAMES WHITE

Regarding the Chuch Harris letter in issue 9, as you may already know, I have not written a friendly word to Harris since the mid-fifties when he wrote derogatory things about me to Peggy after our engagement and I half-drowned him with my water-pistol and he accompanied us on our honeymoon in London. But I never could stay mad at anybody for long, and so I feel impelled to say that it is always a pleasure to see a debate summed up in such exemplary fashion by an expert, wherever that area of expertise happens to lie. I look forward to reading everything by him, knowing that the things he says and the ways he says them will be not only funny but seeded with fiendish anti-personal shocking devices, but feeling that I should be ready to hide the piece under my coat if somebody normal walks in. However, such a breadth of carnal erudition makes me professionally uneasy, and a bit jealous.

You may remember that in my workroom, between ATom's "Fan of La Mancha" cartoon and the painting of a clipper ship under full sail, there hangs proudly my only medical qualification. This aging and faded piece of cardboard, on which the corpus of my later e-t medical work was based, is the 1947 British Red Cross Society's Junior First Aid Certificate. And now I find that Harris outranks me, for he served in Her Britannic Majesty's Royal Navy (cue background fanfare of trumpets) as a fully qualified Sick Berth Attendant!

Do you realize that somewhere there must be a probability world in which he rather than I wrote the Sector General books, a series about aliens getting into full frontal situations and displaying their extra-terrestrial naughty wobbly bits for all to see, and catching horrible yukky antisocial extraterrestrial diseases? And the terrible thing is that, with his qualifications, flow of language and extensive hands-on experience, he could write it here and now.

Why don't you suggest it to him for serialization in TRAP DOOR?

I thought that illustrating "The Unreal George Affair" would be a big problem, and frankly I was expecting something gothic and maybe a bit corny.



But Steve's idea and execution was lovely and original and just right. (2 West Drive, Portstewart, Co. Londonderry BT55 7ND, Northern Ireland)

## WALTER WILLIS

I haven't been commenting on TRAP DOOR because of a feeling that you were doing all right as you are, and that what energies I have would be more usefully directed elsewhere. You seem to me to be performing with great distinction the same role we envisaged for HYPHEN at the time we started putting a lighthouse on the back cover. I was content to cheer from the touchline.

What has made me invade the pitch are those two remarkable contributions from Benford and Boggs. I feel privileged to be present at the revival of a Redd Boggs column, which I have always thought of as a foundation of fandom as I knew it at its best. I feel again the awed admiration he has always inspired in me. I feel much the same about the Benford piece on Stephen Hawking. Quite apart from its merits as a piece of writing, which are considerable, I am wonderstruck at the idea that Hawking, whom I admire as much as anyone in the world, should be on such terms of mutual respect with a friend of mine.

Both make me feel proud of fandom. If someone like a correspondent of the *Times* were to ask me why I had devoted so much of my life to this curious hobby, I feel all I would need to do would be silently to hand them this copy of TRAP DOOR. I shall keep it handy for just that purpose.

I'd never thought that any other contribution would rival the gem from James White, nor that you would be able to assemble a setting for these three jewels of such varying nature but consistent excellence. I am coming to realize this is one of the best fanzines I have ever read.

How nice to hear from Jean Young again. I remember her fondly. I have an old (pre-cassette) tape in which Andy was describing a colleague who had collected a huge number of old doors for building materials. "He built his whole house out of doors," Andy informed me. "Where else?" interjected Jean. (32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 0PD)

## DAVE RIKE

Like you I feel uneasy about and tend to deplore the fan feuds that have erupted during the '80s. Not only do they not seem like fun—I especially don't understand what's behind the disagreements going on with the British fans—but, as far as I know, they have not inspired any interesting fanac.

