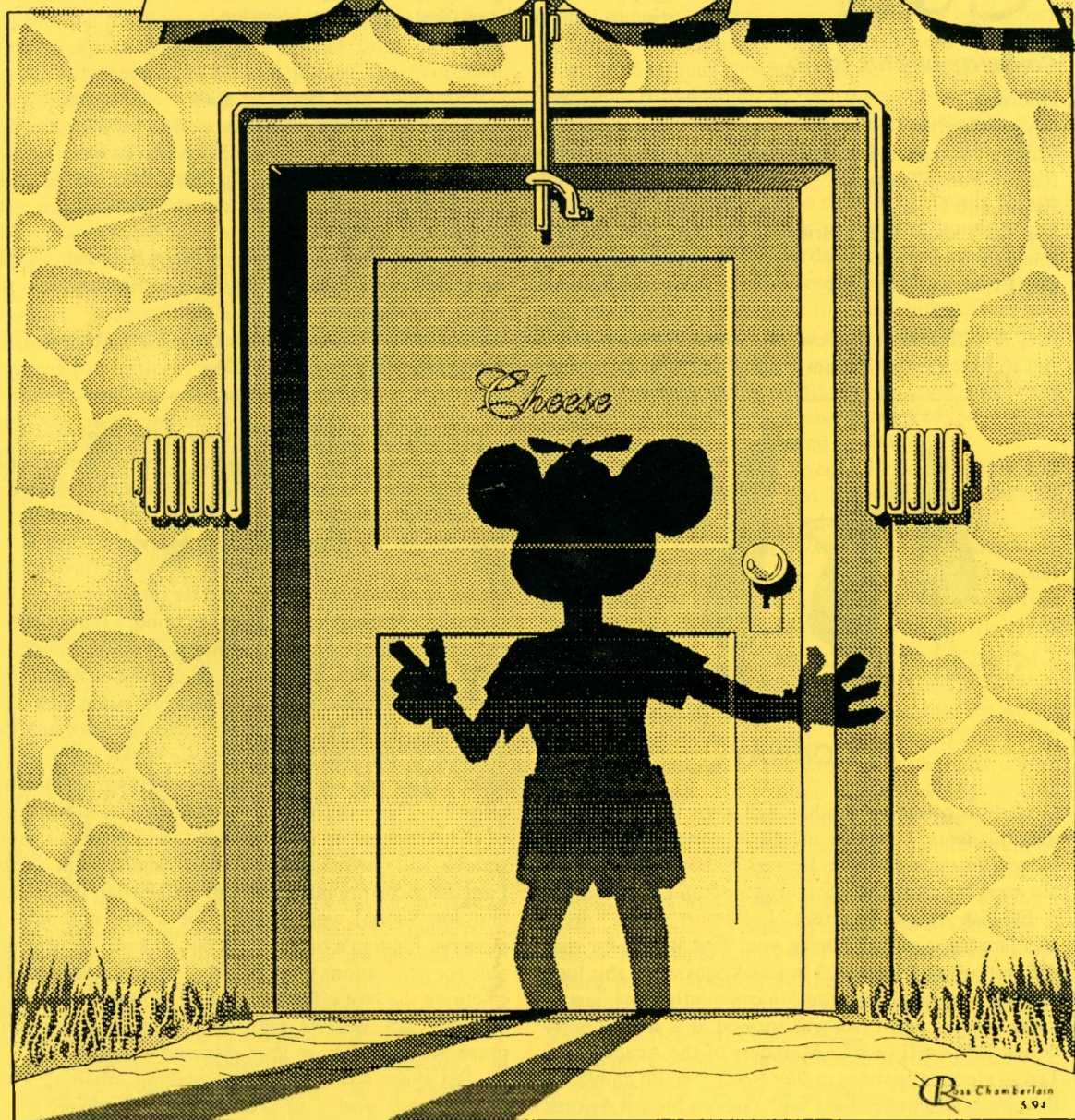


DOOR





Issue No. 14, July 1994. Edited and published by Robert Lichtman, P. O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442 USA. Please send all trade fanzines and letters of comment to this address. Founding member and Past President₁₉₉₁: fwa. Also a founding member: afal. This fanzine is available by Editorial Whim in response to The Usual, or \$4.00 per issue (*reviewers please note!*). The Usual includes your letters, contributions both written and artistic, and accepted trades. You should know I can be capricious (thus "editorial whim") about marginal members of the mailing list; so if I haven't heard from *you* lately, think about checking in. If there's an "X" or "?" (or perhaps both) on your mailing label, I'm already reconsidering your continued presence on my mailing list. All contents copyright ©1994 by TRAP DOOR with all rights reverting to individual contributors upon publication.

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DOORWAY

Astute colophon readers will note that beginning with this issue, I identify myself as a member not only of fwa (the venerable Fan Writers of America, ten years old now) but of the newly constituted afal, or Academy of Fannish Arts and Letters. I was part of the "dregs of a late-night party" (thank you, Ted White, for that description) at Silvercon 3 in Las Vegas when this long overdue new fannish institution came into being, just as I was present when fwa was formed at a similar party during LACon II in '84. Members of the Academy, as Ted so eloquently states in *Blat* No. 3, "could emblazon the covers of our fanzines with Golden Stencil Awards—for best-planned staples, or maybe adequate margins."

Shortly after my return, a copy of the FanHistoricon flyer revealed itself in the piles of print precariously perched in my bedroom/office. This was a three-day convention scheduled immediately after Corflu in Hagerstown, an obscure Western Maryland town virtually unknown outside of fandom. Reading through the leaflet reminded me of afal and its intention of recognizing fannish worth. With that in mind, I found myself sharing the FanHistoricon committee's stated concerns: "The publications and legacy of our fannish past are notoriously fragile and in danger of being lost and forgotten. How can we preserve the fanzines and the artifacts of the past? How can we make them accessible? How can we make this an ongoing, sustainable effort?" These statements seemed parallel to the goals of the Academy of Fannish Arts and Letters, if more serious and far-reaching in their denouement. The FanHistoricon organizers (Peggy Rae Pavlat, Bruce Pelz and Joe Siclari) were looking for a way not only to preserve fandom's best efforts but to keep them available for generations to come, while the founders of afal celebrate the best efforts of current fandom—but would certainly not quarrel with the notion of longterm preservation. Well, at least *this* one wouldn't.

But there seemed to be something missing. Fandom, though worthy of preservation, is unlikely to be able to muster enough support and, let's face it, suffi-

cient cash to create a repository for fannish publications and lore on its own. I concluded that a larger concept was in order. Before long I came up with the solution: the Science Fiction, Fantasy and Fandom Hall of Fame and Museum, a large permanent exhibition in its own sprawling building featuring all aspects of the mother literature and its aficionados. Perhaps it might be a joint venture of SFWA and afaf.

There would be numerous ways to finance such a wide-ranging operation, including the selling of "memberships" to the vast science-fiction and fantasy reading and viewing public and to fandom. Charter memberships would be offered at a special price and with special privileges, sort of like joining the Worldcon early. This could be done by direct mail solicitation – yes, junk mail! – with an attractive mailing of the usual sort: an enthusiastic and sincere letter from a prominent figure in the field enlisting your support "at this critical early stage"; an illustrated brochure showing an artist's conception of the building coupled with a description of the sorts of exhibits that would be mounted, including some examples; a pledge card and a pre-addressed envelope. Sources such as the membership lists of the Science Fiction Book Club, all recent Worldcons and regional conventions, mail order dealers, the *Fandom Directory*, and of course the mailing lists of major fanzines would provide a huge initial mailing list. A similar brochure could be sent in bulk to stf/fantasy specialty shops as well as general book stores with a large stf/fantasy section. There would be tables and possibly panels about it at various conventions. There could also be an aggressive program to encourage fans and pros alike to set up trust funds from their estates to benefit the museum. This is a common fund-raising tactic these days, and apparently a fairly successful one.

In a frivolous moment, I thought that the perfect location for the SFFFHFM would be Cleveland, Ohio, across from the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame. The cross-pollination of these two major branches of pop culture would be beneficial. Cleveland's most famous fan/pro, Harlan Ellison, having no children to whom to bequeath his worldly belongings, might want to be a donor. Since he's Done It All – been a famous fan *and* a famous pro – it might be appropriate, in recognition of serious support on his part, to set up a Harlan Ellison Room, in which his career would be traced from those early issues of the *Bulletin of the Cleveland SF Society* through his early prozine sales, his many novels, short story and non-fiction collections, his scripts for various TV shows, and of course the materials for the never-published final *Dangerous Visions* collection. I'm sure this would please Harlan's sense of self-worth and he might pitch in for some of the expense involved.

As a longtime decrier of Certain Fans, Harlan could also sponsor the Fugghead Room of the Fan Wing – after all, fuggheads are famous fans, too, in their own way – but we would have to draw the line on one thing. He would *not* be allowed to name it after Andy Porter (who most people would not consider qualified for such an "honor," anyway). No, the Fugghead Room would have a name evocative of multiple generations of fandom's most infamous. It would be called the Claude Hall. (As an acknowledged or at least self-proclaimed expert on fuggheads, Arnie Katz could be the curator.)

At that my musings stopped. Thinking of the part in Ted White's dream ("Nightmare at ConFrancisco," *Idea* No. 8) about "giving offense," I wondered if a Fugghead Room would be too controversial. Not able to decide, I moved on to other fannish matters.

A few weeks later I was visiting at Carol Carr's house. Expecting a visit from a long-lost distant relative, she was looking for a stash of old family photos and, in the course of this, uncovered an envelope containing Terry's report cards, from third grade on up through high school. Now here, I thought, is an artifact that would prove invaluable to future biographers and historians. Through a careful analysis of Terry's grades in various subjects and the comments scrawled by his teachers over the course of his school career, one could construct a whole theory of what motivated him and led him to live a dual fannish and proish life.

The Fan Wing of the Science Fiction, Fantasy and Fandom Hall of Fame and Museum would be the perfect repository for esoterica such as Terry Carr's report cards. I can see it now: a large glass cubicle on a pedestal containing an artful display of the report cards, with a few of them open to public view so that visitors could see that, for instance, in fourth grade Terry's handwriting was rated "good for this student." Another case nearby might house the QWERTYUIO- and Gafia Presses and the famous Iron Maiden with a few examples of their output. There would *have* to be an extensive display of the work of the best fan artists and cartoonists. An audio display would include excerpts from the Burbee-Lancy tapes, the sound of Tucker smoooothing, and much more. There would be slides or photos of the fans and, wherever possible, videos. This would also apply to another display I envision: Famous Faanish Laughs. It would *have* to include F. Towner Lancy and Jeanne Bowman. I was getting pretty jazzed by all this – and this was just the Fan Wing. I hesitated to get into what might be in the Science Fiction and Fantasy wings, preferring to leave that to more serious scholars of the Mother Literatures. (I will mention one thing, though: for visitors to the museum who want to nod out for a while, there would

be a small comfortable closed area where Phil Farmer's 1968 Worldcon GoH speech would play over and over.)

But I'm sure that, with your cosmic minds, y'all can Just Imagine

As I've written before, fandom is all in your mind. Each of us creates our own fandom by the choices we make of the fanzines we choose to publish and receive, the conventions we attend, and the fellow fen with whom we associate. So consider the figures that follow reflective of my own personal fandom, the one determined by my "editorial whim," however quirky. I make no secret of the fact that I don't automatically trade with everyone who solicits me, mostly because some zines simply don't interest me. No doubt *Trap Door* doesn't interest everyone, either. I know that in my first fan incarnation I tended to trade with nearly everyone—that was pretty much the tradition—but fandom was smaller then and more homogeneous. All that said, here's the annual tally of fanzines I've received:

	'93	'92	'91	'90	'89	'88	'87
Australia	16	18	16	16	12	15	32
Canada	12	17	1	2	2	1	4
U. K.	51	50	44	30	61	51	33
U. S.	91	104	85	66	55	67	58
Others	2	2	1	5	0	4	3
Totals:	171	191	147	115	130	138	130

1993's Others were from Lithuania and New Zealand.
So were '92's! Is this a conspiracy?

So far this year I've received 102 fanzines (from January 1 through June 30). An inordinate but not excessive number were from '90s publishing giant and hyperfan Andy Hooper, who asked me at Silvercon 3 if my totals included genzines I get via the FAPA mailings. He said that he received something like 200 fanzines last year, and that he included such zines as part of his calculations. To see if this had a major effect on my totals, I took a look at the past year's mailings and counted ten zines I would have received directly. I could go back and check out the other years tallied above, but would rather not engage in revisionist statistics. I concluded my own personal fandom continued in fairly healthy condition, and was pleased.

My personal 1994 convention season began with Silvercon 3 in Las Vegas in early April and ended with Corflu Nova in late May. Of the two, I would have to say that Silvercon was more fannish. Most of the core group that makes up the heart of any Corflu was in attendance, and the committee seemed more responsive to the needs of attendees—this despite the fact that the bulk of Silvercon attendees are more interested in

gaming than in fanzines. I took few notes at both cons, so this is not going to become a dual report. The main thing that sticks in my mind common to both conventions is the excellence of the parties before, during and after. Other than that, general impressions are all that remain: memories of good conversations and times with friends I see too seldom.

