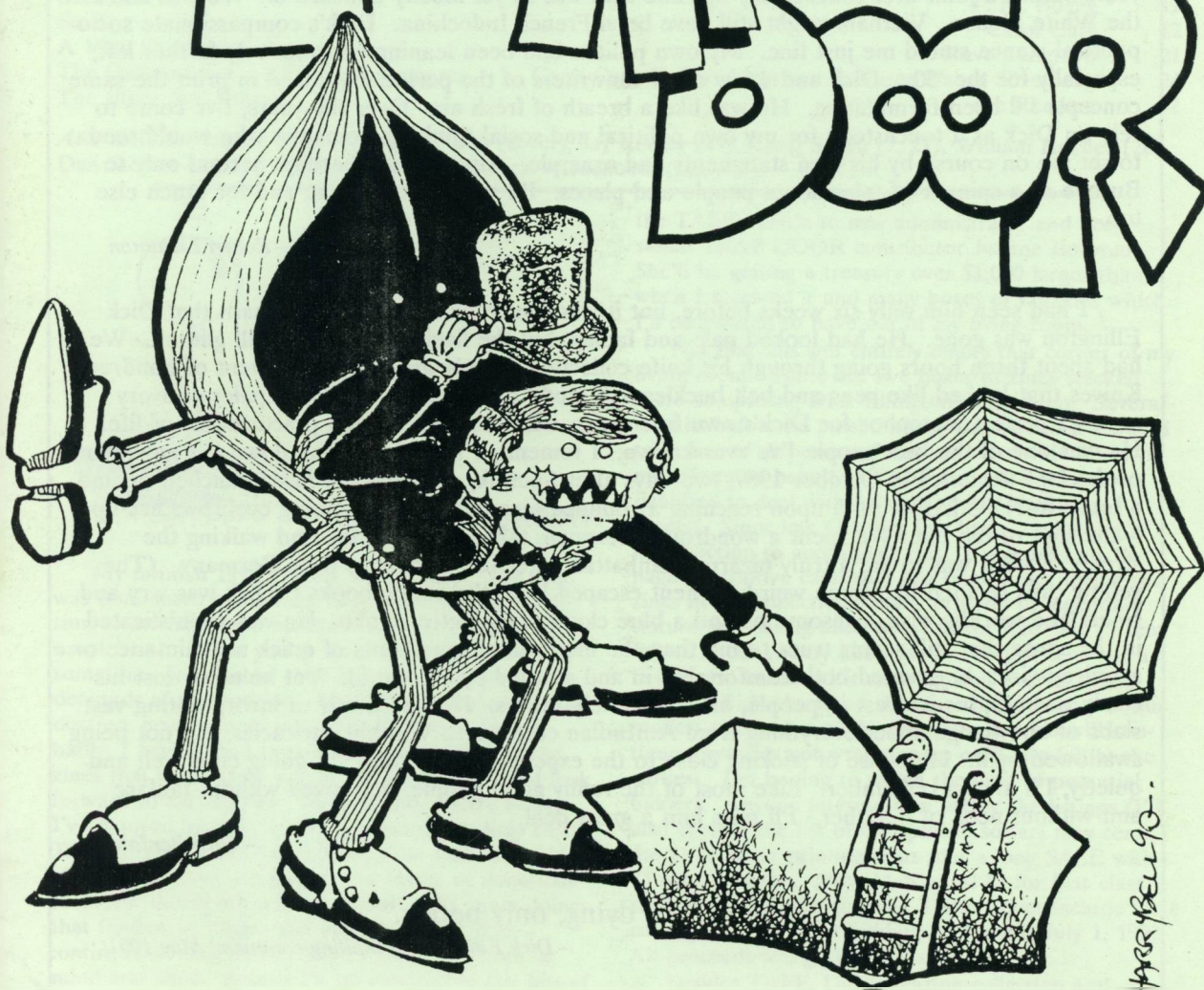


TRAP DOOR



•HARRIS BELL 90•

IN MEMORIAM: DICK ELLINGTON

1. Never believe the big lie.
2. Always try to kick shit.
3. Needle them whenever you can.

*— Dick Ellington, appearing in a dream
by Grania Davis, January 1991*

Before I ever met him in 1961, Dick Ellington was already sort of legendary to me. Y'see, I'd read in HABAKKUK and elsewhere about the Nunnery crowd and the Dive: the interesting personalities, the radical politics, the wild parties. In 1959 he sent me FIJAGH #3 with the long article by Donaho about the acquisition, preparation and ingestion of peyote. This was four long years before a joint ever touched my lips and acid was as yet mostly unheard of. Ike was still in the White House. Vietnam might still have been French Indochina. Dick's compassionate socio-political stance suited me just fine. My own politics had been leaning progressively farther left, especially for the '50s. Dick and a few other fanwriters of the period expressed in print the same concepts I'd been formulating. He was like a breath of fresh air. Over the years, I've come to rely on Dick as a touchstone for my own political and social thinking, someone who would tend to set me on course by his own statements and example. Also, he was perhaps second only to Burbee as a spinner of tales about people and places. I'll miss him for that, and for much else too.

— Robert Lichtman

I had seen him only six weeks before, but it was somehow still a shock to learn that Dick Ellington was gone. He had looked pale and fading, but the lively intelligence still glinted. We had spent three hours going through his knife collection, a truly amazing assortment of hundreds. Knives that looked like pens and belt buckles and credit cards, exotic curved impalers, silvery arcs — a perfect metaphor for Dick's own fascination with the oddities and practicalities of life. He was one of the best people I've ever known. I remember sharply coming down the gangplank of the USS America in October 1957, two days after Sputnik, scanning the faces bunched behind a fence in NYC harbor, and upon reaching a rounded face under a hat, seeing eyebrows arc up — the sign of the fan. We spent a wondrous afternoon, talking over coffee and walking the streets of what was to me a truly bizarre Manhattan, after three years in dark Germany. (The yellow cabs seemed like some weird element escaped from the comic books.) Dick was wry and smart and worldly wise, awesome behind a blue cloud of cigarette smoke. He was sophisticated in the sense that still seems truer to me than the mere tinsel ornaments of quick acquaintance or acquired vice: he seemed both comfortable in and amused by the world. Yet he never lost his ready warmth, his interest in people, his will to help others. He had a way of incorporating vast slabs of knowledge about everything from AmIndian customs to Wobbly intricacies, but not being swallowed by it. His sense of sticking close to the experience of a thing, of doing craft well and quietly, I'll always remember. Like most of the really good people, he moved without fanfare and without need of it, either. I'll miss him a great deal.

— Greg Benford

"Living is like dying, only better."

— Dick Ellington, a mailing comment, May 1991

Trap Door

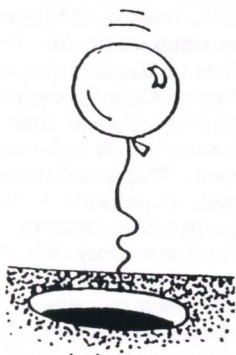
Issue No. 11, February 1992. Edited and published by Robert Lichtman, P. O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442 USA, who continues to be a founding member: fwa. Please send all trade fanzines and letters of comment to this address. Local associates in fandom: Jeanne Bowman, Don Herron, Donna Nassar and Paul Williams (despite their uniform non-appearance in this issue). 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.

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DOORWAY

My fannish 1991. Ghod, was it busy! The year was dominated by running two TAFF races in addition to attempting to maintain some semblance of my usual fanac. When you're a fan fund administrator, sometimes your hobby time is structured by the demands of the position. My letter of comment production, never too strong to begin with, suffered badly; I haven't had time even to read some of the zines that made their way to my door in '91, and look forward to catching up. Despite this, I have to say I've enjoyed immensely the opportunity to help carry TAFF forward. As I said in my final newsletter, it's clear to me from the nature and extent of donations to TAFF during my front-row look at its inner doings that fandom at large—not just fanzine fandom—continues to believe in it and to support it both in mind and deed. Shortly I'll be passing the last bits of

the TAFF mantle to new administrator and occasional TRAP DOOR contributor Jeanne Bowman. She'll be getting a treasury over \$1,000 larger than when I received it and many boxes of fanzines which I'll be pleased to have out of my living room.

Not that this will entirely empty that corner of my living room. There are five boxes of zines stacked there comprising Dick Ellington's collection. Several months before he passed away, Dick asked if I would take care of disposing of his collection. He knew of my efforts on behalf of TAFF and felt I was most qualified to deal with his own zines. Naturally, I agreed. Since late October I've been conducting a mail auction to accomplish this. I prepared an 18-page descriptive catalogue (no small task), listing the zines in the collection—many of them of legendary stature and dating back as far as the mid-'50s. I sent this to about twenty likely fans. I've just sent out a first-round bidders' list showing well over \$1,000 worth of bids placed on the zines listed from just this modest circulation of the list. This auction will continue, probably not wrapping up until late fall at the earliest. I'm hoping to widen the field of potential bidders. Anyone interested in seeing the listings (I'll also enclose the list of bids placed so far) may send me \$1 to cover printing costs plus a long SASE with 75 cents postage. (Non-U. S. send \$2 for first class surface mail, \$3 for airmail. These prices include the catalogue.) The next bidding deadline is July 1, 1992. All proceeds will go to Dick's wife, Pat.

Besides TAFF, Dick's fanzine collection and

TRAP DOOR, I continue to be moderately active in SAPS and FAPA, and am still the Secretary-Treasurer of the latter. (I would really like it if old-time fans and former members rejoined and it became sort of the fannish equivalent of mundane ajay's Fossils.) I'm also somewhat active in Lilapa. These three groups add an enjoyable level of apa-fanac for me, one which allows me time — under normal circumstances — to read the other fanzines that come in, respond to those which attract my attention the most, and publish TRAP DOOR at least annually. In order to keep my fannish affairs manageable, I recently turned down invitations to join two other apas, one on whose waiting list I'd spent four years. Another reason is, of course, to allow time to begin writing my TAFF report. Soon enough, you'll see bits of it start showing up here and there.

More than most issues, this one has taken on a life of its own. Because I wanted to publish accounts of the Oakland fire while it was still a fairly recent event, it became necessary to hold over Redd Boggs' and Paul Williams' regular columns as well as a four-page spread of unpublished ATom artwork. All will be in the next issue. Because of the length of Carol's column (coupled with my desire to present it in its entirety) and the fire accounts, more of this issue is set in two-column format with smaller type, something that violated my ongoing concept of TRAP DOOR's look and feel (which essentially jelled with the fourth issue — editorial and letter sections in smaller type — the only major change being going from Selectric to computer in 1988). Relevant to this, in an unpublished bit of his letter of comment Brian Earl Brown lodges a modest creeb about this aspect of my format: "It's just one of those things that strikes me where fanzines have been too slavish in imitation of professional magazines." Well, he's right of course; but what else can you expect from a faned who calls his lettercol "The Ether Still Vibrates"? On the other hand, it certainly crams more text in. Since I don't want the zine to get any larger in pagecount, perhaps this is a desirable change in order to get more wordage to y'all. I'll know more for myself when I see the first collated and stapled copy.

Anyway, to summarize this rambling, one thread that all my fanac in '91 had in common was how enjoyable it all was, despite occasionally feeling like I was in the eye of a fannish hurricane. Well, perhaps especially then!

My first vacation since the TAFF trip was when Carol Carr and I went touring in the Southwest with the Grand Canyon and the adjacent Hopi/Navajo mesa country as the centerpieces of our trip. We left the Bay Area one sunny weekend as September turned into October.

The first day out was pretty uneventful. It was hot, but our car was air-conditioned, and traffic was

light once we got away from the Bay Area. There's nothing much to say about a night in Barstow, our first stop, where we ate at a fairly competent Mexican restaurant and then retreated to our room. The following morning, we made a side-trip to the Calico ghost town just outside Barstow. Carol had never seen a ghost town and I hadn't been to this particular one in thirty years, when I joined a large group of Fangelenees making the movie version of the late Lee Jacobs' playful faan fiction yarn, *The Musquite Kid*. My memory of this fannish event is somewhat dim, actually, but I dug out one of my old SAPSzines, wherein I was informed by my account of that day's filming that I played one Rebel Lee. I had lines like "I never drink in the same bar as sercon pro-lovers!" and "I'll leave the territory! I'll go to England and wear turtle-neck sweaters!" and was part of a shoot-out on Main Street but only got shot in the hand. Back then, Calico was a fairly dusty little ghost town, only partly renovated by its then-recent purchasers, the Knott family (of Knott's Berry Farm in Southern California). It's still owned by the Knotts but has become just another tourist attraction. Though there's more to do there than I recall, it seemed much tamer than it did three decades ago. For one thing, the main street is paved.

From Calico it was straight out across the Mojave Desert, mile after mile of endless scrub and sandy hills. We drove past the little town of Bagdad, spotting over on old Route 66 the Bagdad Cafe of movie fame. After breakfast in Needles (featuring our first taste of non-Bay Area coffee), we headed on into Arizona towards the Grand Canyon. This was Carol's first visit there and only my second. (I passed through and looked over the edge in a few places in 1971, when I went to The Farm in Tennessee.) We arrived in late afternoon and stopped at the first overlook on our way into the park. That one was called Mather Point and a good first look it was. The Canyon is very wide at that location and the rim is very high. There was much to see through the binoculars we immediately whipped out. We spent a lot of time there before going on to locate our room for the night, and then had a mediocre dinner. (The food at the Canyon is concession food, much of it Greyhound Post House-like).

The entire next day was spent touring the Grand Canyon. Waking up fairly early, we had breakfast at the El Tovar dining room, the only restaurant with anything approaching decent food (though not decent coffee), then drove out the West Rim Drive to Hermit's Rest at the very end (so named because a hermit lived there). We spent some time at that farthest of the overlooks reachable by automobile and then made our way slowly back towards the Grand Canyon Village, stopping at every overlook along the way. Our final meal at the Canyon was lunch at the El Tovar, where we were able to dine at one of the

prized tables actually overlooking the Canyon. After lunch we visited the Hopi House and Verkamp's Curios, where we had our first exposure to Navajo rugs and blankets on display. We were impressed.

The rest of the day we toured the overlooks of the East Rim Drive, ending at the Desert View overlook, the last one inside the Park. We ascended the Watchtower, a five-story reproduction of a Hopi observation building. We admired some of the Navajo rugs in the gift shop, noting they weren't as good as the ones at the Hopi House and Verkamp's. As sunset approached, we crowded with others along the west end of the overlook so we could see and photograph the sun setting over the Canyon and the resulting rapid and spectacular changes of lighting that take place. Then we drove on to Tuba City, from which the next day we planned to travel through Hopi and Navajo territory.

After breakfast the next morning (by now beginning to experience Decent Coffee withdrawal symptoms), we set out across the mesas. Ascending the western-most of the series of mesas that comprise the Hopi reservation, we stopped first at Oraibi, which has the distinction of being the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in North America. It consists of several rambling blocks of mostly ruins, with occupied dwellings here and there, all situated at the edge of a steep cliff. The only store is a crafts and gift shop, heavy on silver jewelry, the Hopi's main craft besides Kachina figures. One of the things I wanted to be sure to do on this trip was to bring back something of the native crafts. I would have liked that to be a Navajo weaving, but I was already beginning to suspect from the prices I saw at the Grand Canyon and at the small trading post next to our motel in Tuba City that the ones I liked the most were well out of my financial grasp. However, the proprietor of the shop at Oraibi made wildly multi-colored plaques with a yarn god's-eye surrounding it, all rife with Hopi symbolism. I got one eighteen inches across; it hangs now on the wall above my bed.

We stopped at nearly every crafts gallery and trading post from Tuba City to Ganado that day. The latter is the location of the Hubbell Trading Post, founded by one of the pioneer traders and home of the largest inventory of Navajo weavings we encountered on the entire trip. Their rug room must have boasted over 500. Turning north, we made a lengthy side-trip via Chinle to see the extremely scenic Canyon de Chelly, and then headed south and drove past about forty miles of those incredible red stone cliffs for which Arizona is so justly famous. We also checked out the window rock in Window Rock, an amazing rock formation. Good New Mexico-style Mexican food in Gallup that evening.

The next day was equally ambitious. We drove out from Gallup after breakfast (we'd given up hop-

ing for good coffee), stopped at Camp Yellowhorse (a modest tourist attraction on the Arizona/New Mexico border with the state line running through the middle of the store—Carol and I hugged across state lines) and toured the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest. I've driven by the PD and PF on many cross-country trips from Tennessee to California (and vice versa) and stopped at the visitor's center on numerous occasions to let the kids pee, etc. It was a treat to get to tour it/them at our leisure, making the side trips necessary to see all the spectacular natural features—and all that petrified wood!

After stopping for a walk in Flagstaff to stretch our legs, we drove down through spectacularly verdant and scenic Oak Creek Canyon. At the bottom we stopped at a large roadside Indian goods store near Sedona for a last look at Navajo weaving before leaving the territory. It was a very upscale store, with many excellent examples of quality weaving. We lingered.

Next we drove up a long mountain road to an old mining town called Jerome, an unexpected but pleasant surprise. It was a good place to stop for another short walk. As day turned into evening, we finally reached the low desert and drove on into the sunset to Blythe, California, where we stopped for the night. It was very hot there.

We drove into L. A. the next morning. (Though we're back in California—barely—the coffee is still borderline.) The main item of interest along the way was the huge windmill farm we unexpectedly encountered along the way just west of Palm Springs, which stretched across hilltops and large fields for miles. Our progress slowed as we plunged into the vastness of Greater L.A. The traffic was suddenly dense, but I shifted my brain and reflexes into familiar old Southern California freeway driving mode (sort of a cartico-thalamic pause) and we eventually reached my parents' house unrattled and unscathed.

I hadn't seen them since July 1989 and it was Carol's first meeting. They showed us around the house and grounds, my father filling Carol in on details of the origins and birth throes of his land-scaping creations. My parents are more frail-looking each time I see them, and I've gotten used to that. It's somewhat more disturbing that my mother is increasingly off in her own world, but she is still sharp in a disconnected way. My father is managing to cope with her needs but worried about how much longer he'll be able to. (In his case, the spirit is willing—he's totally alert—but the flesh is weakening.) At one point, I noticed him flirt a little with Carol, and my mother flirted a little with me (but may have been forgetting who I was at the time).

We offered to take them out for lunch, but they weren't interested. So after a while, we said our goodbyes and headed for Fairfax and Cantor's.

Fairfax is the old Jewish ghetto in West L. A. and Cantor's is a long-established, huge (cavernous) deli-restaurant in the heart of it, and excellent. After a great lunch, we walked over to the Diamond Bakery, a place out of my youth. I got lots of loaves of corn rye bread to bring back up to Glen Ellen, but my major nostalgia purchase was a huge chunk of poppy seed strudel, something I hadn't had since the mid-'60s. (It's still outrageously good.) We drove up Fairfax to Sunset Boulevard and then all the way out west on Sunset—the entire length of the Sunset Strip, through the heart of Beverly Hills, and then exclusive residential areas of Brentwood, Bel Air and Pacific Palisades—to the Pacific Coast Highway. We turned north and cruised out along the ocean through endless Malibu and points north—the fog-shrouded ocean to our left, the tastes of Cantor's still lingering on our tongues.

We spent our final night on the road in Carpinteria, a small town ten miles south of Santa Barbara. The next morning, we drove on into SB in search of Real Coffee. We found a coffee house on State Street downtown serving an excellent latte and tasty pastries. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, we drove north, stopping at Pismo Beach, one of those quintessential California beach towns with boutiques, quaint restaurants, and surf shops. We walked out to the end of the pier and back again. A very sercon (in the original sense) surfer competition was taking place on the beach to one side of the pier. A p.a. system blared out announcements of winners.

Lunch included sharing a bowl of Pismo Beach clam chowder in a cafe near the beach. Pismo was our final stop in Southern California and, by extension, the southwest. We made only brief stops the rest of the way back to the Bay Area.

We had rented a car from Avis for this trip, neither of us wanting to put several thousand miles on our own. It was a small American car (a Pontiac Sunbird) with adequate room and power and a dynamite air conditioning system. The only thing it didn't come with that I would have appreciated was cruise control. Every time we went down a bumpy dirt road on the Hopi and Navajo reservations, we shouted in unison, "I'm glad this isn't my car!"

Since coming back from our trip, Carol and I have become somewhat obsessed with Navajo weaving. I've had one Navajo rug since 1968 when I got it at a garage sale in San Francisco. It's not in first-rate condition anymore (it wasn't then, either) but it still has many years left. So they weren't exactly a new thing to me. But we began reading books about them. We learned that Navajo rugdom over the years has had its own phases (just like our numbered fandoms: the styles of rugs and blankets would change, as our fanzines changed focus from one fandom to the next); it's been fascinating to learn

about this level of history. Other than that, there's something about the best work that appeals to my artistic sense: I've always loved the rug I've had all these years.

One thing led to another and we spent one crazed Sunday going to about half a dozen places in the inner Bay Area that handle Indian stuff, particularly Navajo rugs, and checking them out. Then Bob Silverberg told Carol that a local auction house was going to be selling off about 300 rugs, saddle blankets, throws, etc., shortly. We went to the auction preview, took copious notes, did serious comparisons, and presented Bob with a list of preferences. He went to the auction for us—it was on a Thursday—and was successful bidder for two of our desired lots containing a total of seven pieces, and at a reasonable price.

I ended up with two of them, plus two others I bought locally after feeling I could justify it, having got the other two so inexpensively. This is hardly a hobby I can afford to participate in seriously; old Navajo rugs, like old fanzines, are pricey. I also don't have room right now to put very many of the things. (Three of the pieces I got are smaller and I've hung them on the walls, one above me as I type this.) But I'm keeping an eye out for opportunities to get one or two bigger rugs eventually, intending to store them away until I've no more of my kids living with me and would feel comfortable having them in my living room.

In the meantime, as mentioned above I've acquired some excellent books on the subject. I've learned considerably about the social history of the Navajo and how it's related to changing traditions and styles in their weaving, details on the various regional styles that have evolved this century, and even how to weave Navajo-style. All these books are lavishly illustrated, many with full-color plates of historic and contemporary weavings, so I can drool over more blankets and rugs that I could ever possibly own. And Carol and I are slowly plotting our next trip to the Southwest.

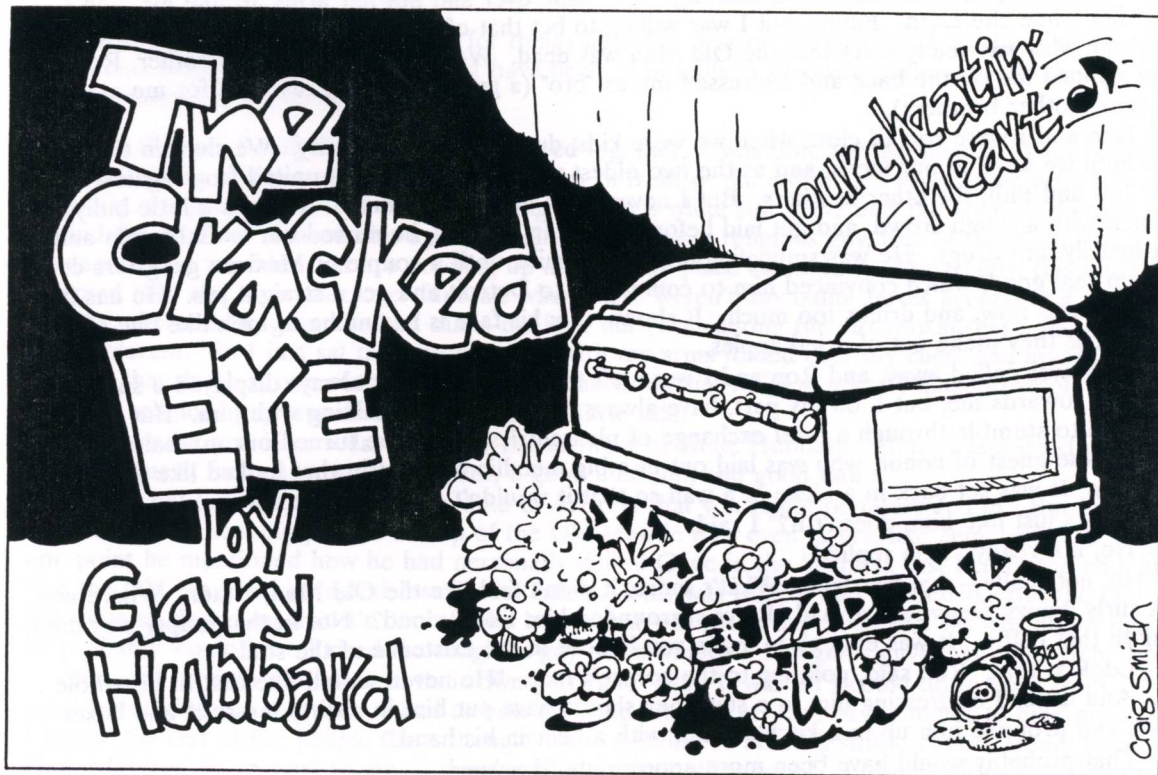
I remember reading that LeeH reportedly left fandom the first time for a horse, but it's *not* going to be said that I left fandom seeking the perfect horse blanket.

