

Trap Door



Steve
Stiles

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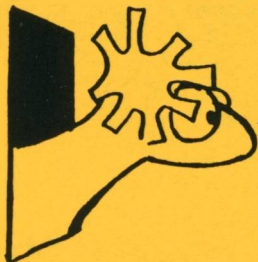
Trap Door

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DOORWAY

This is TRAP DOOR's Jiant Tenth Annish – the first issue came out in October 1983 – and it's also my personal 35th anniversary issue. In November 1958 I sent out Volume I, Number 1, Whole Number 1, First Issue of my first fanzine, PSI-PHI. (It was dated January 1959 because I wanted to Do It Like The Prozines.) That was the beginning of a long run. For statistics freaks: besides the thirteen issues so far of this zine, I published nine issues of PSI-PHI (the last two for FAPA, though they were rather genzine-like), six of FRAP, and one lone issue of OUTWORLDS (yes, OUTWORLDS! – it came out nearly seven years *before* Bill Bowers started his). I've also produced several hundred apazines. All this despite taking the '70s off! At one time or another over the decades, I've also been Director of the LASFS, Official Editor of the N3F apa, President of OMPA (the first non-Brit to be an OMPA official), and more recently did three years as North American TAFF administrator. (My latest line about

my report is, the longer it gets since I promised to write it, the sooner it is to when I might...) I'm now in my seventh year as Secretary-Treasurer of FAPA. Yes, I've been a busy fanboy and I have no intention of stopping any time soon!

When I started up TRAP DOOR, I remember thinking how I was proving Laney right. Jeanne Bowman and I had parted company earlier that year; I was ripe for some sublimation. What better way, I thought with a chuckle, than to publish a fanzine. I'd been dabbling around the fringes of fandom for several years on my way back to a new immersion and, well, it seemed like the fannish thing to do. Ignoring Charles Burbee's sage advice in "How to Stop Writing for Fanzines, Part 2" – "You just stop, that's all" – I plunged wholeheartedly into fanzine production.

I managed to maintain both a twice-yearly publishing schedule and lack of a steady sweetie for TRAP DOOR's first five issues. After that, the first thing that happened was resumption of a regular 9-to-5 job. Next, I finally worked out the "relationship" thing. The time I used to devote to fanac over weekends soon disappeared – not that I minded. While in my cosmic mind I wanted to continue to publish more frequently, I got more lackadaisical about getting the material to accomplish it. I became – yes! – an old fan, and tired, again. The procession of annual issues followed.

But no more, Meyer! I still have both job and sweetie, but *this* is the New TRAP DOOR, downsized to 36 pages per issue and back to twice yearly publica-

tion — with a hoped-for schedule of appearing roughly every spring and fall. I may have to ease into this as I'm off to a late start. I've dropped the use of bulk mail in order to get the zine out faster and have adjusted my mailing list, deleting some deadwood and adding some promising new names.

What are the reasons for this new burst of *crifanac*, you ask? One big one is that after years of living with one or more of my four children, none of them live with me now. The last one moved out while I was away enjoying ConFrancisco. Three are now out on their own in one way or another, while the youngest lives nearby with his mother and only a Serious Altercation with her would cause him to want to move in with me since his mother's digs offer more privacy and space and are nearer his school, work and friends. The head space opened up by the absence of offspring is enormous. I can tailor my schedule to my own needs and am free of interruptions of the parental kind. It's having a positive effect on my *fanac*.

The other reason is that with the appearance in recent years of so many new, more frequent fanzines, from my point of view TRAP DOOR was increasingly in danger of becoming an anthology affair, anticipated with enthusiasm by its readers but isolated and marginalized due to lack of adequate momentum. That's not the sort of fanzine I want to publish.

Accomplishing this is going to take your help. If you've written for TRAP DOOR in the past, please consider making an encore appearance. Those who've never appeared here outside of the letter column are welcome to give it a shot. In recent issues I've moved the discussion towards family both in and out of fandom — a subject I feel is far from exhausted — but diversity is a joy in fanzines and I welcome it here. Intelligence and good humor are also things I value in (and out of) these pages. I want all of this in an ongoing fashion if this fanzine is to continue, and I want next issue's supply of it by no later than early March 1994.

A centrally located fanzine lounge made all the difference in my enjoyment of ConFrancisco. There was a fanzine room at the last Worldcon I attended — the '84 bash in Southern California — but it was tucked away in an obscure corner of a mezzanine in the convention facility. "Our kind of fans" knew it was there, but it was far removed from the main action and attracted few potential newcomers.

By way of contrast, the fanzine lounge at Con-Francisco was in the middle of everything: right off the main concourse leading from the programming rooms to the art show, the huckster room and the various exhibits. A pegboard display of old-time fanzines

greeted those entering the area. Publications exhibited ranged from the sublime — items such as *The Harp Stateside* and the original 1944 *Fancyclopedia* — to the ridiculous — my own PSI-PHI No. 1, for instance. Along one wall were 30-40 feet of tables covered with a wide array of fanzines for sale, part of the proceeds going to various fan funds. (In a SPENT BRASS just after the convention, Andy Hooper reported over \$500 being raised for the funds.) A smaller group of tables held free fanzines and various fliers. Couches and clusters of tables and chairs provided ample and comfortable places for fanzine fans to congregate.

Consequently, I based my con activities out of the lounge during the day and spent quite a bit of time there hanging out with whoever happened to be around. The lounge was organized and overseen by that fannish stalwart, the above-mentioned Andy Hooper, who took on the project fairly late in the game and pulled it off very successfully in my opinion. In an exchange of letters earlier, Andy mentioned that while we'd hung out together at several conventions in the past we'd never had a Real Conversation. Both of us expecting to spend lots of time in the fanzine lounge, we vowed to remedy the situation. However, I think performance anxiety might have left us both too self-conscious. Or maybe it was just the distraction of running the fanzine lounge on Andy's part and of the convention in general for both of us (or maybe it was just that time of the month). In any event, it didn't happen.

Despite my love for the smaller, more intimate venue of a Corflu or a Ditto, there's something to be said for the wide array and sheer number of fans who show up for the Worldcon. People attend who you would *never* see at a convention exclusively for fanzine fans, many of whom are (or have been) fanzine fans. Ghosts of fanzine fandom's past lurked in the hallways. Why, the very first fan I recognized when I entered the convention hall was none other than Forrest J Ackerman; you can't get much more antique than that. I remember seeing Ray Beam and Fred Prophet lumbering along. Mike McInerney, whom I hadn't seen since the first Corflu in 1984, made several welcome appearances. Dick Lupoff spent time in the fanzine lounge. I saw Dick Eney from across the lounge once.

But this is getting ahead of things. There was a party Thursday night at Pat and Marie Ellington's in Oakland, which Carol and I cohosted. There was lots of good food and conversation with John D. Berry, Eileen Gunn, Steve and Elaine Stiles, Steve and Grania Davis, Barbara Silverberg, Debbie Notkin, Alan Bostick, D. Potter, Paul Williams and his friend Cindy Lee Berryhill, Poul and Karen Anderson, Cynthia Goldstone, Jay Kinney, Jim Benford, Bill Donaho, Dave

Hartwell and his friend Kathryn Cramer, and even my old high-school buddy and former fellow LAS6Fer (see *A Wealth of Fable*, page 212, for explanation) Jerry Knight and his friend Barbara Adair. This was the most enjoyable party of the entire convention for me.

Back at ConFrancisco on Friday, I met Sam Moskowitz. In anticipation, I'd hauled along my copy of the 1989 large type reprint of *The Immortal Storm*; SaM had been instrumental in helping me obtain a review copy. (My review appeared in FILE 770 several years ago.) Pigeonholing him one afternoon in the fanzine lounge, we talked for a time and I presented the book for his signature. He wrote: "A record of fandom's infamies recorded for posterity."

SaM told me that Fred Clarke, brother of Arthur C., was in the huckster room selling copies of Neil McAleer's biography of Arthur, originally priced at \$27.95, for only \$10. Not only was this a great deal, Sam observed, but Fred was also inserting a bookplate bearing ACC's actual autograph into each copy. "I don't think there are many copies left," Sam intoned with collectorly camaraderie.

Shortly afterwards I found Fred in the huckster room and bought a copy of the bio. I pumped him a little bit for tidbits about his brother as a young fan, mostly to no avail. The next day I returned and bought another little book he had on sale, *My Four Feet on the Ground: Memories of Exmoor and Ballifants*, written by his and Arthur's mother Nora and privately published in 1978. It contains entertaining anecdotal bits about the family's early history at Ballifants, their country estate. The best part is a photo of Arthur as a teenager, sitting in front of a wall packed with books, and captioned, "In his study at Ballifants the young Arthur C. Clarke contemplates the future of space communications." Fred told me Arthur was about seventeen when it was taken. His sensitive fannish face beams out across the decades.

Fred Clarke was at the booth of fannish legends Dave and Ruth Kyle. It was a pleasure to make their acquaintance. Dave neither offered nor denied me a seat. Ruth was selling attractive hand-decorated eggshells and the last copies of a project she edited back in 1959: *Fandom's Cookbook*, the first-ever fannish recipe collection. I got one and had her sign it. (I haven't tried any of the recipes just yet. Many of them are too carnivorous for my tastes, e.g., Pat Ellington's recipe for fried rabbit and Cynthia Goldstone's "Earth-side Meatloaf.")

In addition to the old-timers, ConFrancisco was a good place to meet current fans who had only been names on paper to me. I can't remember all of them and I didn't take notes, but some come readily. I'd

been looking forward to meeting Benoit Girard, editor of THE FROZEN FROG, from far-oof exotic Cap-Rouge, and I was pleased when he turned out to be as engaging and entertaining in person as he is in the pages of his zine. I also met a few FAPA members: Benoit for one, also Tom Feller, Tom Jackson and the aforementioned Moskowitz, plus Austrian waitlister Franz Miklis.

Jeff Schalles and I finally met at ConFrancisco and spent a lot of time together, often in the company of Frank Lunney and Catherine Jackson (who I'd met previously at the Seattle Corflu, introduced by Ted White). In Ted's absence – he mainly attends just Corflu these days – Jeff, Frank and Catherine were a significant part of a particularly enjoyable sub-set of fanzine-type fans I hung out with at the convention. We kept close company for much of the long weekend.

Whenever I needed a break from the fanzine lounge, I would check out the action in the huckster room. The dealer tables were the usual mix of everything from dragon statuettes to *Star Trek* memorabilia to rare old hardcovers (I even saw a copy of *The Outsider and Others*), from old sci-fi movie posters to rubber stamps to back issues of every prozine imaginable. On one of these forays I passed by the table of the *Marion Zimmer Bradley Fantasy Magazine* and there was MZB herself. I found myself asking Marion if she remembered me. "Of course I do!" she replied, almost bristling at the notion that she didn't. She asked if I knew that Walter Breen had passed away last year. I assured her fandom had been kept well-apprised of Walter's final years.

After the convention center closed each evening, the fanzine fan action moved to the nearby Parc 55 Hotel – to a fan lounge in two large adjoining rooms, one smoking and the other non-. This provided a similar base from which to venture forth (or not) every night. One evening, I renewed my acquaintance with Jack Harness, who told me he'd left Scientology after many years. Later that evening I saw him and Dave Rike sitting around a crowded table with pens blazing. Since all of us had been members of the Cult in the '60s, I quipped, "Cultoan jam session?" – but only Jack seemed to get it.

In addition to those I was meeting for the first time, it was also a good convention for renewing acquaintances and spending time with old fannish friends. I apologize in advance for not naming everyone, but there were so many of you! Special mention must be made of a few, though: Steve and Elaine Stiles, whom I hadn't seen in many years. Steve served ably as my stand-in at last year's Hugo ceremonies and has been a major contributor to these pages almost since the

beginning. And John D. Berry and Eileen Gunn: I don't know Eileen as well as I'd like—we've had limited encounters over the years. John and I haven't seen much of one another lately but we've known each other since his neofan days. I spirited them away one evening to Carol's house for a visit, and then we all enjoyed dinner at a new Mexican restaurant in Berkeley.

The night after that I chauffeured William Rotsler and his friend Neola Graef to Carol's, where we hung out for a while and then went to dinner at an East Bay-front eating establishment, where we were joined by Barbara Silverberg. Besides good conversation, the most memorable part of dinner was dessert. They all sounded good to us so, unwilling to make hard choices, we ordered a combination tray of all six desserts. It disappeared completely in about three minutes *without* an actual feeding frenzy occurring.

Lest you think all I did at ConFrancisco was party and hang out with fanzine fans, let me tell you about the program items I attended. Friday afternoon I went to a well-attended tribute to Avram Davidson, where family, friends and acquaintances remembered Avram in full multi-faceted (and surprisingly similar) detail, including Peter Beagle, Greg Benford, Ethan Davidson, Grania Davis, Eileen Gunn, Lucius Shepard (who moderated), John Silbersack, Bob Silverberg and various audience members. Everyone agreed that Avram was both lovable and curmudgeonly.

Following this was "Bridges Built to Last: Fan Funds," a panel about TAFF, DUFF and other fan travel funds — their origins and present situations — moderated by Jerry Kaufman with fellow panelists Abigail Frost, Art Widner, and Dick and Leah Smith. Based on what both the panelists and the audience said, it appears there's a lot of soul-searching about what the present mission of the various fan travel funds should be, but no coherent approach as yet on how and/or whether to change. Because of this lack of focus, this panel never really got off the ground in my opinion, though some good points were made.

The next day at high noon I stumbled sleepily into "Fandom's Own Summer of Love," a veritable love feast about the 1968 Worldcon held at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley. Panelists were John D. Berry, Bill Donaho, Lee Gold, Jerry Kaufman, Ed Meskys and Bob Silverberg. Jerry made quite a point of how he'd ended up on the panel despite not having attended the convention. Everyone's memories of the Baycon were pretty uniform: the heat and lack of air-conditioning; student "riots" in Berkeley which made traveling to the auxiliary hotels dicey at times; the animal tranquilizers; and of course the interminable Philip Jose Farmer speech. But despite these negative aspects, everyone's

comments were largely positive. It was a fun panel about a fun convention.

Very lightly attended (especially compared to the '68 Worldcon panel) but definitely worthy was "Jerry Jacks Remembered," moderated by Debbie Notkin. Panelists and audience members alike remembered Jerry for his high energy, inventiveness, generosity and various endearing quirks and shortcomings. I wished that Ted White had been here for this one; since he knew and loved Jerry so well, he would have enjoyed the stories told here and would have likely contributed some of his own.

"The Transmigration of Philip K. Dick" was another heavily-attended panel, featuring David Hartwell, K. W. Jeter, Tim Powers, Eric Van and Paul Williams. In the *ConFrancisco Quick Reference Guide* (useful, though finding stuff in a 132-page volume is hardly quick) it was written up thus: "Why are the works of Philip K. Dick ubiquitous now, when he received so little recognition while he was alive?" I remember some small discussion of that, but mostly this panel consisted of reminiscences about Phil from the panelists and various members of the audience. Another love-feast cum panel. This is the kind of programming I can relate to! Was this unique to ConFrancisco, or have I missed something by generally avoiding programming at the previous Worldcons I've attended?

That was all the programming I could handle on Saturday, and it wasn't until 3:00 p.m. Sunday (lamentably missing an advertised wake for Roger Weddall at noon) when I attended the curiously named "Time Bind-Its: Young Turks Look in the Mirror..." moderated by Peter Larsen with fellow panelists Andy Hooper, George Laskowski, Nicki Lynch and Art Widner. The text in the quick guide goes on: "... and see Old Pharts. Through fanzines, future old pharts connect with one-time young turks. Radical fannish nostalgia." This was another panel that never quite got off, though there was spirited discussion. As Nicki Lynch wrote in her SAPSzine, "It was supposed to be on time-binding, but we got off the track."

That evening Jeff Schalles and I sat in the back row of the hall to watch the Hugos being presented. This is the first Hugo ceremony I've ever sat through all of. That was the last programming I went to. Monday was a day of final visits and goodbyes, enjoyable but a little sad because we won't see one another again for a time. I left early rather than linger on for the inevitable dead dog parties, feeling sufficiently full of convention to sustain me for a long time.

Until Corflu next spring, if all goes well ...

[- RL]

A Letter From Calvin Demmon



STILES

I want to tell you how much I enjoy *Trap Door*, though this isn't a letter of comment; how nice it is to read new things by old friends such as Andrew Main, Gary Deindorfer, Steve Stiles, Greg Benford – and Robert Lichtman. I'm sorry that I haven't written to you earlier and more often. In my younger days, which don't seem that long ago, I wrote dozens of letters each week to people all over the country. Now I'll bet I don't write a dozen personal letters in a year.