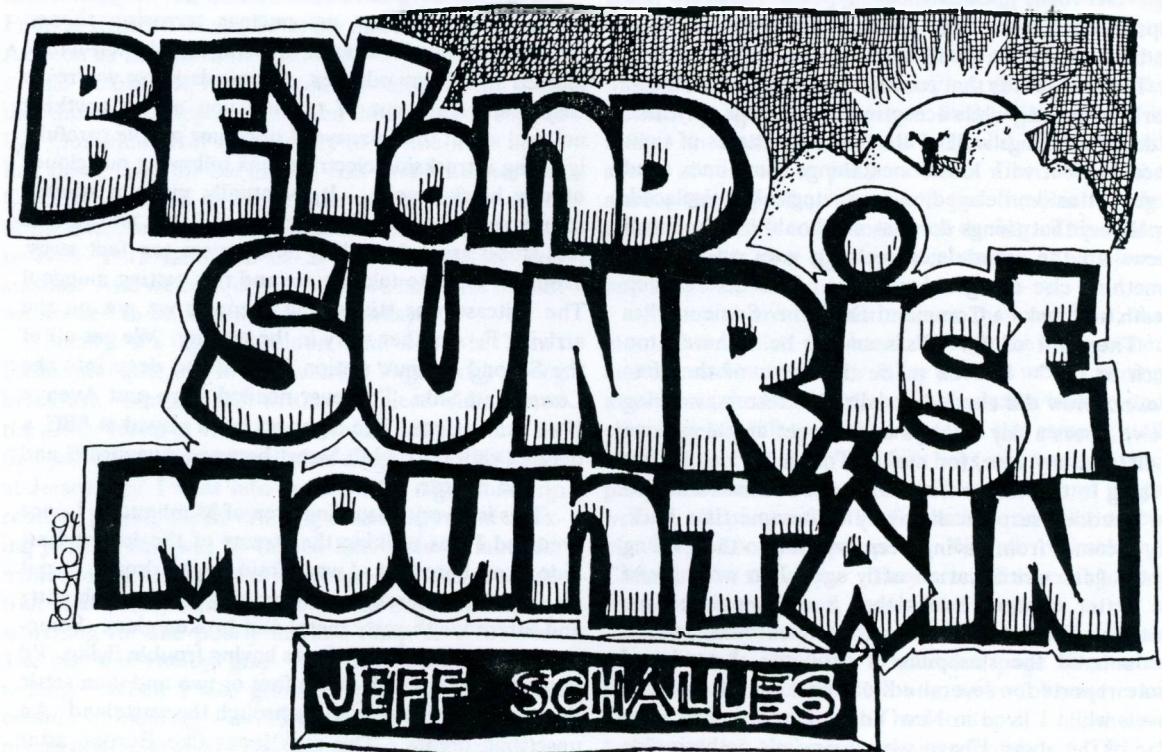
At Silvercon, there was the emergence of the Shrimp Brothers, no relation to the Chicken Brothers of British fandom during the '80s. Andy Hooper, Dan Steffan and John D. Berry discovered the World's Best and Largest Shrimp Cocktails at a casino near the convention hotel in downtown Vegas. On several occasions they returned to the convention and, more or less in unison, extolled the virtues of said cocktails to everyone in earshot. Someone called them the Shrimp Boys, which I immediately amended to Shrimp Brothers, and on their own they came up with the Shrimp Brothers Secret Sign, which consists of Certain Gestures done with the middle three fingers of each hand. I hope they will have their first annual reunion at next year's Corflu in Las Vegas (hope to see *you* there!) and regale us once again with their antics. Why, I can't think of anyone who's seen them who wouldn't willingly stand them a round of shrimp cocktails in order to witness their infectious zaniness!

Silvercon is becoming known as the convention to which All Fan Guests Return. I was their first GoH in 1992 and William Rotsler the following year. I've not missed any Silvercons so far—the only convention about which I can make this claim—and Rotsler showed up again this year as well. Ted White and Greg Benford were this year's guests, so of course I expect to see them time and again out there on the desert as years go by. Though they've not been guests so far, Charles and Cora Burbee have become regular attendees and that, too, is a tradition I hope to see continue.

Jack Speer is another Silvercon regular, and I'm told that he's become something of an icon to the newer generation of Vegas fandom—those fans I've dubbed the Decker Dillies of the Desert, hoping that they won't disappear as suddenly or soon as their namesakes. Arnie Katz mentioned Speer's local reputation to me at a party late one evening. "Awesome" might have been one of the words he used to describe the locals' reverence of Speer. When controversy about a fannish matter arises, Arnie said, they imagine What Jack Speer Would Say About This. I suggested to Arnie that Jack should hold a self-help seminar on this very subject. "Getting in Touch With Your Inner Speer" was the name I suggested for it.

Corflu was less successful as a convention, but as a

(continued on page 21)



BEYOND SUNRISE MOUNTAIN

JEFF SCHALLES

It occurs to me that I might be in a fanwriting rut. In the late sixties and early seventies, when I was young and new to fandom, I tried to write light fannish humor. Faanfiction. That was what I liked best to read in fanzines at first, so that was what I tried to write. It all seemed so friendly, and I wanted to join right in. Halfway through college, five years into fandom, my writing took an obtuse turn. I think it came from reading stuff like Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*, Baba Ram Dass's *Be Here Now*, Ted Johnstone's "LASFS History 1956-61," and T. H. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. That last one in particular laid it right out on the line to me. I began writing for fanzines what has become a series of transcendent travelogues, bits of my life and worldly observations overlaid with a cynical running social commentary. That last part is where I still try and sneak in a little humor.

But I have been wondering lately if maybe I'm lost in a monologue with my navel.

Coming up for air at age 42, it occurs to me that this can't be a mid-life crisis. Why? Because I'm not there yet. I hope to live well past a hundred. Most folks think it's too soon for that Buck Rogers stuff. Even a lot of fans. But I don't see how you can read the daily paper, let alone the weekly *Science News*, and not see what's coming. I've assumed most of my adult life that I would get an extra forty or fifty years. Maybe more, maybe hundreds. Especially if I can stay healthy and physically active. A couple of grams of Vitamin C every day since 1973 should be helping to keep those pesky free radicals at bay. So I'm just not in my midlife yet. Maybe never will be. I haven't been feeling any sudden urges to drop what I'm doing and head off in an unexpected direction, develop fantasized nonexistent talents, buy an impossible to tune sports car, get a tattoo. Actually, I *do* want to learn welding. Sail to the south Pacific. Build a solar powered house. Finish rebuilding my Chevelle (which calls for a lot of weld-

ing). Get really good at shooting pool. These are just steps along the way that I haven't come to yet. Like the books I assume I will write.

There is a focus that comes from being interested in nearly everything while accepting that there is only time to do a few things well. I don't like the stress of tight schedules, but with loose ones, things sometimes need to get set aside, delayed, even strategically misplaced. My theory that things done at all should be done well screws up the schedule; something goes on hold so something else can get done right. You take a deep breath and make a Command Decision. Someone has to. The spirit of the '90's seems to be "There's too much to do!" It even made the cover of the *Ume Reader*. How did our industrialized ancestors, working twelve hours a day six days a week, get anything done at all? In any case, for me, this quest for quality has nothing to do with the international business community's sudden surprise discovery of it some time back. No, it comes from having been exposed to the guiding lights of fan writing at an early age. Fan writing and the better class of books that it often pointed me toward. To complete the circle, somewhat later I encountered the slushpiles of prodrom. I read and wrote reports for several editors on a lot of slushpile novels while I lived in New York. I have been to the edge of the abyss; I have seen the grimly pathetic side of how bad *bad* can be.

Meanwhile I stack up fanzines and magazines and little neighborhood newspapers to read in odd moments. I read all the time, but not much fiction these days. I stuff boxes full of clippings, take thousands of photographs and fill steno pads full of notes. Someday I'll need to sort all this out. It occurs to me that I could use an assistant, an intern, to do my filing, go to the public library to do my research, keep my darkroom cleaned up and stocked with chemicals, make my contact sheets and work prints. Such a person would also need to show a genuine interest in running a mimeograph, turning a compost pile, tuning a 1970 Chevelle. The scutwork of my creative province.

Maybe I could advertise in fandom, like *Locus* does.

Meanwhile, getting back to the cosmic travelogue. Back to New York in the '80's. I was on the downtown side of the 34th Street station one evening. An F train comes and goes and there is a large new-looking suitcase left standing alone on the platform, perpendicular to the tracks. It's like, oh, 11:10 p.m. on a fall week-night in 1987. There are maybe a half dozen people around. No one goes near the suitcase or pays any attention to it. It occurs to me that a small nuclear bomb could be in a suitcase such as that. I move to the other end of the platform.

Lou Stathis gets off the arriving D train. He doesn't want to hear my nuclear terrorism theory. Grunts and rolls his eyes at my dangerously non-native interest in subway oddities. Criminals know you're an easy mark from out of town if you notice anything unusual about the subways. I once saw people carefully ignoring a trackside electrical box billowing out clouds of oily black smoke. It eventually made a whump sound, sent out a six-foot geyser of flame and people just stood around reading newspapers ten feet away. Wouldn't want to take notice and risk getting mugged! The suitcase was still sitting there as we got on the arriving F. Another story in the big city. We got off at the Second Avenue station and walked deep into the Lower East Side. I'd never needed to go past Avenue B on foot before. The night my band played at 8BC, a defunct club on Eighth Street between Avenues B and C, I had my car.

This is a very unsettling area of Manhattan. I once dreamed I was walking the streets of the Lower East Side in my bare feet. I was afraid, in the dream, to put my feet down anywhere. Everything was horribly dirty and littered with rusty metal and broken glass. Someone was chasing me but I was having trouble flying. I'd flap my arms but only rise a foot or two and then settle down again. Moon-walking through the wasteland. An unsettling dream. The area looks like Europe after WWII. Portions of blocks are full of bricks and rubble from demolished buildings; many of the still-standing buildings are boarded up, windowless. The residents of the area are a mix of the very old and the very new, the woebegone and the terrifying. And then there are the artists.

As a breeding ground for planetary creative talent, this place gives the West Bank in Paris a good run for the money. The band we are on our way to visit is called "Swans" and they live in Scotland. Tonight, though, they appear to be living in a converted bodega on a corner somewhere around Avenue D. I am introduced to Michael Gira and the singularly named Jarbo. Couple of really intense customers. There's a practice studio in the back of the living space, keyboards and amps and stuff. Lou is working on a piece about them and he wants me to shoot some photos. No money, but probably the cover shot in his pal Rich Shupe's magazine *Reflex*.

I was told time was tight. I went straight home and made the prints and shipped them off by overnight express. I had the publisher's Federal Express account number and everything. His address was at a fraternity house at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Some days later Lou called to report that he was very late with his piece and that he needed to deliver it

immediately to the editor. Not even time enough for Federal Express. It was Saturday and it had to go *now*. As soon as he was done writing it.

To be truthful, he'd warned me earlier in the week that this might happen. And then the afternoon slipped by. Our window of opportunity to do the hour and a half drive, drop off the article, visit Frank Lunney and Catherine Jackson at their restaurant in Bethlehem or at their house way off in the boondocks, and get back to New York before 2 or 3 a.m. was getting ever smaller. And we both claimed that we had piles of stuff we needed to be in town for on Sunday.

Finally, it's late afternoon and we're in Tom's Restaurant (the one in the Suzanne Vega song) having breakfast. Lou was still writing his piece while I read the Daily News at the table. It was still light for the first part of the drive. Soon after climbing the Palisades at Jersey City, I went into my Saturday night road trip routine, playing tapes, drinking cans of beer and smoking joints. This was by far the best state of mind for maneuvering an old Chevy through the blasted industrial New Jersey landscape, over the Bayonne Skyway, searching for the poorly marked ramp to I-78 West. The sky was cloudy, gray. Lou stayed buried in his writing. When I was growing up — the parts I did outside of fandom — us Pennsylvania guys spent our nights driving around drinking, talking, listening to the car radio and smoking pot. We lived at home and were too young to drink in bars. There was nothing else to do but get in a car with a bunch of beer and stuff, drive a couple hours out I-80, turn around and come back. That's the game. Over the years it turned into a bad habit. But that's how it generally happens, for those of you who have always wondered why anyone would deliberately drink while driving. You need to know that some people can do it a lot better than others. You only hear about the others.

On I-78 now. We passed through the suburban sprawl of the piedmont lowlands and began climbing the second line of old New Jersey mountains, the extruded lava ridges of the Watchungs. These mountains saved George Washington's army. The British were unable to break through the passes, one of which we were now motoring effortlessly through up an interstate highway. The terrain is not unlike Bosnia. Hell of a place to fight a war. I am giving Lou my geohistorical travelogue as he continues to write but don't bother him with the factoid that we are passing the exit to the National Golf Museum.

After a rolling farmland stretch we hit the real mountains, the eastern rampart of the Appalachians. The geologists think these piles of rubble of an even older mountain range are relatives of the mountains of Ireland, Scotland and Norway. Sunrise Mountain is

about 25 miles north of here. It has gotten dark and Lou is still scribbling by the light of the flashlight from my glove compartment. Near the top of Musconetcong Mountain the weather gets heavy. A thunderstorm has pushed up against the western flank. The summit is hidden in a cloud bank. Wind, wild lightning and sheets of rain try to push us back. I turn down the stereo, stop opening beers and put the joint in the ashtray. It's time to do some real driving. This is why I like big cars with eight-cylinder motors. Lou winces and keeps on writing.

Distances are far shorter here than out west, the mountains smaller. We break through the bad weather and descend into the river valley and it is merely raining as we cross the Delaware, the Pennsylvania border, and climb the big hill to Bethlehem, find the campus, pull in at the frat house. The frat boys are having a keg party. Lou sits down at Rich's Macintosh and keeps writing. I party with the fraternity and take a few pictures of Lou at the computer. We talk to Frank and Catherine on the phone. They are still expecting us to come out to the house, despite the lateness.

Lou finally finishes his article and we head out into the late night rain with a notebook page filled with back-roads instructions. No one, we're told, not even Dan and Lynn Steffan (who had to stop at a farmhouse for directions) has ever made it to Frank and Catherine's place on the first try without getting lost. I'd lived in New York a long time, six or seven years, and had almost forgotten about driving rural Pennsylvania roads. They meander around a lot and don't particularly follow compass directions. Making one brief wrong turn (which counts as "a mite bewildered" but not "lost" as Daniel Boone saw things) we drive blacktop roads that don't show up on regular gas station maps for thirty or forty minutes before edging, slowly, through the bushes obscuring Frank and Catherine's rutted private lane. What a cool place! The little designer house is every bit as bohemian and cozy as I'd been led to expect. It was too dark to see the millpond and dam, but I could hear the spillway.

At two a.m., us mighty New York rockers try to leave (we'd be up till four normally anyway) but are convinced to stay, sleep on cushions on the living room floor, have some breakfast. So we stay up even later, sleep on the living room floor, wake up for coffee and get the daylight tour of the estate. Walking through the woods, Frank says that people have been parking up by the road lately and coming down into the woods to party. I find a weathered cardboard box that once held a six-foot inflatable female sex doll and wonder what kind of party. Breakfast is at a classic Pennsylvania Dutch place and, yes, I know what scrapple is, thank

you, and no, I don't want any, thanks.