[—RL, February 10, 1992]

	1991	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Australia	16	16	12	15	32	27
Canada	1	2	2	1	4	7
U.K.	44	30	61	51	33	33
U.S.	85	66	55	67	58	98
Other	1	5	0	4	3	1
Totals:	147	115	130	138	130	166
1991's solitary "Other" was from Lithuania.						

Fig. 1: Fanzines received by 1986-1991

A modest upward trend in fanzine production is noted.



The funeral was on a Saturday afternoon, a very nice Saturday afternoon. The sun was shining and the sky was clear. It was not the sort of day *I* would pick to die on.

As I drove my car along the street toward the funeral parlor, I glanced out the window from time to time at the surrounding world which was buzzing with weekend activity. There were kids skateboarding on the sidewalks and grownups mowing their lawns. Somewhere, somebody was getting ready to go to the beach, or something like that. And somewhere else, somebody else was waking up with someone they had met the night before.

The world at large seemed completely unaware that somebody had died.

I pulled the car into the parking lot of the funeral parlor, found a space, parked, unfastened my seat belt, opened the door, and got out of the car. I did all of this stuff exceedingly slowly, trying to draw the process out as long as possible. Before me was a large Howard Johnson's style building with a little sign out front that read: *Uht Funeral Home*. What a funny name. I remember that long ago this place used to send us a calendar every year. Mom used to hang them up on the kitchen wall next to the telephone. Now all those free calendars had paid off for Mr. Uht.

I didn't like this, not one bit of it. I was feeling very resentful about having to be here in this place and for this occasion. I really don't like funerals. But ... he was my father after all, so, manfully, I took a deep breath and strode towards the entrance. I was met there by a fat, middle-aged gentleman and a tall, blond-haired fellow who was quite a bit younger. They both wore appropriately somber expressions that they had just put on for the occasion. The middle-aged gent (Mr. Uht, I presume) shook my hand and had me sign my name in his book. Then he handed me over to Uht, the Younger, who took me to the room where the body (which they called "the loved one") was laid out. The place was full of people who were milling around and chatting. It sort of reminded me of those "Meet the Author" parties they have at sf cons, except (of course) that nobody was drinking anything (out of respect for the dead) and it was too late to get his autograph.

Mom emerged from the crowd, sobbing. She came over and put her arms around me, and I held her while she cried. Funny, but I was willing to bet that of all the people there, Mom was the only one who was really sorry that the Old Man was dead. We were joined by my brother, Ron, who slapped me on the back and addressed me as "bro" (a greeting he has reserved for me among all of our other brothers).

Ron and I were sort of close when we were kids, due mostly to necessity. We slept in the same bed until we were in our teens, and as the two oldest we had to keep up a united front against Craig and Jeff and Phil, the other brothers. But I never liked him all that much. He was a little bully, ran around with a tough crowd, and got laid before I did. In the '60s, he moved out to California and got heavily into drugs. He was smuggling dope for awhile, until a couple of Mexican gangsters cut him up real good, which convinced him to come back to Detroit and get a straight job. He has his own business now, and drinks too much. It shows, too; his face is beginning to look like one of those dolls they make out of dried apples.

Mom was called away, and Ron and I were left together. Ron has always displayed a special affection towards me, but I, on my part, have always had a hard time talking with him. But I managed to stumble through a brief exchange of pleasantries before we turned our mutual attention towards the guest of honor, who was laid out in a big metallic blue coffin that looked like a 1949 Mercury. It was set back in a niche in a wall so that it wouldn't get in anyone's way.

"Looks just like him, doesn't it?" I said.

"No, not really," Ron replied.

No, not really — that was true. What's more, it didn't feel like the Old Man, either. Where was that surly, boozy *presence* that had always surrounded him like a cloud? Not in that empty wax thing lying in that coffin. It was enough to make you believe in the existence of the soul.

"Look at that," Ron said, pointing to the corpse's face. "He never smiled like that in his whole life. And instead of dressing him in a suit, they should have put him in a dirty tee shirt and boxer shorts and propped him up in a kitchen chair with a beer in his hand."

"That probably would have been more appropriate," I agreed.

Ron left me to attend to some chore or other, so I started drifting around the room to see who all had come to the party. Way over in the corner, my youngest brother Jeff was standing around with his video camera pressed into his face recording every action-packed second of the funeral. This camera was his toy of the moment. Last year it had been telescopes, and the year before that, race cars. Across the way from Jeff was his wife, Connie, Ron's wife, Jan, and my sister, Pam. They were standing together in a group, chatting, and were dressed in their most stylish (yet tasteful) mourning wear. The way they were posed made me think of the Three Graces ... or perhaps the Three Fates.

The next of my brothers I ran into was Craig. Frankly, I was a bit surprised to see him. You see, none of us cared much for the Old Man, but over the years we had managed to establish relationships with him that more or less approached cordiality. For example, I used to drink with him sometimes and listen politely while he told me what was wrong with my lifestyle and how the country needed a dictator. But Craig just flat out detested the Old Man. He's like that, though. He has a short temper and he never forgives a slight. Certainly he never forgave the Old Man. Although, what he has to be so pissed about that the rest of us don't is more than I can say. I don't think the Old Man was any meaner to Craig than he was to the rest of us. In any event, Craig had often said while the Old Man was alive that he wouldn't be caught dead at his funeral, so, naturally, I was surprised to see him. Mom had made him come; you see, he owed her money.

It was while I was talking to Craig that Phil, the last of my many brothers, appeared on the scene.

As you may have noticed, I come from a large family, and in a large family everyone has a place. For example, I as the oldest was always sort of responsible for my brothers; I was a kind of conditional adult. It was my job to make sure my brothers washed behind their ears, went to bed on time, and stuff like that. Phil's job was to be a spy for the Old Man. He watched everything the rest

of us did or said very closely, looking for things he could pass on to the Old Man. I swear, I sometimes thought his first words must have been, "I'm tellin'." Naturally, after a while the rest of us were careful when he was around.

Now that the family was finally all gathered together, it was time for the service. They brought in some folding chairs and set up a little podium in front of the coffin. As soon as we were all seated in our proper places, a cheerful young man in a white suit came into the room and stood behind the podium. I sized him up immediately. He was a religious guy, one of those smiling fundamentalist zombies that are popping up all over the place these days. Apparently, this one's assigned task was to preside over funerals when there weren't any ballot boxes around that needed stuffing. Personally, guys like him make me itch, but (considering the circumstances) I was inclined to be tolerant. So I just sat there in my chair with my arms folded over my chest and mused on the thought that death is one of the few biological functions that religion doesn't disapprove of.

The religious guy launched himself into his little talk.

"We have come here today to honor the memory of Gene Hubbard. Gene was a good man, decent, honest, forthright, a hard worker, a good husband, and good father ..."

If you believe that, I've got some land in Arizona that you might be interested in. But he went on in this vein, heaping praises on top of the Old Man in nice even layers, like cemetery dirt. At one point he mentioned how he had personally visited Gene in the hospital, just before the end, and that the Old Man had accepted Jesus at his hands. This was true; it had happened. But the Old Man was so doped up that it's doubtful he knew what was going on. If he had his wits about him, he probably would have kicked the religious guy out a window. Religious guys made him itch, too.

Funeral services are funny in their own particular way. It was all I could do to keep from laughing out loud at this one. I had to bow my head and put my face in my hands to hide my smile. I hoped the rest of the people there thought I was grieving. I heard a stifled chuckle come from Ron, who was sitting next to me. I wondered how many other people in the room were trying to keep a straight face, too. I realize that it's nice to speak well of the dead and all that, but what the religious guy was laying on us wasn't elegy, it was euphemism.

I wonder what *I* would have said, if I had been asked to say a few words about the Old Man?

Well, for starters, let's forget all that stuff about good husband, good father, etc. The Old Man would never win points in those categories if he were running for Father-of-the-Year. He wasn't really evil. Sure, he beat us a lot, but he wasn't really a fiend. And he did possess a few of the duller virtues, but they tended to get lost in the wild glare of his vices. No, to talk about the Old Man is to talk about his bad habits.

He was born in the year 1928, in a place called Wallens Creek, Kentucky. Don't try to find it on the map. His father, Barney Hubbard, was a man of many parts. In his time, he had been a coal miner, a baseball player, a chicken thief, and a Baptist minister. He settled on the latter as his life's work, not so much from having a calling for religion, but because it intimidated his creditors. As a preacher's son (one of many, as a matter of fact — Barney had fourteen kids; his wife was a very strong woman), the Old Man got to see the inner workings of religion. For example, whenever Barney, in his office as Reverend Hubbard, gave a sermon, he'd send the collection plate around; and if there wasn't enough in it, he'd pour on a little hellfire and send it back around. Incidents such as that tended to make a freethinker of the Old Man. Also, he didn't like the constraints that being a preacher's kid placed on his behavior. I truly believe that he wouldn't have been so attracted to sin throughout his adult life if he hadn't been so deprived of it as a child.

As soon as he could, he got out of Wallens Creek. At the age of sixteen, he dropped out of school and headed up north to Detroit where there were plenty of jobs for high school drop-outs, because there was a war going on. He met a girl in Detroit. They got married. He did a short stint in the Navy near the end of the war. They had a bunch of kids and moved out into the suburbs. He started drinking.

At first, he would just go to a bar after work and have a couple of drinks with some of the guys

from the factory. Mom didn't like that and she made him stop, so he started coming straight home to drink by himself. Mom didn't like that, either, but no amount of nagging could get him to stop, so she eventually gave up. Which was unfortunate, because no Hubbard should ever drink. Drink has been the downfall of many of my race. Take, for example, my great-grandfather, Clive Hubbard. He had a wicked temper that was augmented by alcohol, and one day (during a drunken argument) he cut off a man's head with a sickle.

The Old Man never got that violent, but he could get pretty mean when he was drinking. On the other hand, he might not get mean, but funny. Or he might get sentimental. One time he got hold of a 45 of Hank Williams singing "Your Cheating Heart" which he played for a total of forty-nine times in a row (it cracked before it got to an even fifty). Sometimes he just passed out. There was usually no way of telling what kind of mood he was going to be in after he had a few under his belt, but sometimes you could. If he came home from work with a six-pack, it signified that he'd had a bad day at work and was likely to take it out on us. On weekends, drink tended to put him in a more sentimental mood, and we were all liable to be subjected to unwanted beery hugs.

The Old Man was a strict believer in Law 'n Order, although he, himself, was equipped with thoroughly rubber morals. He believed that the law should come down hard on transgressors if they were black or wore long hair (and he once said that science fiction writers should be hung up by their balls), but the average hard-working white guy should be allowed to get away with something every now and then. He wasn't a hardened criminal, you understand. It's just that he took an innocent (even childlike) glee in pulling a fast one. This could cause problems sometimes for anyone associated with him.

I remember this one time, the Old Man and I were in the supermarket, and as we passed the meat counter, he picked up a package of sliced ham and told me to hide it beneath my coat. I was just a little kid at the time, and I think that he reasoned that no one would suspect me of trying to shoplift meat or, if I got caught, he could pretend to be shocked to discovered that his little darling was a kleptomaniac, offer to pay for the meat, and promise to beat the shit out of me – and he would have, too. Suddenly, I found myself poised on the brink of a dilemma. On the one hand, I was afraid to defy the Old Man but, on the other, I was afraid of getting caught by the supermarket people. It was the first moral decision I'd ever had to make, although (like every moral decision I have ever had to make since then) it really only amounted to choosing between one kind of cowardice and another.

I chose not to steal the meat. Getting caught by the supermarket people would have been too embarrassing. I expected him to get angry, but all he did was look at me sadly and say, "So you won't do this for your own father. Some loyalty." This of course made me miserable for a long time, but at least he never asked me to do it again. Instead, he chose to practice his faganish tendencies on my brothers, who were all willing pupils. Especially Phil. In fact, Phil had already been doing a little stealing on his own – from the rest of us. None of our stuff was safe from Phil. If he had graduated from high school, I suppose they would have voted him most likely to do ten to twenty for petty theft.

The Old Man was reputed to be quite a lady's man, but I can't vouch for it. All I know about his sex life is that he used to send us all to the movies every Saturday afternoon. But I overheard people saying a few things at the wake that led me to believe that he had no problem with adultery. Then, too, there's that old home movie of a Christmas party that shows him with his hand up the back of a fat lady's sweater. After all these years, the significance of that film has just struck me. But this doesn't mean that my folks had a bad marriage. On the contrary, they seemed to be pretty happy with each other. Mom really loved the Old Man and I think he loved her, but he was just not the man to let any temptation alone.

The beginning of the end for the Old Man started with an act of heroism. In the factory where he was employed, there was a man working on a high scaffolding who slipped off and fell. It was sheer luck that the Old Man happened to be underneath at that moment. He caught the falling man in his arms like a baby. The shock of the experience shook up just about every major internal organ

in his body (which was not in that great a shape to begin with due to all that drinking). He had a heart attack shortly after that and had to stay out of work for a year. From then on it was just one medical problem after another; he spent more and more time in the hospital where he just slowly wasted away. The last year of his life was so pathetic that it hurts me to think about it. You may have gathered from what I've written that we were not pals, but it was so sad

The religious guy was still talking, but he had moved the focus of his speech away from the subject of the Old Man and was now delivering a generalized pitch for his religion. Fortunately, his much was cut short by Phil, who suddenly jumped up and started screaming, "He's dead! He's dead!" over and over again. He finally had to be restrained by our Uncle Dick who dragged him out of the room. We all later agreed that it was a monumental breach of good taste for him to display grief at a funeral.

So there it is, the death and transcription of Gene Hubbard. I don't know what you should make of it. Heck, I don't know what *I* should make of it. When someone close to us dies, it is for ourselves we mourn, not them. Because when that happens it is as if the Reaper, who usually confines his slaughter to strangers on the six o'clock news, has stepped out of the screen and said, "Here I am. I haven't forgotten about you."

We all got into our cars and followed the hearse out to the graveyard where they buried him. It started to rain, which I thought was a nice touch. Just like in the movies.

— Gary Hubbard

SCENARIO

F. M. BUSBY

Let's see now. Elements of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Republican National Committee send Treasury agents to Kennebunkport and take George Bush captive. It is announced that Mr. Bush is incapacitated due to severe rupture of the syntax and that the government will be administered by a Committee appointed to serve as guardians for Dan Quayle.

Mario Cuomo calls for the country to reject these usurpers: standing atop his stretch limo in front of the Capitol at Albany he defies a phalanx of armored cars, mostly Brink's but a few from Loomis, and announces the independence of New York state. Similar proclamations soon issue from New Jersey, Texas and California; Richard Nixon declares himself president of the Republic of San Clemente or possibly Barbados.

Alaska and Hawaii have been claiming independence for months, but neither can get a spot on the evening news so nobody notices. The Loomis armored car contingent goes over to Cuomo, creating a standoff in Albany. Dan Quayle announces that he did *not* smoke marijuana to avoid the draft and get into law school.

New York and California are the first to sign trade and mutual aid treaties. William F. Buckley Jr. urges restoration of the monarchy under Nancy Reagan and her consort Frank Sinatra. Bush is rescued by the Loomis brigade and returns to Washington D. C. where he calls a press conference but no one comes except Geraldo.

Backed by treaties with a number of other states, Cuomo consolidates his position. He would have one more if Washington state could muster a quorum, but Initiative 577 limits tenure of office holders to two weeks. The pacts provide for alliance under the Articles of Confederation with a few minor changes, such as putting the location of the national capital up for bid every four years. To ensure stability of the Confederacy and prevent future coups, Cuomo disbands the IRS.

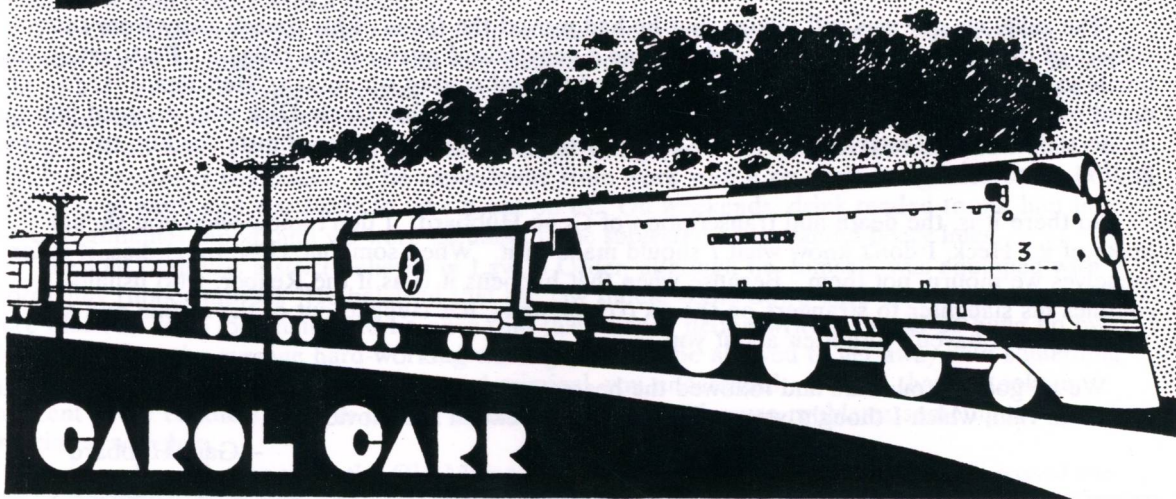
Hawaii is annexed by Japan. Cuomo protests, but is forced to back down when presented with the bill of sale.

In a last ditch maneuver Bush attempts to reach the Russian president on the hot line, only to find that as an economy move, that leader has had the phone disconnected. In despair, the former chief executive rides a bus to Austin where he proclaims himself president of the Republic of Texas but can't prove who he is because Greyhound lost his luggage.

Quayle goes on CNN with an impassioned plea for return to Constitutional government, but everyone is watching the NFL playoffs.

— F. M. Busby

STUFF



NEW YORK TRIP REPORT, OR: "NO WONDER NOBODY COMES HERE; IT'S TOO CROWDED"

It wasn't hard to stay away from New York for twenty years. I have no family there anymore, and I hate flying. But events come together in very seductive ways sometimes and you find yourself doing things you never thought were in the cards. One of those events was, last year, a much too short visit with Leo and Diane Dillon when they were in the Bay Area for a book-signing at Other Change of Hobbit. I simply wanted more time with them, and preferably on their turf in Brooklyn Heights/Cobble Hill. The second event was an increasingly friendly correspondence with Pauline Kael (retired film critic for *The New Yorker*), which led to her inviting me to dinner at the Algonquin. Yeah, home of the drunken wit of Round-tablers Parker, Woolcott, Benchley. Talk about being pushed over the edge. Talk about being made an offer you can't refuse...

PART ONE: AMTRAK

The scenery. I think Amtrak's major functions are to save you from flying and to show you, as it promises, wonderful chunks of the country. The very best part of the trip was the 238 miles of the Colorado River, which the train follows very very slowly since it's up high and creeping along on the edge of oblivion. It's an exquisite sight, partly because you feel you're moving through the very center of it

(rather than peering out the car window *at* it, or looking down below from a plane); for color and texture and overall Grandeur of Scene, it's about as close to being there as I can imagine without being there; it's virtual reality all over again. I wish I had a decent vocabulary for this sort of description, the way the colors (coral, salmon, mossy green and purple) and configurations change as you slowly slowly wind through it, for about two and a half hours.

And the Sierras: miles of snow-covered firs, clumps of snow occasionally plopping into the streams right near you.

One night, unable to sleep (as was my wont), I pulled aside the curtain and saw Ansel Adams come to life: snow in the foreground, a deep field in back, hills in the far background, and above it all, a full moon. Worth being sleepless for, and it stretched on for miles.

And some very nice hills & dales going through Pennsylvania; apparently it was baby cow and lamb time. It was also the season for flags and yellow things waving from every pole and storefront in every town, a post-Persian Gulf feeding frenzy sucking every last drop out of our glorious victory.

It is indeed the way to See America. You go right through the heart of Reno. You can reach out and knock on Harrah's door and say Joe sent me.

The gripes. The observation car is where you want to be because it's really built to do the job. But the windows are dirty. Very dirty. Huge streaks of dirty. (The windows in the sleeping compartments are dirty too.) But far worse is the cigarette smoke recirculating from the lounge downstairs. I spent the first whole day in that car and by the end of it my throat hurt and my eyes hurt and I was coughing. I think people who smoke should have a place to do it; I'm not one of those ex-smokers who thinks it's anything less than agonizing to quit, or who believes that smokers shouldn't have a comfortable place to smoke. But it was so hard to take that I never sat in the observation car again. The conductor said he keeps writing to the company recommending they do something; apparently there's only one smoke-eater in the smoking lounge, which is not nearly enough to do the job.

The food. The food is Denny's on a bad day, at best boring and at worst burned or not cooked long enough. It is, in a word, a hamburger (rather like Wendy's), a tuna salad (iceberg lettuce with clumps of canned tuna scattered around it and the dressing of your choice on the side). For dinner, a respectable hunk of meat like steak or a pork chop with overcooked string beans and oversalted fake mashed potatoes. There's a vegetarian item: lasagna, with standard tomato sauce and—two out of the three times I ordered it—cold in the center. The apple pie was surprisingly good.

The people. The best of times and the worst of times. It's an enforced social event since the waiters seat you exactly where they want to seat you, every time, so you get to meet a pretty heterogeneous group. Well, maybe not so heterogeneous, since most of them thought the food was good. A lot of retired couples travel on Amtrak on their way to and from visiting their children or other family, or just to see the country. Some don't like to fly, but they didn't seem to be the majority, or maybe they were embarrassed to admit it. A lot of racist and sexist people travel on Amtrak. I ran into more anti-Semitism in a day than I have in my life; I was beginning to feel like Woody Allen, imagining it everywhere, except that I wasn't.

Serious Religion and flag jewelry. One dinner time I was shown to the table of a woman about my age, impeccably coiffed and made-up, and when she saw me approach she crinkled her eyes and smiled at me in a way that I can only describe as ecstatic. I thought, "Oh God, she's Born Again!" And so she was. The least provocation, like "Please pass the salt," would call forth large chunks of the gospel and beams of love juice (yes, it did seem somewhat pornographic), and when I would respond with a polite but totally inappropriate "Whatever . . . (or whatever)," it deterred her not, nor did she waver, but would verily go on and then some more, as if she were mightily

possessed, or like me when I'm talking about computers.

I also met some people who were a wonderful surprise, particularly a couple who live around the corner from where Terry and I used to live in Brooklyn Heights; and on the five-hour layover in Chicago we took a cab to the Art Institute of Chicago; it was a treat and so were they. I told them as much at our last meal together, in a small way a most poignant occasion. Jack (around 70, partially paralyzed on one side, bent over, Bogart-type lip twitch), looks at me with a kind of Sid Coleman twinkle when Sid's about to come out with a good one and says, "You're not going to cry?" Lee, his wife, with an longtime-married, good-humored weariness, says: "That's always been the trouble with you, Jack. It's never enough; you always want everything." Jack, with a glint of Evil: "You call *that* Everything?" Earlier, we'd been trading life stories and he'd said: "You didn't have a very good time in the eighties, did you? Your mother, your husband, Ronald Reagan . . ."