Regardless of what one might feel about whether the L.A. Insurgents were justified in their feud with the LASFS, or whether Laney and Burbee *et al.* were mean-spirited in some of the things they put into

print about some fans... regardless of this, they still came out with some interesting fanac which still makes good reading today. Ah! Sweet Idiocy!, FAN DANGO, WILD HAIR and the various and sundry one-shots all have a value that transcends the self-serving purpose of propaganda for their side.

Greg Benford's piece is a brilliant gem. If the *New Yorker* was slanted towards the science community, it would fit right in the "Talk of the Town" section as is, and yet Greg added a fannish touch, for probably most of the readers of TRAP DOOR, with the references to Sid Coleman and Arthur C. Clarke.

May we expect any more "science fact" articles from your British correspondent, Mr. C. Harris? (P. O. Box 11, Crockett, CA 94525)

## RICHARD BRANDT

Judith Hanna touched a nerve with her comments about redbacks—known here variously as black widow spiders or John D. Berry zines—since they were rather common in my old flame's house in Dog Canyon, New Mexico—a converted barracks, really, full of the sort of rustic charm that Jeff Schalles might admire at stopping points on the Appalachian trail. Her brother once scooted under a car to fiddle with the machinery, and found himself staring into a nest of them.

One recent winter, my buddy Roy decided to take a peek into his basement, which he hadn't done for a few months. He opened the door, grabbed the cord to pull the light switch, and as he turned on the light felt something deliver a stinging bite to one finger. The something turned out to be a tiny black widow spider, which meant the hand would soon be a painfully swollen purple mass, but that's getting ahead of the story. More important at the moment, he found the spiders had nested in the floorboards over the basement, and their newly hatched offspring were descending from the ceiling on fine gossamer threads. There were thousands of them.

While he still had the presence of mind, Roy bought a couple of bug bombs and tossed them into the cellar. After the fog dispersed a bit, he covered his head and shoulders in netting, went in with a broom, a few cans of bug spray and some household bleach, and cleaned up shop. Good thing he checked the basement when he did, really.

I've only found one live scorpion in my current residence; found him in the kitchen sink one morning when I had just risen, bleary-eyed. Glad I put on my glasses to see what it was before brushing it aside. Little translucent yellow kind of thing, flexing its tail proudly. Gave him a lift on the newspaper shuttle to a port of embarkation for the Flushing Line. It has been brought to my attention since that the silhouettes of two scorpions are visible through the frosted glass of one of my overhead lights. Since they've held

the same position for a rather long time (as far as we can tell), we assume they've gone on to their reward, but you can never tell ...

Berni Phillips has a good point about coming into fandom: that recruitment through the prozines is no longer a factor. I know that's how I found out about it — through the fanzine review columns which Ted White, bless him, maintained in *Amazing* throughout his tenure. The prozines were the sole avenue through which many earlier generations discovered fandom — which gave us a common ground, as it were. Later, they were a means of finding out about the existence of fanzine fandom for those who didn't go to cons, or game, or belong to a club, or to the SCA, or to an apa. And there hasn't been any fanzine news in the prozines for a long while now. The effect on the makeup of subsequent fannish generations has been as we observe it. *{Early last year, in an effort to reverse this trend, I wrote to Aboriginal Science Fiction suggesting such a column and offering to write it as well; it must have thrown them for a total loop, for I never had the courtesy of a reply.}* (4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912)

## LUKE MCGUFF

I think Eric Mayer's analogy of the Eastern and Western empires is pretty valid, and certainly more generous than any I've come up with. (Fandom is a small town which thinks it's more important than the big city over there; fanzine fandom is like the Neanderthal, an early evolutionary offshoot unrelated to the main trunk.) Trufanzine fandom is the Eastern empire, and LAN'S LANTERN and FOSFAX (neither of which I've actually read, so I'm making these comments based on reputation only; go ahead, pillory me) are the Western empire. Does that make minicomics and litzines and the great mass of etcetera zines into the barbarian hordes? Hmmm ... I'm all for it, in a way. Why not? (4121 Interlake No., Seattle, WA 98103)