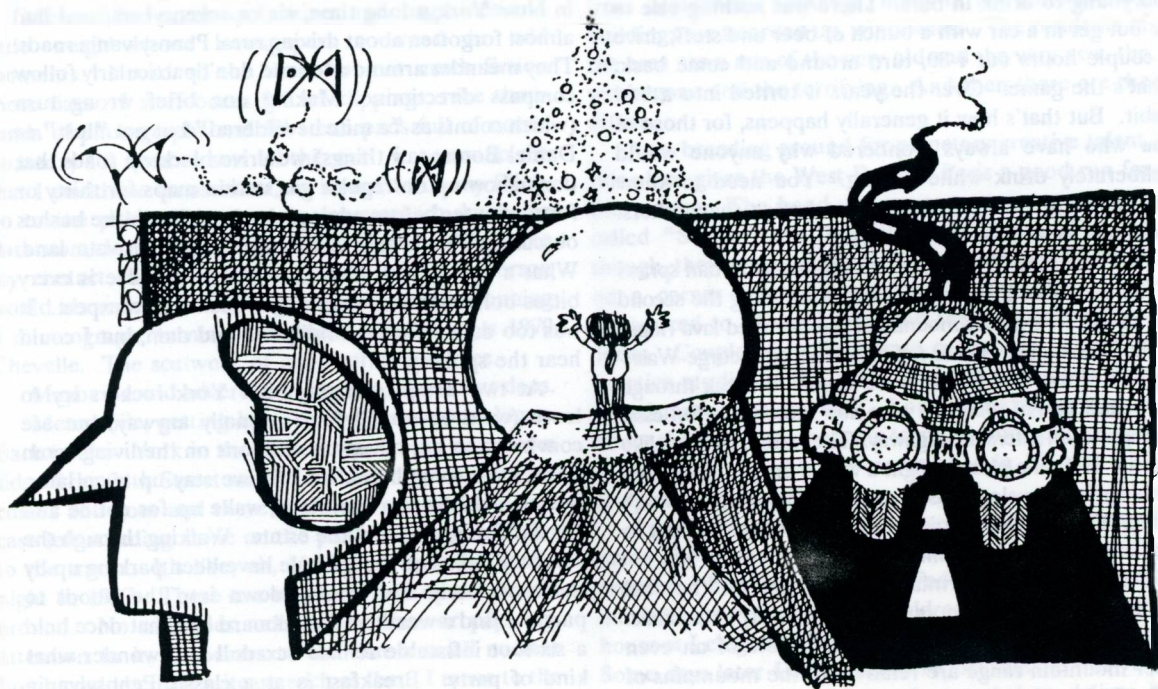
After that first visit I found my way back to Frank and Catherine's hideaway by the mill pond in Powder Valley several more times before moving to Minnesota. I think the reminder I got there that life outside the big city, especially New York, could be quiet and sane, helped remind me that it was time to get out of New York. That happened in July 1989.

Before leaving, I finally made it to the top of Sunrise Mountain. From my journal: "Tue., 6/20/89, Site 19 Lake Ocquittunk campground in Stokes State Forest, NJ. 5:11 p.m. No stinking Lyme ticks yet. Last day of spring. Thought I'd like waking up in the woods on the first day of my last summer in New York. Hurricane in Gulf of Mexico has clouds overhead here. Thick green moss lines two creeks, campsite is little isthmus between them with own driveway off from the other sites. Not too many others. Permanent rushing water sound, water meandering down to join Big Flatbrook. Yes, that was a raindrop. Pause to erect tent. Will sun rise earlier up on Sunrise Mountain? And who keeps leaving these flowers on my campsite picnic tables? Who's been doing this all these years? Mescalito himself?"

Next morning (having been awakened by the annoying alarm on my portable calculator/clock): "On top of mountain at last, wet cloud passing, hazy view (first!) out over valley, the Schooley Peneplain. Sunrise Mountain isn't very high! But steep. I've driven on that little road down there along the foot of the mountain, the first time an awful long time ago, with Cynthia Costa. Her therapist suggested she grow plants, so she bought a bunch from a rural garden store down there and took them back to New York where weeks later I finally repotted them in a box and wired them to her windowsill. Some therapy. So what am I, Kerouac doing Hemingway? Just another wanderer getting a peek inside through the corners of my eyes while looking outside with all the intensity I can muster. I dream of windows looking to the inside, of actually being allowed to know who you are, what your 'name' is. The index to the brain's data, subjects and connections, kept elsewhere on RNA coded material - this is what gets passed on in reproduction, this is where the ancestral memories reside."

What a long strange trip it's been.

- Jeff Schalles



CHARLIE PARKER REVISITED OR THE BRAIN POLICE IN BELLEVUE



And so your narrator (to be called henceforth Leo not because it's his name but because it's the zodiac sign under which he was born 24 July 1945 in the wet misty wartime mosaic of Seattle, Washington, 12:30 a.m.) awoke fully dressed in black pinstripes and red tie on the hard wood floor of his apartment, the taste of dust on his lips like a bathtub full of mud, an odor faintly like wisteria tickling his nostrils like the memory of an old love gone sour named Muriel. He gulped a blistering mug of hot java and hummed an old sad tune. It definitely looked like another of those goddamn days, thought Leo wearily, reaching into his pocket as he gulped and pulling out a thin creased booklet like a Chinese fortune extended into the absurd or like something they handed you as you went into church, not that he'd been to church, not since that fatal day, not since the pcw crashed under the extra weight. Westercon 1993, said the booklet. Bellevue, Washington. July 3, 1993. Leo glanced at his watch, waiting for the hands to steady, waiting like a mariner in a sailor's suit and cap lashed to the wheel of a wooden ship, waiting for a stormy sea to subside. July 3, said the watch. Seven-fifteen a.m. Fuck, thought Leo, and I've got a ten o'clock panel.

He didn't twitch a muscle.

I wish I had a saxophone, he thought.

(But Leo was always wishing he had a saxophone. He wished he had a saxophone and he was a black person and he played like Charlie Parker. But he also wanted simultaneously to look like Burt Lancaster in the 1946 version of *The Killers* when he crushes Ava Gardner to his chest and says don't ever leave me, baby, don't ever leave.

(But she does. And much worse. She rams a figurative antler through his eye and leaves him holed up in that stark, pale-walled boarding house room while Nick Adams flips flapjacks in the diner down the road and Burt's the Swede who cares not whether he lives or

dies.) (Well it's the same story you read in English class. And Leo is also Swedish by descent.)

A ten a.m. panel. (Leo checks the schedule to be sure. "The alien sex scene as a metaphor for the baseball hall of fame," it says. Christ, and they'd let him pick the theme himself. Now what was he going to say? As for the other panelists, three were women who'd written one fantasy trilogy each and who bragged about having had sex with elves. The other was Luther A. Silverman. Leo once had a cellmate in Chino named Luther Silverman but it probably wasn't the same guy. That Silverman had been a raging psycho.)

Leo rose to his feet.

(Leo had been a goddamned scientifiction fan since the early 1960s, since just before Jack Kennedy had got elected to the White House and the world turned fascinating for a while. A thirty-year ride on a down-bound train, he now thought, stubbing out his fourth stale Pall Mall cigarette of the morning. (He thought about eating a bowl of Cheerios.) That was what him and stf were like, big ol' legs wrapped around each other, a mad passionate coupling that couldn't be severed short of death, like antlers sprouting on a bull moose's head. Hell, ol' Leo had read his first real science fiction story back in October 1957, the same month the Russians hurled Sputnik spinning into space, sitting mutely mouth open in his junior high English class, eyes bulging with naked wonderment. That first story, as he'd related (probably endlessly) elsewhere, was Clifford Simak's brilliant "Desertion," a story about what it would be like to become something (not someone but something) different, every fifties adolescent's major wet dream short of French kissing your favorite Mouseketeer. But what Leo never mentioned was that the second story he'd read was something by Sturgeon. And he'd loathed that story, found that it made him almost physically ill. So what, he now asked himself, if

he'd read the Sturgeon first and not the Simak? What if his first reaction to the world of sf had been physical nausea rather than spiritual marvel? Would he have come back for more? Would he have tossed that thirty-five cent Teenage Book Club edition of Groff Conklin's *A Treasury of Science Fiction* into the trash bucket and let it lie there forevermore. Could be. Could very well goddamn be.) (But Burt Lancaster knew about that kind of stuff. Charlie Parker, too.)

He tossed the smoldering cigarette of his remembrance into the waves of the sea of life and tried to trudge on.

Time to think about starting the car (Leo wheeled a '55 Packard) if he intended to make that panel way over in Bellevue.

(But he'd definitely have to play the radio. That was just about the only way he could make it sanely down the road of life these days. Most of the time he just spun the dial down to an oldies station and let it roar. What did it matter what they played? Every song from the fifties made him think of young love, every song from the sixties of good dope. He remembered how the first time he'd heard the Rolling Stones' *Between the Buttons* album he had been so fucked on acid that he'd fused with the floor of a friend's apartment, he'd become a throw rug. But the drugs were better back then. Or maybe just the kids. Everyone was so fucking mean to each other anymore. So hung up on being tough. What did it matter if you were tough once you were reborn as a sea slug? Who gave a shit?)

The telephone rang. Leo let it. If it was her, he knew what she wanted and if it wasn't her, then he knew what she ought to want.

(Lately Leo had been telling everyone he met that it was Elvis Presley who had changed his life the most. It was August of 1956 when he'd bought his first Presley record, a 78 rpm RCA Victor reprint of the second Sun single: Good Rockin' Tonight b/w I Don't Care If The Sun Don't Shine. Nothing was the same after that. It was as if you could cut his life with a knife. Before Presley, everything was bland. It wasn't bad or evil or ugly or anything like that. Actually, his childhood had been mostly rather nice. But after Presley he all of a sudden knew about danger. And about the possible. Danger and possibility. The possibility of danger. Before Presley everything there was was just there in front of him. After Presley it was all out there to be found, to be searched for. And there was so very very much more.

(Elvis Presley and Clifford D. Simak. In truth those two were equals. The two together had shown him the true range of experience. Two men he'd never actually met, never even seen.)

Leo wondered if he had a clean suit in the closet.

The one he had on looked as if it had been slept in. (Which it had.)

(The one band he hoped they wouldn't play on the radio as he drove to the Westercon in Bellevue was the Doors. He hated the fucking Doors. Hello, I Love You was the worst piece of shit but they were all lousy, even Light My Fire, to the throbbing beat of which he'd once fucked Anita Ekberg in a fountain in the middle of Rome. But that was then. This was now. And something had definitely changed. Something important. Oddly it wasn't Morrison who got to him. Morrison always had been a posturing jerk. He still was. No, now it was Manzarek and his goddamn organ. The way it sounded like a refugee out of a seedy merry-go-round ride. Worse than fingernails on a blackboard. (When Leo was in grade school, the blackboards were all painted green but people still called them blackboards.) He hadn't been able to listen to the Doors since Terry Carr died. He didn't know what the connection was. Maybe there wasn't any connection. But it was still a fact. The last time he'd seen Terry Carr was at a science fiction convention sometime in the eighties. (The eighties were the only decade he'd lived through where he couldn't differentiate one year from the next. Or want to.) Terry had looked rail thin, dark as a shut eyelid, wraith-like. There might have been a premonition there but Leo had failed to catch it. When Terry died it hit him like an antler in the eye. He didn't cry anymore – hadn't since prison – but for one of the few times he wanted to.)

He went into the kitchen, opened the refrigerator, and pulled a fifth of Johnnie Walker off the shelf. He sat on the floor and drank straight from the bottle.

The first disc jockey around these parts was a guy named Bob Salter who had an afternoon show on KJR 950 AM. The rest of the day (and Leo stayed home from school several times just to be sure) KJR was just another 1956 mainstream station. Frank Sinatra and Teresa Brewer, Patti Paige and Peggy Lee. But then Salter would come on the air at three just as all the kids got out of school and the earth would seem to swallow itself whole and spit itself out and be transformed. That's when you'd hear Presley. And Gene Vincent. Chuck Berry and Little Richard. And the Coasters. The Del Vikings. It always amazed Leo the good taste in music he'd had as a kid. Damn near all of it still stood up. His favorite after Presley was Jerry Lee Lewis. (He'd once written a fan letter to Jerry Lee, something he'd never done even with Elvis.)

Leo took another big swallow of whiskey. Then he turned the bottle upright and poured it out around him. He lit a match.

– Gordon Eklund



It came upon a midnight clear—December 25, 1993—and my son Geoff and his friend Ryan (the only senior in Geoff's local high school "Battle of the Bands"-winning Riverbottom Nightmare Band) were watching MTV as the video for *Animal Crackers* rewound. Ryan was staying over with us that night because his mother was getting remarried in the morning and had, originally, forbidden him to come, then invited him. He had booked the overnight during the forbidden zone, then cut a deal with Geoff to attend, too, for moral support. I pieced this together from fragmentary information—monosyllabic teenage answers to direct questions. Anyway, Geoff was very sympathetic to friends with mother problems, having so many of his own. Later it occurred to me that Geoff's mother had announced her intention to remarry on January 21, 1994, so he may have been lining up moral support of the right kind for his own forthcoming wedding experience. I carefully refrained from even hinting that the Riverbottom Nightmare Band might play this particular gig. The 92-year-old mother of the groom is reportedly paper-thin and fragile, and the groom might take it ill. It wouldn't have been worth it, even for the terrible effect it would have on the bride. The Christmas spirit prevailed.

Geoff and I were alone on Christmas weekend, so we negotiated a plan for shopping, gifts, decoration and guests that would leave neither of us feeling abandoned or oppressed. And it went well. My daughter Alison came to visit for a couple of hours on Christmas Day, then drove Geoff so they could have dinner in Greenwich with their mom and her fiancé Bob, a 65-year-old attorney in Recovery, before Alison had to go back to work at the stable. Meanwhile, Fred Draper, the local student of Segovia, sf reader and fringe fan, came over and we talked and watched *La Strada*. (His kids were with their mom.) Fred plays guitar professionally, and I like his music so well that I produced a tape for him

a few years ago. You see, Fred and I are the same age and when we were teenagers, we loved science fiction and rock and roll, which was actually an unusual combination in 1956 or thereabouts. We both started playing guitar then, but he quickly got serious about it and made it his life work. I got serious about sf. So we always have a lot to talk about. He's quite well-read, and I still play folk guitar. Our sons, Geoff and Matt, learned to play around us and it's been fun. So, Geoff and Fred and I watched the last part of *Howard's End* or the first part of *Animal Crackers* until Ryan arrived. There was another video in there somewhere, and some Christmas present exchanges. Geoff and I called my folks and sisters in Duxbury. Alison called Duxbury when she was here, too.

And then it was midnight. Fred had just left; Geoff and Ryan were communicating happily in nudges and monosyllables; and *Beavis and Butthead* flashed on when Geoff pressed rewind.

Which made me remember.... Greg Benford, Terry Carr and Ted White did a fanzine in the late '50s out of New York (*Void*) in which the real conversation of the heroic fans famous for their clever lines, sharp wit and entertaining storytelling was transcribed diplomatically (as we say in the medieval manuscript transcription trade—completely without editing). It was a great joke because the moment-by-moment talk was so boring and mundane.

This recollection hit me at midnight on Christmas night, and I turned to Ryan and said, "Okay, now I understand Beavis and Butthead. It's about all those times when nothing is happening, everything is boring, and so you fill the silence with dumb stuff."

"Yeah," said Ryan, meaning either I acknowledge your existence, adult, or you are perceptive and filled with penetrating insight and have a real sense of humor.