Unless something really odd happens.

On Saturday morning, March 13, I woke up with a headache. Felt bad – really bad. Couldn't keep food down. Because I am rarely ill, India called our doctor, who said I'd probably caught a flu that was going around; he said about half of his patients were sick with it. By Monday I still had a bad headache, couldn't eat, couldn't even drink water. India called the doctor again. He said I should go to the hospital for some tests. India drove me to Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital.

I checked into a hospital bed. My doctor came around and talked to me. Then another doctor came and asked some more questions. When did the headache start? Well, I said, I could remember it precisely – it started that Friday night, just before I went to sleep, when I felt a little “ping” in the back of my head, down towards the base of the skull.

The doctor was interested. Within 30 minutes I was on a gurney and a couple of orderlies were pushing me towards the X-ray lab, where a technician helped me scoot onto a motorized table sticking out of a donut-

like hole in the side of a CAT scan machine. The table moved and my head went into the opening.

My doctor was there, and so was another doctor whom I recognized, a local neurosurgeon who had earlier treated me (non-surgically) for back pain. After viewing the scans, the neurosurgeon told me I had two problems, both serious. First, an aneurysm, a little balloon on the surface of a blood vessel in my brain, had burst, he said. Second, that small explosion of blood had interfered with my brain's ability to drain off cerebrospinal fluid, causing the headaches and other symptoms. I would need two operations: one to relieve the fluid pressure and the other to fix the aneurysm. The second operation, in particular, was delicate and risky, he said. (He told India, but he didn't tell me, that the chance of death or permanent impairment from the second operation was high. I learned much later that 50 percent of those who have ruptured brain aneurysms don't even make it to the hospital alive.)

Instead of taking me back to my room, the orderlies wheeled me and my gurney to the intensive care unit. A nurse stuck an intravenous line into my wrist and wrapped an automatic blood pressure cuff around my arm. Another nurse pasted electrodes to my chest and connected them to wires leading to a heart monitor. A gentle and, I thought, at least slightly embarrassed nurse inserted a catheter into my penis and from there into my bladder, trailing the tube to a bag hanging at the side of the bed. All of a sudden I was totally interfaced with the hospital. And I still had the headache.

Every hour, all afternoon and through the night, the nurse who had put in the catheter came in to check my pulse and blood pressure and to ask me to say my name, to squeeze her fingers, to press my toes against her hands. If I couldn't do all that, they'd know I was in trouble. Sleeping was impossible. Besides the hourly tests, the place was noisy – all of us patients were connected to various monitoring machines and one or more of the machines was always sounding an alarm. Just outside the half-closed curtain hanging across the entrance to my room, a machine growled all night. It could have been a floor polisher or an air conditioner; I never saw it. I was forbidden to eat or drink. I wasn't hungry anyway.

I prayed, as I do nearly every day. Two years ago I spent a couple of days in another hospital because of a kidney stone. It was a painful episode, but nobody, including me, thought of it as an emergency; it was just a matter of waiting until I could go home again. When I prayed then I had the sensation of being wrapped in God's care; the kidney stone pain didn't stop, but it didn't matter; I knew I was safe.

Hoping for the same reassurance, I prayed again, lying fretfully in intensive care with an exploded brain. But I seemed to be alone this time; I had no assurance that God was anywhere around at all. An injection of painkiller eased the headache and loosened my thoughts, weirding them up. I thought of Christ hanging on the cross. Why didn't he come down, I wondered. He could have done it easily. Why didn't he just come down off the cross? If I were in his situation, I realized, I'd get right down. Instantly.

The bladder catheter didn't hurt, though I developed a fear that someone's careless foot would catch on the tube and pull it out, so I got in the habit of holding a loop of the tube protectively in my left hand.

India stayed late into the night and came again in the morning, bringing Paul and Veronica with her. A balloon arrived from my coworkers at *The Herald*. Back on a gurney again, I was rolled into the hall and down a ramp to a waiting ambulance, which carried me around the outside of the hospital to the magnetic resonance imager. I spent an hour inside a tunnel deep within the machine. When it took pictures of the inside of my head, the machine sounded like a cement mixer loaded with heavy stones.

In the afternoon I was back on the gurney headed for the angiography lab, a high-ceilinged chamber filled with X-ray equipment and video monitors. Inside, a nurse shaved my groin (by this time I had no shame left) and a physician made an incision there and inserted a tube into an artery. Into the tube he threaded a smaller tube, moving it up within the artery all the way

from my groin to my neck. I imagined that I could feel it snaking along, but I probably couldn't. When the tube reached my neck and the vessels supplying blood to my brain, a machine injected iodine into the tube, the X-ray cameras rattled, and the results appeared on the monitors, brain paths like trees after the leaves have fallen. It was hot behind my eyes, the iodine; I saw colorful patterns. Another shot of iodine: warm liquid running just behind my throat in a place I had never felt before.

I went for another gurney ride, back to my bed. In the early evening a nurse and an aide shaved the hair from my head as India and the children watched. When they were done I asked for a mirror. I liked the look of my bare head – not as aristocratic as Capt. Jean-Luc Picard's, but a big, bulky, naked, rude head like Kojak's. Back on the gurney, down the hall until I arrived at an operating room. The neurosurgeon was there, waiting for me. He threw a fit. "Where are the blood workups?" he demanded, fussing with my charts. A second doctor took the charts and found what the surgeon wanted. Inside the operating room, on a table, I waited until the anesthesiologist shot something into my intravenous line and I went blank.

The operation to install a cerebrospinal fluid shunt took two hours. They drilled a hole in my skull, about three inches above my right temple, and inserted a catheter deep inside to allow the pressurized fluid to escape. They connected a plastic tube to the catheter and twirled a little Roto-Rooter-like device between my scalp and my skull, making a tunnel through which they pushed the plastic tube, working it under my skin, over my ear and down the back of my neck and then across the collarbone and under a rib, reaching in to pull it down through a surgical slice in my abdomen. The fluid drains into my stomach cavity. You can feel the tube beneath my scalp, like an electrical wire running under a carpet, and I might as well get used to it because it'll be there for the rest of my life.

Coming back from the anesthesia confused me and for some reason it made me angry. I was pulling at elastic bands that somehow held my wrists. I was at the dentist – no, I was installing a card in a computer, a 386 or a 286, I couldn't tell which – 386, 286, 386. People were trying to get my attention; I was furious with them all, but I stopped tugging at the restraints. I was lying on a gurney, a bandage wrapped around my head. The neurosurgeon walked by. "What was that stuff you gave me?" I asked him. He said it was an anesthetic. "Don't give me that stuff any more," I warned him angrily. Attendants wheeled me back to the intensive care unit.

That night the nurses came in every hour to give me

little IQ tests and I looked at the television fastened to the ceiling. I hadn't slept for at least two days. While I watched, pillows fell from the TV and piled up on the floor. I could see them, a sleep-deprived hallucination like those I used to get when I'd drive all night between Berkeley and Los Angeles, seeing dogs and dinosaurs alongside the highway just before waking, startled. Thirty years ago this year, I took a trip from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., with Ron Ellik and another guy whose name I have forgotten. We were headed for that year's big science-fiction convention and we drove straight through, the plan being that one would drive, one would sleep, and the third would keep the driver awake. It didn't exactly work. Once—I don't remember who was at the wheel—we approached a tollbooth at about 60 miles per hour, all of us half-asleep, and were only saved from crashing into it by the hallucination that there was something blocking the roadway. We slammed on the brakes, not to avoid the tollbooth but the hallucination.

Outside my room I could hear a nurse talking. She was disappointed that intensive care seemed more and more to be about taking care of older people, and less about dealing with victims of accidents and mayhem. "Where's the pain?" she asked wistfully. "Where's the trauma?"

India had called *The Herald* to advise my coworkers of my condition. The reporter she spoke to asked what he and the others could do. "Pray," she said. Though he said he wasn't a praying sort, he dutifully passed her message along, and over the next several days my hard-bitten reporter and editor friends gathered periodically to share news about my progress and to admit to each other, with some amazement, that some of them had been praying for my recovery. (One of them asked if he couldn't just sacrifice a chicken instead.) They also sent food to our home so that India wouldn't have to fix dinner for the kids. Somebody sent to my room a little plastic Easter rabbit with a white bandage on its head; I felt sorry for it and propped it beside the phone, but I couldn't really see it there because I was not allowed to lift my head.

There was still the problem of the aneurysm. Nobody seemed to know where it was. The angiographic iodine views showed no sign of it. "That's NOT good news," the neurosurgeon told India; if it couldn't be found it couldn't be fixed. I would remain at risk. I would have to stay in the hospital for nine more days, then have another angiogram. He promised to find it no matter how many angiograms it took.

But the next day the neurosurgeon fell sick himself; he'd contracted the flu that was affecting 50 percent of my doctor's patients; he'd be away, somebody said, for

at least a week. Another surgeon, whom I'd never met, began coming around to check on me. I wondered about my neurosurgeon's condition. Assuming that the aneurysm showed up on the next angiogram and that he found it operable (some locations in the brain are as good as inaccessible because in order to get to them one must destroy basic functions such as breathing), did I want a guy who was recovering from the flu poking around in my head, looking through a surgical microscope for a tiny balloon on the surface of a blood vessel and trying to put a little silver clip on the neck of the balloon to seal it off, his hands shaking, his nose dripping, his knees weak? No, I didn't.

Friends came to see me. Several questioned what they'd heard about my condition and expressed concern about my absent physician. Wasn't this just a little community hospital? they asked. Weren't we talking about my brain, here, after all? Was I in the best place for this kind of thing? We made a list of questions and India put in calls to the neurosurgeon's office but they weren't returned. We felt abandoned. Finally, India called Stanford Medical Center, at the university in Palo Alto. Did they have anyone there who knew about aneurysms? A neurosurgeon, flying back from a brain surgery conference in Washington, D.C., called us from his plane. Yes, he had performed many such procedures, he told us. He advised us to ask for a transfer to Stanford, which had more advanced imaging equipment than that in Salinas. India tried calling our neurosurgeon's office again, but nobody called back. We decided to go to Stanford.

The Stanford neurosurgeon called the next day to ask if we'd made arrangements. We said we hadn't been able to reach anyone. He said he'd take care of the paperwork and transportation from his end. My doctor—the general practitioner who had originally suspected the flu—came by. When we told him we were considering leaving the hospital and going to Stanford, he became furious. His teeth clenched, his face dark, he said the physicians in Salinas were every bit as good as those at Stanford, and so was the equipment, maybe even better. If we went to Stanford I'd be operated on by students; in fact, he said, the head of the department there was an old man near retirement whose capability and coordination he questioned. (But we had talked to the department head—he was young, the one who'd called us from his airplane flight—and he'd told us that in cases like mine, he always did the surgery himself.) We were amazed and frightened by the anger expressed by our usually friendly family doctor. What was going on? Could we get out of there?

About two hours later, I heard a commotion in the hall outside my room. "Stanford's here," I heard a

nurse say. Two attendants with a gurney appeared at my door. They wore trim red jumpsuits and carried life support equipment. They slid me from my bed onto their gurney and rolled me into the hall. I waved goodbye to the nurses. Down a ramp, into an ambulance, a five-minute ride to the Salinas airport, and then the gurney was inside a red helicopter and I was airborne with the two attendants and their pilot, and half an hour later the helicopter landed on the roof of Stanford Medical Center. The whole thing was like a commando raid, or an assault by a SWAT team, or the rescue at Entebbe.

Another visit to a magnetic resonance imaging tunnel, another CAT scan, a first-time ultrasound exploration of the blood vessels in my head, another angiogram with its hot pulse of iodine to the brain. Stanford could find no sign of the aneurysm either. Instead of telling me to wait there for more tests, they sent me home. "Be a couch potato for six weeks," the neurosurgeon said. The idea was that I'd lay low, give my brain a chance to recover from all the recent insults, and then I'd return for another angiogram. It was possible, he said, that there never was an aneurysm at all, no balloon, but that instead a blood vessel wall had merely parted and leaked. If so, such a condition might heal itself. Another angiogram after several weeks of rest could confirm that there was no longer any danger – or could uncover an aneurysm now hidden by trauma and swelling.

A nurse disconnected me from the machines, gave me a shot of antibiotics, and gripped the bladder catheter tube. "Take a deep breath," she said, pulling the catheter out with a flourish like a magician producing a bouquet from a handkerchief; the catheter was much thicker and longer than I had imagined.

I'd been in the hospitals for 10 days. I spent the next six weeks watching Oprah and Phil on TV, sleeping, listening to music. My head ached and I couldn't read very well – my eyes didn't want to track across the page. Consulted by telephone after the first week, the neurosurgeon ordered us back to Stanford for another CAT scan, which showed no trouble; the headaches and eye problems were probably due to stress, he said, sending me home to continue life on the couch.

My coworkers brought food, get-well cards, candy, videos, magazines and books. Our neighbors sent lasagna. As the news spread through my family, cousins I hadn't heard from in 25 or 30 years called to wish me well.

I was surrounded with affection, wrapped in love as surely as I had been during that earlier hospital experience. And I began to understand: sometimes, probably most of the time, God works through other people.

Sometimes he doesn't make personal visits, and it's presumptuous to expect him to.

Yesterday, the six weeks up, we returned to Stanford, leaving at 5:30 a.m. for the 90-minute drive. I dreaded being admitted to the hospital again. Until recently I had thought of hospitals as pleasant enough places filled with nice people who took care of you. I now knew that if you penetrate to its heart, a hospital is a fearsome place where they keep you awake all night, stick catheters into you, pump you full of drugs, drill holes in your skull, and tell you, quite seriously, that you might actually die.

After arriving at Stanford again and changing into a backless hospital gown, I was wheeled once more to the angiography lab. This time, I knew what lay in store for me and I was scared. A nurse reshaved my groin, a doctor threaded tubes within tubes into an artery, and I felt the hot iodine inside my skull and saw flowers and stars and glowing caterpillars.

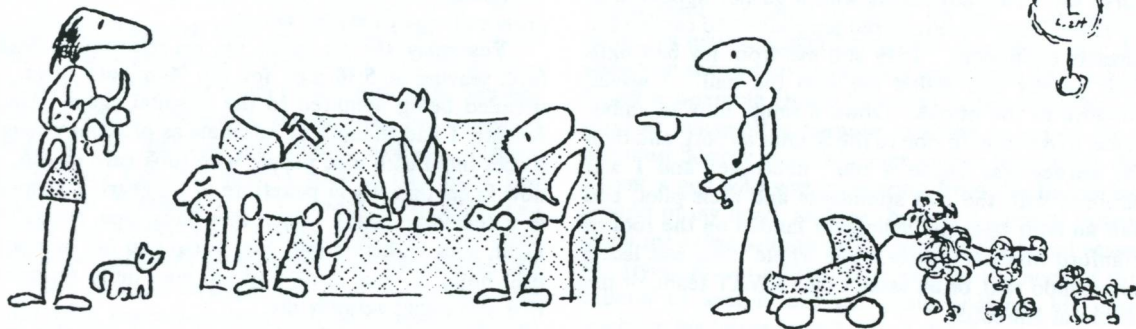
In bed in a hospital room, I waited with India for the films to be developed. I'd either be going home or staying for major, very risky, brain surgery. A resident physician, a student doing a three-year internship at the hospital, came by to chat. No aneurysm on the films, he said; the bleed apparently healed by itself. I asked him if that happened very often, and he said no. India and I began to hope. At 6:30 p.m. the neurosurgeon came by, flanked by a couple of assistants.

"We couldn't see any evidence of an aneurysm," he said. "I'm giving you a clean bill of health. Your chance of having another incident is probably no greater than mine or anyone else's." He told me to come back in a year for a follow-up exam.

We drove home in a numb, exhausted state. The kids had cooked their own dinner. India called my brother in Mission Viejo and her mother in Texas. I can go back to work next week. I still have the plastic tube beneath my scalp and the two-inch scar on my belly; I still have the hole in my head. God works in mysterious ways, and I now believe he hears even the prayers of reporters and editors. I also know why he stayed on the cross despite being able to say a word and come down – it was love.

I'm back at work full-time, headaches part time, one more CAT scan recently, everything seems to be okay, my hair's mostly grown back. Meanwhile, I have discovered Shunt Fandom – there's a whole group of people, most younger than I am, who've had shunt surgery over the years and who gather regularly on the Prodigy computer network. Mostly I don't know what to say to them. Having a tube in your head isn't quite the same as having a Sense of Wonder.