Somebody asked me for more details on Amtrak bigotry:

"Hi, I'm Hal Shaw and this is my wife, Marge." "Hi, I'm Carol Carr." And for lack of anything else to say that moment, I added, inanely: "We all have such short names." Marge, who's standing while I'm sitting, bends down so we're eye to eye, gives me a conspiratorial wink, and whispers, "That's the best kind." It took me a while. If not for the wink nudge & tickle I might have thought it's the best kind because it's easy to spell or something. So, what I shoulda said was: "Absolutely. Like Fong and Chow." *Espit d'escalier*, that wonderful phrase that literally means the spirit of the staircase, or what you thought of saying as you were leaving the scene.

Mr. Smith, of the sleeper across from mine, has just called the porter to make up his bed. But he leaves before porter gets there. The porter is just finishing up when Mr. Smith gets back. "Oh, I'm sorry I missed you," Mr. Smith says. "I wanted to watch what you were doing. Who knows—someday I may have to get a job (heh-heh) doing that (heh-heh) myself (heh-heh)." Maybe that's not bigotry. Maybe that's just disgusting. And the usual asides by tight-lipped citizens in very starched collars about immigrants ruining the country.

There was a lovely white L. L. Bean-type woman in her seventies I was having dinner with—very sweet—who, hearing that I was Jewish, said in a Very Loud voice: "Oh JEWS!!! I LOVE Jews!!!" Not *some* of her best friends, but her *very* best friends are Jews. Then she thought of something that would really grab me. There's this group in her town in Wisconsin called Jews for Jesus, and she gets their literature, which is fascinating beyond description, and have I ever heard of them.

The sexism? One ass-grab, one conductor-pass,

one redneck getting his jollies by terrifying an already nervous woman (who happened to be black and kind of sexy) about the safety of the train (the more scared she got the more he smiled as he reached for the next harrowing anecdote).

What caused this racist/anti-Semitic outpouring? I would guess it was simply the opportunity to outpour to what they perceived was a safe audience to do it in front of (e.g., the Shaws confiding to the Carr); or, in the case of the woman who shopped L. L. Bean, a lack of imagination coupled with a lack of experience, coupled with a need to make an alien feel at home, coupled with a hearing problem that caused her to shout. This kind of stuff is probably fairly typical across all kinds of populations, not just retirees and rednecks.

In toto, I'm afraid we *were* in Kansas, kiddo.

The sleeping cars. Very small. Very small indeed. The sleepers are different east of Chicago: older, but they have a toilet and sink, coupled together in an ingeniously efficient design. Once when I was lying stretched out, head to toe exactly filling the length of the compartment, my left shoulder at the window and my right shoulder only inches from the door, I thought of how the Egyptians were buried with their stuff and how *Amtrak americanus* would be entombed, with tiny sinks and toilets and miniature bags of complimentary salted nuts.

PART TWO: AND THEN NEW YORK

First glimpse of the Empire State Building from the train window brings on emotional meltdown. But almost immediately the train takes the route under the river and doesn't come out again till Penn Station. I'm tired from being up practically all night but terribly excited. It's 5:30 p.m., the height of rush hour, and when we come out of the station into daylight it's all teeming masses, redcaps with (now) endearing New York accents; it's *BLADE RUNNER*, it's ten times as dirty and noisy as I remember it, ten times as many cabs, cars, people. The cab driver has to practically touch car bumper to pedestrian bodies in order to make a right turn across town, towards the hotel about a dozen blocks uptown and a little bit east. The city looks massive, dark, alien, familiar and exciting, not necessarily because it's an exciting place, but because I'm so excited to be here.

The last dollar bills have left my pocket, one by one, and finally I'm up in my room at the Algonquin. No view, small, spotlessly clean, a well-lit walk-in closet, old hexagonal tiles in the bathroom but a built-in hair dryer and the expected assortment of small toiletries. I do what I usually do in strange places, the Cat Thing: walk around in circles, open stuff, turn stuff on. I feel the way I look on my driver's license when I was so goony-brained ecstatic to have passed the first time. Recent issues of the

New Yorker are scattered tastefully on the dresser, each one with a printed message of the hotel's long connection with the magazine. The faucets don't squeak and hot water comes out in a gush. Am I checking to see if I'm in some third world country? Maybe.

Something tells me I'm hungry, so I leave the hotel and walk down the block to the coffee shop Bob and Karen Silverberg told me about. It's a big place and almost empty. I order a meatloaf sandwich and coffee. I settle in to breathe it all in while I wait. I mumble something ebulliently incoherent to the Greek owner, who couldn't care less that I haven't been here in twenty years, but I'm a nattering fool, a shopping bag lady with spending money in her shopping bag. The meatloaf is blah and I just nibble at the sandwich while listening to conversations. At the cashier's, I see a French Cruller in the high-domed cake preserver and realize I haven't had a Real One since when, and I get one to go.

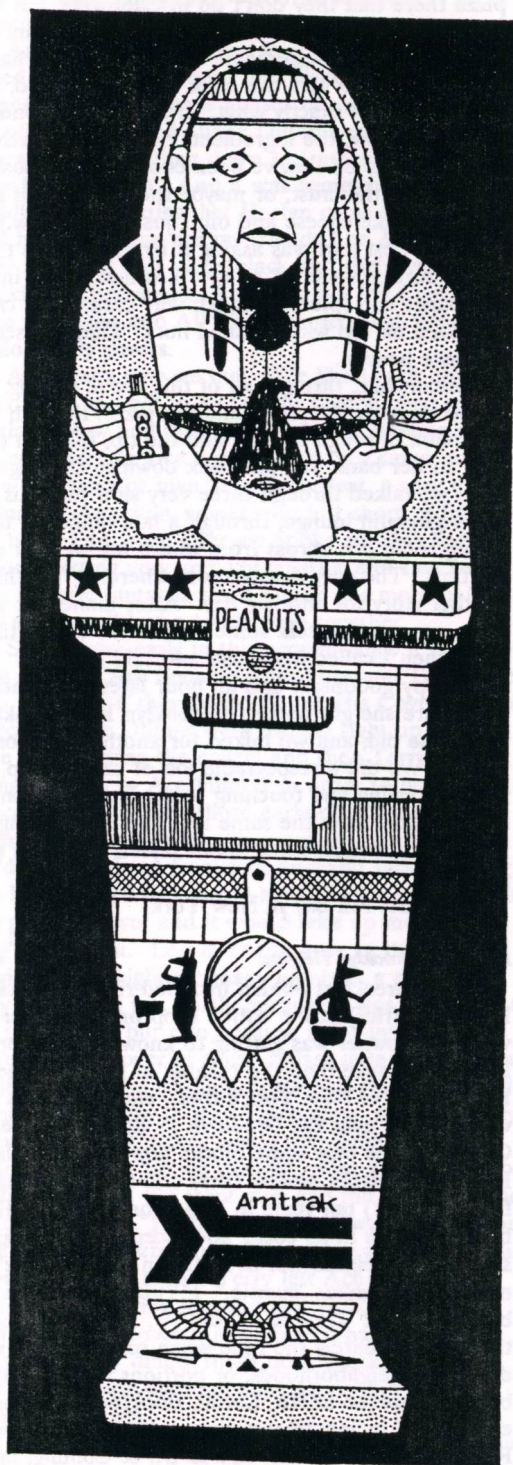
Back to the Algonquin with a pastry in my pocket and a sort of a song in my heart. I call Ruth and make specific arrangements to see her tomorrow, Friday; she's already been primed, but we manage to talk for an hour or so about everything else; it's always like that. Then I call Leo and Diane Dillon and we set a time for Saturday. Then I call Robert to say hello, I'm really here. Then I close my eyes. The room is quiet and it's staying in one place. I wake up hours later without having moved once. It seems.

Friday, Full Day One:

The *Times* is outside my door when I leave in the morning. This is better than *USA Today* under my door on Amtrak. First thing on this can-so-go-home-again agenda is to take a cab down to the Village, see what old landmines, oops, landmarks have survived (where I lived with Terry in 1961/2, with Jack 1960, the apple tree, the wishing well), and then walk as far uptown as I can till it's almost time to meet Ruth at Bank Street College, where we both worked, and then grab another cab to 112th Street.

To backtrack just a bit, there was one thing I wanted very much to see, but was almost certain wouldn't work out. I wanted to drive through Brownsville, in Brooklyn, where I grew up. Brownsville was a Jewish slum then, and then transmogrified into several other ethnicities of slum, and landed up, from what I'd heard, as nothing at all, just obliterated, bombed-out. When I mentioned to Bob Silverberg my fantasy of seeing it again even if it was only from the window of a car, he said, "I'd rather drive through the streets of Beirut." I figured there was a good piece of advice embedded in that rather brutal statement.

So when I was making plans for the trip, seeing Brownsville was not part of what I expected. On the other hand, I'd built in a little elbow room, and if



some magic opportunity presented itself . . .

So I get into the cab that first morning and tell the driver I want to go to 8th Street & 5th Avenue. He's a black man about my age, with a West Indian-type accent, and I like him. I'm still on automatic motormouth and we start talking about the city and its neighborhoods and it turns out he's been living for the last fifteen or so years exactly around the corner from where I grew up. He knows every street, everything that's still there and everything that isn't. I ask him if he'd be interested in taking me on a tour and he says yes, but it can't be tomorrow, because tomorrow he'll be taking his son for his SATS but how about Sunday? — *Oh Yeah* — and we arrange the time, and I just can't believe such luck.

He lets me out in the Village and I get a second wave of Alien and how you can know something in your head but until you actually see it you don't really know it at all. I mean, it was all there, all the streets in the right place, all the basic structure, but there was almost nothing familiar from the old country, and I felt I was groping my way from one private landmark to another. There weren't many. It was a gray, windy morning, and I stopped for a coffee and a donut. Didn't hit the first memory till Sheridan Square, the cigar store on the corner, which had been there since even before I discovered it at fifteen. Terry and I used to play a little tug of war outside that cigar store because they carried paperbacks and he could never resist a bookstore even when it had few and cruddy books and whenever we passed that corner we had a ritual of my pulling him away from it and him winning. Well, listen, if I wasn't there for the nostalgia, what was I there for. But the bookstore was an interesting little lesson for me because, like a lot of the stores and restaurants in New York, the edifice remained but the current owners were fairly new to the country, didn't live in the neighborhoods of their establishments, and knew little about the neighborhood ("We don't know; we don't go out"). So the continuity I was feeling was very subjective; no one could help fill in the history. Except of course if the walls could talk except of course but I've never actually seen it happen.

I noticed Gay is much more in evidence in the Village than when I lived there. I couldn't find the burlap store wherefrom we all made our curtains in the early Bohemian Sixties (surprise, surprise), but there were a few leather shops and I'm not talking thong sandals. I curled all around the Village, having trouble finding 56 Jane Street, where Terry and I lived when we first got together, but it was right on the corner where I'd left it (older and a bit battle-scarred, but waddaya want for a quarter). I decided to be an Ugly Californian and accosted a woman who

was opening the outside door. She was friendly and told me about the occasional muggings outside her window. Wound my way out of the Village, and up 7th Avenue to 16th Street, where I lived with first husband Jack in 1960. Again, the building was still there, but, now just a few blocks outside the Village, which has been sort of historically insulated from a lot of the rack 'n' ruin of the rest of the city, it's much seedier, more run down. For some reason I was kind of stuck there, looking, and feeling memories with no names, until I started to feel embarrassed at being stared back at by some nearby people who were starting to wonder, and not being in the mood to chat, I unhitched myself from the nameless mood and nudged myself onward. Up 7th Avenue for a while, and then over to 6th (aka Avenue of the Americas) for a while, and then over to 5th and then back again, till it started getting late, and I had to meet Ruth at 1:30 on 112th Street, so I took a cab and we rode the brakes all the way from 38th. Now, wasn't that exciting, you who were trailing your finger along a map.

Time out from unrelieved geography. As I walked, the changes became more and more apparent. Every coffee shop was owned by people whose English is obviously not native-born, but who can play a virtuoso calculator, and there were several financially and/or mentally challenged citizens staggering along the streets who reminded me that it might not be a bad idea to keep my wits about me. (Surprisingly, not one asked for money; Ruth told me later they were all busy working the subways.) Hardly anything looked the same, in wide view or detail. It's just generally rundown, darker, sadder. But still, within half an hour I was carrying my purse the way I usually do, maybe just a bit tighter, and at no time did I feel I was a defenseless tourist in enemy territory. It's a city I would have to get to know all over again if I were going to feel at home again. But I could definitely do it if I had to; it still speaks to me.

Symbolic interjection: In California recorded telephones messages on business telephones tell you to "Press 1." In New York, it's "Push 1."

My visit with Ruth lasted twelve hours. We hadn't seen each other since 1971; she was 43 then. I met her right outside her office and as soon as we glimpsed each other we did what I knew we'd do—we jumped up and down and screamed and hugged. She took me inside and showed me her Macintosh(es) (her job requires an elaborate system, full-page monitors, the works). We haven't seen each other in twenty years and the first thing we do is play with pixels. An hour and a half later we were Very Hungry. I wanted pizza because New York pizza is terrific and I've missed it. We went to an Italian

place nearby and I don't know what they do with pizza there that they don't do in California, but it was indeed the way I remembered it except eggplant was part of the basic ingredients. (The difference has something to do with the cook not being afraid, but I'm not sure of exactly what. It seems more one-piece somehow: the ingredients have lived together longer, or the oil they've been cooked in has soaked deeper into the crust, or maybe there's more of the right stuff like cheese and oil; I just don't know.) The next best part was asking if by any chance they served tortoni (one "n" or two?), which comes in a tiny paper cup (pleated sides): very creamy ice cream sprinkled on top with crushed nuts. They did serve it—taste heaven.

Meanwhile, through all of this, we're talking. We talked through the pixels and the pizza, through the ice cream, through the bill and the tip, through the walk to her bank, the bus back down to the Algonquin; we talked through three very slow martinis in the Algonquin lounge, through a late dinner in their dining room just across from where we sat with our martinis. The very dining room where. Well, that's another story for another day. After dinner we went up to my room to talk some more. We talked till 1:30, when I called her a cab and said a very sad/happy goodnight and an hour later called her to make sure she got home to Brooklyn Heights okay, which she did, and we talked for another hour on the phone. We did a respectable job of catching up. It was interesting and touching to see her again, and noticing how she's the same and how she's changed. I wonder the same thing about myself but I can only guess.

End first full day in New York.

Day Two, Brooklyn Heights:

After breakfast (which included rilly soggy, tasteless home fries) at the coffee shop on the corner where the owner was getting to know me less for my loyal attendance than the cashing of travelers checks, I called one of New York's trusty car companies and was whisked over the Brooklyn Bridge to Cobble Hill. Cobble Hill is only some blocks down the road from Brooklyn Heights, where Terry and I lived during our first (and last) ten years in New York. Cobble Hill back then was in its cocky adolescence: not as expensive as the Heights, not as spiffy, in some people's minds "real" versus "yuppie." ("Yuppie" didn't exist back then, but "Gentrified" did . . . I think. I think this was just barely the time when remodeled & re-decorated neighborhoods, or portions thereof, were being christened SoHo, LoCal, BooHoo, MooCow, etc.) (And its inhabitants were calling themselves Renovated-Americans.) It was Up & Coming, much

like the East Village in relation to the Real Greenwich Village.

Anyway, like Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill consisted of tree-lined streets and brownstones and other stones, and it was those houses of many stones that people like Leo and Diane Dillon were buying and upgrading and settling down in (rather than "turning over for a profit"). And it was somewhere in the middle to late sixties that Harlan came to visit and said hey-hey, come see my friends Leo & Diane and their little son Lee—he's black and she's white and the kid's in between and they do All My Covers, I have it written into All My Contracts that they have to do all my covers.

And that's how we met. We liked each other right away and got to be friends independent of Harlan. Now and then on a weekend evening we'd go over there or vice versa (when they came over here our elevator man/superintendent, a very unhip Romanian-American, would stop just short of frisking big black Leo, even after we Spoke to him) and sit around getting very verbally creative and Leo would spin the tale fantastic while Diane was more quietly wry and we all had a lovely time together.

Somewhere early in this acquaintance it came to pass that the Ace Specials were born and Terry asked Leo & Diane if they would do All His Covers for the Specials. The Dillons were usually right up to the wire in delivering the covers and then Terry would bring them in to Ace himself in order to hurry the process. I remember those early deadline mornings when we'd tootle down the street in the gray VW we'd bought cheap from first husband Jack and ring the Dillons' bell and they'd hand over the canvas with the paint still wet and it would take up most of the Bug's back seat. Leo & Diane were in the habit of staying up all night for many nights in a row when they were on a job, partly because it was their m.o. to blitz a project, but also because if for instance they were doing a cover in stained-glass style they'd get all excited about the medium of stained glass, so they'd want to learn how to *do* stained glass, and once they knew how to do it they would invariably ring a few changes on it. ("So we thought, what if we scrape off a little grit from the front step and mix it in with the yellow ochre . . .") Then, as all hell was breaking out on the sexdrugs&rock'n'roll front, we moved to California. But just before Terry left Ace Books, he talked it into giving him the Dillons' cover for *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and there it hangs, over the fireplace in my dining room now, speaking of a certain time and certain people, a certain way of looking at things.

And here I was, at precisely noon, my second day in New York, and there they were, opening the door.

I'd seen them very very briefly a few months ago at their autograph-signing at Other Change of Hobbit, and anyway, they hadn't changed all that much, but their house was a surprise in that it was not a surprise at all but pretty much as I remembered it—finally something that time hadn't had its way with. Their son Lee, who had been around five back then, crawling around our ankles under the table where we munched our brownies, was 26 now, and gorgeous, and making elaborate, fantastic jewelry and painting heroic, operatic canvases—massive things that took up entire walls. "Why couldn't we have had a kid who painted small," Leo said, typically demon-like, squinting his eyes and acting badder than he is.

We had a glass of ginger ale and then left for the grand tour of the Outside World with its yet unknown transmogrifications. I found that Cobble Hill is not a downscale version of Brooklyn Heights any more: all the grungy parts have been bought, scraped, painted, remodeled, landscaped, etc. The Dillons say it's changed in character from a neighborhood of artists and craftspeople to a conclave of amateur real estate entrepreneurs who have no personal stake in it, but to my superficial eye and insouciant mood, just looking, not living there, it was a beautiful place to be on a sunny spring day.

But as we walked our way into Brooklyn Heights, at the point where I should have started recognizing it, I didn't. I had to get right onto the street where we lived, and then it finally came into focus. But brighter. Noisier. Almost a Toon version of what I remembered. There were a lot of children around. The Heights never used to have children: it used to have old people, gay people, starting-out couples, and a hushed quality even at prime time and even on the brightest days. The shops on the main street were a little tackier (a Waldens, for instance); and I was hoping that the deli (hot brisket sandwiches in a wooden-beamed atmosphere that was reminiscent of Swiss chalet) would still be there, but it wasn't. But as we turned the corner onto Pierrepont Street, where we'd lived, it was more spiffy than ever. I opened the door and walked into the lobby of 35 Pierrepont. The brass was so shiny it was singing; the people coming out of the elevator smiled hello in the very lobby where Leo had snuck through the fascist lines twenty years ago. Everything and everybody looked perfectly maintained. At the foot of Pierrepont, where we walked along the promenade that fronts the view of the Manhattan skyline that people pay so dearly to live here for (was that English?), there was the familiar little plot of a playground: a few swings and a see-saw. The difference was, there were *many* children playing there. Leo & Diane said that the new (relatively speaking) highrises just outside the Heights

were probably the source of this influx: "outsiders" came here for the bit of shopping, restaurants, to walk on the promenade, and that's why the population seemed tripled. But the Dillons didn't seem to have noticed the difference in density as sharply as I did; you just had to have not been there, I guess.

We had Chinese lunch and the kind of New York spareribs I've thought about for years with carnivorous nostalgia (the kind of nostalgia that makes you want to eat your past). We started to talk some Real Stuff at this point, since we hadn't really had a chance to discuss our lives since we left New York on the cusp of Real Stuff revolution. It turned out that Diane and I had a lot more to say to each other than we'd figured on, and Leo sensed it, and when we got back to the house he cavalierly excused himself to do something mysterious. Diane and I talked for the next couple of hours, the kind of exchange that's warm, close, extremely interesting, and unfortunately (for this context) that can't be repeated. So I'll cut to the next scene, when we rejoined Leo.

He'd been working on their latest book, *Pish, Posh, Hieronymus Bosch*, a droll interpretation of Bosch's home life with the kind of drawings you keep seeing new details in every time you look and a very clever story line. They were working up to the wire, as usual, but they say they don't stay up all night any more. Leo seems to be feeling his mortality and talks about how all he cares about is The Work, all the art he wants to do before shuffling off this mortal coil. Nothing ominous there, just Leo's well-formed sense of drama (which is usually topped with a wild sense of the absurd; he's sort of a lemon meringue person, whereas Diane's more strawberry-rhubarb).

I left around 8:00 p.m., having given and received many spurious promises of how often we'd be in touch, but again feeling so glad I'd done this thing, and that so far it was worth even Amtrak's tuna salad.

PART THE ENDTH:

Finally, My Dinner with Pauline, the anticlimax we've all been waiting for. This is Sunday, my last day in New York, the day before I'm about to re-board Amtrak (which I've had quite enough of, thanks) and read my way through another slew of sleepless nights while waiting for the Rockies to crop up again.

(By the way, I did write a Letter of Complaint to Amtrak and was answered with meticulous condescension: the kind of response where each of your comments is acknowledged just to be trivialized. "We regret that you *felt* [italics mine] there was smoke in the observation car." Felt? I know not Felt.)

So that last morning I walked out of the Algonquin and slid into the seat next to the West

Indian-American cab driver who was to take me on a tour of Brownsville, mine own home slum. And found out that the neighborhood I was warned of as dangerous and dying looked, at least in broad daylight, poor, black, and very much alive. The shops (no vacancies that I noticed) advertised themselves in bright, gaudy lettering. The street where my grandparents had sold fruits and vegetables was still lined with pushcarts. We stopped and bought coconuts and drank the milk. My driver knew the coconut-peddler by name, the way the people in the old neighborhood had known my grandfather. But this was an island somewhere upside of Fiji, another picture postcard entirely from the one in my head all these years.

As we drove out of the commercial areas and down residential streets, I could see more dead spots in the landscape: apartment houses that housed nothing; bare, weedy pieces of land where, in its prime, kid gangs thinned each other out. But miraculously, the apartment house I'd lived in between ages 13 and 16 was still there, and, mother of all miracles, so was the theater I'd seen my first movie in, recognizable at least structurally. This was better than I'd dreamed. We wound our way around the streets, which were quiet on this sunny Sunday afternoon, and whenever I mentioned a personal landmark, the driver knew where to find it, or he'd tell me what year it had disappeared and what had replaced it. He said things *had* been very rundown about ten years ago, but the city had been putting some money into the area and it was growing back up again. We passed a row of little brick one-family houses, with plots of grass in front and wrought-iron fencing, pretty and well-maintained. He said they were fairly new. I said "How much?" He said, "About \$50,000, a low down payment and good financing."

We started the drive back to Manhattan on Eastern Parkway, the long, broad avenue where my girlfriend Sheila and I used to take long walks on dark nights, stop for egg creams and malteds and cheeseburgers and lime rickeys and never gave a thought to calories, cholesterol, cruelty-free drinking straws, muggings, murders, or rapes. Once a couple of boys said something rude to us. Once a boy said to me, "Are you a ballerina?" What is it about the deep past that makes you want to cry when you're not even sad?

Eastern Parkway is a boulevard-like street in Crown Heights, which was in the news a while ago when riots broke out in reaction to the death of a little black girl by an Hasidic driver. Eastern Parkway as I remember it was all Jewish (not particularly Hasidic), and where families like us, if they managed to get some upward mobility going, moved to as a



prelude to entering Heaven. I don't remember any black faces.

The trip had taken two hours. Back at the hotel I paid the driver and thanked him; he said he'd enjoyed it too, that a lot of people leave the neighborhood and they never want to come back.

It was good.