Clearly, I chose the later.

—David Hartwell

ESTHER

AND



HENRY

Steve
Stiles

2/17/94

by Ted White

Esther Davis's name popped up twice in *Trap Door* No. 13: once, in passing, in my letter of comment, and at slightly greater length in another letter of comment by Boyd Raeburn. We were both responding to a piece in the previous issue by Gary Deindorfer. Boyd said of her, "She was a very nice lady of mature years who — Ghu knows why — became a sort of den mother to a group of New York fans who, as I recall dimly, weren't always as nice to her in return as they should have been."

That barely begins to tell you about Esther Stanton Davis and her long-suffering common-law husband, Henry Dupree.

I met Esther through Walter Breen. Whatever else one may think about Walter, he knew some interesting people. (He also knew the real "Auntie Mame" of the novel by Patrick Dennis and said that she lived only a block away from my apartment in the Village, but refused to introduce her to us. "She's not a nice person," was all he would say of her.)

In early 1961 I rented a basement that had been a restaurant (*sans* all equipment, empty except for the thick layer of grease on the walls of the back room) which I turned into a mimeo shop called Towner Hall,

partly at the urging of my friends Walter Breen and Robert Bashlow (Bashlow put up the deposit), who were looking for a place where they could store stuff. In Bashlow's case it was actually a reedy-looking friend and business partner of his, who was looking for a place to store imported bungee-straps of the kind used to tie items down on the backs of motor scooters or bikes. He imported them in bulk from Italy — I drove the truck and picked them up at the pier after he'd done the paperwork downtown at the customs house — and packaged them for sale. I wish I could recall this fellow's name. His most notable characteristic was a wheezy sound and a fetid smell; he had a hole in his chest and a tube that hung out. Lacking much strength, he relied on me to do his lifting and carrying for him. I didn't like him.

Walter, on the other hand, wanted to store stuff which previously he'd been storing somewhere else ... at the place of a friend, uptown. "She's moving and she can't take it with her," he said. So we drove uptown, where I briefly met a slightly flustered-looking middle-aged woman, and we carried out stacks of newspapers, all in neat chronological order, which was not to be disturbed. I seem to remember several stacks

of *Life* magazines as well, but that may not be true. "Why do you have all these old newspapers?" I asked Walter as we drove back downtown with them filling the trunk and back seat of my 1953 Ford sedan. He told me he had to go through them, clip things from them. This is a story I've heard since then from several other hoarders of newspapers, none of whom have ever done more than collect stacks of them, sometimes filling whole rooms with them. Walter never clipped his papers either; the last time I saw them, they were still moldering in the storage room when I moved out of Towner Hall, a year later.

But that uptown friend of Walter's was Esther Davis, and that was the first time I met her. The move she was about to undertake would bring her downtown, to my neighborhood (easy walking distance), and it would be there that she would begin entertaining us regularly.

Esther was — or at least appeared to be — a nice person. Within a short period of time after I'd first met her, I found myself being invited to dinners and get-togethers at her place on a frequent basis. One of the reasons I went was that she also invited other friends of ours, like Les Gerber and Andy Reiss (who, five years younger than me, were the youngest fans in the group). Although I sometimes wondered a little about Esther, it was easy to hang out at her place in the company of my various friends.

Esther and Henry lived in a really nice garden apartment in a building that was located on the upper edge of Greenwich Village and close to Fifth Avenue, a "luxury building" to us scuffling young fans. Henry was the building's super(intendent) and got the apartment rent-free.

I have no idea how old Esther and Henry were then, in the early '60s; they were easily a generation older than the rest of us. Henry had been a merchant seaman and had gotten his engineer's license; he was qualified to run the giant boilers of steamships or the great diesel engines of later ships, which made him in effect over-qualified to run the boilers that heated his building. I believe Henry served in World War Two; he was at least thirty years older than I was (I was then in my early twenties).

To say that Esther was "of mature years" is putting it kindly, but Esther often did not *act* very mature. She was very "feminine," as women of her generation were raised to be, and delighted in sexually teasing Henry in front of us. She'd vamp him, try to slow-dance with him if there was suitable music playing, rub up against him and come on all sexy and wanting. This was a little embarrassing to the rest of us, but Esther always played it for laughs, giggling and carrying on like a caricature

of a schoolgirl, winking at us as she snuggled up to Henry. And if you knew nothing more about them than that, it seemed harmless enough.

Henry was a quiet man, just short of morose, who seemed to put up with Esther's carryings-on with infinite patience. He obviously loved her: it was Henry who kept house, cooked the meals and, basically, picked up after her. (Esther had an office job; Henry was home all day, since he worked in the building.)

One evening Henry and I had gone out to see the movie of "The Connection," a play which had been in performance in a Village theater for several years. The play was of more than passing importance to me because it employed jazz musicians among the actors and continually threatened to break out of being a play. The movie was basically just a record on film of a performance of the play, but by actors (and musicians) who had succeeded those I'd seen on stage. I forget why just the two of us went out that evening, but Henry used the opportunity to unload on me, and he told me things I'd not realized about their relationship.

The principal fact was that Henry and Esther had not had sex in many years — at least five, maybe ten. This did not come as a total shock to me; Esther had dropped a few hints here and there. I had assumed that Henry was impotent, or just not sexually attracted to her anymore. The way Esther came on to him seemed to support this; she seemed to be trying to regain his interest in her and seemed equally resigned to failure.

But Henry said it wasn't like that at all. *She* wouldn't have sex with *him*, despite sharing a bed with him every night. She had had a hysterectomy, he said, and thereafter refused sex. It was not clear to me then whether she felt she was no longer sexually attractive to him, or just didn't care for sex anymore. I think, upon reflection, that it was the latter. Other women have told me that having a hysterectomy had profoundly reduced their interest in sex.

Henry could live with that, he told me, although of course he didn't want to. But what really drove him up the wall — sometimes made him want to strangle her — was the way she teased him in front of other people. She never did it when they were alone.

I began to see both Henry and Esther with different eyes.

Esther enjoyed being our "den mother." She liked to entertain, and I think she fancied that her apartment was a "salon," to which interesting people would come to hold clever conversations. And to the best of our ability, we tried to oblige her. Mostly her guests were young fans (Walter was probably the oldest of her

regular guests – and she loved him like a son), but visiting fans also showed up, as did Boyd, for example.

Probably the fannish pinnacle of Esther's entertaining took place while the Willises were in town in 1962. Esther outdid herself. She and Henry cooked an elaborate dinner for close to a dozen guests. In addition to Walt and Madeleine Willis, Les Gerber, Andy Reiss, Walter Breen, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Terry and Carol Carr, and myself, she invited Paul Krassner, the editor-publisher of *The Realist*, who still at that time lived and worked in New York City. I think she wanted to have a guest who would impress the Willises, although I have no memory or whether or not they were. Paul was someone else Walter Breen had introduced me to, and *The Realist* in the early '60s was an exciting magazine with a number of fannish connections. My first wife Sylvia, for instance, sold poetry to *The Realist*, while Andy Reiss and Steve Stiles sold cartoons. Ken Seagle and Bhub Stewart did "JC," a full-page strip, for the magazine. I had several pieces in *The Realist* and a contribution that was accepted for the never-published Tenth Anniversary Issue that would have made me famous if it had appeared in 1967 when I wrote it. But I'm getting ahead of myself here; we're still in 1962. I doubt Paul knew who the Willises were, beyond the introductions that were made, but he made a good dinner companion.

By then I was trying to see less of Esther, turning down some of her dinner invitations. The reason was the role she played in the breakup of my marriage to Sylvia.

Looking back now, I see the breakup of that marriage as inevitable. Sylvia and I had both been very young when we met, fell in love, and got married. I was twenty; she was nineteen. She was beautiful and very talented. She could play and write music, write poetry and prose, and during our marriage she learned to paint and to be a professional photographer. After we broke up she moved to Chicago, where Sid Coleman put her through the Art Institute, and then to Los Angeles, where she briefly remarried and became a movie-maker, doing those "Time Capsules" for the Smothers Brothers TV show. In most respects Sylvia was more talented (and more intelligent – or at least she had a higher IQ) than me. But she was strangely insecure about it. She wouldn't paint if I was doing paintings. So I stopped. She wouldn't use the camera if I expressed an interest in using it to try a few shots. So I didn't. And, although she'd done two excellent issues of a fanzine before meeting me, she never finished her next issue. Putting out fanzines (and doing fanac) was one thing I would *not* stop doing.

There were other problems, which I'll not go into

here, but no doubt it was becoming apparent to all our friends that our marriage was on rocky ground. Terry Carr and I stayed up all night once talking about how his first marriage had failed and I saw many parallels to ours. Into this situation came Larry McCombs, a former Los Angeles fan who was now taking post-grad courses at Yale, a short distance away in New Haven, Connecticut. He began spending his weekends in NYC, staying with us.

Now I don't really object to the fact that Esther Davis had made up her own mind that Larry would be "better" for Sylvia than me. What I do object to was that she decided to take an active hand in the matter. She would draw Sylvia aside and talk to her about me, us, Larry, and Larry and Sylvia. She had clearly chosen sides. And I was on the wrong side.

I think Esther acted less out of concern for Sylvia than simply for her own amusement. It was like the way she teased Henry. It never seemed to occur to her that she was treating Henry dreadfully; she was aware only of her own amusement, of being the center of attention.

Similarly, I think she saw us as some sort of soap opera, and one in which she could take a hand. She took Sylvia under her wing and encouraged her to have an affair with Larry and then to leave me for him. This took place during the spring and summer of 1962. (Certainly Larry played his own role. He told me later that he'd quickly realized that Sylvia had serious problems, but he thought I was their cause. Like the proverbial White Knight on the Charger, he saw himself carrying Sylvia off and rescuing her from all her problems. Alas, her problems followed her and Larry quickly learned that it wasn't much fun living with her.)

Sylvia moved to Chicago, but I stayed in New York City, although in Brooklyn rather than the Village. I stayed in touch with Esther, but not too closely. In 1963 she told me a coworker in Queens wanted to get rid of a dining room table, a big oval thing with two additional leaves to make it even longer. Somehow I managed to get the entire table, in separate pieces, into the back seat of my Ford. I still use that table in my dining room today. Later that year she gave me her mattress and box spring – Beautyrest, the best I'd ever owned – when she and Henry got a new one. The bed had two depressions worn into it and a forbidding ridge between them, mute testimony to their sleeping habits.

As time went on, Henry became quieter and more sour – and he began drinking heavily. When Terry and Carol Carr got their first apartment in Brooklyn Heights they threw a party, to which Henry and Esther came. Henry drank steadily at the party and became

more and more grumpy towards Esther. Finally he told her that he was leaving. Esther was not ready to leave. She batted her eyes at Henry and cooed that he should stay, she was just getting "warmed up." With a grunt of disgust, Henry left by himself.

The party was still in full swing when the phone rang. It was for Esther. When she answered it she turned white.

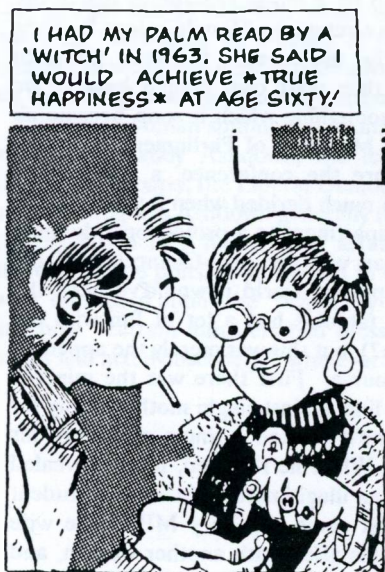
Henry was in a hospital, she said, panic in her voice. He'd tried to hail a cab, took a misstep off a curb, and fell. The cab had taken him to the nearest hospital, one located in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn — not a nice area, even then. We immediately rushed in a body to my car, jamming in as many as it would hold, and drove to the hospital, where none of us had ever been before.

We found Henry in the emergency room, groggy and unable to say much. He'd cut his head in falling, maybe had a little concussion, and he was still very drunk. We left Esther there with him, holding his hand.

Esther owned a Jaguar sedan, but I'm not sure why since she rarely drove it. I tried several times to borrow it after my Ford bit the dust in 1963, but Esther would blow hot and cold — the coquettish tease in a new guise — first promising I could use it and then deciding I couldn't after I'd made plans involving it. I offered to rent the car from her, but when she refused that I had to get a car from an actual rental agency. I have a vague memory that Esther, in the company of fans like Les Gerber, tried to drive her car down to DC for the 1963 Worldcon, and that it either broke down en route or got them there only after a hazardous trip. Jaguars require constant maintenance and I doubt Esther's got even a bare minimum. Perhaps she feared it would break down while I was driving it; I don't know. She never spoke of her car in such terms, preferring to refer to it as her "baby," telling me she wasn't sure I would be "right" for "her baby."

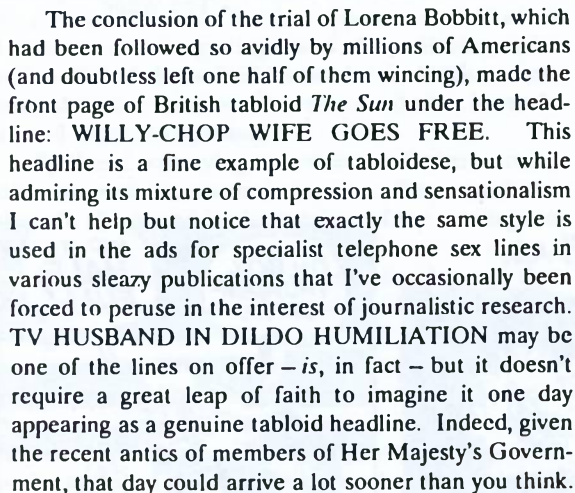
I don't recall the last time I saw Esther, but it was probably no later than the mid-'60s. I have no idea what became of her and Henry.

—Ted White



ESTHER, FROM AN UNDERGROUND COMIC SEQUENCE--*SNARF* # 9, 1981

ROB HANSEN



Whenever I hear right-wing politicians invoke "family values" ~~I reach for my gun~~ a chill goes down

-16-

politics, Jim, but not as we've known it. Or, to put it another way: politics haven't been this much fun since the heyday of Caligula.

Taking a leaf from the Tories—who imagined they were qualified to instruct us on how to conduct ourselves, after all—one of the stars of a local soap opera took a tabloid newspaper to court for claiming that the police had caught her fellating her boyfriend in a car parked at the side of a busy road. Since the police *had* caught her fellating her boyfriend in a car parked at the side of a busy road, she lost the case. Idly contemplating this matter later, I was moved to wonder if she could have got off using a variation of the Clinton defense: “Yes, I sucked on it—but I didn't swallow!” Well, perhaps not.