– Calvin Demmon



STUFF

BY CAROL CARR

Memories of me. Karen called me at work late in the afternoon, shortly before I leave for the day. While we talked I started straightening up and locking up. I put my pens and pencils into their cup and turned off the computer. I put my box of floppies away. Then I unplugged the jack from my phone. I was about to put the phone into my cabinet drawer when I noticed the line was dead. Damn, I thought, what's wrong with this thing?

Skip the moment of truth. Cut to later that evening. I called Bobbie because I'd seen her (ex-) house address on a list of building permits just issued and I wanted to read the item to her. I mentioned the phone incident as an unmistakable sign of Alzheimer's. She attempted a tactful pause, but in the end she couldn't help it. She said, that's not Alzheimer's, that's Carol, and reminded me of the time, about twenty years ago, when I was sewing in bed and, needing a free hand for a minute, stuck the needle into the mattress.

It was a waterbed.

Recently I tried to get a new pair of glasses that would not (sic) bring my eyes up to the ideal 20-20. (This is because my left eye is very nearsighted, the right eye is hardly nearsighted, and if the bad eye is brought up to perfection, the two eyes don't work together well and focusing feels strained.) But. There's a law that says optometrists can't fill a prescription that's more than two years old, so I had to get lenses that were "accurate" but don't feel comfortable. (Once they're made, you can get them changed to whatever you want, but that's another story for another bedtime.) Anyway, I was struck by the irony (in the growing list of

such ironies) that if you're sick you can't get health insurance, and if you Get sick, it can be canceled; but it's practically illegal to walk around with vision that's less than perfect.

Got a letter from Pete Graham. He had a dream about Terry in which they were talking about computers and Terry asked him if he was still using Wordstool.

Speaking of dreams: I'm in a coffee shop with a few friends and we're talking about some radio call-in show. Friend A says: "They're all breaknecks." Me: "You mean rednecks?" Person A: "Yes, that's right." Me: "Have you noticed that they all start their comments with, 'What do you think God meant when he said ...?'" Person B: "That's not really true. But they sure do know their Mark Twain." I woke up abruptly and remembered it verbatim.

Computer swapmeet dept.: The outgoing chairman (not really, he's pretty introverted) decided to end his tenure with a flourish and got me a 386, 33 Mhz, 120 meg disc—you know the package. And Windows. Ah, Windows. I cannot bear WordPerfect for Windows. It crashes me. It takes a month to do something I can do in a few seconds with the regular version. Still, gotta admit, endless games of Solitaire have in no time shrunk my IQ to the low double digits and my tongue lolls, drooling and Alien-like, throughout large portions of the day.

Here I sit, dragging black jacks onto red queens. It's just a phase she's going through, I tell people, unable to remember my proper pronoun. Windows' version of MacPaint is even more seductive. No thrill

in the world like zooming in to the pixel level and working dot by dot. No end to the eyestrain I can tolerate in the name of art.

In summary, it's really insidiously wonderful stuff, and I can't wait until desktop virtual reality.

Seeing "The Last Days of Chez Nous" at Emeryville Multiplex, next-to-last row. Movie's been on for about 45 minutes. Group of teenagers enter in full verbal regalia, plunk (P*L*U*N*K) down in back row. Adjust feet. Realign feet. Practice chiropractic on each other. Bang, bonk, clunk, boom. Have a relationship with each other. Enjoy relationship with each other. Initiate relationship with movie in audible, interactive way.

Time was you'd hope they would stop and when they didn't stop you'd say something and when they still didn't stop you'd say something more and then, worst scenario, you'd have an ugly little argument and somebody might move or somebody might shut up.

Time was, way way back, an usher would roam the aisles and hush the offenders for you. That was a long long time ago, in the days when you weren't expected to bus your own empty popcorn containers much less expose yourself to the awkwardness of confrontation.

Time present: We turn our heads at them once or twice, an old-timey signal that used to mean "Is that you? It must be you — there's nobody else here." But these days a look is only a look, unless it's much more than a look, and then you end up like Bonnie and Clyde.

Eventually they left, before the end of the movie. Afterwards Robert suggested to the manager that he not let people in when the movie's been on for a while. The manager is sixteen years old, working part-time for 22 cents an hour, and doesn't speak too good. And sure, they're gonna station a guard at every one of the eight doors so people like us won't complain.

I know what you mean, feeling like "the Job of Appliances." Two of the burners on my stove gave up the fiery ghost months and months ago. My dustbuster just went bust. Last summer I came home from vacation to find the food in the freezer a little too pliable (the company had sent out a recall on the condenser but it never got to me because the store didn't send it on to me and then it went out of business). Sometime after our most recent power-out the VCR stopped being able to bring in any channel above 29 without an unacceptable amount of audio-visual white sound. Cracks in the walls are upwardly mobile. The kitchen sink is so porous that tap water leaves brown stains. (I'm probably exaggerating.)

There's kitty litter in my heating vents. The spiders are walking upright and they've joined a union. Several trees threaten to fall on me, some mine, some not mine. The roof, I am told, wants to be surfaced with more sun-defying silver paint. The drainage may or may not be under control. Termites always threaten. When I throw a marble on the floor, it starts to roll, then looks totally confused and sits trembling in the nearest downhill corner crying, You *know* how I hate these rides.

Saw the AIDS quilts when they were exhibited on campus. The quilts were on the floor and on the walls; someone read the names of the people memorialized. Boxes of tissues strategically placed here and there. The squares were complicated, plain, funny, serious, playful, heartbreaking (several for very young children, one created by the person himself, who said, among other things, "If you're reading this, I am dead."). No chance of remaining dry-eyed or detached. I've always imagined the Vietnam Memorial Wall would evoke similar feelings.

Walking north on Shattuck, crossing towards Bake Shop. Police car parked on corner. Officer inside car up to no good. Black man in blue neon sweats crosses Shattuck in the middle of the block. Officer jumps out of parked car, shouts "Hey!" Man in blue neon slowly turns, sees Officer, gets expression on face like "Huh? — Wha?," continues to other side of street. Why did the black man in blue neon cross the road? To get to the other side. Elementary.

I walk on, cautiously. Step on a crack, get ticketed for obsessive-compulsiveness. Officer's car now on opposite side of street, waiting to apprehend man in blue neon as he lays foot on curb. Bloody nuisance, this waiting for felony to occur. Pass parked convertible holding two or three young Chicano men in dangerous sunglasses and L.L. Bean shirts. They are aware of the Incident.

"Where's the videocamera?" one of them says to me and we all smile. Urban laughter.

— Carol Carr



AUNT, UNCA, MOTHER, FRIEND

GERI SULLIVAN



I've undergone a sex change of late, in a relative sense. With the birth of Gavriella Chava Levy Haskell last December, I went from being Unca Geri, in the fannish sense, to Aunt Geri, in the family sense. Yet this new relationship was formed according to fannish standards of family — self-defined relationships agreed upon by friends and supported by our community — rather than those prescribed by traditional society or law.

The transition from “Unca” to “Aunt” prompted by Gavi's birth and its profound effect on Fred and Susan's family got me to thinking about families — fannish and otherwise.

Families scare me. We enter the world needing non-stop, unconditional care and love — needs that are provided, for better or worse, by family. We don't choose our parents or our siblings, aunts, uncles or grandparents. Nor can we change them. Even death does not release you, as I discovered in 1989 when my brother died. Here was this guy, six years older than me. We'd both moved away from Battle Creek, Michigan; he'd lived in Indiana for nineteen years with a family of his own. We saw each other for just a few hours every few years, picking up on conversations and

old patterns much the way fans do at conventions. Barry and I loved each other but were never very close. The age difference and family problems took their toll when we were young, and we lived too far apart — physically and emotionally — to bridge the gap once we were grown up. Yet his death, a suicide, tore me to emotional shreds, the grief surprising me with its intensity.

Months later, a little neighbor girl asked, “Do you have any brothers or sisters?”

I gave the only answer I could: “Yes, one of each.” While I didn't find it appropriate to explain that my brother had died, I couldn't bring myself to simply say, “I have a sister.”

In those few moments of conversation, I learned the truth behind an old fannish catch-phrase: “Death does not release you, even if you die.”

More recently, Barry's eldest daughter, Sara, came to visit. She's just entering her senior year of college where she is majoring in psychology with a minor in religion. After she gets her master's degree, she plans to specialize in adolescent psychology, prompted in part by trauma during her own adolescence.

Sara's visit was a delight. Conversation flowed

between aunt and niece even though, again, we'd never been all that close. Between our shopping adventures (including an extraordinarily busy Saturday at the Mall of America with Gavi in tow), a grilled chicken dinner with fresh corn on the cob while the Minn-stf board met in the living room, an hour or two spent proofreading a work project that demanded immediate attention, and other simple pleasures, we got into a late night conversation about Barry's suicide.

Therein lay an emotional bombshell. Sara gave me some background about the months (and years) preceding her father's death. I'd occasionally seen the angry, manipulative side of Barry, who also happened to be an idolized small-town minister. Sara lived with it—day by day and night by night. In those last months, most nights were spent in fear behind a securely locked bedroom door as her drunk father pounded the walls, bellowing threats and obscenities.

Before our talk I'd only distantly known (and feared) men's violence towards the women they love. Now I'm feeling deeply grateful, if somewhat surprised, that Barry didn't take the rest of his family with him.

In spite of his monstrous behavior, Barry's death did not release Sara any more than it released me. It merely brought a different kind of horror, one she's working her way through as best she can.

As am I.

One of the ways I am doing that is by developing close, lifelong relationships within fandom, the family of my choosing. The newest member of that family, Gavi, is also a first for me—and not just in the diaper department, though hers were the first I ever changed. (I really had no experience with this kid stuff until last December.)

Months before she was born, Jeff and I were talking about long-term plans—discussing where to buy that 40-100 acres, build Toad Hall Too, invite the divas in and spend the rest of our lives doing great and wondrous things with plants, cameras, computers, music and friends. I was surprised to discover that a big part of why I want to stay around Minnesota, within easy driving distance to Minneapolis, is because I want to be part of Gavi's growing up. Not as a distant aunt, who visits a few times each year (during conventions, natch), but part of her day-to-day, week-to-week existence. I've been close to a few of my friends' kids over the years, rejoicing in natural connections that span the usual barriers of age and experience. But it was always a matter of acknowledging a spark, of fanning it in the hope that a lasting friendship would form. Before Gavi, I always wanted, even needed, to know someone before committing to a lifelong relationship.

For the past eight months I've been saying, "I feel like I'm just beginning to have the time of my life with Gavi." The grand adventure may just be starting, but already it's having its effect. "Fun" is undergoing redefinition. A high point of Corflu 10 was sitting in Fred and Susan's room, talking with Colin Hinz, while Gavi slept and Fred and Susan went out for a late-night dinner. It was fun, in a new and quiet sense. It was even, well, not fun but kind of funny when Gavi woke up and let me know, with increasing vocal intensity, that I was "not-Mom" when only Mom would do. I walked around the room, cuddling her, trying to help her relax and fall back to sleep.

It didn't work.

Colin and I looked at each other with understanding at the hopelessness of the situation, secure in the knowledge that everything would be all right as soon as Fred and Susan returned. Sure enough, Mom's arms provided the reassurance Gavi needed and she was soon asleep. Fortunately, she was glad to be in my arms during Sunday's banquet, walking around the room, playing with the clown doll I'd brought along, looking at the inflatable cows, the people, everything there was to see, while Fred and Susan got a chance to eat and socialize a bit.

A few weeks later I marveled at the change in Gavi's ability to find comfort while waiting for Mom to come home. It had been a couple of hours. Aunt Geri had been fun, but where was Mom? Gavi fussed, crying, while reaching out to grasp any new toy I held within her reach. Every few minutes she'd forget she was upset as she explored how the toy felt in her mouth. After five to ninety seconds she'd look at me, remember "not-Mom," and wail... while grasping for every new toy. She was so close to settling down for real, I knew in just a few more weeks she'd have it. Not permanently, perhaps, but she'd learn she could get along and even be happy (or at least okay) while waiting for Mom.

Knowing that didn't lessen my wonder or delight when six weeks later she fell asleep on my chest after a rough spot, then also settled down quickly after waking. Up to that day, I'd been nothing but "not-Mom" upon her waking. We *both* enjoyed our trip to a record store and a greenhouse full of flowers that afternoon.

With Susan's return to work in mid-June, I went from sometimes being "not-Mom" to "not-Mom, not-Dad (waaaaa)." Yet she grins at me in delight from the safety of Mom's or Dad's arms. And she enjoys me when we're on our own—at least for a little while. I'm trusting that her enjoyment of our times together will grow in length and intensity as she grows.

So, yeah, I still like to party, but I had a blast

walking around Minicon, Corflu and Congenial with Gavi, seeing who and what there was to see, focusing attention on what brought her joy, or at least whatever comfort I could provide. Being Aunt Geri, being family, and helping to introduce her to her fannish kinfolk.

That will turn into a real challenge when she learns about family trees. While relationships are dictated in traditional society, they are discovered or created in fandom. Thus it is that Tucker is most everybody's grandpa. Avedon Carol and Teresa Nielsen Hayden are Chuch Harris' daughters; I am his mom. Genealogy buffs would find a fannish family tree almost as convoluted and interlinked as a Langdon chart of sexual liaisons, but since we're blatantly public about our fannish family connections the gossip isn't as good.

Here in Minneapolis several fannish "elders" are "Uncas," like Unca Fred (Levy Haskell), Unca Ken (Fletcher) and Unca Reed (Waller). Uncas aren't necessarily older, male, or even the most senior members of the local community, for I am none of the above, and yet I am Unca Geri. Age has little to do with it; attitude and action are the defining factors. And like "BNF" and "fughead," Unca is not a name you give yourself. It becomes yours after someone else, or several someone elses (especially Uncas) see it in you and use the title in casual conversation. No Knights of St. Fantony ceremony here, folks, just Minneapolis chaos and anarchy – and a deepening sense of family. Relationships define us and our role in the community even as we define them.

But how was it that I came to be Chuch's mother? Almost twenty years ago I stumbled across the discovery that "none" was one of the possible numbers to choose when deciding how many children to have. I'd grown up during the birth control pill revolution, when it became possible, in theory at least, to decide how many. I grew up thinking "two" would be a good number, only to be overwhelmed by a sense of relief when I finally realized that "zero" was an option, too. Perhaps my relief stemmed from the fact that both my mom and maternal grandmother suffered from mental illness, and I was afraid I'd be as bad or worse than my own mother was in the "mom" department. She tried; she did her best. But she got some of the basics wrong. Very wrong. My family was not as horrible as many you read about, or perhaps even families you know. And it wasn't all my mother's fault. But most of my childhood and adolescence was not particularly pleasant or emotionally healthy.

Or maybe it's just me.

Whatever, the possibility of remaining childless made for a much more appealing future. And that's

been the future I've pursued. Upon the rare occasions when friends jokingly said "Yes, mother" around me, I recoiled in horror.

Yet I embraced my son with delight when Chuch cried out "Mom" at the end of the Minneapolis Corflu. We laughed as Rob Hansen suggested the bedtime stories my son would most want read to him: "Ranidlocks and the Three Bears" and "Around the World in Eighty Lays." Maybe it was the absurdity that struck my funny bone and lowered my defenses. How many 35-year-old women's sons have already retired? Maybe it was because Barry's death only seven weeks earlier left me longing for a happier, healthier family. Whatever the cause, I welcomed the abrupt change in relationship, in self-identity.

While fannish "family" relationships are created out of a sense of fun, they are also another way of expressing the bonds that connect us. Like families themselves, fandom is no bed of dethorned roses. We've got our weird uncles, creepy cousins, and entire branches of the family tree we'd sometimes rather disown. All too often we treat strangers better than we treat ourselves or each other. We bicker, snipe, feud and fight. We're quick to notice shortcomings and all too slow to accept or forgive them. Underneath it all, many of us love each other. That's what gives us the power to hurt one another so badly. If we didn't care, it wouldn't matter.

Related to the concept of family is that of "home." Fans play with that one, too. We make the entire world our home, or at least those parts of the world where we can find another fan or two. So it is that Don Fitch recently wrote (in response to a letter from us): "Ahhh! It's good to get a Letter From Home – and a bit disconcerting that I consider Toad Hall almost as much Home as ... er ... this place (which I'll refer to with less disgust when many cubic yards of Stuff get cleared away – perhaps by late next year), but (despite my Love of Place) there's something about the word 'Home' that implies the presence of more than one person."

Delighted as I am that Don thinks of Toad Hall as one of his homes, I don't think a home requires two or more people. Sense of home – of belonging – depends on personal effort. There's no free ride, whether it's creating and maintaining the physical space in which you live or your place in fandom.