It was around noon. I took a walk down Fifth Avenue. Bought a hot dog from a street vendor, sat on the steps of the 42nd Street Library, wandered into Lord & Taylor. Where a saleswoman from one of the cosmetic counters (Orlane, if you have to know) talked me into letting her paint my face. Is that what you call a makeover? I'd never had one of those things and it seemed perfect for the moment. During the hour or so I was sitting on the stool, being swabbed and smeared, two people got caught shoplifting. It was a little surreal: this huge store, brightly lit, half empty, sounds hushed and gentle; and suddenly, from some other dimension, loud, urgent, screams: "Let me GO!" "Happens all the time," said my face-painter. She handed me a mirror. "Wanna look?" Gaa. By the numbers. All the "right" colors and stuff, but not tailor-made for the face that nobody knows better than I know. Not bad enough to have to wash off right away; I waited till I got back to the hotel.

Some of us female types will understand the next sentence. I bought the minimum I could under the circumstances, shuddered at the total, and had it all sent home. Even as I signed my name I knew I'd regret spending so much on stuff I didn't need and wouldn't use. (Ah, but I was wrong. Turns out I love it all. Turns out expensive cosmetics *are* nicer than your over the drugstore-counter variety. Turns out the expensive stuff smells better, goes on creamier, and the eyeliner is the perfect texture between "have to press hard" and "crumble on contact.")

I walked down Fifth Avenue some more with my trendy face. Saw a small restaurant with the sign FAST FRENCH FOOD. Got back to the Algonquin in time to write a postcard or two and get dressed for dinner.

PK and I were both on time in the Algonquin lobby. I recognized her right away though she was smaller and frailer looking than I'd expected. I introduced myself and we grasped (different from "shook") hands. It was warm and nice. She led us into The Dining Room and the headwaiter took over. He seemed very happy to see her again. He'd been friendly enough to me when Ruth and I had had dinner here two days ago, but he opened up his grin a little wider when he saw me with Her. PK asked him for the round table (not The Round Table) in the back. We sat down and small-talked and ordered and

small-talked (about when she got in, when I was leaving; her health (she has a couple of problems that make getting around in New York too much of a strain), the fact that any future writing she'd do would be for *The New Yorker* because she knows her audience there). She said she'd looked at the movie listings to see if there was anything we might want to see, but couldn't find a thing, and that she'd invited a couple of friends to join us for dessert. Phooey, I thought. Double-phooey. I wanted to have more time alone with her.

But it was not to be. The meal went by very quickly (we'd both ordered just the entree), and then her friends showed up: a *Newsweek* reporter named Jack (forget his last name) and Polly Frost, who I noticed had a piece in *The New Yorker* a month or so later. They were young and pretty and fun and smart and cordial, but they and PK had known each other for some time, and inevitably references to stuff only they knew would pop up, leaving me alone with my imagination. After dessert PK suggested we all go to her room (suite, actually; it not only had an extra room, but an Algonquin bathrobe). She showed us some of the hate mail she got after her review of *Dances With Wolves*. Fun, but listen, I would rather have read the collection when I was back home. She ordered Perrier for us and we watched a very shlocky made-for-TV-movie with Jobeth Williams and Bruce Bosnell or Pierce Bonnestell, or Bryce Purcell, that dark, good-looking person who does a lot of action-shlock. It was terribly dumb; we were terribly clever. PK watched it curled up in an easy chair; the rest of us sat on the couch. When the movie was over, we talked for a few minutes, then Polly and Jack got up

to go, making arrangements to meet PK again tomorrow. I took my cue from them, said all the things you say, and though she looked a little surprised, she said her goodbyes too. And so it ended, as I said earlier, somewhat anticlimactically. The next morning, on checking out, I left a note in her box with a few clippings I'd forgotten to give her and words to the effect that, like all good things, it had been too brief.

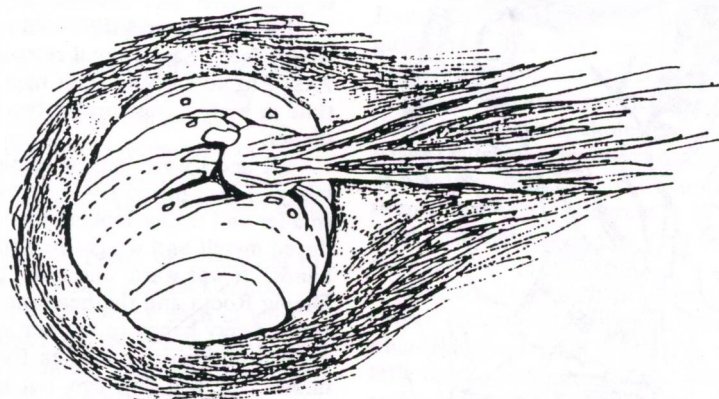
Which is one way to put it. I guess I felt cheated out of getting to know her a little better. She'd said, in our pre-dinner chat, that she'd planned to come to New York just to meet me (then a book signing for *5001 Nights at the Movies* came up, so she extended her visit another day). Why then would she want to dilute the meeting by inviting others? Well, maybe because, since it's getting hard for her to make this trip, she'd have fewer chances to see her friends and would want to double-book. Also, I remembered her saying that Jack had, fortunately, been with her twice before when she'd fallen; so maybe she simply felt safer with more than one (hitherto unknown) person near her.

Whatever the reason, I found the meeting more fun (in the objective sense: we did such "interesting" things) but less personally satisfying than I'd expected.

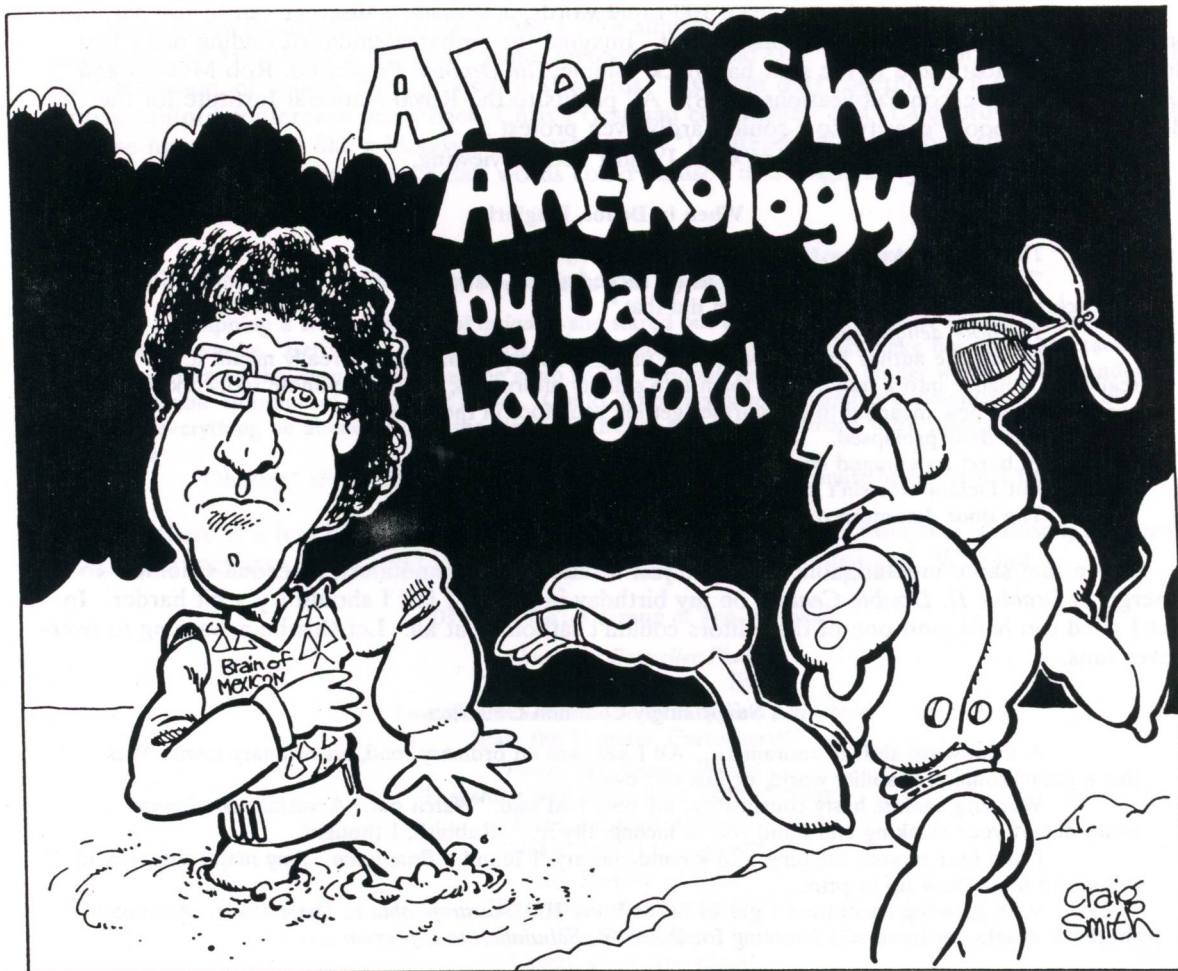
Anyway, finis. Truly memorable. Would do it again soon if only I could beam myself down into midtown.

P.S. I hadn't been in touch with PK since New York but she called me in early December to ask about the fire and recommend an article (on Phil Dick) in *Film Comment*. It was good to hear her voice but I miss it most of all in *The New Yorker*.

— Carol Carr



THE HONEYCOMB OF THE MOON



Did you ever hear of the great Drabble craze that swept over (bits of) British fandom in the late 1980s? Literary historians have traced the name back to the 1971 *Monty Python's Big Red Book*: "Drabble. A word game for 2 to 4 players. The four players sit from left to right and the first person to write a novel wins."

For this to be playable in real time, it had to be rather a short novel. Brian Aldiss got all excited about what he called "mini-sagas," stories of *exactly* 50 words ... which rash enthusiasm led him into judging a national newspaper competition and burning out his cortex reading 33,000 entries. A minority of fans thought 50 words a trifle flabby and verbose: Nick Lowe pioneered the micro-saga of precisely eight words, and Colin Greenland wrote the definitive specimen: "Aliens disguised as typewriters? I never heard such —"

Others — notably the Birmingham University SF Society, who are to blame for what follows — reckoned that 100 words was the most comfortable figure. This, gentle reader, is the Drabble. (Once again the word count must be precise, though up to 15 extra are allowed for a title. "Hyphenated-words-are-argued-about.") One dark day in 1987, I wandered into the Novacon convention hall to find it crammed with people scribbling and counting obsessively on their fingers. Drabblemania had begun.

With a light laugh I sat down, wrote 100 rapid words, and made a discreet exit to the bar, little knowing that there were fearsome plans afoot. Imagine the embarrassment of finding one's first-draft scrawl immortalized in the slim hardback volume *The Drabble Project* ed. Rob Meades and David B. Wake (Becon Publications, 1988). All profits to the Royal National Institute for the Blind's "talking book" charity, so I could hardly even protest

Here it is. No prizes for guessing what I'd just been reviewing.

When in Doubt, Plagiarize

The door dilated ...

"No," muttered Samuel Delany as he hacked at the fifteenth draft of his new novel *Stars in my Pocket like Grains of Sand*. "Heinlein did that."

The door deliquesced

Swiftly the author jotted down a few paragraphs explaining that he really meant it, the door really did collapse into a puddle and foam into solidity afterwards, requiring nimble footwork to avoid giving a whole new meaning to the phrase "getting your foot in the door."

The door prolapsed.

In burst an enraged critic, shrieking, "What a fucking awful line!"

But Delany wouldn't change it.

The door detumesced

When that same indefatigable or maybe just insane editors announced a second volume – to emerge as *Drabble II: Double Century* on my birthday in 1990 – I felt I should try a bit harder. In fact I tried too hard, and one of the editors couldn't fathom it at all. Let this be a warning to over-clever fans.

A Surprisingly Common Omission

A transworld shift is undramatic. All I saw was an ordinary road, an ordinary town. Was this a parachronic probability world, or just our own?

Warning against hasty conclusions, my boss had said: "Watch out. A variant continuum could distort your thinking and blind you to incongruity" Rubbish, I thought.

I had four hours. Slipping into a handy library, I found a *Britannica*. Any major disparity in this world must show up in print.

With growing frustration I got as far as Book III, *Claustrophobia to Dysprosium*. Automatic shiftback caught my hand still fumbling for Book IV, *Fabulation to Lipogram*

Although the first one had appeared as by Dave Langford, this second effort was of necessity by his professional pseudonym David Langford.

Certain British fanzines kept on calling for Drabbles, the length being ever so convenient for odd comments not weighty enough to sustain a "proper" story or article, and so:

The Robots of Environment

by Is*c As*m*v

"Daneel! My robot sidekick! Thank God you're here – rescue me from this treacherous swamp at once."

"I must inform you, Partner Elijah, that I have just acquainted myself with the datanet information on global warming. The energy expenditure you request would be a contributing factor, harmful to humanity at large."

"But I'm sinking! Remember the First Law of Robotics"

"My programming now incorporates *Robots and Empire* (1985), whose Zeroth Law gives priority to the welfare of the entire species."

"Well, my existence is vital to humanity's, because –"

"To minimize greenhouse heating I am now shutting down my systems." *Click.*

"... Glug."

Along came the Birmingham SF Group's 20th anniversary party, whose silly program items included "Call My Bluff," a dictionary game involving true and fake definitions of obscure words. In the fan version, of course, they're obscure SF words. My team duly covered itself with glory. (At a British Milford conference years back, Chris Priest had complained that "Langford's only good at this because his style's just like a bloody dictionary anyway.") Afterwards in the bar, someone idly wondered whether all that event's daft words could be used in a single story. Mere pints of beer later

**A Drabble Inspired by Exceedingly Vague Memories
of Twentycon's *Call My Bluff* Game**

Sipping a steaming mug of *qujadin*, she stared out across the lush *pelki* with its gambolling flocks of *varelse*. Before another *quantch* had elapsed, she would have to make her move and tackle the menace of the *rown*. Adjusting the strap of her *periboob* and pulling on her *webbies*, she pondered the terrible situation of this entire *fratrin*. Could diplomacy save humanity's *deodand* even now, or must everything be abandoned to the *glotch*? Already the dread *sipstrassi* were massing for their attack

"Oh *derg*," she swore, "I can't understand a word of this. It must be an early Cherryh novel."

Yes, there is a fearful temptation to say wicked, parodic things. Could one, I mused, squeeze a complete trilogy into 100 words? Surely yes. In fact, why stop at a trilogy? Why not –

DEKALOGY: A Group of Ten Volumes

One: The Bestseller Plan

"And I shall call you ... Eve!"

Two: Black Genesis – Fortress of East Grinstead

"Pass the E-meter, Carruthers!"

Three: The Enema Within

This thing was bigger than both of them!

Four: An Alien Affidavit

"Nuke 'em till they glow!"

Five: Fortune of Hype

"International bestseller!?!?"

Six: Debt Quest

Lasers won't stop them!

Seven: Reviewers of Vengeance

"Eat radioactive death, critics!"

Eight: Remainder!

Could this be the end? Never!

Nine: Venality Victorious

"You don't mean – ?"

"Yes!"

"Then – ?"

"Precisely!"

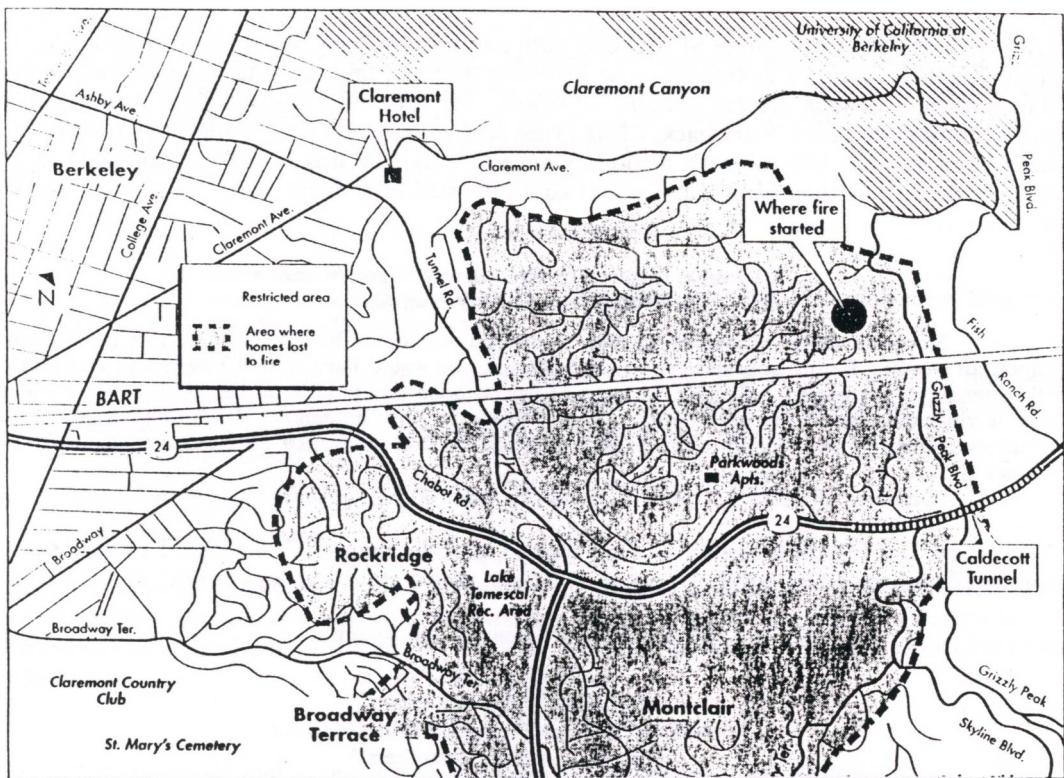
"But in that case –"

Ten: The Doomed Publisher

There are books with which Man was not meant to meddle.

On second, third and so on to tenth thoughts, perhaps there are also literary forms with which Langford had better not meddle any more.

– Dave Langford



THE OAKLAND FIRE: 3 PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

ROBERT LICHTMAN:

Sunday, October 20th, started out innocently enough except for the high wind that caught our attention about quarter after nine. Carol and I browsed through the Sunday paper over coffee and got out of the house around 10:15 to have breakfast in Berkeley. As we neared the bottom of Broadway Terrace, a lone fire truck came slowly up — no sirens — followed by an Oakland police car. Thinking nothing of it, we drove on into Berkeley.

Walking back to our car after breakfast, we noticed lots of black smoke overhead and overheard several people speaking of a fire up above the Claremont Hotel. Since the hotel is several miles from Carol's house, we didn't think much of it and went on to our next stop, the Ashby BART Station flea market. When we got there, people were standing around watching the progress of the fire in the hills and making comments. We tried to call Barbara from there, but her line rang a busy signal. Her house was probably gone, we concluded with a shudder. We walked through the aisles, rather more hurriedly than if there had been no fire but pausing here and there, before deciding to move on. We were still on our way to catch "Barton Fink" at an early show.

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By the time we drove to the theatre complex and started looking for a parking place, we'd become totally unable to relate to the notion of watching a flick while the fire raged on in the hills. We headed back to the house. We had to snake our way through various side streets and across Broadway to Broadway Terrace, thus avoiding some police barricades. We encountered no further police lines and were soon on our way up the hill.

There was no particular sign that anything was happening as we arrived at Carol's house. The sun was visible and the warmth in the air was from the hot winds, not from the proximity of any walls of flame. Carol began gathering up clothing, papers and other kipple, while I went to the basement and quickly packed and carted off the huge lilapa file and Terry's own file copies of his fanzines. Yes, even in the face of imminent danger, once a fan, always a fan! We made futile attempts to get Claudius, Carol's cat, into his travel case, but he eluded us entirely and we finally had to give up on him for the moment and try again later.

We were both operating on massive adrenaline by then. Probably we were in a mild state of shock, too. If either of us had been thinking things out a little further, we would have taken considerably more out

of the house. Another factor, though, was that Carol had injured her leg on our Grand Canyon trip and she couldn't move fast. We left photo albums, irreplaceable tapes, valuable kipple, and her computer and laser printer (though she took the laptop, which had the most important stuff on it). As we started to leave, it occurred to me to stay behind a while to hose down the place as best I could and do whatever else outside seemed like it might help if the fire came near. Carol went off to Bob and Karen Silverberg's. I said I'd be along pretty soon and began sweeping the roof clear of the usual accumulation of pine needles, eucalyptus berries, leaves and bark.

That done, I turned on the garden hose full blast and began hosing down the outside. The water pressure was excellent. I hosed the roof until water stood in the gutters, then watered every outside surface of the house I could reach. Next, I turned my attention to the ivy growing down the hillside between the house and the road, the leaves on the shrubs and low trees in front of the house, and the trunk of the giant eucalyptus tree looming up from between the carport ramp and the entrance steps. I moved the hose downstairs, attached it to a second hose already there, and with the added length was able to reach behind the house to wet down the rear walls, the deck both above and below, and the leaf and pine needle-laden hillside. As I hosed away down out of sight from the road, the first police car ordering people to evacuate the area passed by. Shortly thereafter, an East Bay Parks vehicle came around and repeated the message. I could see these vehicles, but they couldn't see me. I ignored them because I didn't feel it was time to leave yet. My reason: there were still no nearby signs of the fire — just the black smoke drifting overhead. I felt I still had time to try to make a difference.

Finishing up down below, I reconnected the hose upstairs. I moved my car out of the carport and turned on the radio to listen to late reports as I hosed the inside of the carport from top to bottom. Hearing that fire had been reported uphill at Broadway Terrace and Pineneedle Drive, I decided to check it out to see if it would be prudent to leave. I drove one mile up to the reported fire. At that point Broadway Terrace on one side is a fairly sheer drop with no houses along it, but with a long row of mailboxes mounted between two posts. The low brush at the edge of the road was burning but the mailboxes weren't.

On the way back down, I could see the approach of the fire across the hollow to my right. Unlike the reports of walls of flames, this was a low, fairly slow-moving fire except where houses were engulfed in flames. It looked similar to the brush fires I occasionally helped to fight when I lived in Tennessee. I noticed people in and outside of the houses on the side of the road facing the fire. Many were busily

packing possessions into their vehicles while others, their cars already full, were watching the fire's advance. One older couple was hugging. As I drove down, I could see from the lay of the land that the fire was going to have to climb over or around a very high ridge to get to Carol's house, and that it appeared equally likely that it would go around and skirt her area entirely, working its way downhill. More about this later. Through all this, I saw no signs of fire-fighting equipment in the vicinity.

Back at Carol's, I left the radio on and gave the roof and the front of the house another round of water. The sky rumbled as the first tanker plane passed overhead, followed shortly by a water-carrying helicopter. They disappeared over the top of the ridge. After perhaps another ten minutes, a pair of motorcycle police drove up Broadway Terrace, stopping to ask everyone to leave the area. I said I was just finishing up and would leave shortly; they moved on up the road. It was probably another ten minutes before I finally decided I'd done enough, shut off the hose, gave everything one last look, and drove off.

Going down, I drove slowly, having a good look at everything, realizing that it might, just might, be the last time I saw it. Things looked pretty normal until I came to the first sharp turn in the road. Looking off to the right, I saw homes on fire several hundred feet away and a brush fire moving towards Broadway Terrace. No fire fighters were in evidence. I hurried on and joined the traffic jam on Mountain Boulevard on my way to Bob and Karen's.

It took me another forty minutes to reach the Agberg manse as I watched the fire advance from behind. Bob had just finished hosing off the roof when I walked in. We went inside and joined Carol and Karen listening to the radio (KCBS news, by far the best coverage during the fire) and watching TV (news coverage far behind radio's, but lots of gripping video).

Before long a helicopter flew over ordering people to evacuate. Bob and Karen had already packed, their bags and cases in a neat pile inside the front door. We were going to Pat Ellington's, Bob and Karen to Jim and Hilary Benford's in Lafayette. Carol followed me in her car as I made my way through the semi-familiar hills of lower Piedmont, past the Grand Lake Theatre, and eventually up Telegraph Avenue to Pat's. After a while we heard from Bob and Karen, who had successfully made it to Jim and Hilary's. Pat, Carol and I went out to dinner in Berkeley. Back at Pat's, we continued to watch TV and listen to the radio.

A couple of hours later, I regretfully had to go home. Carol would spend the night at Pat's.