Unless, as in the case of the Tories, they're making a big fuss about personal morality (in which case they deserve all the heat they're getting), a politician's personal life shouldn't have any bearing on their political career. Bill Clinton almost certainly had affairs with other women, and should have been able to tell inquisitive reporters it was none of their damn business. In fact, he could even turn this to his advantage, if recent revelations are true. London's *Time Out* magazine of 5 January 1994 quotes Gennifer Flowers as saying of Clinton: “Bill loved to give me oral sex for as long as I wanted it. He hasn't got a great backside, he has big hips, and he is not well-endowed. But he has a flexible tongue.” If Clinton's handlers are on the ball they can use this to help him secure reelection in 1996. After all, there must be millions of female voters out there who would be very appreciative of the example set by a President who likes to eat pussy.

Another woman spilling the beans recently was the ex-lover of Paddy Ashdown, the leader of Britain's third-ranking party, the Liberal Democrats. So dull and uninteresting was Ashdown generally thought to be that the revelation he'd had a lover actually *increased* his standing in the polls. The woman in question recently went on record about the “hypocrisy” at Westminster and how “certain ministers had dressed up as French maids and acted obscenely,” whatever that might mean.

As the columnist Peter McKay commented:

“Personally, I don't mind government ministers dressing up as French maids, although I don't think it should be made compulsory as yet. A little self expression might make them more interesting. It is piquant to think them capable of rolling their eyes, blushing prettily, and polishing the furniture with lots of bottom-wiggling. Incidentally, it must be terribly encouraging for our French cousins that at least one element of their culture is held in such high esteem by the Tory leadership.”

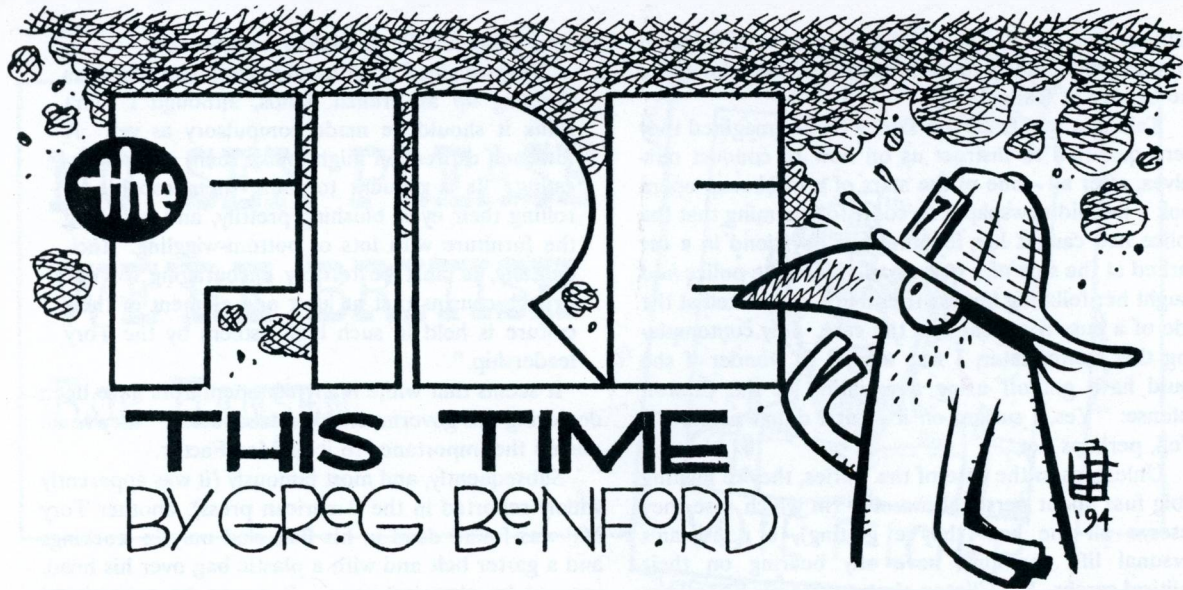
It seems that while many commentators have been deploring this government's “sleaze factor,” they've all missed the importance to it of Max Factor.

Subsequently, and most famously (it was apparently widely reported in the American press), another Tory MP was found dead in his flat, clad only in stockings and a garter belt and with a plastic bag over his head, secured by electrical tape. It seems he asphyxiated while indulging in a well-known sexual practice that involves restricting the flow of blood to the brain. There was much disingenuous wailing and gnashing of teeth, particularly at Conservative Central Offices, over what could have possessed a man widely tipped as a future cabinet minister to indulge in such things, when the answer is obvious. He was practicing the skills necessary to be a minister in this government. What else could the stockings and garter belt be, after all, but the first stage of a full French maid's outfit? And, surely, policies such as the gradual dismantling of the health service, the lunatic roads building program and the criminal sale of arms to Iraq, can only result from a restricted flow of blood to ministers' brains. The Conservatives are forever telling us how well they're running the country, but their policies say otherwise. Their recent sexual shenanigans have been hugely entertaining, but the political agenda behind those policies is the *real* scandal the tabloids should be pursuing. I've even got a headline for them: TORY GLORY: THE GORY STORY.

Now *that* would be worth reading!

— Rob Hansen





I saw the smoke as I went to my 1 p.m. lecture on a blustery Wednesday, October 27, 1993. The spire of oily black smoke was about seven miles inland, I judged, near the freeway, far from my home in Laguna Beach. Dry winds off the desert called the Santa Anas brought an eerie, skin-prickling apprehension to the sharp air.

By the time I had held forth on turbulence theory for an hour and a half, a dark cloud loomed across all the southern horizon. The brush fire had swept to the sea. On the telephone my wife Joan said the smell was already heavy and asked me to come home.

I tried to reach Laguna Beach by the Pacific Coast Highway, only to be turned back by a policeman at the campus edge. So I went south, looping the long way around, leaving the freeway and threading through surface streets. When I bought my Mercedes 560SL my son had deplored its excess power, quite ecologically unsound, and I had replied lightly that I wanted to "seize opportunities." Here was the chance: I cut through traffic, hoping to get ahead of the predictable wedge wanting the only access to town.

I failed, of course. Traffic was chaotic. It took two hours to reach Monarch Bay, the community immediately south of Laguna Beach. At Monarch Bay the police stopped everyone. Smoke glowered across the entire horizon now.

I left my car at 5:30 and hiked north, striking up a conversation with a man, Dave Adams, who was walking to his nearby home. I stopped there for a drink and heard that the high school had burned. Our house sits three hundred meters above the school. On the other hand, this was media wisdom, instantly discounted.

I went on, hitchhiking and walking the five miles to central Laguna by 7 p.m. Police were turning everyone back, but the acrid flavor in the air alarmed me and the dark clouds blowing thickly out to sea seemed to come from our hill. The police stopped me several times. I always retreated, then worked my way around to another street and went on.

I knew that Joan must have evacuated by then, but I had set out to come home and just kept at it, through the gathering pall. Maybe there was something I could do — fight the fire, water down the yard, rescue some precious memories....

Near the high school, a police car came cruising down, herding the few homeowners left. I ducked behind a stone wall. "Get out of my driveway!" a man wearing a headphone radio shouted at me. He waved a pistol wildly — a part of me noted, *32 revolver, finger on the trigger guard, probably knows how to handle it* — and I realized he perhaps mistook me for a looter. I ran behind the police car and down a street, following the narrow windings toward our hill. Night had fallen.

I sprinted on — excited, oblivious to choking smoke, sirens and hoarse cries. At the high school — untouched, of course — I met fire teams and more police. Chaos. Flames leapt from our hill, a steady popping roar. Homes exploded in orange as their roofs burst open. Yellows and reds traced out the dark discords of walls collapsing, brush crackling, cinders churning up in cyclonic winds, orange motes in a fountain of air — then falling, bright tumbling fireworks. Ash swept through the streets like gray snow. Above it all a cowl of black smoke poured out to sea.

I crossed the street and climbed up onto a high

ledge and still could not see far enough up Mystic Canyon to make out our house. But all around it homes burned furiously. Our street, Skyline Drive, was a flaming artery both above and below our house.

A fire warden shouted at me to get out. I hesitated, he shouted again, and I realized it was all over. At last I gave up our house and turned away. I had been rushing forward for several hours, intent on reaching home. That was impossible. I could do nothing in this inferno. I had not gotten in anybody's way, but I hadn't done any good, either. Working my way this close to the fires was risky, if only from the smoke I inhaled. Slowly I realized that I had been running on automatic, and all this was quite foolish.

I retreated through deserted streets. I hitchhiked partway back out and a few miles south found a Seven-Eleven open. An incongruous sight, bright beacon beside the exodus. I was parched, sagging. I went in and straight to the back to get a big container of cold tea. The store owner was in a heated argument with two men who wanted to get gasoline. Police had come by and ordered the pumps closed. Excited, the owner started rattling off in Korean and one of the men grabbed him by the shirt collar and pulled him halfway across the counter. More shouting. The owner got free and backed away and the rest of us in the store yelled at the two men. They swore at the owner but made no more moves.

Plenty of talk then, accusations and retorts and barks of angry egos. I judged it was not going to get any worse so I left money on the counter and walked out with the tea. A block further south, six motorcycle police from Newport Beach sat on their machines and watched people still leaving along the Coast Highway, their uniforms pressed and neat. They weren't interested in the Seven-Eleven.

I finished the tea before I reached the Adams home. They all watched the television news and I drank some more. My thirst would not go away. I sat and listened to the announcer declare that all homes in the Mystic Hills were lost. All. Confirmation sent me into a daze.

I called friends, who reported that Joan had indeed evacuated town and come to them, and then gone on to the refugee center. Dave Adams drove me to the center and I found Joan. She was in better shape mentally and physically than me. I sat on a curb and ate my first fast food burger ever, from a free canteen run by In & Out. It was improbably delicious.

Joan had evacuated as flames marched over the ridge line of the hill across the street, coming as fast as a person walks. She had stuffed her Volvo with financial documents, vital but small items like safety deposit keys, passports and telephone directories, plus our

photo albums, the oldest of our Japanese woodblock prints, jewelry, and cherished oddments of our accumulated history.

She had been putting the pets in the car when a guy walked up and asked if she needed help loading things in the car. She suspected he was in fact interested in getting into the house, so said no thanks. He ambled away. Just as she was ready to close the trunk, our postman pulled up, looking rather anxious. She took the day's mail, jumped into the car, and headed downhill. People were barreling down at high speed. The postman followed her out, stopping to deliver to homes which were soon to burn, flames approaching behind him. At the time, she said, it did not occur to her to laugh. Later, she did.

A police chaplain came by and we talked about losing the house. I couldn't seem to get my mind around the concept. We were leaving the center to go back to the friends when a neighbor called to us. He had lost his house, his classic car collection included. But he had seen our house standing at 9 p.m., he was pretty sure. It was hard to tell in the darkness, though, without street lights. This heartened us greatly, but I had severe doubts that anything could have survived the furnace I had seen.

We reached friends, an Episcopal minister and wife, at midnight. We slept solidly until 6 a.m. Up, talk, news on TV – which I found oddly uninteresting, and distrusted. Breakfast out. I always eat a lot in the morning, having grown up in farm country, and this time ordered double. The restaurant seemed eerie in its calm. Pancakes and omelettes, the fire only a rank smell from distant hills.

Back to the center, where we wore away the day vainly seeking news. Nobody released any information on homes burned. News programs dwelt infuriatingly on the spectacular wasteland at the top of our hill, never letting the helicopter camera angle descend to take in lower Skyline Drive. Reports continued that everything had burned on Skyline. I was inclined to believe them, though I kept saying encouraging things to all I talked to, including our daughter Alyson, on cellular phones supplied free. I distracted myself by searching for clothes in the immense piles donated by charitable groups. I was still wearing the shorts and short-sleeved shirt I had been lecturing in, what seemed a year ago.

At 4 p.m., word came that since all fires were out we could go back into town. We left, I picked up my car, and we edged our way into Laguna. Behind me, out of my sight, Joan's Volvo overheated, stranding her for nearly two hours on Coast Highway.

Dusk fell as I reached the high school again, only to be blocked by police. Nobody allowed on the hill.

Nope, not even residents. They were trying to prevent looting. Grim warnings.

I simply could not turn back. This was my neighborhood and I knew the short cuts. I slipped around the police lines, over ash-covered tennis courts, along a path and up through several burned homes, onto Skyline. Several news teams were arrayed among the ruins with portable gear, shooting interviews under their bright lights. Media okay, but homeowners keep out.

Melted cars and ashy gray debris littered Skyline. Cables down, charred palm trees. A heavy acrid stench made me cough. I walked uphill and around a curve. Amid the black ruins our house stood untouched. I approached in a daze. The battle to save it was visible only in fire hoses left in the street, boot prints in the yard and minor damage to plants.

Two doors were unlocked, one ajar. Inside, the smoky stink could not blanket my immediate reaction: home. Safe. Numbly I collected some floppy disk backups from my study. Pointless, but automatic. Our fireproof safe stood with both drawers yawning open. I took it all in but wasn't thinking much.

I departed in the gathering gloom. The street outside was covered with ash and burnt scraps. Somehow I didn't want to leave the hill, even in the gloom. I could not comprehend the enormity of others' loss, and of our luck. A German TV crew interviewed me when they found I could speak German. Crisis surrealism; a foreign tongue that recalled war zone damage.

Still dazed, I wondered where Joan was. Turned out she had been exhausted by the overheated car and traffic and had stopped at a friend's. She was quite wrung out. We finally linked up again and spent the night at a nearby friend's house. The next day, Friday, we even got into our house. About 80% of the neighborhood was gone, 199 homes, probably \$200 million lost. In the whole town over 350 burned, with losses around \$500 million.

The water had run out again and again through the long fight. Firemen had been forced to abandon whole blocks to the swift flames. Around our group of a dozen homes they had drawn a perimeter and defended, using the hydrant across the street from us, which had high pressure. They worked around the houses, trampled vegetation, got the job done. The flames had come down our hill and the firefighters had stopped them at the curb across the street from our house.

Then the fire worked south, burning all the homes downhill from us, and leaped Skyline. It burned a dozen more homes below and then crawled up our canyon to within 30 meters of our house. The firemen hit the flames with a 500 gallon-per-minute, precision high-velocity cannon. After several hours that did it. Our canyon was a black pit.

Apparently the initial small fire far inland was set by someone, the media said. I didn't care much for these larger views; my focus had narrowed to the local, intense present. Time to clean up. Our unlocked doors apparently were the firemen's work, checking for people unable to get out. Joan had left our safe closed, but not locked. A looter had come through and checked it, finding only financial papers. He took nothing. That must have been while the police cordon kept out homeowners, but not entrepreneurs ready for the quick take.