Years ago, twenty-one to be precise, my parents got divorced. In the process of breaking up, my mom wanted to sell the house they'd owned and lived in for fifteen years; she didn't like it. My dad resisted, saying, "Barbara, I don't want to sell; I like it here." When she asked why, he explained, "I poured the concrete for

the sidewalk and steps. I put the lamp post in and the planter box out front. I look out the window and see the stone wall I built. I've done some stuff here; it's part of me."

Mom responded, very honestly, "Maybe that's why I don't like it; I've never done anything here."

Much of the appeal fandom holds for me is that it's a place where we can all do things – and we get to decide, individually and collectively, what those things are. Unlike a house, where there are a limited number of ways you can fix broken plumbing, fandom thrives when people create new forms of fanac or new ways of expression in traditional venues such as fanzines. For the most part, fandom rewards action. It's good to have some sensibilities, so your actions do some good (or at least little harm), but we're all expert enough at procrastination that we admire fans who actually get things done.

So, getting back to Don, I think Toad Hall is one of his homes because of the things he's done here. As I told him, "Home is where you dug dandelions by the wallboard-paste-bucket-full and pruned the rose bush." I neglected to mention that the dishes need washing again...

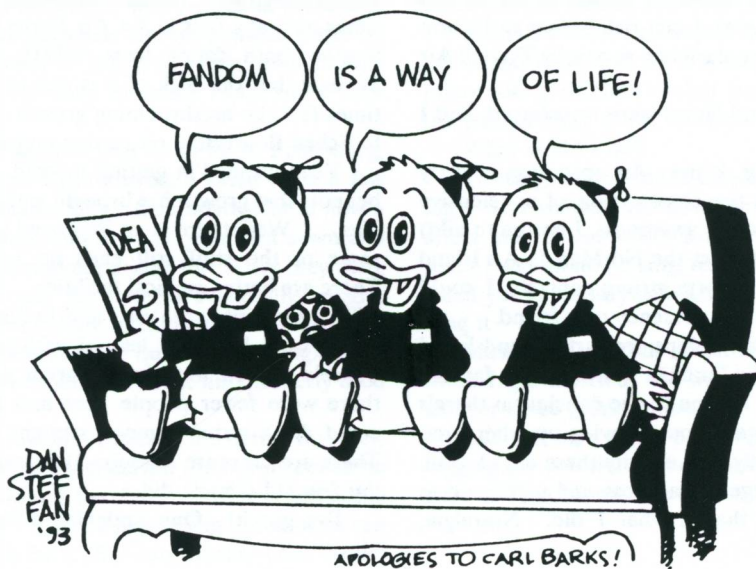
Toad Hall is also more "home" to me with the little orange pitcher that sits on the shelf above the stove. It sat in Don's family kitchen back in the 1940s and through every decade since. He brought it to Corflu 9 along with everything else he might possibly use in the running of the consuite – toasters, mixing bowls, a blender, the works. When we were repacking boxes after the convention, he threatened to put the pitcher

into storage rather than return it to his cluttered kitchen. I objected to this fate and offered a better one, so he sent it home with me. Toad Hall is filled with such memorabilia. There's the inflatable stegosaurus Pat Virzi sent to replace the one I gave away to Brazilian fan Henrique Flory, the rocket ship Michael Butler launched (and then recovered) after having everyone at Not-A-D-Con II sign it, color photocopies of ATOM illos that Linda Bushyager and Moshe Feder sent after the Tropicon auction for the Harris fund, frogs from fans around the world, and the izzard Teresa Nielsen Hayden drew for the MagiCon fan lounge. Every home I know of – fannish or otherwise – contains tokens and totems that reflect family connections and memories of good times. These things, too, create "home."

Thanks to fandom, and fannish sensibilities, Don has homes in L.A. and Minneapolis (and other places as well, no doubt) while I have homes in Minneapolis, Battle Creek and Donaghadee. Even before my first visit, Walt Willis sent a photo captioned, "The view from Your Room (you have been so happy to be here you have wakened early)." Done in high fannish humor, to be sure, but reflecting an attitude that assures "this is where you belong."

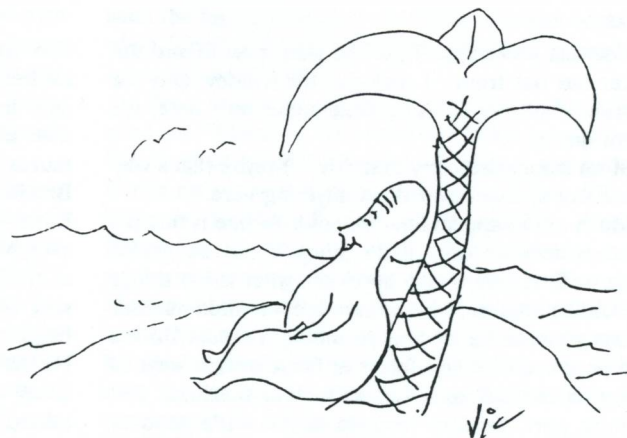
At its best, fandom provides each of us with a worldwide home, a place of belonging, be it as an aunt, unca, mother or friend. It's a good place to be, a good life to share with family and friends – especially Gavriella and her folks.

– Geri Sullivan



This Island, Me

by Shelby Vick



One aggravation about hanging around with Old Fanzines and Old Pharts: Sooner than one likes, they get into Time Was, and—if you're polite (or can't come up with a quick change of subject)—you get trapped in reminiscences.

As one who—when younger—has suffered through many such ramblings while waiting for a haircut or whatever, I've sworn never to subject others to such trials and tribulations.

Never.

Or, to put it another way, you could stop now.

It was always easy to identify with "It's a proud and lonely thing to be a fan." I was fourteen or fifteen before I found someone else who read and understood s-f, a field I had been familiar with since age eight. For the next decade, things improved. I met Joseph L. Green, who went on to become a published author and to work for NASA. Later, I met rich brown and Norm Metcalf when they were stationed at nearby Tyndall Air Force Base.

Joe moved, rich and Norm were transferred, and I was alone again.

Part of it, however, is me. An uprooting in early childhood resulted in the construction of a defensive barrier (not with conscious awareness, I hasten to add) so that I tried to contradict the No Man Is An Island philosophy. If I didn't form strong contacts, I could never be hurt if I lost the presence of a friend.

So most of my relationships are surface, and I find myself different, even in fandom. For example, fanzine locs and articles have led me to the conclusion there's something almost vulgar about growing up where you were born. (Admittedly, it is a rarity these days.) Still, subject to a few changes of address and a year or so away now and then, that is what I did. Nostalgia,

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however, still exists; nostalgia, and regrets at seeing wooded areas cleared for houses and streets laid where ruts once existed—or, quite often, where pastures or swamps once thrived.

Before WW the Tooth, our beaches consisted of miles and miles of sand dunes covered with waving sea oats, gnarled magnolias, sea grapes—and white, really *white* sand. There were a few cottages, a couple of places for drinking and dancing—and swarms of dogflies in summer would blacken screened porches and daunt all but the most foolhardy.

Now, dunes are replaced by motels and dogflies are eradicated, replaced by swarms of tourists.

I prefer the dogflies.

When I was born, the county's population was about 12,000. Now, excluding the aforementioned tourists, it's almost ten times that. (Unfortunately, without ten times as many fans.) An Air Force base and a Naval Station, both dating from WWII, contribute to the increase, but the bulk of it is due to tourism. I sometimes feel the mushrooming growth of our area is akin to lichen flourishing on rotting corpses.

Yeah, yeah; I'm getting morbid. I'm ignoring the benefits that growth has brought with it, benefits like... like... Well, there is an improved sewer system—but some of the stuff still ends up polluting our bays. There are better medical facilities... that are kept busy with automobile accidents and knifings and shootings, which we'd have far less of without all the people. There's a good water purification system—but when there were fewer people here and less pollution, we could drink water pumped straight from the ground. There are far more schools—that teach much less than the few old schools did.

I've got it! One undeniable benefit: We get a

much broader variety of foods. In the old days, canned veggies were it, plus what was grown locally, and meat was strictly limited to what could be easily trucked in. Bread was either homemade or that squishy white stuff Colonial and Sunbeam bake. Thanks to the miscellaneous tastes of the mixed bag moving through here, we have bagels, fresh ginger, snow peas, kiwi fruit, lamb and lobster, as well as crusty bread with substance between the crusts, and much more.

One change for the worse I can't blame on the tourists is the old newsstand. Along with newspapers and comics, it used to have a wide variety of pulp magazines. Yeah; that's one deficiency that can't be ascribed to war or tourism.

If this sounds like a plea for the GhooD Ole Days – well, not exactly.

I wouldn't want to give up my computer or cable TV or the true medical advances progress has brought. Or the great improvements in xerography that have led to lower costs for high quality printing. Or central heat and air, and on and on. I guess what I want is to live in a small town with all the latest conveniences, plus a few compatible fans.

I can dream, can't I?

Now, for some last words about nostalgia, and Going Back. As Wolfe is often quoted, "You can't." Those who have returned after years of absence have realized the differences ... and I've *seen* the differences. The first place I remember from my childhood was an apartment behind a service station my father operated.

The station's been torn down and a condo built there.

Second place I remember was a shack in the woods where there was an outhouse and we pumped water on the front porch. After we left, it was torn down and the woods were cleared away to make room for a subdivision.

After that, we spent a year or so in St. Petersburg, then moved back to Lynn Haven, a small town a few miles north of Panama City. One apartment is now a loft over a coin shop; another has been torn down and replaced by a supermarket parking lot. After they died, had to sell the house my parents eventually bought. (Lots of fanning done there, including my first mimeo.) Their medical expenses were quite high. Single-level apartments are now where the house and property used to be.

No regrets, however. Frankly, it's better this way. My memories are mostly cheerful; the old places shine much brighter through the filter of time – physically going back would, I fear, be depressing. Memories can be selective; reality isn't. So – no thanks, Tom Wolfe;

I don't *want* to go home again. I'm comfortable on my little island.

Earlier I said my "island" bit was an unconscious act over which I had no control. Further deliberation leads me to question that. I was around eleven when the uprooting occurred which I feel is responsible for the wall. But there was a precursor.

When I was five or six, my father had a female bird dog (a pointer, a dog built along the lines of a Dalmatian) named Pal. My mother became emotionally attached to this slender, easy-to-please canine, partly because Pal was around her more than my father, partly because the dog was intelligent as well as lovable and it demonstrated love and fealty for my mother. Mom would see there were always nice tidbits for Pal, even during those tight days when everyone was struggling out of the depression.

Then Pal disappeared.

We lived in a shack in what was then a wooded section of town. My mother wandered through the woods, calling Pal's name, with no results. When my father came home, he tried. No luck. Days went by, then weeks. At last, about a mile away from home, someone found Pal's body. She had been caught in a hunter's steel trap.

My father was upset, but not nearly so much as my mother. She had always hated traps, and now the hatred turned into a tear-blinded fury. She imagined not only Pal's pain at being trapped, but also the agony of the slow death by starvation. She lamented the death of a friend she had loved so much, the unfairness and cruelty of her death – but what stuck in my young mind was the specter of Death taking away a loved one.

Mortality wasn't a subject that had really grabbed my attention before. Now it hit home and – as with so many young children – what bothered me deeply was the possible loss of my mother.

What could I do?

To my young mind the solution was reverse psychology. If I *wanted* her dead, then her death wouldn't affect me. There was a song I had heard quite a lot; when I was alone I'd sing, tears in my eyes, "I'll be glad when you're dead you rascal you." Over and over I sang it.

Must have worked. Even though I was past thirty when I got married, she was around for the wedding and for three grandchildren.

But that also might have been when I first started digging an emotional moat around my feelings – the start of This Island, Me.

– Shelby Vick

Nightmare in Istanbul

by Jay Kinney



"Turkey? Why are you going to Turkey??" I've gotten used to being asked this question over the past five years as I've visited Turkey three times. Contrary to the common American image of a dangerous and threatening country fostered by movies like *Midnight Express*, Turkey is actually a hospitable place with a cultural history going back millennia. Poised between the West and the Middle East, it maintains a vital mix of Islamic and European culture that is both exotic and familiar at the same time. During my first trip there in 1988 I found Turkey quite irresistible.

Of course my simpatico with Turkey was made somewhat easier by the fact that I've maintained a strong interest in Islam and its culture for a long time, and particularly in Sufism, the esoteric mystical tradition associated with Islam. Sufism has become best known in the West through the books of Idries Shah, the universalist teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan (and his son, Pir Vilayat), and the influx over the last decade or so of Shaikhs associated with various Sufi orders. Sufi teachings are commonly passed from teacher to student within orders that embody traditional lineages of transmission. However, there is also a tradition of less conventional Sufism which is taught and practiced outside of the orders. It was with practitioners of these teachings of a largely unconventional sort that I found friendship. The following account offers a glimpse of my most recent visit with these Turkish friends...

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It was about 11:30 on a Friday night last May when I scrambled out of the dolmus a few blocks from the Goztepe train station on the Asian side of Istanbul. My Turkish friends, Refik and Oya, and I had spent a long day in the sprawling metropolis and we were eager to get back home to Pendik, an Istanbul suburb that was still an hour's train ride further east. We were buying train tickets at the station when I suddenly discovered that all my money, my passport and my traveler's cheques were gone! Unfortunately, this wasn't an American Express commercial, it was real life, and I had been thrown for a loop.

Had my pocket been picked? I didn't think so. I had been keeping my passport and money in two dark plastic holders in the deep left front pocket of my pants where I could casually keep my hand on them at all times. No one had acted suspiciously that I could remember. After quickly running through the possibilities, I concluded that my money and papers had fallen out of my pocket at that awkward moment when I had clambered out of the back seat of the dolmus.

If you aren't familiar with the vagaries of Istanbul transportation, dolmuses are vintage American cars ('57 Chevys are big favorites) that have been stretched and modified to include a third row of seats, thus allowing nine people to be shoehorned in. They serve as owner-operated taxis running between dolmus stands at Taksim Square and Bostanci, a roughly thirty-minute drive. Cheaper than cabs and quicker than buses, they are ideal if their set route matches yours. Little did I realize that in search of my passport and money I was about to learn more about the ways of dolmus drivers – and of Sufism – than I had ever anticipated.

Not more than fifteen minutes had passed since we had exited the dolmus, so Refik reasoned that we still had a good chance of catching our dolmus at the Bostanci stop – perhaps my things would still be there on the car seat. Dolmuses commonly line up at the stands at each end of the Taksim-Bostanci route, not leaving again until the dolmuses ahead of them in line have filled with passengers and left. Hailing a cab, we sped the short distance from the Goztepe train station to the Bostanci dolmus stand, only to discover that our particular dolmus had already come and headed back to Taksim sans passengers ten minutes before. Our ride had been the driver's final run for the night. On the chance that we might still be in time to catch him there, we took another dolmus back to Taksim, its sympathetic driver making record time in pursuit of the lost passport.

It was around fifteen minutes past midnight when we pulled up at Taksim. We piled out, quickly scanned the ranks of sitting dolmuses and lounging drivers, and after a few inquiries found that our driver had gone home for the night. We had just missed him, but good fortune was with us. A couple of drivers said that a passport and money had been found in a dolmus just shortly before. The driver had counted out the cash (\$250 in both U.S. dollars and Turkish lira) in front of the other drivers, turning it and the passport and the \$300 in traveler's cheques over to the "chief" for safe-keeping, as was their custom with lost items. The drivers were proud of their honesty and insisted that they always turned in everything left in their dolmuses.

Unfortunately, both the driver and chief had left already, as midnight was the end of their shift. We should come back the next night, the drivers suggested, and *insh'allah*, I might reclaim my things from the chief. Things looked hopeful, but I couldn't shake a certain feeling of teeth-gritting anxiety as we made our way home hours later than originally planned.

As fate would have it, the annual Muslim holiday of Bayram, marking the end of Hajj, was about to begin. The weekends both before and after Bayram week

added up to produce a whopping nine-day stretch of celebration. For Bayram, families commonly get together, go off to their country homes, and butcher lambs in commemoration of Abraham's original sacrifice to God. Banks and businesses shut down for days on end. I still had twelve days to go for my stay in Turkey, but if I didn't recover my passport quickly Bayram was going to throw a real monkey wrench into the process of replacing it.

Late Saturday afternoon we journeyed again into Istanbul and took a dolmus from Bostanci to Taksim. Once there we discovered that the previous night's "chief" (whose name turned out to be Mustafa) was gone for the weekend. Our honest driver of the night before was there, however, and reiterated that he found my papers – cash included – and gave them to Mustafa. We thanked him, promised him a tip when I got my money back, and returned to the question of the chief's whereabouts. He was off celebrating Bayram with family in the country. Did anyone have a phone number for his relatives? No, but perhaps Mustafa's uncle might. His uncle, in fact, was also a dolmus chief of higher rank than his nephew. But he was not working tonight either.