## LENNY KAYE

Since I can probably speak better about music-related things these days than stf, I was interested in what Jean Young had to say about the different impacts music has in different environments. I find that in the final stages of mixing an album, when putting a microscope to something means you're probably taking the *long* view on it, you begin to realize the amazing differences in speaker technology. Literally, should you take your in-progress tape around to various listening systems, you (or rather I) would be amazed at its sonic differences, leading to depression, overwhelming anger, and general throwing up of the hands. The recent switch to digital has further murkified the issue, especially since it now appears that the rush to CD technology of the early '80s could have been a touch premature. If they'd

waited a couple of years, many of the complaints that dog this "perfect medium" might have been avoided. Where once 44.1 samples per second was once considered the norm (kind of like those newspaper dot-matrix photos), that still leaves a lot of audio holes for the digital converter to try and bridge. Now, with sampling rates capable of at least twice that, the sound has the possibility to be warmer, more dimensional, etc., etc. The irony is that the manufacturers don't dare introduce the higher standard for fear of alienating their new CD-conscious consumers (the sad truth is that vinyl records account for about 3% of sales these days ... bye bye, records). Of course, it is nice to hear *Blonde on Blonde* without the overlying fur. And, of course, none of it matters being played on a boom box with a cracked woofer at megadistorted volume. (P. O. Box 407, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156)

## JEAN YOUNG

I was interested to note that Dick Ellington's mom was a "femail man" so long ago. Female clerks, and in rural towns, post-mistresses, are pretty common; and there are getting to be more women supervisors and dispatchers and dock fore (uh) persons. But hereabouts even now, carriers ("city" carriers) are rare — in fact, even woman rural carriers are rare; Decorah doesn't have either. Woman drivers are pretty rare, too, except as subs. There's one working out of Cedar Rapids who's been doing it a long time, but I can't offhand think of any others who've been doing it as long as I have. My boss has had one part-time woman semi-driver for one year — the only other woman driver besides me.

Dick's descriptions of working-class Seattle and its skid rows/roads was extremely vivid and immediate. When I was little (and even now) I was always intrigued by hole-in-the-wall places — the places my mother always hurried me by (in Philadelphia), the places I saw from the "el" or the streetcar when I lived in Boston. The bit about the intersection of Occidental and Washington and the zones or territories that the different groups and soapboxers staked out was most intriguing. I've seen something a bit like it in Boston Commons, but not the same sort of regularity, territoriality or diversity.

I enjoyed Jeanne Bowman's "Signs of the Times," though I somehow doubt I would actually do even minor billboard alteration. Why not? I *think* about it; I'd sort of *like* to do it; I think some of them are both hilarious and appropriate. So why not? Some secret, conservative, early-internalized Good Little Girl streak? Which I justify or explain by pointing out that these things are, after all, somebody else's property, something somebody else paid for? Or am I just getting too old to be even a little bit revolutionary?

That's a marvelous and very touching piece by



Greg Benford. I hadn't realized that these two famous people were suffering so dreadfully from such incapacitating illnesses. Years ago, on a Tri-State Geological Field Conference trip, I was talking with a blind geologist about working with blind students on geology lab projects. He had gone blind only relatively recently and so had his training and memories of sighted times in his work, but he seemed not at all bitter, very friendly and helpful. I remember him saying, as we discussed all the things one could do to utilize the other senses in field and lab, "Of course, I've always chewed on rock." (And indeed, most geologists do.) It's a moment that's stayed with me, both as an example of a fine and uncomplaining reaction to infirmity and as an insight into the roles of our less-appreciated senses.