Wildlife had suffered enormously. Dead birds littered the canyon. In the hills beyond, on a walk through the black slopes, I came to a twisted wire fence. Against it was a line of white bones, the lizards and rabbits and snakes and rats and deer that had run in blind panic into it and turned to face the onrushing wall of heat.

I trapped a two-pound rat in our tool shed, and saw rats the size of cats jumping between palm trees. From our deck we watched hawks diving at mice as they scampered for shelter on the bare hillsides. We put out seed and water and birds flocked – gnatcatchers, hummingbirds, red-tailed hawks, crows, brilliantly hued mountain bluebirds.

Two Dalmatians were found roaming, having somehow escaped their burning house. Boaters three miles offshore saw an exhausted mule deer doe swimming out to sea, away from the blighted canyons where she usually foraged. They hauled her in and brought her back for care. On the canyons, gray tree frogs turned spontaneously black, closely matching the charred ground. Somewhere in their genes lies the memory of many other fires and a honed response to give them protection from predators, somehow triggered by the sight or smell of the flames.

All this seemed very distant, in the immense relief at being among the survivors. Our house was not particularly expensive, but what really matters, I came to feel, was how much of yourself you had put into your home. Neighbors recently moved in walked away from their ruins with apparently some aplomb. Oldtimers were more devastated.

We both slept poorly for several nights, chased by phantom flames in repeating dream dramas. Those who had lost everything were forlorn, adrift. When the Santa Ana winds picked up again, one woman who had been evacuated in the fire began automatically loading her car with cherished photographs. Some elderly couples developed the habit of taking their dearest possessions with them everywhere they went.

Counselors at the Community Clinic spoke of "post traumatic stress disorder" and of conducting "critical incident stress debriefings," and the phenomena they

tried to capture with such jargon was real. I kept going over how close it had been, with the unsettled mind of one who has been shot at and barely missed.

As a scientist I habitually saw cause and effect, but the random nature of the world had asserted itself here. Much of our culture devotes itself obsessively to the comfy human world, our gossip and relationships and destinies. Now we had all been reminded that the world itself neither likes nor dislikes us; worse, in a way, it is indifferent. The fire had no point, no target in itself – though whoever started it probably did. However much I believed as a scientist in an objective, unconcerned universe out there, which we study to understand, my emotions veered away from that.

The calamity had missed us by a hair. We had fire-proofed the roof with concrete tile five years before, recoated with thick fire-resistant paint in 1992, and the morning of the fire had a garden crew clearing out the volatile underbrush. They had fled only when the flames danced above the ridgeline, just behind Joan. We had been prepared, sure, but we were hugely lucky, too.

We had already been through the slide and burning

in our little canyon in January 1993, which took out the three homes immediately below us. The immensely larger ferocity of this catastrophe was numbing. A week later, a sudden rain flooded out the five surviving homes across the street. Sandbags in our driveway deflected the ash-laden streams from us. The big storms of winter were worse.

I missed no classes and got back to research soon. But my thinking was unsettled.

The fire impressed me with the sheer raw power of nature. It disoriented my thinking and made difficult a return to the calculations I was doing in – an ironic touch – turbulence theory. Some part of me could not settle down to the neat, clean equations, precise markings for exact quantities; the world outside was too rife with emotion, friction, brutal forces, malicious intent. The universe seemed to be threatening, not standing at an abstract distance.

There is great relief in this aftermath, of course. Still, sometimes we felt as if the world would keep trying until it got us. I suppose in a way it will.

– Greg Benford

(Doorway – continued from page 4)

venue for parties it of course remains unexcelled. One problem was that, as Andy Hooper pointed out in *Apparatchik* No. 11, anyone putting on a Corflu needs to “project some personality.” Cochairs Dick and Nicki Lynch were very low key and reportedly went home early at least one evening. More visible, Alexis Gilliland was the primary target of complaints. A disastrous first happened at this Corflu: a few parties, not especially noisy ones, were shut down by hotel security. Also, although there were around 100 attendees, the banquet was set for only forty. Apparently no one thought to inform Alexis that the banquet is in many respects *the* main program item at a Corflu. He therefore seemingly assumed that people would just wander in and out, help themselves to the food, and mingle. There was an embarrassingly large queue of people waiting as the hotel staff hustled up additional seating.

I stayed with Ted and Lynda White and their family while in the DC area. I'd never been to Ted's fan-cestral manse in Falls Church before and was mightily pleased with and appreciative of the Whites' hospitality and the beauty of the grounds. Ted mentions his azaleas in the latest *Blat*, but they are much more impressive in person than in print. He has lots of other flowering plants, a few vegetables, and some huge trees that provided pleasant shade on the several *hot* days during my visit. I did some touristy things. Lynda and

their son Aaron took me to the Capitol Mall one afternoon, where I saw the Air and Space Museum, the Natural History Museum's Native American display, the Vietnam Wall – and the White House from a distance. (Even Aaron, a six-year-old bundle of energy, was too tired of walking by then to go closer.) Ted took me out to see the Great Falls of the Potomac, where we walked to the falls on elevated boardwalks that reminded me of that old Ray Bradbury time travel story, and to Harpers Ferry. We tried to visit his mother along the way, but she wasn't home. All this took us through much beautiful countryside in Virginia, Maryland and West Virginia. I also accompanied Ted on his comic book distribution route and got to see a lot of suburban countryside. We talked fannish, checking out one another's perceptions of current fanac – as fans will do – and found that we agreed a lot. The week seemed to pass quickly and we were both unhappy to see it end.

Space is running out, but I need to mention that Gordon's piece this issue first appeared in his FAPA-zine, that Greg's account is much expanded from an earlier version in *Lilapa*, and that Rob's article also first appeared in a tiny *apa* he's in. Next issue I plan to bring back at least some of my formerly regular columnists, and it could appear sooner than you think, so don't put off writing for too long.

– Robert Lichtman

THE ETHER STILL VIBRATES



COLIN HINZ

Your lengthy report on ConFrancisco surprised me, mostly because we were both there and we never ran into each other. But after all, it's a Worldcon and these sorts of things are expected to happen. Well, at least at North American ones, as the ambience is a little more intimate at the overseas Worldcons. It used to really irritate me that Worldcons were so huge, impersonal and expensive, but now I just go and have as much fun as I can.

I thought about what you said about the daytime fan lounge and I'm forced to agree. When I first saw the lounge I was disappointed with the location, thinking of it as a small oasis in the horribly lit, windowless and cavernous expanse of the exhibition hall. I didn't think of its wonderful, central location where it just couldn't be entirely ignored by the madding crowd. The atmosphere of the evening lounge, over at the Parc 55, was much like the consuite at a Corflu or Ditto—absolutely wonderful. It's too bad that I seemed to sleep through the best of the partying, though. Already I'm starting to feel old and this seems premature, the first of the Bad

Birthdays being still over a year away.

I read Calvin Demmon's piece with mildly horrified interest, all the while a little voice at the back of my head repeating the mantra, "I sure hope he's got good insurance. I hope his insurance company doesn't tell him to take a hike afterwards." Well, of course, here in Canada we don't have problems with the financial aspect of health care, although it is true that hospitals here have fewer high-tech toys than American hospitals do. However, one should be careful to completely ignore the AMA propaganda that Canadian emergency care is substandard or prone to long waiting periods. Everyone in my family, including me, who has required emergency care has received it promptly and properly. The only delay I've witnessed was some years ago when a distant friend self-inflicted a nasty-looking though hardly life-threatening injury. The doctors left him to deal with our support (and our remonstrations) before sewing him up a couple of hours later. All their qualified staff had been busy dealing with the carnage of a serious auto accident, the doc said to us.

I'm hardly surprised that Calvin's G.P. was furious

about his transfer to Stanford. After all, think of the substantial fees he'd had no chance to collect. Sorry for sounding cynical, but here in Canada American doctors have a reputation only slightly less rapacious than loan sharks.

I truly enjoyed reading Geri Sullivan's article, and not just because my name was so kindly dropped. Heck, it was done so nicely it wasn't dropped, it was gently placed. I'm happy that she has good memories of that conversation, as I do also. These sorts of experiences are what I like a lot about fandom, and I find it wonderful to be able to share them afterwards. (Insert obligatory rant about fanzines being the most superior form of communication in the universe.)

I confess I don't have any fannish Aunts or Uncles. There are those to whom I owe a great debt for giving me more than my due when I was a neofan, and one of these people is a guest of honor at the next Worldcon. So, I guess he's certainly getting the treatment he deserves. But a feeling of indebtedness isn't really a relationship, is it?

Ah, the sense of "home." When I uprooted myself in May 1988 from Saskatoon to take up work here in Ontario, I felt that "home" wasn't really in my mostly bare apartment and that I'd really left it behind in Saskatoon. This feeling changed as my belongings, or more exactly a selected subset of them, arrived here. It's taken a while, but where I now live, even two moves later, has a strong sense of home to it. My mother's capacious, sprawling wooden house is still *home*, though. There is also "home" for me in Toronto, and in the unlikely hamlet of West Lima, Wisconsin. I'd add that there's even "Home" on my computer keyboard, but that would be flippant.

I'm a bit surprised about Shelby Vick's somewhat detached attitude towards the many places he's lived in the past, most of which have been obliterated by the unstoppable forces of "progress." My attitude towards past domiciles more closely parallels Geri's father's: I've done stuff there, and those places are now a part of me. Granted, the various suburban tract houses I grew up in while a small child I care little for; if all of them were obliterated, my sole concern would be for the waste of good reusable building materials. My mother's place is different, though. While architecturally interesting in its own right, and to me a house of no little beauty, it's where a lot of things have happened to me. A lot does happen to anyone between the ages of 11 and 22; for me, it was grade school, high school, puberty, various hobbies, university, and the start of my first "real" job. Oh yes, and fandom too: this is where my interest in science fiction changed from passing to obsessive, where I discovered science fiction magazines,

then older prozines including those Ted White *Amazings*, and then came the pulps. I was smitten by the collecting bug, then fandom tapped me on the shoulder and I drove eight hours to the closest convention. It's where I pounded out my neofannish zines and correspondence on a sturdy little manual Smith-Corona, and where zines started emerging from a growing collection of well-aged Gestetner technology.

It's where I learned how things are put together and where I helped my father with the many reconstructions and renovations: walls went up and also came down, a fireplace was dismantled and replaced by a bigger and safer one, roofs were redone, foundations dug and concrete poured, a large garage erected and finished, a huge rotting veranda shored up and restored to a thing of beauty, and the unused expanse of basement carved into several useful rooms. An actual complete list would be tedious, and I'm sure enough of a point's been made.

The next place was my own, another older house with an entirely unfinished basement. This time the ambitions were entirely mine, and the basement I carved into bedroom, bathroom, laundry area, small workshop, and the "big room." This room was the communal nerd space for a household of three, with space for electronics experiments, four computers, and even more Gestetners (guess whose?). The mimeo work area was a truly marvelous set-up, so predictably I had to move cross-continent to find work before I could manage to put my ish in such luxurious quarters. I was actually forced to abandon my renovation project before the finish work was completed, which to this day is a source of aggravation.

My first permanent digs here in Ontario were in half of the upper floor of a crumbling late Victorian brick house which was largely ignored by the absentee landlord until he managed to sell it to a yuppie doctor couple with more ambitions than sense. They ripped the guts out of the building entirely and in doing so removed all of its character as well. A somewhat dilapidated but still sound building has now been transformed into a prim but tacky fake-Victorian travesty. It grieves me to see the place in its present state, and sometimes I wish they'd been a little more thorough and bulldozed it entirely.

The place that followed I've never had a strong attraction for, it already having been vandalized long in the past by supposed handymen with no sense of style, proportion or direction, and no budget. I can't possibly conceive how these perpetrators could have been proud of their work, so I wasn't proud of the place either. Its peculiar quirks I initially found amusing, but they became points of irritation by the time I moved out. When I left it, I found out from the neighbors below

that the main support beam in the basement is cracked in several places. Since I know from experience the building's owners would sooner have the building fall into the basement than do any "unnecessary" work, I guess the place's days are numbered. Boy, I'm glad I'm out of there!

My present quarters are in the first post-WW2 building I've lived in since 1976. The kitchen cupboards are about thirty years old, built solidly by hand by a competent carpenter, and aged enough to be positively charming. Much of the space was originally a huge recreation room, and the numerous pool cue marks on the ceiling prove it. This space is now an electronics lab and audio assault center. I think it has converted nicely, and I quite like it here. The neighbors are the best I've ever had; after past experiences I treasure that.

I have most of the art books that Russ Chauvenet mentions in his LoC, but it appears he's missed a few. Foremost is the companion to Dave Kyle's *Pictorial History of Science Fiction*, his 1977 *Illustrated Book of Science Fiction Ideas and Dreams* (how did Nicholls miss it?). These two books were an enormous resource when I first entered fandom, and I still treasure them. It would do good to also mention the fine books of reprint art published by Gerry de la Ree and by Donald Grant.

I dispute strongly something that Ted White says and, though this may plunge my fannish being into mortal peril, I'm prepared to make a bet on it. He claims, in reference to an earlier LoC by Joseph Nicholas, that "no matter what is on those 600 LPs [of Nicholas'], it is either now or will be in the near future available on CD." Now, Ted has proven himself to have an enormous knowledge about a great deal of music, but this shouldn't be confused with knowing everything about all kinds of music. I wager that I can produce 100 LP records from my own collection that will not have been re-released on CD by the end of the century. I'll stake money on that claim, too.

Good comment by Ted about Frank Paul, although I have a slight preference for the vast, colorful technolandscapes of Wesso. I wonder what on earth has happened to all the original artwork of that period? I've heard that publishers and editors just gave the stuff away at whim—could much of it have survived? (*Sam, would you care to address this matter in a future issue.*) (P. O. Box 161, Orillia, Ont. L3V 6H9, Canada)

JEANNE MEALY

Congrats and many thanks for the historic tenth anniversary issue of *Trap Door*. Couldn't take my eyes off that cover. Nice job by Steve Stiles. My own involvement with fandom only goes back to 1975, when I joined a start-up SF club in college and heard rumors

of fandom, conventions and other wild things. Haven't looked back since.

I feel stupid that I didn't look you up at ConFrancisco! I spent way too much time seeing the sights in and out of the con, trying to catch up with friends, and maybe even sleeping. Loved the ramblings about what you did and who you saw. I tend to get overwhelmed by large cons, though I have fun too.