A taxi drove up and we discovered that its driver knew the uncle and would take us to a barber shop where he often hung out. If he was there and if he had a phone number for his nephew, perhaps Refik could arrange for us to go get my papers. It seemed like an extremely long shot, but we had no other leads, so off we went through typically convoluted Istanbul neighborhoods in search of the uncle. By now it was getting on towards 10 p.m. and my stomach was beginning to groan from lack of dinner. That lent a certain gut-wrenching quality to our search. Unfortunately, as I feared, the uncle was nowhere to be found and we finally gave up and returned to Taksim. There seemed little to do but trust to Allah and show up again Monday night. We took a dolmus back to Bostanci and Refik ordered us some Turkish fast food before we caught a train to Pendik. It was a grilled intestines sandwich and to my famished stomach it tasted just fine.

Come Sunday my dilemma began to sink in. Here I was in Turkey without my passport and without any money. Circumstances couldn't have connived to come up with a better illustration of the fundamental teaching of both Islam and Sufism that ultimately we are all dependent on God. As Allah says in the Quran: "Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, – Who say, when afflicted with calamity: 'To

God we belong, and to Him is our return': – They are those on whom (descend) blessings from God, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance."

As we discussed the different possibilities, Refik and I concluded that even in the worst possible case – the chief disappears, my passport and money vanish for good – I was still blessed by being with friends who could feed me and lend me money; I could report the lost passport to the American consulate and get some sort of replacement; and I could get my traveler's cheques replaced. I should hardly let this ruin my visit. I was here in Turkey to learn more about Sufism. What better opportunity to learn patience and to trust in Allah than this? After all, Mustafa is another name for Muhammad, so in a sense my things were in the hands of Muhammad. But, Refik added, let's just pray that the chief doesn't get too drunk this weekend and lose everything!

I spent Sunday and the first part of Monday discussing Sufism with Refik and friends. In turn, Refik sat me down and made me listen to his favorite music from his college years in the '70s: Bob Dylan's *Street Legal*, the Moody Blues, Leonard Cohen and Joan Baez. Strange lessons indeed: come to Turkey and have your Sufi teacher play you western folk and rock music. For the rest of my stay, the Moody Blues' song "Melancholy Man" was stuck in my mind.

Mid-afternoon on Monday, Oya, Refik and I again trooped into Istanbul. We met another local friend, Hakan, at the Taksim dolmus stand around 5 p.m. and made our inquiries. Mustafa wasn't there, but his uncle was. In fact his uncle was rather ticked that Mustafa hadn't turned over my papers to him. It was uncertain whether Mustafa would show up tonight and he suggested we come back around seven. Ah, another opportunity to practice perseverance.

We retired to a tea garden halfway across Taksim square and settled in for the duration. The Turks seem to have developed the capacity to drink endless glasses of tea – each with two cubes of sugar – and my friends could knock them back with the best. By now I was beginning to give in to anxiety. What if Mustafa didn't show up? What if he had connived to sell off my passport? (American passports are valuable contraband in countries like Turkey; quite useful to smugglers, etc.) Tomorrow was the formal start of Bayram and if I didn't get my papers back tonight, it could take days to wade through the Bayram lull and reestablish my identity. Perhaps we should go to the consulate now? No, it was just another hour until 7 p.m. Hang in there. More tea. My friends talked among themselves in Turkish and I practiced deep breathing. Time oozed by. Finally, at about twenty minutes to seven we broke

camp and started off towards the dolmus stand.

I glanced over at the classy buildings bordering the square and did a double-take. There were the Turkish offices of BCCI, looking for all the world like a legitimate bank. Was this a good omen or bad? It must have been good because, fortuitously, Mustafa had turned up in our absence. He was a tall man in his thirties with a mustache and a slight cut across the bridge of his nose. We all shook hands with him, introduced ourselves, and he handed me my plastic folders. There was my passport! There were my traveler's cheques! But, hmmm ... all the cash was gone.

My first impulse was to count my blessings, kiss off the missing money as the price to be paid for foolishly carrying so much on me in the first place, and split for Pendik. At this point I had already gotten more returned to me than I could have sanely expected if it had happened to me back in New York or San Francisco. But here in Turkey, with the dolmus drivers and the Sufis, things were not so simple.

Where was the money? Mustafa, who was looking rather puffy and hung over, pointed to the scab on his nose and explained that he had gotten very drunk over the weekend, was beaten up, and his attackers must have taken the money. At this explanation, all the dolmus drivers within earshot came over and began to give Mustafa peculiar looks as if to say, "What kind of lame excuse is this?" Given the responsibility placed upon him as a dolmus chief, Mustafa's loss of my money was a grave breach of trust with the drivers. As one of them explained vociferously, Mustafa made them look as if they were fools for being so honest in turning in people's lost money and belongings. One of the drivers urged us to go to the police.

Refik again counseled patience and for a good half hour we stood silently at the side of the dolmus stand, not exerting any overt pressure, but not going away either. The drivers' disgust with Mustafa escalated. The dolmus chiefs' job is part barker, part manager: they direct passengers to the dolmuses and keep order in the ranks. Their pay comes from tips the drivers give them for each run they drive. The general disgust with Mustafa's gaffe meant that many of the drivers were refusing to pay him any tips. Mustafa was on his way to being quickly ostracized and it suddenly looked as if his loss of my money was going to result in the loss of his job. Talk about instant karma!

The tension in the air was palpable as we stood by silently and let things develop on their own. Eventually Mustafa came over and suggested that I give him my address and he would mail me the money I had lost once he was able to scrape it together. Refik translated

this offer to me and said that in his opinion I should reject it because it would just let Mustafa off the hook without his clearly settling accounts with the drivers and without any guarantee of anything actually being done. We stood around silently some more looking dissatisfied. Finally Mustafa came back and promised he'd try to get me the money by the end of Bayram, a week away. We accepted his offer and bid adieu to the dolmus stand.

The next morning, Tuesday, was the formal start of Bayram. As I strolled through the streets of Pendik on my way from my hotel to Refik's apartment, I was confronted with more than one scene of a newly slaughtered lamb carcass hanging from a tree bough in a family's front yard, with the man of the house carving off meat for the big Bayram feast to come. Amid the Bayram celebration, the plight of the dolmus chief was temporarily put aside, and I was simply grateful to have my i.d. back and to be among friends.

But Allah wasn't through with me yet. As I returned to my hotel that night, I discovered that my watch's battery had conked out. My precious identity and my worldly goods (or at least my traveler's cheques) had been yanked away and in due course restored. Now it was time's turn to disappear. And of course no batteries were to be found for at least two or three days until shops started opening after the holiday. Circumstances were again conspiring to force me into the present moment.

As the week progressed, Refik and I mulled over the dolmus situation. It soon became apparent that recovering my cash was *not* the goal. As a member of the American middle class, I could afford to lose a couple of hundred dollars without flinching too greatly, so I might as well shrug off any attachment I had to getting my money back *per se*. Of much more importance were the human lives that had become intertwined in this little drama, especially those of the honest dolmus driver and Mustafa, the hapless chief.

It seemed that the dolmus drivers—'57 Chevys and all—were the modern equivalent of an order of knights, bound by a rule of chivalry and honor that deserved our support. Jaded westerners tend to assume that everyone is ruled by their own self-interest with honesty only honored in the breach. But here amidst the customized hunks of Detroit iron in Istanbul was a brotherhood of drivers who embodied the simple ideal of service. Of course this exemplary behavior was, according to Refik, fueled in part by the dolmus drivers' belief that Allah's sense of justice towards any misdeed or dishonesty on their part would lead, in short order, to a traffic accident or similar mishap. And who were we to say that it wouldn't? The task before us was to try to foster a

resolution to my mess that wouldn't shift the drivers towards cynicism and dishonesty, but help them maintain their virtue and integrity.

That resolution entailed two parts. First, I had to once again track down the honest driver and express my appreciation of his honesty with a sizable tip. If Mustafa did pay me back my money, I should be prepared to turn around and give it to the driver as his just reward for his original purity of intent. Second, I had to provide Mustafa with the opportunity to clear his name by letting him pay me back for the lost money. At this point the question of whether I really needed the money back was less important than the possibility that poor Mustafa's life might be ruined through his circumstantial run-in with my lost cash unless I cooperated in his attempt to set things straight. In a very real sense, the man's soul hung in the balance and I needed to act appropriately.

The gap between this simple spiritual way of looking at things and the standard modern American way couldn't have been more pronounced. As I noted in my journal at the time:

"[Most Americans] would leave the ramifications of the disappeared money to the drivers and chiefs to work out, on the theory that time equals money, and that any more time expended on the situation would actually mean a further loss. Thus the mental calculation would be, for example: someone loses \$180; they earn \$18 per hour at work; therefore the lost money represents ten hours. Each additional hour expended on its recovery or the situation's resolution equals a subtraction of \$18.

"So in most cases, if there was no resolution in sight after three or four hours of effort, they would reason that the recovery of the money might ultimately take more than ten hours total and thus, in terms of time, represent a loss. So they would 'cut their losses' and move on..."

However, we were already long past the point of no return in time spent on this incident. The issue at hand wasn't how to avoid "wasting" any more of our time. Rather, it was following through the course of appropriate behavior to completion, leaving the world in better shape as the result of my accident, not worse.

Islam is a rather daunting religion for most westerners, especially the question of *Shariah* (Islamic laws of correct behavior). Refik and I had discussed this a few days earlier, and now he pointed out that the dolmus drivers' attitudes about honesty were a good example of the value that *Shariah* can have in the world. Turkey as a secular state is not formally run under *Shariah*, but its citizens have sufficiently internalized its key elements so that one's actions, whether morally right or wrong, were seen as having serious consequences. To my western

eyes, the human glue was still at work here in Istanbul in a palpable way. Score one for Islam.

Bayram week sped by. Even though I now had my traveler's cheques back, I was still without money because the banks were closed and I was unable to cash them. Refik and Hakan lent me money for hotel and shopping, waving away questions of when and how I'd repay them. Things would work out. We were all friends. Not to worry.

The first Monday after Bayram arrived and I decided to move back into a guest house in Istanbul for my last two nights in Turkey. Now that Bayram was over, it was time to check back in with Mustafa and see how things were progressing. I rendezvoused with another Turkish friend, Ugur, at Taksim and after a dinner together nearby, we stopped by the Taksim dolmus stand. Mustafa was there with a mildly tortured expression on his face upon sighting me, as if I were a recurring nightmare that just wouldn't go away. No, he didn't have my money – it had been impossible to raise any during Bayram. Had I gone to the police? I later found out that Ugur told him I had, on the theory that it might produce better results. Mustafa promised that if we came back tomorrow night he'd have some money.

I spent the next day, Tuesday, trying to do all the shopping that I'd been unable to do during Bayram in Pendik. I cashed my traveler's cheques and dove into the Grand Bazaar with a friend. By the end of the day I was quite tired. Ugur had promised to stop by the Taksim dolmus stand on her way home from work and

get any money from Mustafa that he might turn over. It was close to midnight by the time she came by my guest house and handed me a bundle of Turkish lira: close to \$120, nearly half the amount that had been lost. He promised to have more in a few days which he'd give Ugur. The honest driver wasn't on duty that night, so she had been unable to tip him anything.

I was flying out the next morning and there were still a few unresolved details, so I arranged to have the money held in the guest house safe for Refik to pick up, to help pay him back for his generosity. I gave Ugur \$25 to tip the driver if she was able to locate him. And I prayed that Mustafa would resolve matters, both with the money and with the drivers. If Ugur did get any more money, she could pass it on to Refik or the driver.

My unplanned seminar in Sufi ethics and the dolmus subculture was over. In the end it had cost me far less than any New Age weekend workshop in America. And it had helped me see that the value Sufis place upon *adab* – appropriate behavior – is not just something suited for tea-drinking chats but a living practice in the daily world. It can't be measured on a financial balance sheet, but it *can* have ramification on the direction of people's lives. And who knows? Perhaps the next time the drivers hand over some lost property to Mustafa, he may think twice about getting drunk.

– Jay Kinney



THE ETHER STILL VIBRATES



TED WHITE

(At the end of some comments about format:) Setting material in type like this really compresses it, as I'm sure you've already noticed. Had TD been typed in a pica typer face and published on full-sized 8½ x 11 sheets of paper, I imagine it would have run at least double the number of pages – it took me a week to read it. TD is a deceptively thin-looking fat fanzine. *{To illustrate this with an example in this issue, your letter as edited here ran exactly four pages in the above format.}*

It would be interesting to compare your statistics (of the fanzines you received over the past seven years) with those of, say, Brian Earl Brown (who has revived WoFan again) to see if the general trends hold up. Judging purely by your tally, it would appear that 1986 was the last year of relatively strong fmz pubbing – especially in this country – with '87 through '90 the “dog years” of low output. 1991 begins to show a recovery, and '92 is an apparent boom year for fanzines. So maybe there's something to this renaissance theory. 1993 might be pretty good; we're trying to do Our Part.

Gary Deindorfer's piece fascinated me, although I can't help wondering how much of it is true. You see, I do recognize parts of the piece, such as Gloria and Gary taking that train ride during which Gloria tried to disguise herself in various ways.

Gloria, of course, was known in those days (in

fandom, but nowhere else) as “Lee Thorin,” and she cut a swath through the male fans on the east coast (as well as some on the West Coast who corresponded with her, as I recall) in 1962 and 1963. (There were some ignorant louts who blamed her for the breakup of my marriage to Sylvia, but this was not true.)

Word came to us (Les Gerber, myself, various others in the Fanoclasts) about that train ride with Gary – maybe from Gary himself (who else?). I recall that Les and I were doing an ersatz FANAC (to jog Walter Breen into doing the real FANAC) which we mailed out with our own MINAC, and we published a special edition in a limited run of three copies, in which news of that fateful train ride was published, in place of some other, more legitimate item. The three copies went to Gary, “Lee” and Esther Davis (with whom we thought they might visit). I no longer recall the outcome of that little hoax, except that it was fairly satisfying.

Rob Hansen's piece is a nice one and valuable for linking British fandom and its running jokes with our own. There is entirely too little of this in most American fanzines. *{My 50+ U.K. readers are welcome to make more of this happen in these pages.}*

I have the feeling I've read most (or all) of Redd Boggs' column before (he sends me his apazines), but it's good to see it here anyway; Redd is much too under-appreciated in today's fandom. His column

maintains a literate style and approach which goes back directly to his SKYHOOK—in my mind one of the ten best fanzines of all time. I'd love to see Redd reinvolve himself in fandom today and apply his mind (and some essays) to issues in today's fandom. In the meantime, I'll take what I can get. *{As I've mentioned in previous issues, Redd's column is taken from his SAPSine of the same name. Redd dropped out of SAPS in 1987. Most of what appeared in his zine was timeless in nature, but unfortunately I'll eventually run out.}*

I saw Truman "live" twice: at his 1984 inauguration and at the 1952 (Eisenhower) inauguration when he passed on the presidency. My parents had tickets (and seats for the parade) to both inaugurations. I was ten in 1948; alone in my fifth-grade class I was an ardent Truman supporter. Vindication was sweet. (I supported Stevenson in 1952, of course.) *{As did I as a 10-year-old that year, and was one of only two in my class to do so.}* I met Bobby Kennedy once, too: for some reason I was taking the Staten Island Ferry to Staten Island one afternoon (right around rush hour—which is three or four hours long in NYC) and there he was, greeting and shaking hands, right inside the turnstiles. I shook his hand. He must've been running for Senator at that point. *{I met Johnson at the 1960 convention in L.A. and shook hands with Nelson Rockefeller Jr. in '64 at a private reception to which I mysteriously received an invitation.}*

Paul Williams remarks upon his relationship with the Post Office (or, as it likes to be known now, the Postal Service), and that's one I imagine most fans share to some degree. It's sort of a love-hate relationship, after all: we can't exist without the P.O., and it's hard to exist *with* it. I once worked in the P.O.—at the downtown Baltimore central P.O.—which was a generally unpleasant experience, but important in knowing how to deal with the Postal Service. I never use postcards, for instance.

Nice Chuch Harris piece. This one read like it *wasn't* abstracted from a letter, which is good, because Chuch should be writing more actual pieces for fanzines. *{Well, actually, it was extracted from two letters...}*

Good letter from Lee Hoffman, but a couple of nits require correction. I don't know whether it was her error or yours (it's an easy typo) *{mine}* but the fannish abode on Riverside Drive in the mid-'50s (which I visited before the 1956 NyCon2) was the "Riverside Dive." Rich brown was not in error in omitting Robin White from the personnel of "the Great Fanoclast Trek of '65" because Robin (then still Robin Postal) didn't make that trip. (I don't think Lee did either.)