I listened to KCBS all the way home. The fire raged on. When I arrived in Glen Ellen, I phoned up Carol and we exchanged information about what we'd heard on the radio. We were optimistic that her

house (and cat) would survive, but nervous about it. It took a long time to get to sleep that night.

I called Carol again the following morning, before leaving for work. She said Bob and another friend had seen a TV report on her part of Broadway Terrace. The house number 11064 – across the street and uphill from Carol – flashed across the screen. That house was gone, as were the others on that side of the road, but the reporter mentioned that some houses across the road still stood. Our hopes were buoyed again.

Late that afternoon Carol called me at work with the good news. Karen and Marie Ellington had trekked into the area from unburned areas below. They'd found the house still there, let themselves in (with Karen's copy of the key), captured Claudius and taken him away, and reported that the inside was not only *not* smoke- or water-damaged, but there wasn't even any smell of smoke. There was no power, however, and no telephone service. Carol checked into a motel in Berkeley, close to work. Her leg, which she'd reinjured during the evacuation, was bothering her a lot. She found it ironic to be living right in the middle of downtown Berkeley and not be able to zip around. That evening I settled into a steady routine of watching TV and listening to KCBS cover the still-unfolding story. The fire was still neither totally contained nor under any sort of control.

The week wound on. The fire gradually ended. Carol and I stayed in touch by telephone, and she began calling utility companies to get the first in a series of best guesses as to when various services would be restored. The aftermath of the fire occupied most of my attention. I tried to start work on this account of it, but I was only able to complete the first version of the opening several paragraphs. Pondering my curious lack of concentration, I realized that it was because the story hadn't completely unfolded. It would take going back – moving Carol back in – for closure. I mentioned this to Carol as we made plans to go up to Broadway Terrace first thing Saturday morning – a game plan set into motion by PG&E telling her that repair trucks would start coming around at 8:00 a.m. to restore gas service and that electric service was already back.

After a week of extensive TV coverage of the fire and post-fire, it was still a shock to drive through and see first-hand the burned-out areas which resembled a post-Atomigeddon stf film. When we let ourselves in, we were dismayed that the electricity wasn't working, but it occurred to Carol that perhaps the circuit breakers were off, and indeed they were. The telephone was out, as was the gas, but the cable TV was working!

After checking out the house to confirm that it was indeed still there and undamaged (no more smoke smell inside than outside), we set to clearing spoiled food from the refrigerator and freezer. I

swept debris off the roof, steps, and elsewhere. As I did, various emergency and utility vehicles drove up and down Broadway Terrace, but none of the many PG&E trucks were the one we were awaiting.

Hours passed. Carol came up periodically. We walked around. We met neighbors she hadn't previously known. I shot a roll of film of the devastation. We observed that, due to where the fire burned and didn't burn, the positions of adjoining surviving houses, and how Carol's house is positioned, that one cannot see *any* signs of the fire from her deck nor from her front windows. It all looks as though nothing had changed. Kinda eerie!

Finally at about 4:30, as I puttered around upstairs, the gas guy came and got the gas going again. We left immediately. Without a telephone and with the house chilly from the furnace being off, we decided to spend another night at the motel. Reaching the bottom of the hill, we found the roads below packed with sightseers. We had planned to go all the way down Broadway Terrace to see the lower parts of the fire ourselves, but there was a steady stream of cars coming off the freeway exit and going the same way. Instead, we got on the freeway towards Berkeley and had dinner.

The next day was almost normal. We moved Carol's stuff out of the motel and back up to her house, doing it early so we could get in and out before the emergency and repair crews started work. Afterwards, we went out to breakfast and then off to San Francisco to see Cynthia Goldstone and her latest show in the heart of North Beach. It was good to do this instead of staying in the fire zone, as it represented a return to normality. Cynthia was in good spirits and her show was stunning. She's been working increasingly in collage the past couple of years and has gotten *very* good at it. The public apparently agreed because she'd sold quite a few items. Afterwards, we made our way back to the East Bay and visited with Pat.

Our final stop of the day was to stock up on groceries, mostly to put in the nearly empty refrigerator. On the way back up, we passed through sign-carrying Asian Jesus freaks lining both sides of the road by the little grocery store at the foot of Upper Broadway Terrace. For these people, the fire had taken on religious significance.

As the evening passed, we finally came to the part neither of us wanted. I needed to go home, leaving Carol alone and phoneless in her house. It was hard, but I did it. Weird not to be able to call her when I got home, as I usually do.

She stayed home from work the next day, so I didn't hear from her then either. I got pretty antsy about it. Watched *Northern Exposure* knowing that she was doing the same. Early Tuesday morning she called me at work with the news that the phone still wasn't back. It finally did come back on Thursday

afternoon, but we stayed in touch by phone while at work. When I came down the next Friday night, it felt like we were finally having a "good usual" weekend together.

It still feels like a drive through a bomb blast going up to Carol's place, but I'm so grateful that she was spared that it almost doesn't matter.

CAROL CARR:

Sunday morning, October 20th. Woke up a little after 9:00 by the hot, dry wind, very eerie for so late in the year, and there's no way not to think Fire, especially since the hills were ripe for one. Robert and I drove down to Berkeley for breakfast, meeting a fire engine coming up; it couldn't have had anything to do with the fire, which didn't start till an hour or so later, but again I was reminded of how dangerous this weather was. We ate, and on leaving the restaurant saw the huge black cloud; all we knew at that point was that there was a bad fire somewhere. But at the Ashby Flea Market, where we were going to kill some time before a movie, we could see the flames in the hills. The streets seemed hushed as everyone stared in the same direction. It was clear that the major part of the fire was in Barbara Silverberg's area. I tried to call her, but already, that early on, there was a busy signal, not a good sign since it was obvious she couldn't have been on the phone, and a busy signal probably meant the house was gone. I hadn't remembered that she and Hal were out of town — in Sonoma — and I was very worried. (We learned later that her house was very close to where the fire started, and it must have succumbed almost immediately.)

At that point it didn't look as if Broadway Terrace was threatened, yet. Robert convinced me it would be safe to go back up, get my cat, hose down the roof, take some stuff out. It was a slow, traffic-jammed, nerve-wracking drive back. When we tried to get Claudius into his carrier, he freaked out; we just couldn't catch him. Time was moving on, and I thought we should get out. Robert carried up a huge carton full of Terry's fanzines and hosed down the roof. He was going to follow me down the hill in his car and meet me at Bob and Karen's on the other side of Montclair.

While Robert was doing brave and useful stuff back on Broadway Terrace, I joined a line of cars on the only street that was open to the outside world, Mountain Boulevard (where Marta Randall lived until she went to Petaluma). It was bumper-to-bumper, and moved, when it moved at all, two miles an hour, stopping to let in the cars coming from the side streets. It was very hot. The sky behind us was dark with smoke and the smell of smoke was getting a little stronger. What we couldn't see was how close or far away behind us the fire was. I had visions of it swooping down on the whole caravan, whoosh, gone.

(Something similar had in fact happened to a line of cars earlier that were trying to escape Barbara and Hal's neighborhood.) And I worried about Robert. Was he safe? Was he still back at the house? If so, I was stupid not to have given him my key so he could try again to get Claudius. A few people left the line to find alternative routes out, but I knew that Adventurous Driving Under Incredible Stress was not my game. Other people were leaving their cars while we were stalled, just to get some air and see a little further up or down, and I did the same. I was a couple of car lengths down the road when the caravan started moving again. Not wanting to hold things up, I went uphill faster than I should have and re-injured the leg tendon I'd torn in Arizona earlier in the month.

Finally, traffic got to the place where it could break up and move, and I drove to Bob and Karen's; they were already packed and ready for evacuation. It felt good to be with them. Karen gave me an Ace bandage. Bob was hosing the house. One or more of us stayed simultaneously glued to the radio (for current news of the fire) and the TV (for film). Barbara called from Sonoma, having heard the news; it was hard having to confirm her fears. More listening to the media. More worrying about Robert driving all over the burning (or not burning) hills, unable to bear the Mountain Boulevard slow, torturous creep. But then he finally arrived; he'd stayed to hose down more of the house and its immediate surroundings. Then he'd driven up the hill to get a better idea of, literally, how the wind was blowing and what the odds were that my house would survive. (He was right in guessing the fire might not eat up my house and cat on the way down Broadway Terrace, and I stayed with that hope all the way through; what we didn't know is that the fire would curl around and come up my side later in the day.) Soon a helicopter loudspeaker was telling us to evacuate. Bob and Karen went to Jim and Hilary's; we drove to Pat Ellington's.

Where we were hugged; it was comforting to be with her and out of the path (we hoped) of the fire. The media were blazing at her house, too, and we pasted ourselves in front of it, waiting to hear, among other things, if and when the winds would die down. Up to this point the fire had been totally out of control but as time went on and more equipment was called in, it slowed somewhat. At one point the Claremont Hotel was in danger; the fire was heading in that direction and getting very close to the line of trees directly in back of it. A decision was made (who was making this kind of decision was never clear) to throw everything into saving it, and saved it was. I made a lot of calls to people who might be worried, and I kept calling my house just to hear it ring, a sign that it might still be standing. But late in the afternoon Robert told me he'd just called and got

a busy signal. Hearts really do sink. Still later, Grania called. She said she'd called the house, got a busy signal, then called again, this time using MCI, and it rang real rings. Up and down.

Robert had to go back to Sonoma, reluctantly. He felt bad that he hadn't done enough to save the house, the cat, my stuff. That thought was the only bad judgment he'd shown all day. Pat lent me something to sleep in and we curled up around the TV on our respective sofas. She disappeared for a few minutes and reappeared with the pastries we'd bought earlier, and a pot of tea. I felt some peace for the first time that day and fell asleep shortly afterwards.

Around 7:00 a.m. Monday morning, still at Pat's, I got two phone calls telling me of TV footage showing a destroyed house at 11064 Broadway Terrace (across and slightly uphill from me) and that reporters had mentioned surviving houses on the other side; one of them looked like it might have been mine or the one next door. More hope.

Pat and I went out for breakfast, stopped at a drugstore so I could pick up a few things, stopped at her shop, where I made a couple more calls to let friends know I was ok, stopped at one of the emergency shelters to leave my name as alive and well, and found a motel within limping distance of work. Gave Pat her life back for a while, hung up my clothes (not a bad selection, considering I was out of my mind at the time I grabbed it), turned on the radio and TV – the fire was "contained" at this point – turned off the radio and TV, and sat down to make more phone calls. Still no way to know whether my house and cat had survived, but I was still holding to the assumption that they were. Late in the afternoon Karen called me. She and Bob had moved back home just that day but instead of settling down and taking a deep breath, she and Marie Ellington hiked up to Broadway Terrace, snuck around the police lines, and discovered that my house still stood, undamaged. They got in with the key I'd given Karen only a couple of months ago, and retrieved Claudius. Marie would keep him until things got straightened out. Hearts do faint with gratitude and relief.

(Later learned that on my side of the road of Upper Broadway Terrace the fire came uphill. It was stopped two houses downhill from me. On the other side of the narrow road, it's all gone. That my house survived was a miracle due to fire direction, wind direction, and the decision of the fire fighters that the house two doors down from me had a chance of being saved.)

Tuesday, still at the motel till the power got turned on at home, I went to work. So to speak. Talked and made phone calls. All the while, I'd been walking on the leg I'd been advised not to walk on. Wednesday night, after dinner with Barbara and Hal, I noticed that both sides of the ankle were black and blue and swollen (and hurt!). I called Steve Davis at

Kaiser Emergency in Richmond, who said come on down, and Pat drove me. She'd brought over Dick's cane. I didn't like actually using it but I loved having it with me because it was Dick's. Steve looked, he touched, he said yes indeed, the tendon is torn and bleeding internally; here are some crutches, here is some hospital-duty aspirin, try to stay off it. This time I did try, more or less, for the next two days. Friends from work called me at the motel and asked if they could drop by with breakfast, lunch, whatever. Yes, yes. Bob and Karen came over with Chinese food for dinner. It was a very different kind of life. Or, God forbid, lifestyle.

Robert came down Friday night, bringing more Chinese food (this is the second time I've craved hot, spicy food during crisis; it seems the only kind I can swallow). That day I'd been told that electricity had been restored, which meant I could move back in. We drove up very early Saturday morning. It was the first time I'd seen the burned-out rubble of the neighborhood that used to make me smile when I drove through it. But at the end of the ruined trail, there was my house: still standing after all these years. We unlocked the door and quick turned on the lights but nothing happened. Damn, they'd told me wrong. I gathered up a few extra things to take to the motel with me, locked up, and we went upstairs to the car. "Wait," I said, totally out of character, "Could it be the circuit breaker was tripped?" The circuit breaker was right there, and as soon as we untripped it the lights went on all over the kitchen. Fantastic. We cleaned out the refrigerator/freezer (dizguzting) and threw out a ton of food. That is, I cleaned and Robert threw. I could barely stand on the leg; he did all the shlepping up the eighteen steps to the garbage can. We talked to neighbors waiting near the road, like us, for the PG&E trucks to come by and turn on the gas. I recognized a woman I'd seen on TV, in tears as she discovered her house was still standing. We met the man two houses down from me who had convinced the fire fighters that his house was "defensible." He had only half his electricity. Everyone had something on and something off and it was never the same thing. A major telephone cable had been destroyed; there was not even any guessing when telephone service would be back. The telephone company had set up a little kiosk of three pay phones at the intersection just below. By late afternoon, PG&E had turned on the gas. That was it. Tomorrow morning I'd be back in.

It seems that there were some dubious decisions made at the beginning of the fire, but how crucial those decisions were (e.g., whether air power would have made a difference in those winds, with that horrific combination of wildfire and residential fire, each calling for techniques that don't work together) we may never know. The individuals, fire fighters, and volunteers, were heroic; police, PG&E, Pacific

Bell, Oakland clean-up squads and tree removers all swarmed over the area as soon as they were allowed to get through. In just a couple of days reflector stakes and white edge lines were installed on the sheer drop sides of the road. Police cars cruised the hill and at the checkpoints kept tourists away (and sometimes residents, but that's another story).

I was so lucky, all the way through. Lucky that the fire fighters had held the line where they did. Lucky that it happened on a Sunday, when Robert was with me and my gimpy leg and could do so much and think so clearly and understand what direction the wind was coming from while I could only point and gasp "Oh My God!" Lucky that I had given my key to Karen only months ago and that she and Marie hiked in to get Claudius when I couldn't even walk. Lucky that the fire didn't jump the road. And lucky that it didn't take out the trees and grass and brush that grow on the little patch of hillside directly in front of me: all along the road there's plastic sheeting to hold back mud slides, except in front of my house. Out my kitchen window the view is entirely pre-fire, and out my deck, overlooking the canyon, it's also the same as always except in the far distance, where there are more lights at night than there used to be. The rest of the hill is almost Hiroshima at ground zero: almost, because there are still-standing shards of buildings, blackened branches, charred sardine cans of automobiles spray-painted with the number of their address and a few identifying letters of their insurance company, sometimes sitting in front of a jagged piece of a wall that used to be a garage. I drive up the hill now, and stop at three police checkpoints and show my driver's license to prove I actually live up here, and I'm allowed entrance into this exclusive neighborhood of rubble. The other evening, Robert and I were driving up the hill and came to Checkpoint Charlie. I flashed my ID, and the sentry said, "Be careful; there's a fire engine up there—a small fire." My mind sort of went on dead pause, and then, what I really felt was: "Oh shut up and leave me alone." And we drove on home.

KAREN HABER SILVERBERG:

The first thing I noticed that morning was the wind: a strange, angry presence rattling tree branches, whipping plant stalks, casting pine needles and seed hulls against windows. Hot air in motion, noisy and unnerving. The weather report promised that the day was going to be a record breaker in terms of heat.

I had been sealing the basement wall against leakage in what we laughingly referred to as the coming rainy season: slow, tedious work, and I was soaked with sweat before 10 a.m. Finally, tiring of mopping my face, I took a break and went upstairs. Peered out the window, and forgot basement, brushes, Sunday chores.

A cloud of brown smoke loomed, roiling like a strange fog. Jesus, I thought. Fire, nearly. I began to search for Bob who was, unbeknownst to me, sequestered in his office. The phone rang: Nancy, a friend's wife, calling with the first alarm. But it was a grass fire in Berkeley, we thought. Nothing much to worry about.

The phone rang again. It was our friend, Dave, calling from his portable car phone. He had been stopped in traffic near the site of the fire's origin (Tunnel Road), had seen the flames leap the highway, and then jump over a lake nearby. He had grown up in Berkeley and knew the risks of fire in the fifth year of drought. "Prepare to get out," he said. "Pack what you need. The fire is heading your way."

11 a.m.: Bob called Barbara. The line was busy. We knew that her house was close to the fire's origins. Not good. Bob called Barbara's brother, Steve, and left a message. We turned on the television. Coverage was spotty: the radio did a better, but not perfect, job.

11:30: Television coverage picked up and the scenes of flames were horrifying. We put the cats, Plurabelle and Lilit, into separate cat carriers. Bob began to hose the shake roof of his office as I began a mad dash through our files for passports, birth certificates, insurance information, bank books and records. Those went into one sack. I grabbed a suitcase and filled it with god-knows-what: underwear, socks, prescription drugs, toothpaste. Auto-pilot had set in as panic began to ascend.

11:45: Carol called—she and Robert were stuck in traffic on Ashby Avenue, could see the flames, but were going to attempt to get home and grab some things. Perhaps they would come to us, perhaps not. Bob tries to call Barbara again. Line still busy. We are certain her house is gone.

Noon: I am hosing the back of the house. Bob is in front hosing the roof from a ladder. Behind us the smoke climbs higher and higher in the sky, giving a false overcast. It is hot, so hot outside that I wonder if I'm feeling the air temperature or the coming flames. Later we learn that the smoke cloud almost blots out the sun: from San Francisco a false twilight sets in, lit by an eerie amber ball. I have never been so frightened. My stomach, my lungs, are clenched in a solid knot.

12:30: The news on TV gets worse and worse. The fire is obviously out of control, heading in several directions. Will it consume the Claremont Hotel and sweep through Berkeley down to the Bay? Will it rage over the hill and attack Contra Costa County: Orinda, Lafayette? Will it reach us? Will it? Bob has gone into shock: the specter of losing another house to fire is causing him to shut down most systems although he does continue to hose the roof. I continue packing: my book, my disks, Bob's latest story, his disks. Cat food and dishes. Water. Feeling

foolish and frivolous, I grab my earring box and throw it in the car trunk along with the other sacks. Already in my mind I can see the flames, see the gutted hulk of the house. I turn the car around in the driveway so it is heading out — ready to go.

1:00: Carol arrives. She had managed to get home and pack some clothing and other things. Robert would be arriving momentarily — he had stayed behind to hose down her roof. We hold hands and watch the television. The phone keeps ringing: Jim and Hilary Benford with the offer of shelter; Bob's mother, in Brooklyn, who has heard about the fire; Rebecca Kurland; Barbara, on her way back from Sonoma, trying to brace herself for the almost certain horror awaiting her.

1:30: Robert arrives, thank God. He tells Carol he doesn't think the fire is going to reach her house. But how can he tell? We try to call Charlie Brown: get his answer machine. Harlan calls. A fan in the Berkeley flats calls. I can hear police cars and helicopters circling nearby, announcing evacuation orders. We watch TV, listen to the radio, waiting to hear if we must run for our lives. I put wet washcloths in a plastic sack by the door in case we must run through the smoke.

2:00: The television news coverage is maddening: San Francisco reporters hurriedly summoned to the scene who are so unfamiliar with the territory that they might as well be reporting from Kuwait. We are fed terrible visions without accurate information. Where is the fire? Where is it going? Scenes of stricken families, men and women in tears. Stalled fire engines. And the flames, always the flames, surrounding houses, dancing along the hilltops. Horrifying images of cars trapped on sub-standard hillside roads, flames all around, people running for their lives.

2:15: Radio news is not much better: idiots speculating on looting when they should be announcing evacuations. Then the helicopters are overhead: "Evacuate immediately! Leave this area! Drive south and east!" Robert and Carol help me load the cats into the car and decide to go to Pat Ellington's — but how to get there from our house? Think — try to think. I can't send them on the freeway; finally I give them garbled instructions that will take them into the safety of downtown Oakland. From there, Robert can navigate. As they leave I have a fleeting, terrible thought: when will we see you again? I go back to the house. Where is Bob? Now I know what *paucis* is really like. It takes me five minutes of high quality yelling to realize he is on one side of the house and I am on the other. I see that he is thinking about staying. But no. We go, dazedly locking the door. Everyone in the neighborhood is getting into their cars, pulling out and away. Diaspora. The scent of smoke is growing stronger. We leave the Mazda behind, get into the Honda. I drive slowly, almost

relieved to be taking some action. From the back seat, the cats complain, convinced that this is being staged solely for their personal discomfort. The jugs of water I have thrown in back keep sloshing and falling over. We creep down the hill, down Park Boulevard, to Highway 580, turn south, and head towards Lafayette. Behind us, the smoke cloud diminishes. I have a sense of truly escaping — if the fire reaches our home, I want to go on driving, driving, to Los Angeles, San Diego, Mexico.

3:30: We fall into Hilary and Jim's arms — their house is a blessed, calm oasis from which to view the inferno. Bob is constantly in motion, checking our message machine by remote control, calling neighbors, friends and relatives, watching the news, plunging into the Benford pool for momentary distraction and then back to the television, to another glass of rum, another phone call. So it goes for hours. Bob is hoping to return to the house that night. But we finally convince him that it's impossible.

8:00: We go out for dinner — a hallucinatory interlude at a noisy pizza joint where children race around the room and their parents watch television — not the fire, mind you, but a baseball game — the World Series? (Bob swears it was a football game, which gives you an idea of our powers of concentration at the time.) Then it's back to the house, more scenes of the fire at night. The Claremont Hotel is still there, we see. The fire does not appear to have reached our neighborhood yet, but it is still out of control.

10:30: It appears that the fire line has been held at the far side of Piedmont, a mile and a half from our house. Bob takes a sleeping pill; it works for twenty minutes, then he's back at the television.

Monday morning, 3:30 a.m.: Bob takes a Valium and sleeps for three hours.

6:30 a.m.: Television — it seems our neighborhood has survived. Bob wants to leave immediately. We convince him to eat something. He calls our answering machine, discovers a message from Judy Blish, in Athens.

9:00: The evacuation order is rescinded for our area. We race home — an hour later we are opening the gate — our house and those of our neighbors appear to be untouched. Rubber-kneed, I unlock the front door. Home. Safe. We were spared. Never mind.

10:00: The phones ring and ring and ring. So many people to reassure, to sympathize, to do therapy with, to love. It is just the beginning of the healing process. I feel distracted, like a crow caught by every bright object she sees.

1:00: I call Marie Ellington, leave a message for her to call. Finally reach Carol at Pat Ellington's shop: she is about to check into a motel. She has a bad leg and is somewhat immobilized. The fate of

her house is unknown. Bob tells me that he saw a brief news clip shot on Broadway Terrace which leads him to think that Carol's house might have survived. I decide to try and sneak up her hill – the site of some of the worst devastation. But maybe I'll have half a Valium first.

1:30: Marie calls and I tell her I want to go up Broadway Terrace. She volunteers for the trek.

3:00: Marie and I set forth – there is a police barricade which deflects us and Marie parks nearby. Casually, we sidle past, hike across Thornhill, and then Marie takes us up a staircase which seems to cross several dimensions, landing us about a mile higher, on Merriewood. We hike steadily uphill, turning here, turning there. Everything looks untouched. Occasionally we see a group of neighbors standing in the road – everyone has that by-now familiar survivors' smile of dazed relief. We turn on Uranus, reach Broadway Terrace, and step into Hell. It takes a moment for the horror to sink in. We are approximately six houses above Carol's address. Across the street the entire side of the hill is just ... not ... there. Familiar houses gone, burned right down to foundation. The trees are blackened sticks jutting up from the grey ash – all color is gone. The perspective is odd – looking downhill for miles where formerly there was no view, only a solid wall of houses and gates. Not that you want to see what is left. It is completely disorienting. Unfamiliar. Awful.