Calvin Demmon's article on having surgery for an aneurysm kept me wincing. It was also interesting to read about what went on in various aspects: the actual medical procedures, the not-so-behind-the-scenes politics, and Calvin's reactions to all of it. I'm curious what the other people in Shunt Fandom say to each other, even if he didn't know what to say to them. Great punchline: "Having a tube in your head isn't quite the same as having a Sense of Wonder." He definitely still has his sense of humor.

Geri Sullivan's "Aunt, Unca, Mother, Friend" was an amusing and touching overview of the many roles she (and others) play in her relatives-by-blood and the fannish family. She's right that "death does not release us" from these connections. I too have close family who've died and find it nearly impossible to deny their existence ("Do you have any brothers or sisters?"). She made excellent points about the concept of "home," a feeling I remember well from my first Minicon at the Leamington Hotel. My reaction was a mixture of "What is all this?" and "This is a Good Place to be!"

Ah, the pros and cons of change in the world around us, as noted by Shelby Vick. There are always things we see as good and others we regret. It happens gradually, too; we don't just get up and everything is different. The only exception is when revisiting an area after time away. Then we can get quite a shock comparing our memories with present-day reality. (I put it that way because I feel my memories are just as real as what I see before me—they're just a little older.) I went cold at his description of applying reverse psychology to take his mind off the thought of his mother's (future) death. I hope he's really not as isolated on his emotional island as this sounds. I remember psyching myself into not feeling anything many years ago. It was very strange. Eventually I became alarmed enough to snap myself out of it. It was probably a natural reaction to the stresses I was under (might've been a teenager), but I felt bad about it for a while.

"Nightmare in Istanbul" will put off a lot of us cautious travelers! I'm astounded at the confusion Jay Kinney went through after misplacing his money and passport. He did a fine job of describing the sights and sounds as well as his interactions with the people. The line about the dolmus drivers being comparable to an

order of knights truly deserved an illo. *{If someone will draw it to my satisfaction, I'll publish it as an artistic epilogue.}* I also appreciated the concept that one's actions are acknowledged to have serious consequences. We could use more of that attitude.

Wow, I am impressed at Jessica Amanda Salmonson's essay on why she couldn't write an LoC. She's wrong that people aren't interested in her memories. Sounds like she needs a Sense of Wonder transplant — maybe a break from routine. On the other hand, she does have an interesting life. I don't know what cons she's attended lately, but the ones I go to don't have "the inescapable costumes (that are) unaesthetic and ridiculous, and ... 99.9% of the attendees (who) don't even read books." (Though there may be things she wouldn't like about them; it's personal taste.) I hope she's pleased by your vow to publish more frequently to maintain the sense of continuity and community that keeps these connections fresh. While e-mail and other more rapid methods of communication have their benefits, there's just nothing like a zine that goes "thump!" in the mailbox and sits there waiting for you — you lucky person! — to spend time with it.

The faces on the back cover seem oddly sad; some are shocked. Are they upset the zine ended? *{Perhaps that, but more likely they're pissed that I took nearly ten years to get their mugs into print. Ray sent that cover shortly after the first issue appeared.}* (4157 Lyndale Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55409)

ANDREW HOOPER

It was a very welcome and encouraging surprise to see a second issue come out last year. I think the point is well-taken that fanzines which appear only annually, no matter how good, have little chance of attracting much of a community around them or, if they have a strong readership, of providing much interchange between them. The past few years fanzine fandom has felt as if the best lacked all conviction, while the worst published monthly; so it feels like a great infusion of energy to see a publisher like you double the frequency of his output.

I enjoyed reading your comments and observations on ConFrancisco. I agree that there is an enjoyable quality to a brawling, sprawling Worldcon that can never be duplicated by Corflu and Armadillocon and Readercon and all the other small events that Fen of Quality seem to prefer these days. I find myself having to defend my enjoyment of ConFrancisco and Worldcon in general to a lot of people; the impressions of the event espoused by Abi Frost and Darrell Schweitzer seem to have become the official record, and five years from now ConFiasco will become the official convention

title in Worldcon histories. But I have to admit to having had a great time in San Francisco, despite being wildly busy and wearing three or four hats at a time.

I appreciate the positive things you said about the fan lounge. There were a lot of things I would like to have done differently, but there simply were neither time nor resources available to do them. I was especially happy to have raised so much money for TAFF and DUFF, since the auction was a complete disaster.

In fact, fan programming in general was something of a non-starter at the con, as you noted in your appraisal of the TAFF/DUFF panel and the one on timebinding. There was no advocate for it in the Byzantine coils of the programming department; thus all fanish activities were bolted on at the last minute.

The presence of Jeff Schalles, Frank Lunney and Catherine Jackson was one of the major reasons why I had a good time. I had dinner with one or more of them several nights, and always had a profound sense of why I love fandom so much when I was with them: They were people of wide experience, able to discourse on virtually any topic set before them, even science fiction. The news of Catherine's death gave me an ugly and painful feeling of *deja vu*. Just as in the case of Roger Weddall, I had met someone and begun a cordial and stimulating relationship, only to have them taken away a few short months later. It makes me feel cheated; like Roger, like Terry, here was someone who was a major player in the lives of many of the fen I respect and like the most, and they passed after I had met them only once or twice. Stay well, Robert, I don't know you nearly well enough yet.

Calvin Demmon's letter was by far the most striking piece in this issue: harrowing events captured in his laconic style. In a way, I found it encouraging. Demmon has clearly remained Demmon, in the face of vascular challenges that would have reduced most of us to a substantially more primal level. I hope he's doing better now.

For me, the most impressive article was Jay Kinney's. I have always loved good travel writing, and Jay's is a classic account, capturing many of the essential paradoxes facing Americans (and before them, the English) abroad. On one level we decry the inroads of western culture into the rest of the world; on another, listening to Bob Dylan records in Turkey provides us with reassurance that "the world," as the grunts used to call it, still waits for our return. His experience with the *dolmus* culture is classic "Americans abroad" as well. We pride ourselves on being open-minded, committed to decency and fair play, and Jay being that sort of good guy couldn't help but get caught up in the social dislocation caused by the misadventures with his money.

Tourists from most countries would have taken their passports and checks, called the cops about the lost money, and never looked back. His experience is instructive; the things you plan to do, the places you plan to go, are never as illuminating as the things that happen to you by accident.

Shelby Vick's piece was remarkable. His stuff is always so unpretentious, but there's always real emotional weight behind it. This one was so elegiac, without ever being lugubrious. He has a gift.

And then Unca Geri. In a way, I feel like Geri is everybody's mom in fanzine fandom. She takes this business of fandom as family so seriously that you can't help but embrace her primacy within it. This must be puzzling to people who have never been bailed out of some difficulty by her, never had her shoulder to cry on, never been gorged to bursting with chocolate and other goodies at her parties. They don't know what they're missing. Gavriella will learn soon enough. (4228 Francis Ave. No. #103, Seattle, WA 98103)

BOYD RAE BURN

ConFrancisco sounds like a good con to have attended — one where there were many people one actually knew to mix with. (Ray Beam? Now that's a name from way, way in the past....)

The letter from Calvin Demmon was both fascinating and scary. And at the scale of U.S. medical costs, I shudder at what the bills must have been, presumably paid by Calvin's employer's medical insurance.

Jay Kinney's "Nightmare in Istanbul" was also scary. He had the advantage of having Turkish-speaking friends to aid him. A regular tourist would have been at a much greater disadvantage.

George Flynn remarked on the tendency, in his experience, for ethnic cuisines to blend together (e.g., chicken teriyaki in pita bread). I haven't noticed that trend here, but it is quite credible. After a period of time, "ethnic" foods tend to lose their ethnicity, if they become widespread enough, to the extent that for example in the U.S. pizza is probably considered as Murcan as apple pie. About the only seafood on pizzas here is smoked salmon on "gourmet" or "designer" pizzas. I hope that on the London pizzas with cockles and mussels, they take the cockles and mussels out of the shells first. (189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)

KEN RUDOLPH

I was sorry to miss ConFrancisco, since my memories of Baycon — addled as they might be by PCP (which the seller guaranteed was THC, by the way) — were so wonderful. I was especially sorry to have missed the

program item about Baycon itself. You know the saying, "If you can remember the '60s you didn't live through 'em." I feel that way about Baycon and it would be nice to hear some lucid reminiscences.

The most interesting article this go-around was the letter from Calvin Demmon. Being involved with several people who are spending inordinate amounts of time in hospitals and coping with cutting-edge medicine, I could really relate to his experiences. I'm glad he seems to have defied the odds and lived to write so entertainingly about his tribulations.

Carol Carr hits the nail on the head about movie audiences (actually, every nail she hits is right on). It's gotten to the point where I hardly ever go out to movies in public because the social contract is so weak. Even at the Motion Picture Academy, where I do spend most of my movie-going time, I've had some problems with fellow professionals who aren't very. It must be another thing to blame on TV. How else to explain why people find it okay to talk back to the screen in public. And I've perfected the tone of my "shusssh." But I wouldn't dare to use it at a public movie theater here in Los Angeles. Everyone knows that the person next to you is probably packing a gun. (35841 — 82nd St. East, Little-rock, CA 93543)

HARRY WARNER JR.

I enjoyed reading about your Worldcon experiences, particularly because so little about the con itself has been published so far. {*Harry's writing in late December.*} About half of the con reports I've seen have devoted as much space to adventures sightseeing in San Francisco as to the con. (Sudden thought: I wonder if Forry has ever thought about referring to the city as Sa Fra?) {*FJA isn't on my mailing list these days — he never locced! — but Harry Andruschak passes on his fanzines to him, so perhaps he will point this query out to him. (Feel free to write, 4e!)* My con report didn't dwell on tourist activities in SF because I used to live there and still know it well; it's just not a tourist-type place to me anymore.}

Calvin Demmon's article is the latest in an extended series of fanzine writings that seem deliberately designed to discourage me from seeking medical help when I think I might have a physical problem. But it also illustrates once again the fact that hospital care today is mostly procedures that would have been science fiction when I was a neofan. And there's a good chance Calvin would be dead if he'd suffered this problem in the '30s. I suppose I'm not the only older fan who never is sure what to do when an odd feeling or a strange pain arrives. Unless I'm fated to drop dead in a few seconds from a massive heart attack or a bullet, there will probably be sooner or later one of those aches or unusual

feelings that will be the first symptom of whatever I'm going to die from, and between first noticing it and loss of consciousness, I'll be wishing desperately I'd reported it to a doctor immediately when there might have been a chance of saving me. But almost everyone at almost every age experiences these minor twinges and upset feelings from time to time, and if we ran to the emergency room to make sure each one of them wasn't a serious symptom, the line of people awaiting examination would be chronically several miles long.

If fandom is a family, as Geri Sullivan contends, there's all the more reason why more people should be writing fan history. Families inspire curiosity about ancestors and family trees and that sort of thing, and there is a great deal of unrecorded information about the less sensational aspects of fandom that is going to vanish eventually unless ambitious people persuade eyewitnesses to put it down on paper or tape and then compile historical stuff from those memories.

Of course, the metamorphosis in Shelby Vick's home area has been experienced by most older fans. Hagerstown hasn't grown nearly as rapidly since I was a boy as many cities of similar size, but it has changed in bewildering ways. Once the local population was so stable (generation after generation of a family continuing to live in the same area) that the Public Health Service used Hagerstown to conduct multi-generational surveys. Now people move in and out so much that local traditions are being lost. I never hear today the Pennsylvania Dutch idioms that almost everyone used a half-century ago ("The coffee is all" when the pot became empty, for instance, or "Come here once" instead of just plain "Come here"). Every good-sized hill in this area once had its own name, but only the oldest natives remember them today. I lived on Bryan Place when I published my first fanzines, and there was only one paralleling street west of it on the edge of town. Now the city is built up a mile further west over land where I once picked wild berries and played baseball. *{When I was very young growing up on the west side of Cleveland, Ohio, the street I lived on was literally on the edge of town and I used to play in an expansive area of woods and fields with several creeks running through it and huge blackberry patches I would pick from in the summer. My family moved to Los Angeles in 1950 and I didn't revisit Cleveland until 1976. My childhood home seemed so small! I also discovered that not only had the city continued to expand for miles beyond my old neighborhood, but that Interstate 90 ran just past the end of the block on which I'd lived, right through one of the berry patches.}*

Jay Kinney's adventure in Istanbul is reassuring for a special reason. I was shaken in my concept of Turkey when an Australian fan recently wrote about the bad

time he'd apparently had while traveling there and about his low opinion of the people who live in that nation. This contradicted completely what I'd been told by a young woman I know who had spent several months in Turkey some years back as a farm exchange program participant. She loved the country, the people and the customs, and while living on a Turkish farm she had become a regional celebrity because she was the first genuine blonde that people far and wide had ever seen in real life. Apparently she was right, not the fan.

I think one major cause for the crime problem today that Jeanne Mealy is worried about is the interstate highway system. If you'll dig out at the public library the FBI's fat volume listing serious crime rates for all cities in the nation and compare it with a map of the nation's interstates, you'll find that the further a city is from an interstate, the lower its crime rate will be. Criminals were able to make faster and farther getaways when the interstates (and a few other multiple lane thoroughfares not officially in the interstate system) opened than when they were forced to drive narrow roads with traffic signals, railroad grade crossings, and other slowing problems. The difference is almost as great as the impact on crime rates when private autos and decent roads first became available to almost everyone just after World War One, although today some people mistakenly believe that it was the Prohibition era that caused the crime rate to go up in the 1920s. (423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740)

SID BIRCHBY

Your editorial reflects a growing concern over family values both in and out of fandom, and would I be wrong in detecting a similar feeling among some of your contributors? Calvin Demmon, who has had a brush with the grim reaper that nobody can deny who has read his letter, makes the point, "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." In the same context, Calvin expresses his faith in the Creator: "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." Now, that's exactly how I approached the matter when I was recovering from a severe stroke, and I suppose that lots of persons have had a similar quasi-death experience. One has had not exactly a glimpse of the Pearly Gates but it surely sounded like the hinges squeaking. Thenceforth I've made a bit more effort with the oil-can of family relationships.

The same goes with fandom, which after all is our own extended family. In the lettercol, Ethel Lindsay

observes that "no matter how inactive you become, when you go back fandom is always there." (Nice to read your letter, Ethel.) Certainly I was grateful for the arrival of various fanzines in the difficult days of recovery, the days when one feels that someone, or Some One, truly is out there and pitching. (*40 Parris Wood Avenue, Didsbury, Manchester M20 5ND, U.K.*)

VICKI ROSENZWEIG

Medical stories are difficult to comment on, and the tellers probably wouldn't want to hear it even if I had had my very own brain aneurysm to talk about, but Calvin Demmon should send that nurse—the one who wants more traumas in her intensive care work—to the inner city. We'll send someone who's tired of looking at teenagers with gunshot wounds and would welcome the chance to take care of some people who nobody was trying to hurt. That sounds cynical, and maybe it is, but it might also be a worthwhile idea. It's actually not surprising that Calvin's doctor would want to keep him in their own hospital. Not only might there be a matter of pride, but one of the odd catches of medicine is that the more you do a procedure, the better you're likely to be at it. However, since nobody wants to be practiced on by a hospital that doesn't already do a lot of them, if you're in the wrong place you may never get the chance to get good at it.