We (the Fanoclasts) were bidding for the 1967 Worldcon, and we made *two* Treks, one in 1965 and

one in 1966. Each had the same basic itinerary: first we went to the Midwestcon, and then we spent nearly a week driving west to the Westercon, held the following weekend, after which we toured the West Coast a bit and returned to NYC. It all took between two and three weeks.

The 1965 Trek was made in my Chevy Greenbriar, carrying six or so of us: Dave Van Arnam, rich brown, Arnie Katz, Mike McNerney and Andy Porter (who, I think, went only as far as the Midwestcon with us). We had a mattress in back and seating in addition for six, and we did part of our Trek in a nonstop drive, rotating drivers (one or two of us sleeping in back) — saving money by not stopping at motels at night.

In 1966 we added a second vehicle — a rented Ambassador—and three women (Robin, Lee, and Cindy the Heap), but rich brown stayed behind (and met Colleen while we were gone). Lee is thinking of that trip.

Boyd Raeburn's letter brings up the subject of snails as food. I have often wondered whether *all* snails are edible, or just those of one variety (the kind that comes in tiny cans from France, with an outrageous price). You see, I *like* to eat snails, at least as they are traditionally prepared in French restaurants, with butter, parsley and garlic. I am less fond of variations that include wine or cognac and leave out the garlic. As far as I am concerned, snails are just an excuse to enjoy a lot of garlic, which I do.

This reminds me of a story. It is a Jerry Jacks story, and one I've told verbally many times, always with great affection for Jerry, whom I miss dearly.

Jerry and I were at a Westercon—I think in Sacramento — and we went to a local restaurant where we both ordered scampi. Now scampi — shrimp in garlic and butter — is another dish which is basically an excuse to enjoy garlic, which Jerry did as much as I, which is why we both ordered it.

While we were ordering, Jerry remarked to the waiter, with cheerful humor if not gusto, "I always say, 'you can't have too much garlic!'" And then he laughed, as did I. I think the waiter also chuckled. Then he departed.

In due time our meals were brought to us. My shrimp were all but swimming in garlic. But Jerry's plate held a different story: his portion had significantly less garlic than mine. Jerry was stunned. "I asked for lots of garlic!" he said, perplexed. "Why, I even told him what I always say, 'you can't have too much garlic.'"

Comprehension dawned on me. "Yeah," I said, "and the waiter took you at your word—you *don't* have too much garlic!"

Joseph Nicholas remarks that their collection of some 600 LPs is irreplaceable "because they're likely never to reappear on CD." I have no idea what's in that collection (except the mention of "those old Jefferson Airplanes") but I feel safe in saying that no matter what is on those 600 LPs, it is either now or will be in the near future available on CD.

I say this because over the past nine years (since 1984) I have been building a collection of CDs (now well over 2,000) most of which are CD reissues of genuinely obscure LPs. And by "genuinely obscure," I mean pressings of 100 to 1,000 in LP, in countries like Italy, Finland, Sweden, U.K., Germany, Austria, France, Portugal and Brazil. And the U.S.: Syn-Phonic, the best U.S. label for such things, has been reissuing material recorded by regional U.S. progressive bands like Cathedral, Easter Island, Now, and a half-dozen others. Some of this material has never before been released; the rest was privately pressed by the bands themselves in small editions sold only at concerts in the mid-'70s.

The CD revolution has created an amazing reissue boom, worldwide, and in every category—from jazz to co-rock. Keeping up with it is not easy. I'll give you one minor example.

In Brazil a number of (obscure) LPs recorded in the late '70s and early '80s have been issued on CD by the Music Hall label. Music Hall makes its CDs in the U.S. and imports them to Brazil (I guess there are no CD plants in Brazil). The Japanese Marquee label buys them in turn, slaps a piece of paper printed in Japanese over the jewel box (so that it covers the back and wraps around the spine to cover a vertical inch of the front, typical of the narrow paper bands the Japanese slip over the spines of all their CD jewel boxes), and re-vends them to Europe and the U.S. as progressive imports. They end up in the import section at my local Tower Records (which has a savvy import-buyer and an import section vastly better than those at the two other D.C.-area Towers).

So I am confident that virtually all of the LPs in Joseph's collection are now or will be soon on CD.

Lenny Kaye remarks on the intersection of fandom and cars—or, more accurately, car magazines. I used to collect car magazines and before my (1975) fire I had a large collection from the early fifties. I had *Motor Trend* back to the first issue (1949). I had *Speed Age* and a bunch of others. One was *Auto Age*, a particular favorite (it ran articles on the Hudsons, Essexes and Terraplanes of the '20s and '30s—and I was a dedicated Hudson freak), which were edited by Larry Shaw. Larry edited a number of car magazines in the '50s, as well as his sf magazines—*Infinity*, *SF Adventures*, et al.—so there's another connection. Ajay Budrys wrote

for those car magazines, too. I recall in 1960 or thereabouts driving a test car out to him in Red Bank, NJ, for Larry Shaw (I took the bus home).

I must agree (again!) with Brian Earl Brown about Frank R. Paul. Although Paul was a competent black and white (line) illustrator, I think it was in his cover paintings that he truly shone. They dazzled the eye with both color (he used bright primary colors—thus throwing into stark relief the drab brown covers of his competitors, Leo Morey and a fellow named Brown) and inventive scenes. His airplanes on the covers of *Air Wonder Stories* look surreal now: a vision of a future that never happened, filled with giant airliners with stacks of wings and scores of engines driving propellers—some of them pointing straight up from the wing, like miniature helicopter rotors. Later, for Ray Palmer's *Amazing and Fantastic Adventures*, he painted scenes of alien life on other worlds, paintings which appeared, sans type, on the magazines' backcovers (surely a fan's gesture from Palmer).

Paul's last important sf work was for Gernsback and Moskowitz's *SF Plus* in 1953, but it lacked the color and verve of his covers for Palmer. His work remains unique, uncopied and unlike that of any other artist. I believe the sf art was a sideline for him, and that he was really an architectural artist (or renderer)—which may explain why he never did people as well as he did landscapes and machines. (But he did better people than later, "astronomical" artists like Bonestell.) (1014 N. Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, VA 22046)

JEAN YOUNG

I appreciated the very personal tone of Andi Shechter's piece on "Losing Isaac." I first laid eyes on Asimov at the Worldcon in Philadelphia in 1953—the summer of which Andy (Young) spent at my parents' house, before we were married. It was our first con and we were bowled over to see The Pros there—and I was astonished to see Asimov and Sprague de Camp wearing Hawaiian sports shirts and chattering to each other. So young-looking! I didn't know who they were, of course; we were just standing by a big square pillar looking out at things and these two guys were talking to each other on the other side of the pillar, calling each other "Ike" and "Sprague." Andy and I stared at each other in true goshwowboyoboy neofannish fashion. Later, as we were milling through the crowd, I felt my bottom pinched (not something that happened to me very often) and was again astonished to see Ike swinging by. I didn't know his reputation at the time and was torn between annoyance, amusement and goshwowery.

A most fascinating article by Greg Benford, showing

Teller in a favorable light—something I probably never would have read had it not appeared in TRAP DOOR, since I am pretty anti-Teller and very anti-weapons. I hadn't realized that Greg worked on the Star Wars stuff (something else I'm opposed to). Reading it certainly revealed my prejudices to me, though it didn't change them. What a strange, sad, moving story about Heinlein and Clarke at that advisory council meeting!

What a fascinating but sad (but funny!) story Chuch Harris tells about his elderly relatives. And how I feel for his old uncle, who yearns for freedom and to fiddle with and fix things. How I dread the thought of being "put away" myself! But who wants to be a burden to his/her family? A galloping mix of emotional reactions to this one.

You always have a wonderful letter column, and it's my main contact with fans-I-once-knew (like LeeH) and fans-I-never-knew (like Paul Skelton, whose letter was marvelous). A. Vinç expresses it so well: "like a room party with all one's friends from far and near gathered together." Right on!

Andrew Hooper strikes a chord when he writes about panicking at sounds with an "auditory resemblance to a fire burning out of control." I have a similar reaction; our barn burned to the ground when I was a child. I also get a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach when I hear high wind (or anything that sounds like high wind), whether from bad days on the road in winter ice and winds — or something more atavistic; I don't know. And smells, too — the smell of smoke (including cigarette smoke) will wake me up. I can smell my landlord's cigarette smoke through the hot-air ducts from all the way down in my basement in La Crosse, and it sometimes wakes me up. And yes, I too frequently rehearse in my mind what I'd grab if a fire broke out when I was at home (in response to Sue Thomason's and Joseph Nicholas' letters). (RR 4, Box 47, Decorah, IA 52101)

HARRY WARNER JR.

I'm glad you've guaranteed the continued existence of the Burbee fanzine collection. Just think how deprived I am of ever experiencing this particular delight of rummaging through boxes of old fanzines I've never seen before. There aren't many fanzines of interest to me published since I became an active fan that I haven't already seen and most of the fanzines published before I began receiving the things in 1938 weren't fannish enough in nature to make me wish now I owned them. I still would like to own runs of FANTASY MAGAZINE, THE TIME TRAVELER and THE FANTASY FAN, but that's about it.

Every time I encounter an article by a female fan

about Isaac Asimov, I fear it's going to unleash a revisionist onslaught on his behavior around young females at cons when he was in his prime. I'm very glad Andi Shechter took a sane view of this matter in her article. There was a difference between horseplay and genuine sexual harassment in such circumstances and apparently most fans accept that fact.

Greg Benford's contribution provides some support for my suspicion that the SDI project was a major factor in the end of the Cold War and perhaps in the breakup of the USSR. He surprises me with the word that Harry Truman read the prozines. Now I find myself wondering if one or two of the obscure fanzine fans who lived in the Washington area around the middle of the century could have been famous people using pen names. There was Paul Vogenitz, for instance, a faithful subscriber to my old genzine, SPACEWAYS, and an occasional loccer of it, who to the best of my knowledge never contacted the active fans like Jack Speer and Lester del Rey who were residing in Washington at the time.

You seem to have that rarest of coups, a Bob Shaw article that isn't a reprint from or a variant on one of his convention talks. A combination of man-made interference and parasites threatens to wipe out the entire oyster population of the Chesapeake Bay and now Bob has me wondering if the link he cites between fans and oysters means a similar fate for fandom.

I believe Redd Boggs may have misremembered his youthful basketball exploits. I'm pretty sure that he's old enough to have played grade school basketball when there was still a jump ball after each basket was scored. This would have cut down sharply on the frantic rushes of everyone from one end of the court to the other that he describes. Whether or not this was so, his teacher must have been sort of stupid, since he seems not to have realized that Redd's lingering under the opponents' basket meant that one member of the opponents' team couldn't be guarded and could do as he pleased while the action was going on at Redd's team's basket.

When I read an article like the one Chuch wrote for this issue, I feel myself sort of fortunate. Now I have a pretty good idea of how I'll behave if I become senile in extreme old age, and thus won't be deprived of this particular knowledge by the very handicap that will cause me to fail to perceive it while it's going on. Already I have a problem with one of my few remaining cousins, who is out of touch with reality in an old folks' home in a nearby town. Ever since she was widowed about forty years ago, I have been instructed to pay her no visits. She would always visit me. I never inquired into this odd situation and I still don't know if she was

afraid neighbors would gossip about a man entering her apartment or if I didn't dress elegantly enough to impress any of her friends she might be entertaining. Now various acquaintances are asking why I don't pay regular visits to her in that nursing home and I'm not sure if I should do so and thus go against her will at a time when she's unable to realize what is happening.

I once wrote a column for the local newspapers about the beginning of the treat or treat custom, trying to pin down just when it began and speculating about how it could have spread to Hagerstown. I no longer remember the approximate year of its possible origin which I tried to find by looking through newspaper files for references to the Halloween phenomena. It didn't exist when I was growing up in the Hagerstown area. Chances are it was popularized here by people moving into Hagerstown from big cities elsewhere in the nation, possibly when Mack Trucks moved its Plainfield, NJ, factory to Hagerstown at the start of the 1960s.

Isn't it possible to buy at affordable prices small safes which are fireproof enough to preserve the contents during a forest fire or house fire? Fans who live in high fire risk areas might save their lives by keeping family photos or other prized possessions in such a container instead of wasting precious time trying to salvage those valuables in a fire emergency. I've tried to steel myself to be philosophical if this house should burn down and I would escape but would lose everything. I have enough insurance to cover the cost of an apartment in a retirement community. There would be no point in extending the insurance coverage to pay for another house of this size and for the cost of building new large collections of books, records and fanzines because I wouldn't have enough years ahead of me to amass large new collections. I didn't even get excited one recent evening when I called 911 because the downstairs smoke alarm was making a lot of noise and I feared I had overlooked some source of fire in the house even though I couldn't feel any heat in the walls or on closed doors and couldn't smell smoke. I simply stayed a few feet from the front door in case of a sudden outburst of flames until the firemen arrived. They couldn't find any problem, either, and decided the smoke alarm had simply gone defective. The most fortunate thing about that experience was the fact that they didn't think of the thing that occurred to me after they were gone: I should have brought the upstairs smoke alarm downstairs and if it didn't go off, I would have known it was a false alarm caused by a mechanical defect. (423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740)

BOYD RAE BURN

Gary Deindorfer's "Beatnik Memoirs" is vintage

Deindorfer. I had forgotten that Gary could do such vivid writing. Esther Davis—wow, there's a name from the past which I had completely forgotten. (She was a very nice lady of mature years who—Ghu knows why—became a sort of den mother to a group of young New York fans who, as I recall dimly, weren't always as nice to her in return as they should have been.)

Greg Benford's article is fascinating and surprising. Who knew that Greg occupied these particular realms? Most interesting was his revelation that the SDI ("Star Wars") had been the last straw which broke the back of the Soviet military's hold on foreign policy. Quite a contrast to the widely propagated claims that the SDI was stupid and wouldn't work.

I actually laughed out loud at Rob Hansen's story that when the BBC proposed in 1924 to broadcast the wedding of Queen Elizabeth II's parents, the Palace refused on the grounds that "disrespectful persons may listen in pubs—with their hats on." Whether today disrespectful persons may happen to listen in pubs with or without their hats on is likely to be least among the Palace's worries.

Interesting to learn from Lee Hoffman that when she was growing up in Savannah, Georgia, there was no Halloween tradition of trick or treat. Often people tend to look on a country as monolithic, not realizing that things can vary immensely from region to region. I have a friend who for several years has spent a month's vacation each year in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and on that basis will unthinkingly attribute to all Americans an attitude with respect to something she finds prevalent in Ft. Lauderdale. People tend to think what is common in their area is to be found all over the country. A good example occurred many years ago when Johnny Carson used to make jokes with respect to Rodney Alan Rippy, a little kid who was featured in commercials for the Jack-in-the-Box hamburger chain. Obviously Carson didn't know—and nobody told him—that Jack-in-the-Box was a fairly local chain, and that the rest of the country had never heard of either it or Rodney Alan Rippy.

Looking over my letter in No. 11 with its reference to the English "lower class" attitude about the French eating frogs' legs and snails, I remembered that Cockneys used to (and maybe still) eat winkles (full name: periwinkles) which are sea snails. They would use a pin to dig them out of the shells. And then there is (was?) the great London delicacy, jellied eels. Arthur Thomson described it to me as "bits of black stuff floating in a bowl of green slime."

I am surprised by the reaction of some to Gary Hubbard's account of his father's funeral. Surely they can understand that a person may dislike to a consider-

able degree a sibling, with good reason, without occasioning alarm and despondency in others. There are such persons as fathers who are rotten or (choose your own adjective) persons, and their offspring owe them no affection or loyalty. Nor is one obliged to love one's relatives. (I guess I'm lucky; I like all my relatives.)

Rob Hansen may find that a "we give blood" sign in the window repels Jehovah's Witnesses, but it may attract vampires. I don't think it necessary to be polite under all circumstances. By being polite to his seat companion, he was subject to "hour after hour of the most vacuous load of old bollocks." I feel sorry for Rob, but it was his own fault. On another subject in his letter, Indians were once immigrants also.