The burned hulks of cars sit in driveways, color gone, wheels melted. Blackened wires hang down like vines from telephone poles. People move slowly along the road, a few here, a few there, hiding their faces, eyes huge, haunted. And oh, the odd macabre touch. A singed mailbox with bundled newspapers awaiting recycling. A realtor's For Sale sign in front of an ash-filled lot. A blackened birdcage here. An iron railing there. And punctuating the ruins, like gravestones, are the stacks of chimneys.

Marie and I walk slowly down the hill, counting houses. We are two away from where we think Carol's is when the police try to stop us. We beg for time, and run the rest of the way – and her house is there, right there, not singed, untouched! We can't believe it. Marie tests the roof. I go in and try to find Claudius. The power is out, but *the house is there!!* I try the phone, but of course it's dead. We decide to take Claudius, who has shed at least three pounds of fur during the holocaust, down the hill and so put him in a cat carrier: thirteen pounds of complaining cat which Marie handles as though he were a cotton puff. We hitch a ride with a fireman from Chico and roll down past the horror, trying to com-

prehend it. Two houses below Carol's all that we knew is gone. Seven houses below Carol, I note sadly that another friend's house was consumed – only the chimney stands amidst the smoking ruins. She has two little boys. Where is she now?

Our chauffeur lets us out at Mountain Boulevard and we trek back towards Montclair Village. The houses here are untouched – the illusion of normalcy almost convincing, but we pass a house where an alarm shrills endlessly: trouble, trouble, trouble. Twin black motorcycle cops come speeding by in formation showing a great deal of attitude. Next, a white motorcycle cop with a big mustache and even more attitude stops us – what the hell are we doing here? How did we get in? We're not supposed to be there. We explained that we are attempting not to be there if he'll just let us go. He is not nice. He also stops a guy who is walking just ahead of us, holding a jar of Gatorade – moments later the guy tells us he has been all around the fire zone – all the way up to Tunnel Road. His cheeriness is chilling. Is he a looter? No, his pockets, hands, are empty. Just a tourist. The first of many.

4:15: Home, with Claudius and the good news. Bob meets us at the door, joyful. We call Carol – she is tearful. We agree that a gathering of the clan at dinner will be therapeutic. The phones begin ringing again and Marie takes off. Life is continuing, sort of. Later will come the post-traumatic shock, the sleeping disorders, the after-fears. The exhaustion.

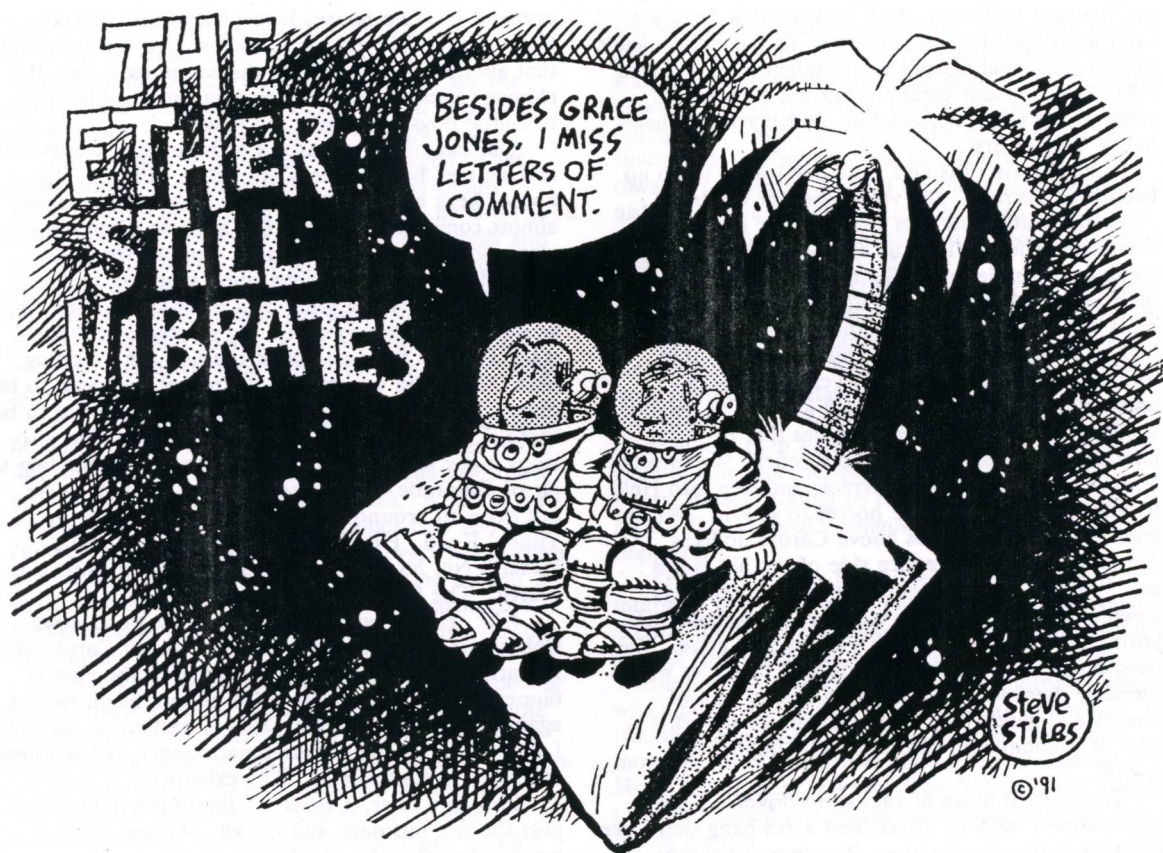
Two days later, it rains. A final black joke, but it puts the fire out once and for all. We are now bracing ourselves for the locusts and frogs.

ROBERT AGAIN:

The foregoing accounts were written in the weeks immediately after the fire. Things have changed somewhat since then. The burned-out cars are almost entirely gone and clearing of rubble and trees is underway. Driving on upper Broadway Terrace these days, one is more likely than not to be slowed or delayed by heavy equipment and/or large trucks. On the other hand, the police checkpoints are long-gone. With no houses to block it, the newly-revealed view to the north and west off the sheer edge as one ascends is spectacular (especially on a clear day or night), but it's tempered considerably by both the memory and the still painful sight of the destruction that caused it.

That too will pass. Driving home from work one evening just before Christmas, I heard on the radio that the first permit to rebuild in the fire area had been issued that day!

– Robert, Carol & Karen



WALTER WILLIS

Thanks for TRAP DOOR, which struggled into downtown Donaghadee on 14th March, weeks after a copy arrived in the remote hamlet of Portstewart on the Atlantic coast, where James White ekes out his precarious existence by waving a lantern from the cliffs on particularly stormy nights. This confirms my suspicion that a sizable proportion of U.S. mail, namely that addressed to me, is delivered by throwing it into the Atlantic, where the Gulf Stream propels it onto the rocky coast of Portstewart. How else to explain that he gets fanzines from America before me?

Your editorial was well written and wonderfully evocative, possibly more so than you realized when you wrote it. Terry Carr's piece was a joy, though tinged with melancholy that one cannot expect another installment. It was lovely to see Linda again, and the impeccable prose of Redd Boggs.

Bob Shaw's piece was one of unusual fascination to me because so much of what he says comes as a surprise. David Bridges' article was curiously interesting, an unusual example of dramatic irony. The

impact comes not from anything he says, but from imagining the effect of his attitude on his American friends.

I don't accept the implications of Terry's little story, but I appreciated the various allusions in Carol's column, particularly the comparison between English departments and Albania. It had never occurred to me how closely University English Departments, American or otherwise, resemble the Balkans, though I can think of one academic who would be improved by being hanged upside down from a lamp post.

I was also interested to note Carol's reference to the intelligence quotient of the average pickled onion, because my previous knowledge in this field was based on Teresa Nielsen Hayden's statement that someone she knew had not the intelligence that God gave a soda cracker. One is immediately faced with the problem of comparing the intelligence of a soda cracker with that of a pickled onion. Fortunately we have in fandom someone eminently qualified in this field. I refer to Bob Shaw, who some years ago published a scholarly treatise comparing the various

attributes of an average fan with those of an oyster, awarding points in each category and reaching statistically irreproachable conclusions.

The letter section was as lively as ever. I was pleased to see that James White's faanfction story was so well appreciated. (32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, N.I. BT21 0PD)

MIKE GLICKSOHN

Once again the Steve Stiles headings are a major contribution to the issue. Each in itself is a work of art and as a series they give a graphic unity that really improves the overall impact of the issue. Say, how many Hugos has he won by now, anyway? (That's Rotslerian sarcasm, son.)

Your editorial, with its painful summation of our recent losses, hit me very personally. Between receiving it and finally finding the energy/interest to write this belated LoC, I lost my father to a heart attack while he was wintering in the desert near San Diego. Despite the fact that we'd only seen each other a half dozen times over the last twenty years, I loved him a great deal and even knowing his health was failing did not prepare me for the impact of his passing. I can only hope you are spared this situation for a good few years to come.

I only started keeping records of incoming fanzines about a year ago (or, more accurately, restarted but didn't let peter out this time) so my totals aren't for an actual calendar year; but in the first year of maintaining the list, I received 137 fanzines. Oddly enough, while I received twenty more U.S. zines than you did, you got six more from the U.K. than reached me. Must be the TAFF influence. One wonders how many Harry got during a similar period and hope that he'll provide that information for those of us who actually do care about such things.

As delightful as your ideas for the spending of convention profits on fanzine-oriented projects obviously are, I'm somewhat doubtful as to their chances of becoming reality. The conventions that would care about such excellent suggestions don't make the profits needed to implement them, and the conventions with the large surpluses would probably argue that such schemes would only benefit/be of interest to a tiny segment of fandom and would hence be unwilling to free up the needed funds. Still, if enough seeds are planted, who can tell what might eventually grow out of them? {Well, so far SciFi Inc. has tried to fund a Fancyclopedia III and is funding a hardcover edition of *Wealth of Fable*, so the seeds are planted in one fannish garden and germinating mildly. Bruce, are you reading this?}

I heartily applaud your use of reprints from small circulation sources (pretty well all of which I see for the first time here). Sad as it is to know that Terry will never add to his legacy of excellent fanwriting,

there is a very real joy to encountering previously unread Carr articles, remembering his smooth, effortless prose, and savoring the delightful wordplay of "WereWolfe." He had me burst out laughing with the punch line of the second piece and, sadly, that doesn't happen often in today's fandom.

Linda's article was rather poignant for me. All my grandparents died while I was still a teenager, my mother died when I was 22, and as I mentioned I rarely saw my dad after that. So I have very little sense of personal ancestry. (Possibly that's why I devote as much time to fandom as I do.) And while I've always regretted not knowing very much about my ancestors, I'm also not sure I'd put too much faith in inherited family traits as Linda seems to. I sleep with a pillow to curl up with, too, which can't be anything but mere coincidence. (Oddly enough, that early Boston Worldcon was the first and last time I ever met Linda, where she managed to stun me with a casual comment more than anyone else has in a quarter century of convention attending. I'm glad she's back, albeit a little sad that she seems to feel fandom itself has in some way thrown her out. Perhaps this appearance in TRAP DOOR will be the start of a new and happier association with fandom for her.)

When I stumble across ads for *Time-Life* books about psychic phenomena, I generally snort with derision at the actors pretending to be just plain folks who've had or believe others have had mysterious experiences for which I'll certainly want to pay \$19.95 (plus s&h of course) every other month to read about. But if Bob Shaw says he's had such moments of inexplicable precognition, I'm going to have to be very careful about what I say. If this were an Eastercon "scientific talk" I could hoot and grin as I usually do, but Bob appears to be quite serious about it and I'm certainly not going to suggest that he's anything less than sincere. I guess all I can say is I've never had any personal experiences of a similar sort and I'm extremely skeptical as to the other-than-natural nature (be it coincidence or some other explanation) of anyone else's apparently paranormal occasions.

I really enjoyed Dave's article about the baseball game, not only because I'm a fanatical baseball fan (in a city where every game is a sell-out, by the way) but also for the off-the-wall nature of Dave's awareness of American popular sports culture. Apparently even after four years he's still very much a stranger in a strange land and it made for very amusing (and often very insightful) commentary on his part. I won't bore you with all the baseball trivia the article brought to mind (only Harry, Andy Hooper and I care about most of it) but I would point out that the bats I've seen from "bat day" were always tiny little replicas maybe a foot or so long which would probably break if used to strike a human head, so

perhaps the baseball stadiums aren't running quite the risk Dave imagined.

As much as I chuckled and enjoyed Dave's observations, though, a part of me was mentally grinding my teeth at the cosmic unfairness of it all. Here's a guy who'll probably attend one baseball game during his whole lifetime and he gets to see Ryan's 5,000th strike-out, one of the epic moments in baseball history. (Thank heavens he approached the whole thing with such a marvelously fannish attitude and got a delightful fanzine article out of it.) I've been going to as many games as I can afford for almost fifteen years and I've seen nothing close to that significant.

Those are mind-boggling statistics from rich brown about fanzines published 32 years ago. He received, as a neo, almost twice as many as I got last year and I'm generally considered a fairly active fanzine fan. But the point he goes on to make is certainly a valid one: If I wrote LoCs solely as a source of egoboo, I doubt I'd continue at even the reduced pace I still manage, so the emergence of new (young) letterhacks is an unlikely phenomenon indeed. Sadly it all ties in with the difficulty of creating new fanzine fans at all and undoubtedly helps to explain the difference between those 1958 and 1990 numbers.

As a mild arachnophobe I never thought I'd hear a worse tale than Barry Kent MacKay's horrendous description of sleeping in grass huts in the Galapagos Islands and allowing four-inch hairy spiders to walk over him because they were eating the little red mites with much more dangerous bites. But Richard Brandt comes pretty close with his story of Black Widow Land. (508 Windermere Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6S 3L6, Canada)

RICH BROWN

I'm astounded. Your comments about your relationship with your parents really strike a responsive chord with me. Of course, I knew before that we shared somewhat similar experiences in that regard but I guess I didn't realize how numerous were the similarities and how relatively few and minor the differences.

I also can't seem to talk to my parents (particularly my dad; my mother has mellowed somewhat) for any extended period without getting into a heated argument — although with my parents, in addition to music (they only liked c&w; the classics were "long hair," jazz was "nigger music" and rock was "noise"), politics and race, the area of disagreement included religion.

Back when I was under their thumb, they positively despised my choices of reading matter (comics and sf); and even years later, they strongly disapproved of me living with a non-WASP. If they had actually been rude to Colleen, I probably would've never spoken to them again, but they actually demurred

when our daughter (their grand-daughter) was born.

I do phone my parents every few months now (even though it still Takes Effort to avoid getting into discussing Real Stuff), to bring them up to speed on what's happening with me and/or Alicia; on the other hand, I've only visited them three times in the interim, even though they moved back to Texas a couple of years ago.

In a fashion somewhat similar to yours, I left home when my father and I came to blows over my mother's destruction of a Cultzine — in which I admitted to being an atheist. I didn't leave Southern California but that was because I was only a month short of finishing high school; I stayed with a non-fan friend and gambled (correctly) that school was probably the last place they'd think to look for me. I turned 17 the week after I graduated, called home and got them to agree to sign the necessary papers to let me enlist in the armed forces. After four years, two months and fifteen days in the Air Force, I returned to civilian life, settling over here on the right coast, or about as far away from them as I could get.

For the longest time I felt like a Changeling — so totally different from them that I couldn't admit, even to myself, that while I might not *like* some of their opinions and attitudes very much, at the same time I *loved them*. It's not the easiest thing in the world to do even now. I guess it's just that, by putting and keeping some distance between us, I finally managed to see that they had what I felt were some good qualities too — and that, where those qualities might be shared, it was likely to be because (and not in spite) of them.

I did manage to win one argument with my father. Like your parents, my father scorned sf; it was full of "pipedreams," he said — without, I'm sure, realizing the underlying connotation. With a laugh of absolute certainty, he told me we'd never put a man on the moon — and certainly not during my lifetime. I knew there was no way I would ever convince him otherwise, but I bet him a nickel that we would. We shook on it. Sometime in the early '70s, when I called to speak to my mother, I got him on the line instead; I asked him if he recalled the bet. He did, but only because I'd reminded him. A short while later I received a nickel, taped to a 3x5 card, in an envelope from Pasadena.

I'm afraid Redd Boggs' evocation of Las Vegas may not have had the desired effect on me. I'm no gambler, certainly, unless you count \$2/week on the lottery (and the occasional — about once every two or three years — game of poker), but in reading Redd I found myself remembering the last time I was in Vegas.

It was the Great Fanoclast Trek of 1965 (or maybe 1964?); we'd just attended Midwestcon and were on our way to the Westercon in Ted White's

Greenbriar—Ted, Dave Van Arnam?, Mike McInerney, Lee Hoffman, Arnie Katz, Andy Porter?, and myself. (I'm a little vague on the personnel—in part because the trip was repeated the following year, with some of the same and some different Fanoclasts, though I didn't go on that one). The Fanoclasts were bidding to host the 1967 Worldcon, and we thought it would be a good idea to promote our bid by attending those "major" regionals *en masse*.

After a long, hot, sticky day traveling through the long, hot, sticky American southwest, we pulled in to Vegas during the dead of night—which, as Redd says here, means "the lights were twinkling like a Thrifty drugstore in Los Angeles." We booked a room in a motel, went for an evening swim in their pool to cool off, and then—most of us, anyway—walked down to a casino to enjoy a little mindless entertainment. We were just going to waste some time by blowing a limited amount of money on the slots, until the desert cooled off a bit, and then get over the worst part of it by night.

It didn't take long for most of us to lose our respective "limits." The exception to this was Mike McInerney. Mike lived up to his name and had "the luck of the Irish": His second or third slot machine rewarded him with a small jackpot—around \$50. He put some of it back before he hit another, for about \$25. Same machine. Then he walked down the aisle, playing machines at random; several of them paid off 5- or 10-to-1 to him. When the rest of us were ready to leave, we had to "rescue" Mike from the roulette table, where he'd managed to win another \$50 or so.

We all got back into the Greenbriar and drove & drove & drove. Well, some of us slept & slept & slept. But we stopped for a late dinner at a little roadside place in Nevada just a few miles shy of the California border. Mike ordered the biggest and best steak they had along with a glass of wine; his bill came to around \$12. After he finished eating, he picked up his check and walked to the cash register where, upon noticing a couple of slot machines on the wall, he put in a quarter and hit for another \$15, which was enough for his meal and a more-than-generous tip. (508 N. Highland #B4, Arlington, VA 22201)

GREGG CALKINS

We have a very similar parental situation, with my Mom at 76 this spring and Dad at 81 this summer. On the rare occasions that the phone rings at an unexpected hour, I stop and wonder if it is "the" call even though so far they seem remarkably healthy and act as if they are planning to live forever... which will suit me, thank you. I don't do deaths very well, and having lost a son and a younger sister I am not at all ready for the next one even as I understand that it is inevitable... unless, of course, I go first, and that

lacks a certain ring to it, somehow.

Our relationships were not as adversarial as yours, though some things touch. My mother, in particular, seemed to struggle with my interest in sf magazines even though she bought me my first Burroughs book and "allowed" me to buy my first sf pulps, which got me started in fandom. She coined the name of my fanzine, OOPSLA!, when she came into my bedroom one cold winter day and found me working on the first issue's layout when she thought I should be outside either playing or shoveling snow, and in her disgust she said, "Oh, for heaven's sake, are you still reading that... that..." (not being able to use profanity, she made up a suitably disgusting exclamation) "OOPSLA!?" Which is why I always insisted the title included an exclamation point.

They also allowed me to go to Chicon II even though I was only 17 at the time. I rode on the Greyhound bus from SLC with Forry and Wendayne Ackerman, who were en route from L.A. by fortunate circumstance, and with fellow SLC fan Jim Webbert, so I supposed they must have been more liberal than I remembered. I liked your comment, though, about recent conversations not being filled with Real Stuff, which seems to be true for me, too, although perhaps it is just because I am such a loner where making personal decisions comes into play. My Dad is a great guy, however, even though I would never characterize our relationship as "close," but in recent years we have found a great mutual ground in computers and as a result we are in better communication now than we have ever been in our lives. Not much about Real Stuff, though, I must admit.

Thank you for your remembrance in including OOPSLA (even though you forgot the !) in your short list of suggested reprints, but I couldn't help but wonder what value you would have placed on OOPS when you valued "-" and Q at \$150-\$200 for a complete run. {About the same.} Of course, there cannot yet be a complete run of OOPS because I have only temporarily suspended publication and expect the next issue Real Soon Now. Why, if I weren't wasting time on this LoC I could be working on it this very minute... (P. O. Box 508, Jackson, CA 95642)

ANDREW HOOPER

I was cruising along happily, reading TRAP DOOR #10, when this sentence sent a chill to my marrow: "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 the various people whose zines I have never yet located passed before my eyes in an accusing queue, leaving me gasping with urgency to get to the keyboard before all those fan-nish tiny Tims slipped beyond the reach of temporal delivery services. I have certainly noted the increased

rapidity with which fan stalwarts have been passing away in the past year; but your simple statement crystallized some of the vague, sad regret I've been feeling into this LoC, and hopefully a few more before I subside once more into pseudofafial sloth.

The dead walk the echoing corridors of your zine, Robert, more than any other I can think of, even Mark Manning's TAND. The two wonderful pieces by Terry Carr are a visitation of the most welcome sort, and I thank you for letting a larger audience find them. I was not, of course, acquainted with Terry in any deep sense, but "The Last Fan on Earth" seemed to really capture the man I met when he was our guest at Wiscon. A pronounced sense of wicked fun. It hurts to recall having had a crush on a girl who dressed as Princess Leia, fibrous hairpieces included, when we were fourteen.

The loss of ATom is a more recent wound, but in what some people might consider a perverse way, it actually gave me a little hope as well. Thinking about him, and then reading Vince Clarke's letter complaining about the crowding at the Wellington (sounds like time for a schism to me) took me back to the only time I met Arthur, which was at Conspiracy. Spike and Jeanne Gomoll, who were absolutely invaluable to my introduction to Britfandom, introduced me to Arthur and Vince and Chuch Harris all in one go. They were polite and friendly, and perked up a little when Jeanne mentioned that I was an aspiring faned of some potential, but really, what does one say to yet another chubby young American in a weekend overrun by them? I ambled off to listen to some savagery that Greg Pickersgill was offering in the fan program, making a note to try and figure out later just which among my terribly small stack of quarto Britzines these gentlemen had figured in. A few minutes later, I walked back into the main fan room and saw the three of them chattering (and gesturing) away about how this differed from Seacon and Loncon and, for all I know, the first Leeds convention. I had a mild epiphany, looking at them, and realized that these three men were very little removed from me and my own mates, friends like Pete Winz, Mike DuCharme and Bill Bodden. We had the same tendency to go to conventions in distant climes and find ourselves sticking close to the pals we had in our own home-corner of fandom. I had a vision of me and my own contemporaries in our later years, still arguing about the strength of George R. R. Martin's characterizations or the relative merits of voting for LAcon XVII.

It made me smile to think that yes, fan friendships have the ability to persist as long as there is breath. I find that very comforting. And in ATom's case, he will have loving friends and admirers for years to come, long after we have been denied contact with the man himself.

I had a sympathetic tremor when you mentioned

having been in fandom two-thirds of your life; I passed the 50% line this past August and it took me a while to decide how that made me feel (I decided "old" pretty well sums it up). I know that my parents looked—and still do—on fandom as some sort of swindle that was being perpetrated on me by a pack of low-ball grifters who preyed on the impressionable minds of academics' children. It's hard to find too many people whose parents embraced fandom, unless they're second generation fen themselves. I hope that someday, if I can make my way as a pro, they will see how valuable fandom has been to my growth as a writer. But if it was easy to understand us, it would hardly be a proud and lonely thing to be a fan.

That rather neatly leads me towards my response to the rumors of the heat-death of fandom. Yours is, without question, one of the closest things we have to a focal point fanzine now, although it's hard, as you've pointed out, to ascribe that status to an annual. One has to give it that title, however, because of the intense level of communal theorization it seems to be engendering. Doesn't this in and of itself give us a clue as to the transformation which fannish fandom has undergone? I think most still feel quite strongly about the friendships and communication which fanzine fandom has afforded in the past, but the advancing tide of life's complexities prevents all but a tiny handful of fen from immersing themselves completely in the fanzine zeitgeist.