Living a little bit close to nature myself (though not as close as she did), I appreciated Judith Hanna's "Nature Moves In." The stray birds, for instance: here, it's starlings (usually) or others that fall down the chimney (gassed out, I think, when they're warming their little butts in winter, or trying to nest in summer) and have to be let out of the stove. Or that come in through some sort of holes in the roof into the crawl space, down through the trap door (yes!) and into the cellarway. One has to, as she says, cover all the windows and have open the door (thus admitting hordes of bugs) and do a lot of shooing — or of leaving alone. Mice and rats and a perennial problem here, and I finally resorted to poison because all my kitchen drawers and shelves were full of mouse shit, and everything not in glass jars or the fridge was getting eaten. Like Judith, I usually leave spiders because they eat flies, except when I'm having Very Special Company (a very rare occasion). Iowa doesn't have any poisonous snakes except the rattlesnake; I've wanted a blue racer in my basement for rodent control; but I wasn't sure it'd *stay* in the basement, and I wasn't keen on finding it in my bed or on my chair or desk or bookcase. There was a garden snake of some sort used to live behind the big desk in my parents' house when I was a child. (That was winter. Summers it lived behind the big rock slab that was our front doorstep.) We'd find it when my mother had fits of rearranging the furniture. It would get shoo'd out, but it'd be back there next time. At least they didn't kill it. (RR 4, Box 47, Decorah, IA 52101)

## WAHF

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK (who observes, "Avedon (& others) seem to be overlooking vasectomy. I had one many years ago and still regard it as the best \$100 I ever spent. Many males balk at the idea of *permanent* sterility, but much progress has been made at reversing such vasectomies and a whole new concept is vasectomies *intended* to be reversible."), HARRY BELL, RICHARD BERGERON, SHERYL BIRKHEAD, ROBERT BLOCH, HARRY BOND,

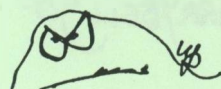
KEN CHESLIN, MIKE CHRISTIE, DAVID EMERSON, NORM CLARKE, DON FRANSON, KATHLEEN GALLAGHER, JENNY GLOVER, ALUN HARRIES, JEAN-HENRI HOLMBERG (who writes at some length about the current state of Swedish fandom — they had their own fan fund blow-up starring Ahrvid Engholm as villain and now most fanzine fanac is done in private apas; he also asks "How many people in Scandanavia get TRAP DOOR?" to which the answer is "You"), GARY HUBBARD (fascinating long letter but mostly about subjects raised in TD#8 and just no room for it), TERRY JEEVES, CHRISTINA LAKE, ETHEL LINDSAY, MARK MANNING, SARAH PRINCE, NIGEL RICHARDSON, A. LANGLEY SEARLES, BOB SHAW, CRAIG SMITH, STEVE STILES ("I get a *deja vu* kind of feeling reading it, having illustrated a lot of the articles"), GERI SULLIVAN, TARAL, DAVID THAYER, PASCAL THOMAS, SUE THOMASON, ROGER WEDDALL, OWEN WHITE-OAK and BRIDGET WILKINSON.

Finally, in early December I received my first LoC from Lithuania, from ROMAS BUIVYDAS, who observed, "In articles and letters you and your friends write about problems which are different than ours. Now many of our people are involved in politics (I am too, and not a bit). Now we think about real independence of our country, about democracy. I don't want to say that problems in your TRAP DOOR are small. No, I only want to repeat that they are different." Romas also remarks: "You are discussing about contraception (especially about condoms). We have no such problems in our country — use or not to use them. We simply almost can't buy them. I think this problem will arouse when we'll have possibility to buy them when we need them." Romas also sent the Vilnius clubzine, THE CONTACT (in English). Send Romas your fanzine at: Antakalnio 91-16, Vilnius 232040, Lithuania Republic.