If I were Martyn Taylor and a fire was approaching my house, I'd hose it down and then worry about the local authorities. Don't let the nitpickers get you down! (189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)

VICKI ROSENZWEIG

Benford's article on working for Teller and on SDI is an interesting look inside something that seemed, throughout the Reagan years, to be all surface: whether one was for against SDI, it was presented primarily as a pretty toy and the Pentagon wanted to be the first on the block to own one. I'm pleased to hear that it, or something, broke the Soviet military's hold on USSR foreign policy, but I fear that the Pentagon increasingly controls ours. And I am sorry to hear that Robert Heinlein considered a disagreement over policy as treason, whether from an unknown or from Arthur Clarke. Surely the man who invented the communications satellite has as much right to an opinion on the future of space as the one who predicted we would go to the Moon by selling advertising rights. (On the other hand, I saw in the news that someone wants to put Mylar billboards in orbit; that's not a prophecy I want to see fulfilled.) We may ask foreign visitors to step quietly in discussions of how we should run our educational system, or whether health care should be run by the government rather than insurance companies – these are domestic issues. But SDI, if it was ever implemented, would affect every resident of Earth.

Andrew Main's article is a good look at a culture I know very little about. Here in New York we are somewhat blase about multiculturalism (I've lost track of the exact three-figure number of ethnic groups the mayor claims live here, but clearly remember that a single school district was sending home notices to parents in over twenty languages), but mostly we're mixing the cultures of immigrants from every continent save Antarctica. (Yes, there are penguins in the Central Park zoo, but they keep to themselves.) There

are "only" 20,000 Native Americans in the city, which sounds like a respectable number but can easily be overlooked – it's a fraction of a percent, scattered throughout the city and not all of one tribe.

Bob Shaw is probably right to leave patience out of the Oyster Ratings. While it does bias things against the oyster, patience may not be the ideal qualification for editing a clubzine. It's a great thing in a friend, but not so great if the deadline looms.

Chuch's tale of the near-escape is humorous and poignant, and rings true. I am very glad that my elderly grandparents still have their mental facilities and are still capable of living in their apartment in Brooklyn, needing only occasional help with shopping and other activities requiring travel.

Pamela Boal's comment about mortality brings to mind some thoughts about age. Roger Weddall was quite young. I've said goodbye to two friends younger than myself in the last two years, and I'm all of 29. Both were suicides, which if anything increased the sense of shock. And in addition to older relatives, fandom gives us the gift of friends much older (and, when we get old, much younger) than we are, but that increases the odds that we will see people we love die. Still – I only met Roger at Magicon, not having had the good fortune of corresponding with him. I liked him and I'll miss him, and I wouldn't have turned down the chance to talk even if I'd somehow known I would be mourning his death before the end of the year. (33 Indian Rd. #6R, New York, NY 10034)

PAMELA BOAL

Greg Benford is right; we are indeed everywhere. Through a non-fannish society I have recently become acquainted with an Italian lady of somewhat more than middle years. She is highly intelligent, a reasonably successful artist with numerous interests. We soon discovered many mutual interests but, as you have no doubt guessed, the one that really got us going was the fact that we are both life-long readers of sf. She had never heard of fandom and is fascinated by the whole concept. As she is living in London just now, I was thinking of throwing her in at the deep end. Maybe it's just as well that Rob Hansen didn't mention which pub by Liverpool Street Station. (4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, U.K.)

SID BIRCHBY

I was particularly taken with the dominant theme of Greg Benford's "We Are Everywhere." Yes, indeed, we are everywhere, with the proviso that "we" embraces the genus science-fiction writer of Edward Teller's impassioned espousal together with the no less

humble genus, the sf fan, trailing clouds and glory and rumble of thunder in the distance.

Indeed, you might make out a case for the sf writer being the 20th century music maker, the dreamer of dreams, as contrasted with the wry humor and half-mockery of the sf fan. When the London Circle first saw the H. G. Wells film, "Things to Come," one of its members, Arthur C. Clarke, enthused that he had seen it no less than 37 times, whereupon Bill Temple sourly commented on the pay-off line, "Man must go on!" with a rude noise.

No, I tell a lie. It was "Fantasia," not "Things to Come," that Arthur saw, and he only watched the sequence with Moussorgsky's music in it, because he liked it so much. Or was it Mossulov's "Steel Foundry"? Now there's a piece of social realism for you. The title says it all. Eat your heart out, Stockhausen. After more than fifty years, "Steel Foundry" is still crashing away in my mind's ear. (40 Parris Wood Ave., Didsbury, Manchester M20 0ND, U.K.)

JIM CAUGHRAN

Benford is frustrating in his mention of weaponry and controversy, not telling us what he did or his reflections on SDI, except for an indirect report on Soviet reactions. But the concept of a bunch of science fiction writers advising the gummint on military policy is wild. The "Star Wars" name seems more and more apt. If Star Wars broke the back of the Soviet military's hold on foreign policy, what will break the back of the military's hold on U.S. foreign policy?

But the prospect of working with Teller and the others would make an overwhelming attraction for weapons research for most young physicists. I am critical from my present pacifist views of military research, but no one ever offered me a chance to contradict what are now my convictions. However, I was a little appalled when a statistician told me that some of my work in function theory was applied in a model of atomic reactions. But I've never seen a confirmation of that application. Secret? (24 Prestwick Crescent, Willowdale, Ont. M2H 1M9, Canada)

ROB HANSEN

I for one never doubted that Ronald Reagan was at least passingly familiar with sf—probably through films rather than books, given his widely reported short attention span. His inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality (as demonstrated on those occasions he recalled moving true events from WWII that later investigation by reporters showed were episodes from movies) and exposure to any number of the truly dreadful post-holocaust sci-fi flicks of recent decades

provides the best explanation for the way he blithely ignored the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction that had underpinned deterrence since the 1950s and began talking about "winnable nuclear war." This lunacy got a lot of people in Europe Very-Worried-Indeed, with the result that Ron was almost single-handedly responsible for the huge revival in anti-nuclear feeling over here in the early 1980s. So I suppose it's not surprising he fell for a scam like SDI.

An article in *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, reported in early 1993 that: "On the tenth anniversary of the Strategic Defense Initiative—with \$27 billion so far paid out—there is not a single viable component available for the system. When it was first announced, the plan was supposed to render nuclear missiles 'impotent and obsolete.' The first component, it was claimed, would be in place in the early 1990s. A recent report by the General Accounting Office, the U.S. budget watchdog, declared flatly that officials involved in the project had repeatedly exaggerated their progress. The accountants said that the director of the program 'twisted the truth to claim successes where none, in fact, existed.'"

Greg Benford seems proud of the part sf writers played in SDI and the influence they had on Ronald Reagan, whereas I see it as something we should be ashamed of and should try to pretend never happened. It certainly does our community no credit that we were in any way involved with what was easily the most corrupt and incompetent U.S. administration this century. Turning the U.S. from the world's largest creditor nation to its largest debtor such that all the taxes collected west of the Mississippi go to pay the interest on the debt run up during the wildly free-spending Reagan years demonstrates the administration's incompetence; while having 225 of his staff accused of ethical transgressions or criminality, with special counsel having to be appointed on six occasions to investigate the more serious allegations (a record for the century), speaks to how deeply corrupt it was. (144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, U.K.)

LLOYD PENNEY

The more fandom talks about itself, as does Greg Benford here, the more the more we learn that unlikely people also read sf. Edward Teller and Harry Truman? The sf book store managers tell me that fandom accounts for only a small percentage of their total sales, so I guess I shouldn't be too surprised to learn that some famous names account for some of the rest.

Crawdaddy!?! A name from the past, around the time I was discovering rock. I'm thinking that its return is due, seeing how rap is pushing rock out of the

Billboard charts. Keep us posted on its success, perhaps? {Shortly after this issue hits the ether, the fourth issue of the revived *Crawdaddy* will come out, completing the first year, with well over 500 subbers. Subs are available at \$12/1 year or \$20/2 years; make check payable to *Crawdaddy* and send to P. O. Box 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442—there, Paul, I did work it in.}

Horror stories about nursing homes crop up on the news from time to time, and the thought comes to mind that I hope I can keep my wits about me long enough to avoid being installed in one of them. Chuch Harris' article brings a bit of a smile, but when I think of a dear friend and fan, Margaret Rossiter, who's been in such a home for years now with no hope of ever emerging for something like a three-day con or even a party, a tear comes to my eye. Nursing homes in Scotland drained my grandparents of whatever wealth they had, leaving my mother and her brother with nearly nothing. I pray I need never enter this chamber of the last days.

As Lee Hoffman's parents did, mine liked the idea of fandom. Prolly (long time since I've seen that "word," Lee) they just wanted to make sure that their son, a high-mark misfit in school for many years, was finally making friends through a common interest. To promote this, they let me host club meetings in our home, always afraid that some of the young would trash the place. Never happened, which reinforced their positive attitude about fandom in general. (412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, Ont. L6T 4B6, Canada)

WALTER A. WILLIS

My favorite piece this time was the account by Greg Benford of his interview with Edward Teller. It was awe-inspiring to think that one of us moves in such exalted circles. At the opposite extreme was Bob Shaw's lovely little piece about the British Standard Oysters, in which I feel some proprietary interest since I am responsible for reminding Bob of it. Somewhere between is your own account of the nomination of TRAP DOOR for the best fanzine Hugo at Magicon. You are quite right about the reason for its non-success being its small circulation among voters. It reminds me of the time HYPHEN narrowly missed a best fanzine Hugo at the London Worldcon by reason of the fact that none of its associate editors, including me, bothered to vote at all. (32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 0PD)

RUSSELL CHAUVENET

The most amazing thing in the issue is Greg Benford's account of Teller's appreciation of Heinlein, Asimov and Clarke—"they are much more important in

the long run than any Secretary of Defense."

I jumped out of my chair when I read Brian Earl Brown's gloomy assertion that "old magazine art is never reprinted." Peter Nicholls' *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* stated (under "Illustration") that the following exist: *2000 AD—Illustrations from the Golden Age of SF Pulp*, by Jacques Sadoul (1975); *One Hundred Years of SF Illustration*, by Anthony Frewin (1974); *Science Fiction Art*, by Brian Aldiss (1975); and *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction*, by David Kyle (1976). I found on my shelves two others: *Fantastic Science Fiction Art (1926-1954)*, by Lester del Rey (1975) and *Tomorrow and Beyond*, by Ian Summers (1978). As Nicholls' work was published in 1979, for all I know other collections of magazine sf art may have appeared since. I just wanted to lift a bit of the gloom BEB's observation might have introduced into the hearts of those loyal to the artists of old. (11 Sussex Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910-5436)

GEORGE FLYNN

"I named my outfit Crustacean Comparison Services," says Bob Shaw. Well, no wonder it didn't work out; oysters aren't crustaceans.

I can beat Redd Boggs' account in one respect, in that I saw Harry Truman *twice*. In both 1948 and 1952 his motorcade came through my home town (Warren, RI) during the campaign, and on one of the two occasions (the other was a Saturday) they let school out so the kids could see the President. As for Redd's statement that he "wouldn't bother to look out of the window if, say, Ronald Reagan rode past my house on an elephant," it might be prudent to do so, in case he made a sharp right turn and collided with the bounce.

Boyd Raeburn talks about "the introduction of 'foreign' dishes into British eateries." I imagine that there, as here, there's a tendency for all the ethnic cuisines to blend together. (Or maybe more than here: it was in London that I discovered the possibility of pizza with a topping of cockles and mussels. Not, fortunately, alive alive-o.) I often eat in the food court of a mall near my office where they have the usual mix of fast-foods-of-all-nations; but what do you call the place whose specialties include chicken teriyaki in pita bread? (And for 50 cents extra, you can get it with mozzarella cheese...) (P. O. Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Sta., Cambridge, MA 02142)

MARTY CANTOR

Redd Boggs writes about almost-encounters with Presidents—I *could* have met (and shaken hands with) Canada's former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney but I passed on that opportunity. Ever since I was in college

and had to pass by a receiving line at an acquaintance's wedding, I have dreaded encounters such as these.

Some background: Robbie is the accountant at Canada's consulate in Los Angeles. In addition to a consular office, the Canadian government owns a mansion which is used by its Consul General. This mansion is used to entertain visiting dignitaries among which, of course, is the Prime Minister if he is visiting Los Angeles. Naturally, if the visiting dignitary is the Prime Minister, the staff of the consulate also turns out.

This was not the first time I have visited the Consul General's mansion. Indeed, as Mrs. Winsor, the Consul General, is an old friend of Robbie's family, I have slightly gotten to know this delightful lady. The mansion is as nice as its then-occupant (Mrs. Winsor retired to Canada when her political appointment to this post ended), situated next to the Riviera Country Club in one of Los Angeles' nicer neighborhoods.

Anyway, after the usual "mixing" and other social niceties were observed (I spent much of my time talking with the consular staff people I knew – at one time I even avoided talking to former Mayor Bradley who had been standing next to me for fifteen or so minutes – there is a tactful way of doing this, one of the few tactful things I have ever mastered) the mass of people inside moved to the patio between the pool and the house to hear Mr. Mulroney give a short speech. I was in the third row, about ten feet from the Prime Minister, but I must say that instead of paying much attention to what he was saying I had more interest in the person about six inches to my front-left, Suzanne Sommers. After his short speech the Prime Minister announced that he would "move among you to say hello" I sidled into the house and successfully avoided the encounter.

At one point early in the evening, Mrs. Winsor asked me to get a chair for the ailing wife of a city councilman, so I wound up having a few words with a grateful and pleasant "famous" person – the one blot on an otherwise successful evening of being around and avoiding contact with well-known people.

Still another type of person was represented at this affair – lots of secret service and mountie types were present. Robbie said there were rumors that Mulroney's good friend Ronald Reagan might attend; fortunately, this turned out to be just rumor. *{You're certainly a determined avoidist!}* (11825 Gilmore St. #105, No. Hollywood, CA 91606-2844)

JEANNE MEALY

I'm glad you got to meet Roger Weddall, too. We were in ANZAPA together and met in person at Magicon last year. There was a sense that he was

partying while he could, but that didn't lessen the fun. We got some silly pictures in the Minneapolis in '73 suite – Roger standing on his hands for the Australian version, him holding me upside down for some equally weird reason. I don't even want to try describing his encounter with the cardboard cow.

Andi Shechter shares some pleasant memories of Isaac Asimov and ends on a note many of us share: "...It was *not* time for Isaac to leave us. Dammit."

I'm not sure what to make of Gary Deindorfer's "One of Those Dreaded Beatnik Memories." Lizard-people in a cappucino house place him on trial for "Wearing a Suit in a Beatnik Cappucino House." Gloria is there, then not there. I don't know what happened, exactly, but it was fun to read.

"On the Road to 1885" begins with a catchy sentence ("I felt I was very near death"), takes us through various sights, and leaves us with a number of thoughts ranging from the habits of mountain people to the quality of the food at the Mar T Cafe. Whether he's trying to avoid slipping on slugs, feeling inspired by the company he keeps, or gazing sadly at neglected miners' graves, Andy Hooper knows how to make us feel like we're there with him – and better off for the experience.

Redd Boggs muses about how crime has intruded on our lives. I remember living in a small town in Wisconsin in the 1960s and laughing when my grandma told us to lock the doors. She was from the big town of Mason City, Iowa, where apparently they worried about these things. Not too many years later, we *were* locking our doors. Yes, there was crime years ago, but it was different. People read books and saw movies about crime, but had a generally trusting attitude. Now, there's no end to the news about violence, and horror movies leave nothing to the imagination. Can it be traced back to the '50s, when anyone could be an alien – or spy, who'd turn in their own family and friends? We get pictures on TV and in movies and endless descriptions in print of how violence is done. Great instructions for someone inclined to pay close attention. Let's toss in alienation and powerlessness, for people who don't know their neighbors or coworkers. No simple cause – any good remedies?

"The Almost Great Escape" by Chuch Harris, about elderly relatives, is a subject I think we'll see more and more in fanzines. I hope they give his wife's uncle something to *do* while in the hospital, or wherever he is these days. He's a Mr. Fix-It? Give him something to fix; get him outside as often as possible. Haven't they heard of "use it or lose it"?

I shivered at Lucy Huntzinger's memories of being near three natural disasters. Everything is normal, life is going along as it does – and suddenly you look up and

think the worst. A plane is about to crash nearby. The bombs have been dropped. An earthquake has hit. A tornado is minutes away, looking like footage on the news. The snow is all around and you're suddenly not sure which way to go. Aarghhh! Not like this! I don't want this to happen to other people; I don't want to end *my* life like this. I understand her wish to avoid dying inside, trapped. There's sometimes a chance to get away if we're outside. Whether this is instinct or half-baked wishful thinking, the urge for self-preservation comes through. Shiver...

Thanks for Pamela Boal for her praise of fans with a variety of interests! "I have always felt the most interesting fans are those who bring their other interests and hobbies into fandom." It's true of anyone, isn't it? Any fanatic is boring. My interests include sf (books, movies and TV shows), rubber stamps, apas, fanzines, conventions, plants, animals (pets and wild ones), weather, toys, rummage sales, eating out, candy, cooking, and many other things. I would not want to get trapped into talking about or doing any one of those for an extended period of time. As for the weird circumstances of her father's funeral – whooooo! Definitely the Twilight Zone. (4157 Lyndale Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55409-1446)

TRACY SHANNON

As a newcomer to fanzine fandom, I perused Bob Shaw's "Shell Cases" with great interest. I'm afraid the oyster would win in my case, but it's nice to have somebody to look up to, right?