I regard the natural progression in the lives of fandom fans as being more responsible for the drop in numbers, far more than some change in the character of fandom, or the lingering stench of the TAFF massacre. Fanzine fans are pretty smart, talented people, on the whole, and it is to be expected that they will find some level of success in their lives, which may require them to spend more creative time on other pursuits.

Jeanne Gomoll, as an example, probably performed the same service to my development as a faan as Rick Sneary did yours, has been spending her time creating all manner of graphic wonders for the state Department of Natural Resources, including a marvelously unhinged animated commercial on the wonders of recycling. It doesn't take a great leap of cognition to see that the same sort of energy and whimsy that went into making WHIMS^EY goes into a project of that sort; perhaps the only significant difference is that Jeanne gets paid for it. *{And fandom doesn't get to see it.}* (Of course, Jeanne would solemnly draw me aside and tell me that, in fact, she *has* changed deeply, and that some of these changes have had the effect of drawing her away from fandom. That even without being involved in a serious, and meaningful, relationship with her Macintosh, she might not be devoting so much time to zines anymore.)

It seems to me that much of what we like about

faans has to do with their profusion of interests. The catalyst for fannishness is possessing an inquisitive, speculative nature, but what makes us entertaining is the ability to draw those speculations from a wide area of interests.

Linda Blanchard's "Genealogy" underlined this diffusion of interests very well. This, to me, seems to be the archetypical fan article of the late '80s and early '90s: It leads off with a small apology and lamentation for having lost that trufannish monomania. ("Why this fan is late.") Then it goes into some detail as to the compelling and fascinating events which have drawn the writer's interest into some non-fannish sphere of life. Then it draws a parallel between those interests and the great goodness of fandom, its honorable traditions, its enduring allure. And it terminates with a re-embracing of fandom and hope for our fannish future.

And don't think for a minute that I am saying Linda's piece was in any way insincere or formulaic! I lost the last of my grandparents in the fall of 1990 and participated recently in dispersing some of their belongings with my immediate family. I understand Linda's sudden fascination with her family's history, and say this to her: Linda, you're very lucky to have arrived at the desire to find out about these people when at least one of them is still alive. My sisters and I have only our grandmother's cousin and a few of their friends to ask about the amazing collection of old photos and other goods which have been dropped in our laps, and which our parents have no clue about. I wish I had taken the chance that you did!

In contrast to what Joe Nicholas was saying about the changing function of fanzines in our lives, I think the need for zines as a form of fan communication is greater than it ever has been. As we burst farther and further beyond the envelope of our lives as fans, it becomes harder and harder to find the time to make all the face-to-face meetings that Joseph asserts technology has made possible. And with the legions of what I can only characterize as fakefans choking the halls at every regional I attend, the importance of fanzines in identifying the segment of fandom with which I wish to associate cannot be overestimated.

I certainly envy Dave Bridges' luck in getting to see Nolan's 5,000th K; but I feel a little sorry for him having to see a pitcher's duel for his first game. An Englishman's first baseball game ought to be full of hits and home runs, wild pitches and balks, screaming rhubarbs and ejected managers, a fan interference call, the national anthem as sung by a high school choir, a twenty-minute rain delay in the middle of a sweltering day, good Polish sausages (*definitely* not Arlington hot dogs) with kraut and special stadium sauce, very very very cold beer (to kill the taste), some stolen bases, a running catch of a foul by a player who falls into the stands and comes up with the ball,

a home run robbed at the wall, a hit batsman who glowers ferociously on his way to first but doesn't charge the mound, a foul or homer that lands close enough for him to catch it without breaking his wrist, which proves upon inspection to have three scratches along the side, thus introducing the concept of doctoring the ball, a diving stop in the hole by a young Dominican shortstop and a perfect throw that nips the runner by a half-step. And then the umpire should blow the call. (315 N. Ingersoll, Madison, WI 53703)

ETHEL LINDSAY

Isn't it sad that you have to start this TRAP DOOR writing about three fans we lost in 1989. They were three of my oldest fan friends and I miss them terribly. Arthur I could always depend upon, Don even wrote me a letter after his stroke, and Rick faithfully sent a long letter each year in time for my birthday.

Odd you should mention your parent's house as always being showroom fresh for one of my clearest recollections is admiring their pink bathroom. I never had those adversarial relations with my folks but this was probably because I left home at 17 to enter the world of nursing. Leave home early and you can begin to appreciate your parents' good points. It is easier also to avoid confrontations. I can remember my mother saying that she had told friends I had gone to America (on TAFF) but that she did not tell them it was to attend an sf con. She had a shrewd suspicion that sf would not agree with her religious beliefs but we mutually agreed not to discuss this. Frankly I could see no reason to upset her about it.

Lately I have been thinking ... there goes fandom careering on with me well behind and then all of a sudden parts of my fandom come into view again. Just recently I received Terry Jeeves' ERG. He had retired, ceased publication, and then says in this issue that he had "withdrawal symptoms." Hot on the heels of that came a YANDRO that even had an article I had written about eight years ago. Lastly but by no means least, I received *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator*. Walt and James writing again - my goodness, what could be better? As I look over your letter column to all those familiar names, I begin to feel a small part of fandom again. Which is a nice feeling, so thank you. (69 Barry Road, Carnoustie, Angus DD7 7QQ, Scotland)

HARRY WARNER JR.

Your editorial and some remarks in the letter section make me grateful for the umpteenth time over the goodness of my parents and their kindness to me when I was growing up and discovering interests different than theirs, like fandom. They never interfered with my fanac, they were patient with visiting

fans, and they even pioneered in a custom which has increased steadily over the years, that of trying to persuade me to go to cons. I forget whether it was the first Nycon or first Chicon that caused a carful of fans to stop in Hagerstown on the way to the event and I was invited to go along to the con. My folks wanted me to go but I suspected the vehicle in which they were traveling would have trouble making it as far as the Maryland state line and thus discovered how much fun it is to stay home during cons. Of course, I didn't play rock music loudly in my room.

I liked the good mix of apa reprints and new material. However, it suddenly occurred to me while refreshing my memory of the apa items I'd read previously that non-apa publications really should reprint uninspired and banal items from apas once in a while. Maybe the custom of choosing only the best to reprint has lured some fans to join apas and immerse themselves in them under the delusion that they contain nothing but the masterpieces they've read in genzines.

I do believe that Bob Shaw's article is that rarity, an item by him written originally for fanzine purposes and not adapted from a con talk. It's superb and makes me envious because I can't remember the last time I dreamed something that eventually came true. Most of my dreams are dull or depressing or both, although I had an odd experience the other night. I awakened just before dawn from a dream in which I was among a group looking up into an empty sky where a high altitude balloon had vanished, and a grieving, well-dressed woman was saying sadly she didn't want any other lives to be lost by sending up rescue balloons because it would be impossible to find them in all that emptiness. A few minutes later, I fell asleep again and dreamed the very same thing, which startled me into waking, and I repeated the same fragment of dream during intermittent dozing at least a half-dozen times: I could sense it coming and couldn't stop it. That never happened before and I blame the increased dependence of the television industry on reruns.

All these bits of information about Elmer Perdue in the letter section are fascinating and new to me. He was such a fabulous person that fans don't seem to feel the need to invent imaginary tales about him, as they've done for Al Ashley, Jim Blish and other deceased fans. And the Chuch Harris and James White letters should be included in any fanthology for 1991 as examples of perfect letter section contributions. (423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740)

DAVE GORECKI

I first took notice of the name Rick Sneary in the old days of his letters to Sam Merwin in *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder*, unique spelling and all ... and I share some sense of loss. It's interesting

that the comments about Rick and Don Thompson both centered on their generosity with time and consideration for other fans, both in person and in print. It's a characteristic that I've found shared by many of the surviving old-time fans. Is this a mellowing characteristic of age, or do you think those fans who tend to have longevity are just a better breed?

Another interesting comment was in your reading beyond your age group, which I'm sure is a definite sign of the early fannish mind. I also sympathize with the parental problems: I remember going away on vacation once with my parents in the early '60s, and pulling out the copy of some fanzine and discovering to my horror that the cover depicted a pot party ... and then hurriedly rolling the fanzine up and sticking it in my back pocket knowing full well it would put an end to the fannish life for me ... (9129 W. 167th St., Orland Hills, IL 60477)

BOYD RAE BURN

That's quite a chunk of very personal writing you have in your editorial this time. I am puzzled by the attitude of some parents as exemplified by your parents' hostility to each of your interests as they came along. Why on earth should parents object to a son's reading car magazines, for example? (Except, say, in a family which is dirt poor and money spent on any magazine means less for necessities.) But at least your parents didn't forbid you to follow any of your interests. You were lucky in that respect.

Redd Boggs is always a joy to read. I do trust that he has been able to find shaving cream in tubes, and that it was just that particular supermarket which did not stock it, or had an unaware clerk. Maybe supermarkets don't stock it. I always buy shaving cream in pharmacies. I don't like canned foam, for it just seems to sit on the skin, rather than moisturizing the beard and skin. I prefer the "wet shave" system, as I have never found an electric razor that gives as close a shave, and electric shaving takes as long as blade shaving.

Bob Shaw was excellent as always. I can really understand his feeling re the unattainable typewriter (not that anything like that has happened to me) and sympathize with his being pushed into a profession he hated. I can understand parents' concern that a child should take up an occupation that should provide the grown child with a "decent living" and also understand that they couldn't understand why their offspring might prefer to starve in a garret while pursuing his/her heart's desire. But I am sure there are some who don't even give the son a choice of "regular occupations." ("I'm a farrier and so was your grandfather and his father too, so a farrier you're going to be, my son." — even though the kid loathes and fears horses.) I was fortunate in that my parents left it completely up to me as to what I wanted to do.

On reading Eric Mayer's letter, I felt like I imagine Isaac Asimov did when he first read Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision*. However, I will comment on one point he raised. He isn't paying those many thousands of dollars interest on his mortgage just to the bank. The bank is passing on some of that interest to the people whose savings the bank lent to Mayer to buy his property. For example, I have the majority of my savings for retirement in (the equivalent of American) IRAs, in (e of A) banks. The major portions are in (e of A) Certificates of Deposit. The banks lend these sums to people on mortgages to enable them to buy homes and the people, in turn, through the banks, pay me for the use of the "fruits of my labor" (and believe me, it was labor). But not all the IRA funds are in CDs. I have one chunk in a Mortgage Fund. That is, through the bank I own (albeit) tiny chunks of a bunch of mortgages. (I guess that makes me even more of a Vile Exploiter.) But wait, there is even worse to be revealed. A small amount is in an Equity Fund, which means that I own (very tiny) chunks of about eighty corporations, some of which are (gasp!) multinational corporations. (189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)

BRUNO OGORELEC

Your editorial touched me in a very personal, intimate manner. Oh, yes. How often and how fervently "I've wished I'd been dealt a better hand in the father department"! It was rather late that I discovered that I *have* in fact been dealt a better hand. I realized what a good guy my father was the moment I left home and escaped his constant pressure and interference. As a father he was insufferable but as a friend he's simply great. In this end it turned out I've been luckier than many—you and Bob Shaw among them—in that respect.

Linda Blanchard mentions ageism. It reminded me of an enjoyable afternoon with Brian Aldiss once upon a time. I haven't seen Brian in years but we used to be on exceptionally friendly terms. There was *understanding* between us, which is such a rare thing indeed. That time, having escaped from a singularly disastrous convention, we were exchanging childhood memories over a nice dinner, feeling pleasantly wistful. To point out how much time had passed since an event I'd been telling him about, I said, "After all, I'm thirty-three now," which made Brian chuckle, "Funny, I didn't think you were of any particular age." Brian is about my father's age, yet we've never felt the need even to wonder about our respective ages, much less to inquire.

That's typical of fandom. It is a unique society in its almost total lack of concern about age. I do not know of any other grouping of people where it is of so little importance. This, if properly studied and

understood, could perhaps give us a valuable insight into the art of living together.

Could it be that *that* is the true legacy of science fiction? Just as Henry Ford certainly never envisioned the revolution in American mating habits the mass-produced car would bring about, Hugo Gernsback can probably be excused for failing to predict the eradication of the generation gap.

I was amused to see that Eric Mayer is bothered by the Eastern European move towards capitalism. I also think that the sudden swing is perilously half-baked. Oh, a change has long been overdue but not the kind of change the ex-communists are all propounding these days. Instead of learning from the capitalists' mistakes, they are embracing them with passion. There goes an historical opportunity again.

Eric says capitalism is anti-freedom. Yes, but so is socialism. All such isms are bothered by freedom. All political systems so far have allowed a relatively small number, a thin layer of influential fat cats, to keep the game controlled, *i.e.*, rigged in their favor. It's a cultural thing, not a characteristic of a particular political system.

If you study the history of democracy, you'll see that things have been slowly getting better all the time as the people have gradually learned the art of fine-tuning the machine of society. It sounds funny, I know, but actually we've never had it so good. The kind of political and economic democracy that the Western world now has—all its glaring shortcomings notwithstanding—is the best, the fairest, most liberal and most enlightened the world has ever seen. Okay, so it still stinks, granted, but it's still getting better all the time, too. (*Kopernikova 10, 41020 Zagreb, Croatia* —note change of country)

RICHARD BRANDT

Eric Mayer's misgivings about Eastern Europe embracing capitalism mirror some thoughts I was indulging just this morning. To wit, why have the Eastern Bloc countries been overrun with "pro-democracy" movements? Looking at the governments that this country has elected over the past decade, who could recommend democracy to anyone? The poor fools probably suffer under the delusion that democracy gives them some say into the workings of their government, as seemingly do many of the populace over here. (4740 N. Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912)

PASCAL THOMAS

Reading TRAP DOOR is like getting news from the family for me. The fannish family, of course. So isn't it funny that your editorial and Linda Blanchard's article both inject new life into the fannish family cliché by turning it around and discussing actual family ties? And how well it fits in with my

own current back-to-the-roots period. Ten years ago it was a younger brother of mine who went and researched the family tree; now I live closer to the places many of these ancestors hailed from and I'd like to know more about it.

Redd Boggs' little snippets of life enjoyable, as usual. I'll make a brief defense of eggplant, one of my favorite vegetables. Of course, if you boil it in water and eat it by itself, it's nothing to write home about. But let's face it, so is the mighty potato. Now, eggplant is the main ingredient in *tahini* – this salad-like concoction you can get in falafel restaurants. And I remember making some great tempura with eggplant (how authentic it was I don't know, but it sure tasted good). Above all, eggplant is the main ingredient in *ratatouille*, a dish from Nice which, granted, may owe some of its taste to the herbs, onions, garlic, tomatoes, peppers and zucchini which are fried in olive oil together with the mighty eggplant. But zucchini in this juncture is, to me, only a pale substitute for eggplant, resorted to only because of its relative cheapness. My mother-in-law cooks a pared-down version of *ratatouille* she calls *chicooumee* (spelling not guaranteed), with mostly eggplant and tomatoes. I commit huge caloric sins when faced with platefuls of the stuff. Well, if Redd ever makes it to Toulouse, we'll kindly take him to the McDonald's on Place du Capitole; he need not face the fearsome local cooking. (7 rue des Saules, 31400 Toulouse, France)

A. LANGLEY SEARLES

Steve Stiles' illustrations and cover hit just the right deft, pert note, but his knowledge of plumbing ought to be refreshed: in the pic for "I Was a Teenage WereWolfe" there should be either two pipes attached to the john tank, no tank at all, or three feet of water in the bathroom!

I fear I've little to add to the brouhaha over the meaning of/change in fandom over the years, except to say that change is the one thing one can count on in every aspect of life, and to reiterate Burbee's dictum that fandom is just a goddam' hobby. I shall ask a couple of questions, though: Why does one have to justify a hobby? And does anyone ever worry about the reasons some people collect stamps or read Westerns? Doubtless a shrink could ferret out causes and reinforcements for anybody truly interested in finding out, and maybe a batch of these would yield some general principles; but I'd rather use my time hobbying than in learning exactly why I hobby.

One general principle is already known, however: as one ages, one becomes more interested in the past, since it constitutes an increasingly larger part of our total lifetimes. One sees this reflected in both Linda Blanchard's "Genealogy" and your own "Doorway." I think this is a nice thing. I wish I had asked more

questions about my own family from both my parents and my grandparents while they were still alive, but concern for my own history came too late for me to do so. There are big information gaps now that will never be filled. (Right on, Linda – telephone Uncle Howie right now! You'll find there's nothing older people would rather talk about than their past.) (48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY 10708)

RAY NELSON

What a jolt! The food-loving author in Terry Carr's article "I Was a Teenage WereWolfe" is *me*, and this is the first time I have read this article. When life happens like this, I get the feeling that life is no longer a river that flows majestically past, never to return, but has become a salad bar in some yuppie fast food restaurant where you walk along and take a little bit from the '60s, then a little bit from the '70s, and a sprig of something from the '80s, and it all sits there together on your plate. All time is experienced as one time or, to be more exact, one meal.

In that spirit I have lately been reinventing fandom. As a teacher, by mail, of would-be fantasy, science fiction and horror writers for the "Writer's Digest School," I have been inviting those few of my students who seem to have fannish potential to join what I have dubbed the Microcosm Penpal Club. My students are mostly young, mostly literate, and have been preselected for me by the school to have an interest in imaginative literature. I've so far recruited about 125 neos, none of whom had previously been aware of the existence of a print-oriented fandom, though some have been aware enough of media fandom to make their early works Star Trek pastiches.

In the '40s I used to go around to newsstands and slip mimeo notices of our science-fiction club meetings into the prozines when the clerk's back was turned. I used to plug the club in the high school paper. I used to write letters to people whose names appeared in prozine letter columns. Doing that sort of thing was fun, was what made fandom exciting and alive for me. When I stopped doing that, fandom stopped being exciting and alive for me.

Now it's the '90s, so they say, but when I read articles by Terry Carr that I never read before which are about me, it isn't really the '90s. It's hypertime or metatime, or something completely outside of time. When I start recruiting neofans as if it was still the '40s, then it is the '40s, or hypertime or metatime, and fandom *as I know it* contains only 125 members, though if you print this letter it may suddenly contain more.

Anyone out there want to join a science-fiction, fantasy and horror penpal club consisting mainly of young, would-be authors? {Also, perhaps you could revive *UNIVERSE* for your fandom, and in it review fanzines and draw Globbly cartoons? You could

reinvent the propellor beanie as a fannish symbol.)
(333 Ramona Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530)

LUCY HUNTZINGER

I laughed at "A Proud and Lonely Thing" and then spent a few minutes thinking about the implications of it (along with the end of Linda B's article and your own comments on the passing of old-fashioned fandom). I don't want to believe "our" kind of fans are passing away year by year. I think we're a personality type, running a minor but sturdy pattern across the grain. Fanzine fandom will reinvent itself over and over. Someone, several someones, will deplore the cattle shows of big cons and come up with a Corflu. I guess I'm not bothered by the idea of breaking off from the body of fandom since in my own time fanzine fandom was a small part of the scene. It must be hard on fans from the earlier years. As long as the paper lasts, our group will survive. I have faith in time-binding.

I particularly enjoyed Bob Shaw's contribution since I regularly have the urge to tell someone what I dreamt last night, in case it comes true. Most of the time I tell John and in the time-honored way of husbands he replies, "You are so weird." But someday I'll be a prophet. I know it. They're such vivid dreams. (2523 Sunset Place, Nashville, TN 37212)

BRIAN EARL BROWN

Steve Stiles' illustration for Linda Blanchard's article is enough to inspire a thousand words in itself. It's interesting that Steve placed editors after Dr. Who fans as the worst of science fiction animal. I would have thought the natural evolution was from writers to failed writers (*i.e.*, editors) to very failed writers (*i.e.*, fans) to, finally, failed sf fans (*i.e.*, Dr. Who fans). But perhaps it can be said that fans, even Dr. Who fans, at least love sf while editors seem to hate the stuff. In any case, I like the fact that Steve drew the editors to look like his "Slavers" on the other evolutionary tree.

I sometimes wonder if children know less about their parents than anyone else. Like the mountains, they loom in one's life immutable and eternal. You never think of them having a life before becoming one's parent, or asking them about it. Or maybe it is just me. Here I am, turned 40 and only a chance comment by my mother the last time we visited my folks resulted in an evening going over old photographs of Dad during the war and hearing stories about it that I'd never heard before. Dad never thought we'd be interested and I never felt that I should ask. Even scarier is the way genetics eventually begins to overwhelm each person's individuality. When my grandfather died and all the family gathered together after a long separation, it was eerie the way Dad and all my uncles looked so much alike,

while others were telling me how much I looked like my grandfather. But spookier than that was one time when Denice and Mom were waiting in the mall for Dad and me to come back from looking at something in Sears. Denice was startled to see that Dad and I not only had the same slouch but the same gait as well. It kind of makes reproduction seem more like cloning.

I think Bob Shaw was actually serious for one moment in his life, writing about the inexplicable, incomprehensible things that happen in our lives that we refuse to accept as supernatural. Like his precognitive dreams, or the way overtime at work seems to materialize whenever I'm hard up for cash. (I suppose I just ignore and forget about the times overtime and my need for cash do not mesh.) This is also a very fine tribute to Walt Willis from Bob. I'm glad he wrote it and that you published it. (11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224)

IRWIN HIRSH

Like Linda Blanchard, I'm also interested in finding out about my family history. A lot of the memories I have of my father's mother are based around the stories she used to tell me. Some of those stories are anecdotal—how she got her driving license and why she let it lapse rather than renew, for instance—but others held a bit more significance. When I was sixteen she, my father, and I went on a trip to, among other places, Israel. In the leadup to the trip, my grandmother was telling me about some of the friends and relatives I'd be meeting in Israel. Among the relatives was my father's cousin, Manny Rosenberg. That got me interested because my father is known as Manny, being short for Emmanuel, and I said that the two of them having similar names was a bit of a coincidence. To that my grandmother nodded her head in the negative and told me that in her family all the first-borns were named Emmanuel, or a similar derivation, after a well-loved relative. "I had six brothers, so your dad had six cousins with a similar name to his," she said. Then she added that Manny Rosenberg was the only one of those six to survive the war; the others all died in Nazi concentration camps. It was the impending doom from across the border which caused her and her young family to leave Poland in the mid-1930s. Her family survived, but not the bulk of her wider family. She wasn't too comfortable with the irony in that.

Linda's question about habits and traits being passed on is interesting. I've often wondered if this works in reverse. The part of my family history which intrigues me the most is the aspect of moving halfway across the world. The acts and thought processes that went through the mind in deciding the move, the differences in the two environments, etc. This fascination became clear to me two years ago when

Wendy and I moved into our present home, and I thought about how all my homes have been in a small area. I doubt if there is more than ten kilometers between any two of my six homes. I wonder if my being comfortable where I am is making up for my grandparents' decisions to move halfway across the world. (26 Jessamine Ave., East Prahran, Vict. 3181, Australia)

CHRISTINA LAKE

I liked what Linda Blanchard was trying to do in juxtaposing the way family traditions work with the way fannish ones do, but in the end I wasn't sure it worked entirely. To me, the leap from Linda's family to the convention was too great, particularly since I was still waiting to see what would happen when Linda met up with her uncle Howie. In other words, I grew too interested in her personal family history to care too much about the fannish family history that belongs to all of us, and we can get anywhere. Tell Linda to do the follow-up article where she makes it up with her cousin!

The Terry Carr piece, "A Proud and Lonely Thing," epitomized for me the worst side of fannish snobishness; after all, if the last fan on earth invited me to call him Adam, I would probably call myself something even worse than Princess Leia. Or was it all a clever send-up of the narrow-mindedness of the trufan? (47 Wessex Ave., Horfield, Bristol BS7 0DE, U.K.)