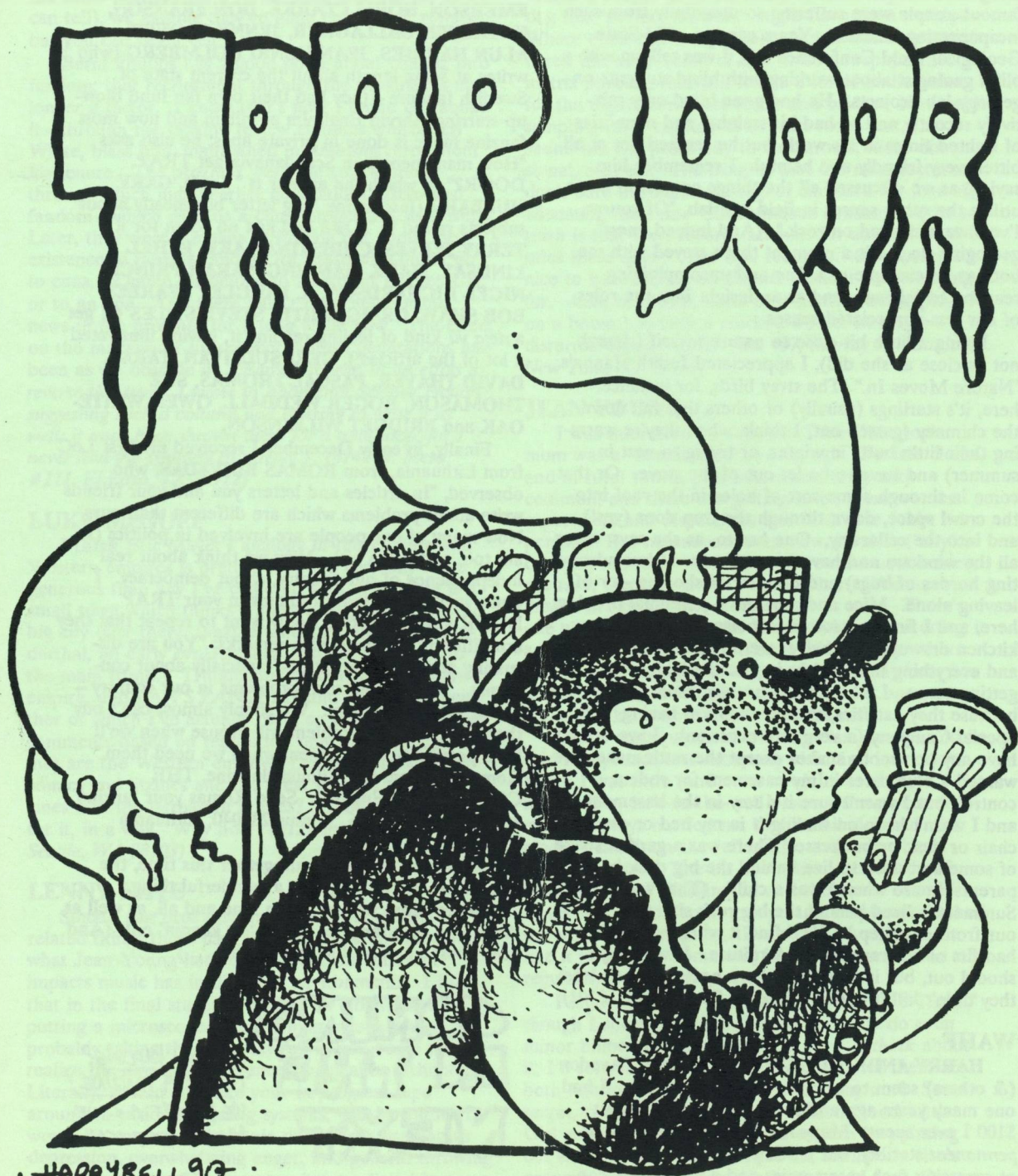
Sixty-three responses altogether this time, the most ever. It certainly was a wonderful thing. Thanks to those who wrote in, one and all, as well as those who sent fanzines. Keep on keepin' on! (And keep those zines and letters coming...)

COMING  
IN THE  
NEXT  
ISSUE

ARE YOU KIDDING?  
THIS IS A FANZINE!  
WE HAVEN'T A CLUE  
ABOUT NEXT ISH!







• HARRY BELL 90 •