Mr. Hooper's epic made me envision it as a completely dialogue-less short film, with only the wind over the gorge, the drip of the leaves, and the squish of the slugs as a soundtrack. The story had a lot of spooky atmosphere, and ending up at the *Twin Peaks* diner seemed quite appropriate, somehow.

Redd Boggs' approach to basketball reminded me of a conversation I overheard at a con. A bunch of guys were attempting to explain baseball to an avowed cricket nut from overseas, but he was not to be convinced. He'd been taken to one baseball game already, apparently, and "one team hadn't any hits at all. In fact, everyone was terribly excited that they hadn't had any. But all I could tell was—nothing was happening!" I have to admit that I agreed with him at the time. (1941 Ellen Ave., Madison, WI 53716)

SHELBY VICK

In "Doorway" you referred to your preferred body temperature, blaming it on the place of your birth. Guess that explains mine, too. I should explain that Panama City is in northwest Florida, a far cry from

balmy Miami. The quickest way to explain the difference is that *summer* is our tourist season; only Snowbirds (mostly Canadians) find our winters an improvement over their own. They find highs in the fifties to be quite pleasant. {*As do I!*} Now, there have been Decembers when you could go swimming – and there have been hard freezes in March. On average, the seventies and eighties reign (often with rain) from April through October though nineties are not unusual. So I like lows in the fifties at night and highs around seventy during the day. {*Who wouldn't; sounds perfect.*} But if I have to choose between hot or cold, I prefer hot – but I'd rather not be forced to make the choice.

I'm interested in Indian culture and can tell, thanks to Andy Main's article and your own references and bits in letters, many others are too. My own interest traces back to an uncle in my childhood. He and my aunt lived Out West for a bit, and he was fascinated by Indian artifacts as well as by Indians he had met and tales he was told. He had several good books on the West, about both Indians and pioneers. Unfortunately, books and uncle have long departed, but my appreciation of things Indian lives on.

Bob Shaw's touch of levity was enjoyable – but he could never use our local oysters for his CCS. They have a way of going straight from the water to one of many local oyster bars for gustatory pleasure, so it would appear they are severely lacking in the "avoidance of distractions" element of his scale. And the oysters in nearby Apalachicola fail on the "ability to stay out of feuds" scoring; they maintain they are far superior to Chesapeake Bay oysters—an opinion shared by all humans who have compared them.

Redd Boggs was, as ever, most readable. I think Redd could write about an elevator ride or waiting for a dental appointment and make it enjoyable. (627 Barton Ave., Panama City, FL 32404)

SHERYL BIRKHEAD

Regarding Chuch Harris' relations, I had a grand-uncle who had been a flying ace in WWI (*other* side) who was all piss and vinegar. Because he would *not* adhere to medical directions, one of his legs was amputated. He never quite recovered, but became a bit more crafty in trying to hide the arrival of the daily six-pack or case from the live-in nurse. A buddy would arrive in the front yard before dawn and deposit the offending bottles/cans in the shrubbery. At 10 a.m., Uncle Gene would allow himself to be cajoled into trying out the prosthesis and refused to have the silly girl fussing over him. I don't think it takes much imagination to figure out where he took his exercise. The nurse appreciated a respite from his sharp tongue – so

she didn't notice his absence for at least an hour. However, after the escalation from six-pack to case, she *did* notice it the second time she found him passed out on the lawn. To my knowledge, right up until the day he died they never did manage to totally thwart his nocturnal booze deliveries. (23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20882)

STEVE STILES

Great cover by Dan; he's always been my favorite fanartist, but lately he's been topping himself, both here and in BLAT. And he really managed to capture the True Me in that sensitive fannish caricature, although omitting the string of drool that usually dangles from my lower lip.

Unfortunately I can't claim Isaac Asimov's friendship (although he *did* once call me a bastard), but I did feel sad when I learned he had died, after all the pleasure his writings had given me over the years. I can still almost feel the sense of wonder I got from reading the Foundation series when I was fourteen. I doubt if I'll ever again experience such feelings with some other author's work, reading it for the first time. It's strange to contemplate stfdom without Asimov. More recently I had similar feelings upon hearing about the deaths of Bill Gaines, EC's publisher, and his former editor/artist/writer, Harvey Kurtzman. Gaines for me will always be *the* ideal comics publisher – I used to fantasize about working for him when I was a kid. This was before all his titles, save *Mad*, were effectively killed by the Moral Majority of those times. I wonder if this is when I first began to doubt mainstream society? Here was this stuff that I considered Wonderful and the powers-that-be were denouncing it as vile trash. From all accounts, Gaines was also a fine and novel human, but Kurtzman's passing hit me a bit harder. *Mad*, *Two-Fisted Tales*, his fantastic art, and his approach to the work, all inspired me on all sorts of levels, and one of them was my becoming a cartoonist.

This was the best Gary Deindorfer writing I've seen in years; really has style and a beat to it – nice timing, nice rhythm. Oh yes, and funny, too – I larfed and larfed. Incidentally, I was lying above about seeing Gloria once a decade; last time I saw her was in '73 when she came knocking at my door 'round midnight, looking for a place for her and her boyfriend to crash before flying off to Ireland the next day. They were going to write pornography there and live tax-free. "Oh, Steve," she breathed in my ear (she breathed in everybody's ear), "things might've been different for us once, if only, if only ..." "Yeah, yeah," I grumped, "... Gary!" (8631 Lucerne Road, Randallstown, MD 21133)

ETHEL LINDSAY

Easily the most fascinating letter was from Pamela Boal. It made me think of the funeral of Ted Carnell. It was held in a crematorium and there were so many people there some had to stand in the vestibule. The minister said some words about Ted and that was all ... just a normal ceremony. Outside, looking at the rows and rows of wreaths, Ted Tubb said to me, "There were so many people there who could have spoken a tribute to Ted." The minister had done his best about Ted as a husband and father, but there was no mention of Ted as a father to British sf.

There must be many of your readers who feel as I do, that no matter how inactive you become, when you go back fandom is always there. Sometimes with good news and sometimes with bad. This was shown by a sudden emergence of Brian Jordan after many years who sent me a Happy Mercer Day card! (69 Barry Road, Carnoustie, Angus DD7 7QQ, Scotland)

JENNY GLOVER

The part which struck me most from the letter column was just how hit and miss people's introductions to fanzines were. I hope I'll be able to look back, like Walt Willis, and recall that so and so came into fandom from reading a British Science Fiction Association magazine. As I read Tom Perry's letter, I realized that the BSFA fanzine he was referring to was *MATRIX*, the news magazine which I edit. He says it is just as much a fanzine as, say, *TRAP DOOR*. I disagree, with respect, for two reasons. First, thank goodness, I don't have any financial worries with *MATRIX*. It's a club magazine, part of the service offered by the BSFA, and is created and paid for by members. However, as with many club magazines, the contributors are not members only – many non-members (but hopefully potential members) also contribute.

The second reason why I'd dispute the definition of fanzine for *MATRIX* is because it has a clear and well-defined function: to provide news for members and to access feedback by members. There are fannish elements in this, including details of conventions and fanzines (with a fanzine review column).

Tom also suggests that the BSFA was partly created as a recruiting source for fandom. Some people still consider that to be one of the BSFA's reason for existence. I know *I* get a real buzz from seeing a BSFA member leap into activity and start pubbing his ish. But, unfortunately, I've seen very little reaction from people who would consciously define themselves as fans to these brave new fans. Take John D. Rickett, for example. He is now a well-liked and active fan, but he recently confessed he had to be very thick-skinned at

the beginning of his journey to fandom – and he is a smooth businessman with all the tricks of communication at his fingertips, for ghod's sake. There are fans who support the BSFA – Joseph Nicholas immediately springs to mind, and Terry Jeeves – but quite frankly I sometimes despair of established fandom, which seems to deliberately shun new fans motivated by and through the BSFA. (16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP, U.K.)

MICHAEL SHANNON

In regards to Tom Perry's letter, I agree with his points about apas being more an indication of fandom's health than its demise. I would probably never have started to get into fanzines if I had not been invited to join an apa. It was through this apa that people like Andy Hooper communicated their passion for fanzines and publishing. Until that point, I had been content to go to a couple of conventions every year (and help put one on), but I really wasn't "connected in" to fandom. I had heard about it, but I hadn't been motivated to find out about it. Reading accounts from people for whom fandom was important got me curious. Getting my feet wet publishing an apazine whetted my appetite for more. (1941 Ellen Ave., Madison, WI 53716)

DEREK PICKLES

Sue Thomason remarks "that there seems to be a lot about mortality/death/funerals in this issue (#11)." Because many of your correspondents and contributors were active in, and can write about, the '40s and '50s, it means that they must be in their 60s and 70s and mortality claims what seems, to the younger, to be a disproportionate share of their number. Reactions to death have changed greatly. When I was younger – and even after WW2 – when a funeral procession drove along the road pedestrians stood to attention and men, especially the older ones who had gone through WW1, took off their hats and caps as a mark of respect. Today I wouldn't be surprised to see someone driving a GTi model car overtaking a funeral procession, probably the same type who overtake on the hard shoulder of motorways. (44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorks. BD5 8LX, U.K.)

DICK LUPOFF

The arrival of TRAP DOOR No. 12, with its never-failing array of excellences, reminds me of my quasi-promise to do a piece for you on my experiences in the Monday Night Class universe of a couple of decades ago. I still haven't done it, of course, and I still intend to do it, of course. Mea culpa! *{In the meantime, Dick, you have the distinction among TRAP DOOR participants of the longest-standing promise. Break it any time!}*

The recent situation in Waco, Texas, involving Vernon Lee Howell ("David Koresh") and the Branch Davidian sect naturally made me think of Stephen Gaskin and the Monday Night Class. Is The Farm still in operation? *{Yes.}* Is Stephen still functioning as guru, seer, saint and godling? *{No!}*

That was one of the things that made Pat and me drop out of the Class, by the way. Mr. Gaskin was turning from a scholar, thinker, teacher and discussion leader – "first among equals" – to an authoritarian figure of potentially frightening stature. Well, that plus we didn't feel like pooling all of our worldly belongings with a couple of hundred people most of whom we didn't even know, and moving to a communal farm in Tennessee. I hadn't spent thirty years training myself and working to become a novelist in order to go off and turn into a hillbilly sorghum farmer. Pat had her feelings, too, pretty similar to my own.

We also came to notice, speaking of the communal aspect of The Farm, an interesting characteristic of most of the people, in that era, who were eager to share all belongings communally. They were mostly eager to share all of *your* belongings. I can't recall a single one of them ever saying, "Here, I've got twenty bucks; why don't you take ten and then we'll share equally." A lot more often it was a case of, "Say, you've got twenty dollars there; why don't you give me ten and then we'll be the same." I guess I was a little slow on the uptake, but in time I figured it out that they were very interested in whatever they could get from you – food, lodging, dope, whatever – and not very interested in what they could give. Or maybe they had nothing to give. Hmmm. *{This situation is certainly something I noticed, too, but I figured it would go away when we'd all melted into one communal lump. In fact, it didn't. For example: certain food items were rationed, so much per person, yet there developed a small coterie of people who would use up all their allotment and then come around and hit you up for some of yours.}*

We, too, had a few "Fire" moments. We were fortunate in that the flames didn't reach our house, but we stood on the front lawn watching them creep down the hill behind the Claremont Hotel and preparing ourselves to bug out. Took some scary photos, too. Had the dogs in the car, our older son had come over to help us pack and clear out, we were getting rained on by black cinders and red coals... and then the wind shifted and the flames stopped advancing. (3208 Claremont Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705)

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

Most of my life, I think, I have had this tug between a generalized ennui for the whole of the world and an

excessive enthusiasm for its minutiae and esoterica. The last many years, however, ennui seems to be winning out. It's become so hard to write LoCs, when once I was an out-of-control letterhack who'd write a page or two to *anyone* kind enough to put me on their mailing list and appreciate my artful obnoxiousness. I do still enjoy the few good fanzines diehards patiently keep sending. Yet when I ponder responding—well, I feel I have nothing to contribute of even ephemeral value, and my LoCs are now rare.

If one essay from No. 11 reminds me that I, too, have driven cross-country a couple times, should I drag out of my memory some supposedly witty vignettes of those trips and call it a LoC? Even I am no longer amused by my tales of 80 MPH drives over the snow-stormed Rockies in Loren MacGregor's beat-up station wagon, with Loren yelling at me to slow down, so how can I believe anyone else wants to hear about it?

Or should I pull one of my radical curmudgeon routines and deflate the sacred cow of a flattered fan of St. Isaac's (from No. 12)? Perhaps St. Isaac *was* merely a "self-mocking" grotesque old fanny-pincher whose general sweetness outweighed his specific obnoxiousness around young women. Yet once he used his lecherous paws awkwardly enough to shove an unwilling victim of his horniness from a shared stage and podium. Only by her great good fortune was she only severely bruised rather than severely injured. And afterwards she was vilified for not happily accepting the fannish baptism of the Saint's frothing lechery, and was said to have leapt intentionally to near death out of sheer mean-spiritedness to embarrass a Saint. As well to remind people that St. Francis was extraordinarily fat and had gout. Truth is rarely as strong as myth.

But by golly, I just haven't the enthusiasm anymore for such curmudgeonly performances. I really don't care that some kindheartedly dirty old fardle nearly killed someone through harmless sexism; indeed, it would hardly sustain my interest if she *had* been killed.

I guess I ask myself too many multiple choice questions. Such as: "What is life for?" (1) Nothing; (2) Fandom; (3) Work-Consume-Die. The choices seem all too familiar.

And maybe I feel fandom has changed too much. I went last Friday night to NorWesCon, having received the usual invitation in the mail, and was pretty certain I'd sent back the card saying thanks for the free membership, I'll be there, and yes, I'll bring a guest, name of Babs. Crossing the parking lot and seeing all these dorks in goofy-looking costumes (a man who probably thought he looked pretty cool dressed like a kitty cat in reality looks like his intestines had fallen out of his ass) I actually started to feel despair.

Then it turned out Babs and I weren't on the guest list after all. I would have had to have waited until after the banquet to ask so-and-so what happened, for only so-and-so could okay the badges (I think the military works that way, too). I weighed the tiny amount of fun conventions can be versus the hassle of running around trying to find so-and-so and realized I'd rather have Thai food with my chum then go home and fuck (with assistance of whips and chains and sundry props, snatcherly—ah, beautiful ennui). Then I worked on a kabbalistic manuscript the rest of the weekend, feeling ennui only when I thought of going back to the con. So why wasn't a con worth a couple hours of hassle to get badges? Because the inescapable costumes are unaesthetic and ridiculous, and because 99.9% of the attendees don't even read books. I can see the remaining 0.1% in a less hectic atmosphere at a different time. I do enjoy cons but they have to be hassle-free or forget it.

And then there are the fanzines. They used to be big fat suckers that came every three or four months and had some sense of continuity and community. Even if they were infuriating, at least you could count on them. Where else could you read the Confessions Of A Confirmed Celibate Who Had Her Tubes Tied In Case She Got Raped And This Way She'll Never Need An Abortion Which She Thinks Would Be Wrong? Or an essay on Mouse Fucking (hi, Gary!). Ah, the good old days! But now the really good fanzines come out annually or less. There's no sense of community in that. You can't generate discussion that way. You're left with something like a photocopied Christmas letter from relatives you almost forgot you had, and the most you can say is a polite "thanks."

So those are some of the reasons I'm not writing this LoC. (P. O. Box 20610, Seattle, WA 98102)

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, ALLEN BAUM, WOODY BERNARDI, ROBERT BLOCH, MOG DECARNIN, MIKE DECKINGER, TEDDY HARVIA ("I'm disappointed circumstances conspired against Steve Stiles delivering his spontaneous Hugo acceptance speech on your behalf. He writes almost as well as he draws."), JOHN-HENRI HOLMBERG, DAVID LANGFORD, ERIC MAYER, JOSEPH NICHOLAS, DAVID ROMM, NIGEL ROWE, A. LANGLEY SEARLES, STEVE SNEYD, JACK SPEER ("I suppose your tabulation of current fanzines is limited to subzines and genzines?" Yes.), SUE THOMASON and HENRY WELCH. Thanks to all!

Remember, next issue in the spring — so don't procrastinate! Write your LoC today!

Trap Door



Ray McLean