JOHN D. RICKETT

David Bridges' "The Game" reminded me irresistibly of some of my own experiences during the three years I worked in New York. David revived many memories of the rather touching way in which Yanks and Brits think they speak the same language, and yet when they do all kinds of cultural differences and assumptions make themselves apparent. I hate to admit this, but I never did get to see a baseball game (I figured that if I wanted to be bored I could watch cricket in England). But I got totally hooked on football, and am still probably the biggest fan the New York Giants have in the U.K. I still have the ticket for the first-ever Giants/Jets game at Shea Stadium after the NFL and the AFC started playing together. Like David, I found there was a hell of a lot to learn about the game before I could properly appreciate it – and like David, I found the best way to learn was to go with some American friends to explain the plays for me.

A few words on "the decline of fanzine fandom": As a newcomer, it seems to me that it is, in fact, quite difficult even to *find* the fanzine scene unless you are lucky enough to be taken into it by a helpful fan (in my case, the benefactor was the good Vinç Clarke). How does one find fandom at all? I'd never realized

it was there – a whole community of people engaged in talking to each other – and I'd been reading sf since the '50s. What caught my attention was an ad in *Interzone* for the BSFA. I joined that just as they ran an article in one of their publications on apas in the U.K. This interested me and I ended up joining two. Still nothing on fanzines, you'll notice. Then I discovered from a BSFA publication that monthly fan meetings were held in the Wellington pub. One of my fellow apahacks had told me to look out for a certain Vinç Clarke, a sure fund of fan history and useful information for the neo. Still nothing about fanzines, you'll notice. Oh, I'd probably seen the word but they somehow seems sort of, well, private. But I was lucky enough to meet Vinç (and with him that evening Don Thompson, an enthusiastic and charming gentleman whose passing saddens me considerably), who soon made it clear to me where the path of true fandom lies and followed up this oral teaching with a letter quoting recommended fanzines and editorial addresses. Had it not been for Vinç I should probably know nothing about fanzines to this day. But at least I'm living proof that apas are not black holes for potential fanzine fans: had it not been for the apas, I would not have been directed towards Vinç. True, I am not yet a faned, but by gosh I'm becoming a hell of a letterhack! (41 Forest Court, Snaresbrook, London E11 1PL, U.K.)

NIGEL RICHARDSON

You got approximately 105 more fanzines in 1990 than I did. Did I miss anything good? I asked Harry "Haz" Bond (during one of his lucid moments at the last but one Wellington) what delights I was missing out on and he was hard-pressed to come up with a single title. TAND was the only one he could think of; I thought he said "tanned" and immediately envisaged a specialist fanzine for spanking enthusiasts – much innocent merriment resulted, as you'd expect ...

It was good to see something by Dave Bridges after all this time. He manages to make use of the Englishman Abroad without lapsing into the usual semantic clichés – or if he does, he does so in passing as with the pumps/high heels confusion rather than making a big deal over the fact that you guys have screwed up the world's greatest language. (Those last nine words to be spoken in a Terry-Thomas or Dave Langford voice.) Obviously marriage and Texas have been good for him.

Boyd Raeburn is a decade or so out of date when it comes to slagging off the English over our bland food. Cheap travel to foreign places in the '70s introduced our nation to exotic culinary qualities like "taste" and "texture," and you have to visit grandparents in the North to get old-fashioned traditional English cooking. Remember, we were dealt a pretty bad hand when it comes to indigenous foodstuffs; we

made a big deal over the discovery of the *potato*, you will recall. (Imagine that, food so boring we had to go halfway across the world for spuds!) The tradition of boiling vegetables until they disintegrate has something to do with Sunday lunch and churchgoing, I think. When I was a lad, waaaaay back in the '60s, my mother would get everything going at the cooker before 10 a.m. and it would all simmer or roast away while my folks were at church and visiting old folk and other Christian duties. At some undefined time in the afternoon they would return, with me in tow, to a kitchen dense with steam, gallons of water condensing on the window, a couple of saucepans filled with greenish sludge, roast potatoes with leathery skins (that would squirt half a pint of scalding fat over the table when you hacked into them) and a piece of beef that tasted like a wet towel. Oh, and of course there were the Yorkshire puddings, which my mother still can't quite get right, but that's her personal quirk rather than a national trait.

Marrow is liked by the English purely for its phallic shape. Most of our native vegetables make up for their tastelessness by their obscene appearance. One of our most popular TV shows is called "That's Life" and intersperses investigations into fraudulent slimming aids and business malpractices with penis-shaped parsnips and turnips that look like General Norman Schwarzkopf. No kidding. (*9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG, U.K.*)

ROB HANSEN

Reading your account of your childhood and the things your parents did only served to confirm, yet again, how weird my own family is. When I was growing up I never thought there was anything weird about us, but then there was no reason why I should. After all, weren't we exactly like the families we saw on 1950s/1960 TV sitcoms? Yes, we were, and *that's* what's so weird. Avedon says that my family is the only one she has ever come across that fits that vision of "normal," and jokes that I'm pathologically well-balanced. The downside of this is that I was totally unprepared for what passes for "normal" in a lot of families, and had some difficulty in empathizing with what was completely outside my experience.

Bob Shaw's "Play Mystic for Me" reminds me of an experience I once had with such non-rational strangeness. (Hey, the way I'm using these articles as springboard for my own experiences I'm turning into a regular Harry Warner Jr.!) You'll doubtless remember from your TAFF trip that as you exit from our local Underground station you emerge at the crest of a hump in an otherwise flat road, the hump being caused by the road bridging the track? Well, a few years ago I stood on that hump, watching Avedon using the crosswalk at its base, with an alarm going off somewhere in the back of my head. Being a

rational human being, I decided I was being silly, shook my head, and headed off to the fish and chip shop, which lay in the opposite direction. The alarm wouldn't stop, however, and as I waited on line in the shop I grew more and more uneasy. Something was definitely wrong. Still admonishing myself for such foolishness, I suddenly *had* to listen to that inner voice and I took off at high speed ... only to meet Avedon coming the other way. Her bag had just been snatched, so something had been wrong after all. Evidence of mental powers on my part, perhaps? I don't think so, though what I believe it to have been is just as fascinating in its way. I'm pretty sure that the bag-snatchers must have been present as I watched Avedon on the crosswalk and that, while I didn't consciously notice them, there was something sufficiently suspicious in their body language that it registered with my subconscious. It's an explanation that makes sense to me and which also ties in with those occasions in the past when I've been surprised at my negative reactions to some people, only to have those reactions justified by their subsequent actions.

Gordon Eklund's musings on the media sf versus literary sf fans was on the money as far as I'm concerned. I, too, feel I have more in common with someone of Sam Moskowitz's vintage than I do with media fans who are far closer to me in age. I also, in my darker moments, think that their ascendancy is almost assured and that we're doomed to go the way of the Neanderthal. It's the post-literate age we're in now, as those who have never known life without television, and so never developed the habit of reading books for pleasure, continue to increase in numbers. (And maybe those who *are* interested in writing are finding their fulfillment via computer bulletin boards; I don't know enough about these to comment.) As fanzine fans are lost through natural attrition they're no longer being replaced, as I think your fanzine statistics showed quite clearly. Media fans being in the majority at conventions and shaping those conventions to reflect their own interests is something we've all had to learn to accept, but our seeming powerlessness in regenerating our own part of fandom is rather harder to take. If there's a way of reversing the current trend, I hope someone finds it. Soon. The only bright spot I can see lies in the hope that, as you suggest to Arnie Katz, the current slump is mainly due to the TAFF wars and that eventually we'll drag ourselves out of it in the same way U.S. fandom pulled itself out of its post-Boondoggle slump in the '60s. I'm not holding my breath, though. {Well, as you noticed in the editorial, the figures are better for '91, but if you look closer you realize much of the increase can be attributed to bursts of activity from Arnie Katz, Andrew Hooper and Michael Ashley, who between them published twenty zines.} (*144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 LAB, U.K.*)

A. VINCENT CLARKE

Redd Boggs mentions the Halloween trick-or-treat in the States, which reads oddly to British ears. As far as I know, there is absolutely no tradition of that here, and it's only during the last three or four years that there's been some sort of (probably movie-inspired) effort to emulate you.

But we do have "Bonfire Night" in the same period of the year. Officially this is Guy Fawkes night, and is a celebration of the fact that on November 5, 1605, Fawkes and assorted conspirators *failed* to ignite 36 barrels of gunpowder in the cellars of the Houses of Parliament. Being great believers in the old adage "Once bitten twice shy," there's been an annual ceremonial poke around in the vaults ever since.

When I was young, Bonfire night celebrations were prepared weeks before. There was, of course, the gathering together of all the odd wood, paper, etc., available, and the building of as big a bonfire as possible in one's back yard/garden. Also, the kids would get an old suit of clothes, stuff it with paper and rags into a semblance of the human figure, tie a grotesque mask on for the face (either bought or just plain made up from a sheet of paper) and lay it out on some busy sidewalk with the plaintive cry of "Penny for the Guy?" This plea remained constant through the years, even when a penny was something you hardly bothered to pick up if you accidentally dropped it.

Any pennies or more substantial amounts of cash collected were spent on fireworks – squibs, rockets, catherine-wheels, sparklers, etc. – and then on November 5th, the bonfire would be lit (with the Guy Fawkes dummy on top), the fireworks would be let off, usually by Dad, and a sort of primitive barbecue took place. The night would be shrouded with smoke lit up by flashes, explosions would be going on until midnight, and a strange and distinct aroma lingered.

The next morning there were rocket cases attached to sticks littering the landscape and a steady procession to the local doctor or hospital of kids with burns or more serious wounds caused by incautious firework lighting. Now there's often an official "celebration" in the local park, with a program of expensive fireworks and an enormous bonfire set up by the Boy Scouts, and the kids are safer. Traditionalists may regret this sanitizing, but even if one kid's eyesight is saved from an exploding squib it's worth it.

I was never very interested in fireworks, holding to the view that I'd rather spend my money on sf magazine than to burn it, and I have only one memory of a connection. There was an adult fireworks night party held by Peter Phillips in the early '50s. Peter was at that time an up-and-coming sf author – his first yarn, "Dreams Are Sacred," in *Astounding* was best-in-issue (see also the anthology

Neglected Visions by Malzberg, Doubleday '79) – and all his friends seemed to be fans.

In among the drinking and the gossiping, someone made a curious discovery. Like most sensible people, Peter had a bucket of water handy so that if the fire got too big it could be damped down. Someone dropped a lighted squib into this bucket, and an odd thing happened. Instead of going out the squib exploded, the contents of the bucket erupting several feet in the air. This caught the imagination of the party-goers and the bucket was refilled, and refilled, and refilled. The back yard became quite soggy, and so did the guests. It was the first bonfire night party where I went away wet instead of scorched.

So far so good, but in fact there was going to be two memories of fireworks in connection with fans, but the more I thought about the second, the mistier it became, and the connection was very tenuous. It persists in bubbling around in my mind, tho', so to lay the ghost I'll burble on for your benefit, and add a few dollops of imagination to what I dimly remember are the Facts.

Sometime in the early '50s there was this character named Mike Wilson, who'd come up to the White Horse every time he was able. He was a cabin boy or something similar on a ship, and when they docked in London he'd be around.

Mike was a wild character, very young (about 16) but with lots of cheeky charisma. In those days Arthur C. Clarke was among us, and Mike and other youngsters would hang around him offering criticism of his stories, new story ideas, etc. Arthur actually took one idea, wrote the story, and gave Mike 50% of the proceeds.

In those days sub-aqua diving was a brand new idea; somehow Mike became interested in it and introduced Arthur to the hobby. Apart from writing sf, Arthur's only passion up to then had been astronautics, and he was being pestered by the military, who wanted to use his expertise in weapons research. Arthur regarded this with horror. He took to the sub-aqua hobby as an almost opposite of sending rockets into the wild blue yonder.

We still had conscription then, and Mike was called up. He volunteered for the paratroopers. As mentioned above, he was wild, and the paratroopers didn't help. All of us were a bit worried, but Arthur took steps. He told Mike that he'd formed an ambition to aqua-dive around the Australian Great Barrier Reef – would Mike like to come along? There was only one possible answer to that, and they prepared to leave. Then Arthur was detained on some publishing business, so he gave Mike his boat ticket for Australia and told him he'd join him later.

The rest of the story I heard some months later. Mike came around to Wendover Way, for some reason one of us had some spare "Thunderflashes"

left over from Guy Fawkes night a couple of weeks earlier, and we went for a walk around a local park. It and the central lake were deserted that November day, and we amused ourselves by throwing the fireworks into the water and watching the upheavals, disturbing no one except possibly the odd water-rat, while Mike told me what had happened.

When the boat reached Australia, one or two local reporters came aboard in the hope of getting copy from the odd celebrity. Mike was never very shy at pushing himself forward, and he was soon chattering about his friend the noted author Arthur C. Clarke and their plans for diving around the Great Barrier Reef.

This made a few paragraphs in a local paper, because sub-aqua diving was quite new in Australia. These were seen by a local theater owner, who was looking for novelty acts. He got in touch with Mike, and soon Mike was demonstrating in a water-filled tank on the stage of this theater. By the time Arthur arrived, Mike had earned enough money to buy a small fishing boat.

They sailed off to the Reef, and Arthur later wrote a very successful book on the trip, the first of several sub-aqua expeditions. They drifted away from fandom. They discovered some sunken treasure, Mike married a Ceylonese princess and went on with a live rather removed from that of your ordinary fan. Arthur has written to THEN #3 saying that Mike has become a Buddhist monk. So it goes. (16 *Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN, U.K.*)

LLOYD PENNEY

After you described your various problems with your parents, I realized how easy newer fans have it. My mother introduced me to sf, for ghod's sake, and the number of second- and even third-generation fans is steadily growing. Certainly fandom's gotten enormous, and as it grows it will be increasingly impossible to keep up with fanhistory. That's why we need more objective fanhistorians, and more contacts with the written word of fanhistory. For the word to be spread, it must be written and available. Bravo for the idea on fanzine reprints and greater availability of fanhistory books.

Linda Blanchard's piece reflects my own feelings on our fannish past. Fanhistory deserves to be recognized, discussed and catalogued for future fen to find out and know. Like genealogy, we should learn who the sinners are as well as the saints so we may track who went before us and either avoid or imitate their examples. (#412, 4 *Lisa St., Brampton, Ont. L6T 4B6, Canada*)

MIKE DECKINGER

I can understand why you're saying it, but Frank R. Paul is the wrong prototype to use as a

comparison reference to ATom. Paul is not remembered because he was a particularly skilled artist; he was just the first. His Victorian sensibilities perfectly complemented the direction Hugo Gernsback was heading. Paul was able to see Gernsback's visions and then, imperfectly, recreated them. His stiff, awkwardly posed human characters, in settings filled with the most marvelously detailed futuristic devices, visualized what Gernsback had verbalized. Together they launched the genre, in words and pictures. Paul is unknown by most of the reading audience today. ATom is a skilled and witty cartoonist whose relevance has not diminished with time, nor will it.

Redd Boggs should be a little more accepting of the motivations of closet gamblers (persons who can keep their destructive impulses bottled up until within proximity of a casino). For a long time — too long — I would regularly visit Reno. I came to know intimately every bend and turn on Route 80 from San Francisco to the Nevada state line. I never calculated my losses — they were high, but not enough to cause drastic lifestyle alterations (I knew when to stop). But I figured, for the amount of satisfaction I could purchase with all the discarded dimes, quarters and dollars, I was actually ahead of the game. I had no illusions nor expectations about my chances for making a big killing. I was buying the recreational opportunities, not the infinitesimal chance of scoring a jackpot. I felt it was value received. I pitied the ravenous gamblers trying to win the next car payment, home payment or load of groceries, but I was never a part of them. During these excursions I would send my wife to the Reno shopping centers. She lost more than I did. (649 — 16th Ave., *San Francisco, CA 94118*)

SID BIRCHBY

Thanks a lot for a fine issue. Looking through the pages, I have the overall impression of light-heartedness beyond the call of fannish duty. It was good to see letters from Messrs. Willis, White, Harris and Clarke, with a full-fledged article by Bob Shaw in the body of the issue. Regards to them all.

Vincent's remarks about the crowded nature of the fannish meetings in the Wellington pub in London makes a point more than moot-ish. Pubs in most cities suffer from a Law of Galloping Consumption, whereby if one puts a maximum of noise, heat and overcrowding, the brewers' profits likewise go up. If the general atmosphere resembles Ordeal Night in a Samoan long-house, then so be it. Everyone has a good time, apart from the occasional solitary drinker who likes a quiet jar.

I am still trying to compose my thoughts on paper after a bout of cerebral short-circuitry, and indeed this is my first fan-letter in the best part of a longish time. May I also plead shortage of handwriting

ability? (40 Parris Wood Ave., Didsbury, Manchester M20 0ND, U.K.)

MARK MANNING

Interesting "Doorway," which rambles here and there. Your folks didn't approve of you, at age 15, dancing to Little Richard tunes while you were locked in your room alone? Can I imagine that? Yes, and come to think of it, I don't think I'd approve of it either. But the setting for this odd disclosure helps me comprehend your ways of dealing with the world, and stuff like that, a lot better. {Yeah? How? Hey, I think I'm lucky you're not my dad! Don't you like Little Richard, Meyer?}

On the art you used in TRAP DOOR #10: Steve Stiles is Ghod. Best Stiles gag is his half of the heading for the lettercol. Harry Bell is also Ghod, and damn good it is to see him degafiate.

Carol Carr is Ghoddess. No, she's Tinkerbell taking common English words, sprinkling them with fairy dust, and making them fly. A trufan would crawl on hir belly through the mud under live bazooka fire, if asked to do so by someone with a mind like hers. You're wise not to print her address, as brash young neos like me would send her between 115 and 166 fanzine annually, leaving her no time for penning such blatant miracles for lilapa (and, eventually, you). (1709 E. Holgate, Seattle, WA 98144)

KEN CHIESLIN

I don't "believe in ghosts," though one of my friends once descended into the cellar of a ruined/demolished house and ran off quickly because he felt something below. He says he later found out that some American soldier had been murdered there during the war. And once, at our "old" house in Stourbridge, during 1944 maybe, my brother (a paratrooper) came home and whilst in bed something big and black came and stood over him. He could not call out or anything. Mom sat up there several nights; if the ghost had come back, he would have got a robust Catholic punch on the nose. I was, oh, seven or maybe younger. I seem to remember the adults talking about a bloke hanging himself in that room, but I don't remember us kids were ever directly told anything.

That was the house where we got raided by the fuzz. My oldest sister, who used to work in the jewelry quarter in Brum, worked in an ammunition factory during the war. She—how can I put it in a somewhat simple fashion?—brought home samples of her work: a grenade, an incendiary bomb, the noses of shells. We had a trap door which led up to the roof. My younger sister and I discovered these souvenirs and took them up to the roof to play with. We must have been seen. We had a dozen (nervous) stout bobbies, tin hats and all, raid us. I'm not clear

what happened about it all. I suppose they were grateful to find we were not a nest of desperate saboteurs and let my sister off with a lecture.

As for a network of computer users being similar to fanzines, maybe that way lies the future. You can print out hard copies. Unfortunately, in that case we might be in a transitional period, similar in some respects to the transition from typers and mimeos to word processors and photocopiers. I suspect that the costs of acquiring wps and pcs (not to mention postage) is or has pushed the cost of producing a fanzine up beyond the reach of some would-be fanzine publishers. I speculate that it was easier for a young (and almost automatically poor) fan to publish twenty years ago than today because the outlay for equipment was less. (I am open to argument/correction.) {Nothing prevents a fan today from using the older, cheaper methods, and many still do.} (10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, W. Midlands DY8 1LA, U.K.)

RICHARD GILLIAM

Many of your writers seem to worry that fanzine fandom as they know it will ultimately die. I submit that fanzine fandom as it was originally established has already died. Not too many of us are doing such serious and constructive work as bio-indexes of our favorite magazine authors. What today is considered to be a traditional fanzine is more in line with the fanzines of the '50s and '60s, when fandom itself became a serious topic for discussion.

In a bizarre way, media fanzines are often more serious and constructive than their literary counterparts. Because most media zines focus on one specific subject (Dr. Who, Star Trek, etc.) they are able to spend more time examining each specific story. Even valiant sercon exceptions such as SHORT FORM can't keep up with all the new short fiction being published.

As we develop quicker and better means of mass communication, so will the form of fanzines continue to evolve. I suspect the cyberpunks are right. Soon most of fandom will be on line, communicating solely for the moment. In our not-so-science-fictional future, we will have shed these cumbersome key-boards which sit before us in favor of direct sensory input. It is simply a question of who gets us first, the cyberpunks or the genetic engineers. And somehow, we'll come through it just fine—even if our brains become wired the term "correction fluid" will take on an entirely different meaning.

As for now, I'm happy to have fanzines like TRAP DOOR to read and to treasure. I continue to resist the impulse to go on line. Call me old-fashioned, but there's still something special about using those traditional fanzine tools—the word processor and the laser printer. The future will come soon enough. (P. O. Box 25676, Tampa, FL 33622)

JAN ORYS

In your editorial you wrote that your boys were "on honor rolls, received awards, won a bike, appeared in plays, were recognized for public service work, etc." Do you mean to tell us these were the kind of clippings you send your parents or that you have actually sent all these within recent memory? If so, what *are* your sons—super-hero types or something? The only clipping I have of David is seven or so years old and is of him letting go of a balloon, in the company of the rest of his classmates at school, for a charity event. Michael has never appeared in the paper. Are your local papers in the U.S. more keen to take photos of school kids, I wonder, or are your boys in schools or clubs that work hard at attracting attention from the press? Is this yet another cultural chasm, or are your boys just very different from mine? I'd be interested to hear what you think. *{Every parent suspects or at least hopes their kids are super-hero types. Mine have done their share of good things (as listed above) and reaped their egoboo, but they have done it over a number of years, which I compressed in writing of it. I also suspect our local Sonoma Valley paper places more value on youth activities and accomplishments than many places.}* (319 Spen Lane, West Park, Leeds, W. Yorks LS6 2LN, U.K.)

ROBERT BLOCH

Thanks for TRAP DOOR. Yours is certainly becoming the Elephant's Graveyard of all fanzines. Some of the names dropped in these pages sound echoes which haven't been heard for many years—a statement that shouldn't be analyzed too closely, since it makes no sense.

Neither does Harry Andruschak's observation that progress has been made in reversing vasectomies. This is a dangerous procedure and let me warn you against it. I had my vasectomy reversed, and promptly impregnated myself. Hoping you are the same ... (2111 Sunset Crest Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90046)

BOB TUCKER

A sterling fanzine such as TRAP DOOR needs more but shorter letters of comment, such as this one. The way will thus be paved for more and longer columns and articles such as those in #10. I have writ. (2516-H E. Washington, Bloomington, IL 61704)

ALSO WROTES

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, MAL ASHWORTH, SHERYL BIRKHEAD, PAMELA BOAL, REDD BOGGS (who sent this issue's bacover—"I don't know where I obtained it, 30 or 40 years ago, but it is an original; nevertheless, to my amazement, I later discovered the very same illo in an old fanzine"—but

despite that, its subject matter makes it belong here; Redd also sent several unpublished ATom illustrations which will show up here eventually), DAVID BRATMAN, AVEDON CAROL, NORM CLARKE, MOG DECARNIN, CALVIN DEMMON, CATHY DOYLE, BRUCE GILLESPIE, JENNY GLOVER, CYNTHIA GOLDSTONE, STEVE GREEN, TEDDY HARVIA, DAVID HAUGH, GARY HUBBARD, TERRY JEEVES, JAY KINNEY (who also sent artwork, which appears below), PETER LARSEN, ERIC MAYER, JEANNE MEALY, SARAH PRINCE, BARNABY RAPOPORT, NIGEL ROWE, CRAIG SMITH, MILT STEVENS (back from two years' fafia), STEVE STILES ("Wanted to mention that: Rotsler co-did the letter column heading, but you didn't give him credit. This happens with about 50% of our collaborations, unfortunately, so please mention it next ish."), CANDI STRECKER, MARTYN TAYLOR, SUE THOMASON and DONYA WHITE. GARY DEINDORFER isn't an Also Wrote, but we did Also Hear From him ... in several phone calls and an entertaining tape. And JEAN YOUNG wrote one of her usual long & fascinating letters, but there's just no more room, alas. There's always next issue, though; send more.



FANNISH NIGHTMARES #237:
"The Philip K. Dick Society has
a pink beam experience en masse."