Geri's article about fannish family, and her adopted niece Gavriella, is wonderful. Oddly, "aunt" and "uncle" may be the only relationships that the mundane world understands as things that can be adopted without legal proceedings or the absence of someone else to fill the role. I had an honorary uncle and aunt when I was growing up—friends of my parents—but as is too often the case the relationship didn't go much deeper than names, and when they stopped being close to my parents, neither they nor I made any effort to maintain it. I was young enough, and they far enough away, that it might have been difficult; but the point is that it never occurred to me, and I hadn't thought about them in years.

Like Shelby, I was a lonely kid. Unlike him, I seem to have reacted by trying, sometimes desperately, to make connections, not always successfully (and not often, before I found fandom). But I don't think it's vulgar to grow up where you were born. At least, I hope not, having done so myself, and I'm still living in the same city—although it is a large city, and the walk from where I grew up to where I live now would take most of the day and probably give me sore feet.

Jay Kinney's article was excellent, the sort of travel writing we need more of: not a plug from the local tourism agency, but a glimpse of what life is really like.

I would advise Harry Warner Jr. (since he seems to be looking for advice) to call on his cousin in the nursing home, on the theory that her reasons for not having him call (whether because he wasn't elegant enough for the neighbors or because she didn't want him to see her home, for whatever reason) probably no longer apply, and she can't call on him anymore. This is, of course, assuming he wants to see her. If he always viewed her visits as a painful duty, he could probably drop the whole thing without any harm.

Jenny Glover doubts whether British fandom is welcoming because of their reaction to someone she describes as a "smooth businessman with all the tricks of communication at his fingertips." I wonder if someone less polished might have done better. Fen tend to have a few rough edges and might have wondered (maybe not even consciously) at this man's motives, or be put off by some of those "tricks of communication." I certainly felt welcome as a visiting American in London a couple of years ago, but don't know how much that proves. It's always easier to make someone welcome for a week if you know they won't be staying around. (*33 Indian Road 6-R, New York, NY 10034*)

WALT WILLIS

The letter from Calvin Demmon was a surprise in some ways. He was the last person I would have expected to go religious. The account of his hospital experiences was harrowing, but somehow hopeful and reassuring. To someone accustomed to the National Health Service, it's nice to read of the standards of excellence available under the American scheme. It makes a change from reports of people being badgered for money before treatment. Again, some of his account expressed my own feelings about my experiences in hospitals—that they're never as bad as you expect. When I first learned about the existence of catheters, for instance, I dreaded the idea, but when I actually experienced one, it seemed quite a normal procedure. After reading Calvin's letter, I regret being unconscious for the whole of my own sojourn in intensive care, because it would have made for an excellent article. When I went back to the intensive care ward after my recovery, I found it completely unfamiliar. All my 'memories' were false. I had a clear recollection of a place rather like the old tennis clubhouse I used to frequent, but the real intensive care ward was nothing like it.

Carol's "Stuff" was excellent as usual. I liked her dream dialogue. I remember waking up from a vivid dream in which I had realized some great truth and actually writing it down. When I was fully awake I found it read, "The obvious is not necessarily untrue."

Geri's article was quite moving, and I'm glad to have

figured in it. The reference in the caption of the photograph I sent her, to her having wakened early, was because the photograph showed the sun rising over the sea to the east of Donaghadee.

Shelby's article was curiously affecting, on several levels. The most simple was realizing that the beach and dunes where Shelby took me in 1952 have almost certainly been replaced by a motel and pool. The most profound was Shelby's reaction to the foreseen death of his mother. I can understand that, only too well.

"Nightmare in Istanbul" was well written and vivid, and utterly convincing. I wonder how different it might have been if Jay hadn't had people with him who could speak the language, but the Turkish taxi drivers come out of it quite well, which is nice.

In the letter section, I agree with Ted White that Redd Boggs is sadly missed. To Harry Warner, I cast my vote that he should visit his widowed cousin. She has probably forgotten that she instructed there should be no visits and wonders only why nobody comes to see her. Harry should not forget that visitors count as a status symbol in an old folks' home. To Sid Birchby, yes, I remember "Steel Foundry" well. Ethel Lindsay's letter gives me a warm feeling, with its reference to her getting a card from Brian Jordan for Mercer's Day. I hadn't realized anyone remembered Mercer's Day. (32 Warren Rd., Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 0PD)

MARTYN TAYLOR

I empathized with Calvin Demmon quite severely, although my brief encounter with the guy with the hour glass, scythe and taste for blindingly hot curries is a long time in my past now, more than half a lifetime ago. The only two times I felt really sick during my six weeks in hospital were the first night when they put me on some sort of high-tech torture table which they tried to convince me was an x-ray machine. "Take me, Lord," I thought when they were finished. "I'm ready to go now." The second was when they forgot to empty my catheter bag. If it hasn't happened to you then you have no idea and words cannot express it. Death, if you'll excuse the pun, would come as a welcome relief.

"Home" is a very elusive concept. Me, I've never had a "home" in that there is somewhere my heart resides no matter where I may be. I've lived in Newbiggin, Morpeth, Middlesbrough, Leeds, Yeadon, Bracknell, London, Douglas (Isle of Man) and Cambridge. Each place has its attractions and memories, and I would definitely like to live by the sea again. But go back to any of them? No. My heart lies wherever I lay my head. Cathie is very much a Cambridge girl, having winged her way homeward from working in such places as Reading, Corpus Christi and Abu Dhabi. As

for me, wherever Cathie and the kids are, that's home to me. I suppose it is something to do with my awareness of time and that the mere recognition of something in the past as being a desirable state makes it impossible to restore. Whatever, whoever made those moments memorable has changed, probably beyond recognition. I know I have, so why shouldn't they? Life is something to be enjoyed now, the future to be savored in expectation. Nostalgia is fine, even if it ain't what it used to be, but I think I'll live for today and tomorrow rather than yesterday, make a new home where I am. Anyone who thinks differently ... well, good luck to them. I hope their lives will be as interesting to them as mine is to me, and let's talk about it sometime. Geri is right. Home is wherever you are when you're with family and friends.

I was taken by Jay Kinney's excursion in Istanbul, having recently been in Syria looking at some ancient places – Palmyra, Ebla, Crac des Chevaliers, etc. Contact with Syria hasn't been too easy these past few years, what with politics and all that, but I liked the Syrians and found them immensely friendly and courteous. Tourists are still a pleasurable novelty to them, unlike their Jordanian neighbors who seem to believe that if Allah didn't intend tourists to be fleeced why did he make them sheep. I got some odd looks with my beard and ponytail, pushing ma-in-law (who was paying) in her wheelchair, and it was a little disquieting walking the suburban streets of Aleppo being scrutinized by boys young enough to be my son wearing Kalshnikovs. It was also "interesting" to have dinner at a restaurant with George Habash sitting at the next table accompanied by five very obviously armed PLO heavies! Time's too short to enthuse about everything I saw but I intend to go back, and if I can avoid going through Jordan so much the better. The juvenile militia in Syria might shoot you because they were twitchy but those Jordanian militia with the nice new blue camouflage jackets would do it because they enjoyed it – and being the King's men they'd probably get away with it, too. (14 Natal Road, Cambridge CB1 3NS, U.K.)

TED WHITE

I'm very squeamish about medical stuff (as I like to call it). I found this out in eighth grade, when I was part of a class being shown a "health" film. They got to the part about applying tourniquets and showed (in black and white) blood gushing in *pulses* from a severed artery, and I just about passed out. (Even the memory, as I write about it, makes me lightheaded.) So reading Calvin's piece was difficult. But I'm glad to hear from him. {I'm squeamish, too, so you can imagine how I reacted when I not only first read Calvin's letter, but had

to type it up. And remember, I've known Calvin since we were both sixteen, which made it even heavier since here was a Dear Old Friend experiencing this "medical stuff," not just a character in a play by ~~Shelby~~ Hippocrates.}

Geri's and Shelby's pieces both seem more suited to personal zines than genzines: very self-focused. But Shelby's inspires two comments: "Fanzine locs and articles have led me to the conclusion there's something almost vulgar about growing up where you were born." I hadn't noticed that and, as someone who currently resides in the house in which I spent my entire childhood, you'd think I would or should have. But maybe Shelby was being more literal: perhaps it would be vulgar to grow up in the *hospital* in which one was born. But the imagine that brought me up short was Shelby's comment on tourism: "I sometimes feel like the mushrooming growth of our area is akin to lichen flourishing on rotting corpses." This conjures up an amazing image in itself, not least because lichens normally do their "flourishing" on weathered outcroppings of stone. Trying to imagine the incredibly slow-growing lichens coping with a fast-rotting corpse certainly stimulated my sense of wonder.

I question Jay Kinney's characterization of "most Americans" as the sort to calculate their losses against their hourly wages (as though while essentially vacationing in a foreign country they'd be calculating their time in that fashion) and ignore the sensibilities of the host country. I don't think Jay is unique among Americans in his sensitivity to the situation, even if he is in a minority.

In the letter column Harry Warner wonders, "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?" The short answer is "No." Few safes of modest size and no safes of modest price can withstand sustained heat without reducing their contents to charred remains (at best) or ash (at worst). Photos in particular will suffer. The safe itself may remain whole and "useable," but perishable contents will perish.

Boyd Raeburn seems to think that the effect of SDI on the Soviet Union is "quite a contrast to the widely propagated claims that the SDI was stupid and wouldn't work." Well, SDI *doesn't* work, and never did, claims to the contrary being lies fed to both the Soviets and to our Congress (for more funding). It appears that SDI was stupid in its claims, but when you have world leaders of *equal* stupidity, like Reagan (who *believes* in the "force shields" of skiffy space-opera) and, it would appear, the Soviet military leaders as well, that point is apparently irrelevant. (1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046)

MILT STEVENS

The articles in *Trap Door* No. 13 seem to divide almost evenly between anecdotal items that invite more anecdotes and anecdotal items where I'm very glad I don't have similar anecdotes to share. "A Letter from Calvin Demmon" definitely falls in the latter category. Thinking of all the things that could go wrong with your body is probably enough to kill you from stress. Knowing the powerful influence of thinking on health, it's amazing that *Readers Digest* hasn't killed off all their readers by now with their disease-of-the-month articles.

Geri Sullivan's article reminded me that I was called uncle years and years before I actually acquired a niece and two nephews. Being named Milton was bad enough in itself without having Milton Berle being the hottest thing on television during my first childhood. I may still have a lingering resentment against television for that. I've grown used to Milton or Milt by now, and it is actually useful to have a somewhat unusual first name with an utterly common last name like Stevens when one starts having bylines.

To a longtime urbanite like myself, the isolation Shelby Vick describes just sounds like life in the big city. When there are too many people around, you develop ways of defending yourself against interaction overload. Fandom is probably one means of defense. You limit your social circle to an almost comprehensible number of people. If we couldn't do things like that, we might end up like the rats in a closed box experiment. Actually, I think that experiment explains a lot of things that happen in urban America. Some people can't construct the necessary defenses, and they start becoming very hostile. (5384 Rainwood St. #90, Simi Valley, CA 93063)

BOB SHAW

Many thanks for *Trap Door* No. 13, a lovely fanzine, one which reminds me of why I have stayed in fandom all my adult life.

I would like to have written a full response to Calvin Demmon's article, but—having recently spent months in cancer wards, where I had my plumbing seriously rearranged—I am too close to the subject to use an objective viewpoint. All I can say to him is that I know very well how he feels (hi, Calvin!) and that at some future time I hope to give his letter the acknowledgement it deserves. {When you get around to doing so, please consider sending the result here for publication.}

Congratulations to George Flynn. I was wondering who would be the first fan to spot my deliberate mistake regarding Crustacea and Ostrea. George has won the 1994 BoSh Award, which entitles him to buy me a beer every time we meet. (98 London Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 6LE, U.K.)

KATE SCHAEFER

Calvin Demmon's letter about his aneurysm, hospitalization, tests and operation was very moving and very real. Yeah, that's what it's like, people coming in and doing undignified things to you, sometimes saying why, sometimes not, and thoughts dashing across your brain without you thinking them. He asked his fellow workers to pray for him; just last week I read in the *New York Times* about a doctor researching the effects of prayer on patients' recovery. He says that even if the patients don't know they're being prayed for, they do better than patients not being prayed for. Not quite enough to make me give up atheism, but I'm impressed.

I spent last October in Florida, land of palmetto bugs and our friends the geckos, taking care of my grandmother, who was recovering from a stroke in August. Now everything reminds me of this experience. Carol Carr's anecdote about memory lapses that aren't Alzheimer's made me think of my grandmother's friend Margie, who does have Alzheimer's. Margie was doing all right, my grandmother said, until her spouse died. Then while she was confused and grieving, Margie's cruel younger sister Marie came down from New York and put Margie in a Home (actually, a very nice adult-assisted living facility where Margie has a one-bedroom apartment with meals and maid service and people check on her two or three times a day, but she didn't choose it and can't leave, so it's a Home). Since then, Margie's gone steadily downhill. Margie called nearly every day while I was there, sometimes two or three times. We'd have the same conversation each time. "How's your grandmother? Just let her know I called. We go way back, you know. We've had a lot of fun together." "How's your grandmother? Just let her know I called. We go way back, you know. We've had a lot of fun together." She never remembered that she'd called before. I never reminded her. Once Margie told me, "They say old age is the golden years. Don't you believe them. It's all donkey dust." "They don't even give her any treatment for the Alzheimer's!" my grandmother said. "There is no treatment for Alzheimer's," I replied. My grandmother was shocked. She believes there must be a treatment for everything. She thought "Better Living Through Chemistry" was a promise. (4012 Interlake Ave. North, Seattle, WA 98103)

GEORGE FLYNN

You say, "I even saw a copy of *The Outsider and Others*" (in the ConFrancisco huckster room). That's nothing. At the World Fantasy Con in Minneapolis, I think I saw *five* copies of it (one in a complete display of Arkham House books, four for sale—and I believe at least two of them did sell). And that's not counting the

manuscript, which was displayed under glass, asking price something like \$17,000. The mind boggles.

While reading Carol Carr's column, my mind got sent on a tangent when I encountered the word *chiropractic*. It's really *chiropractic*, of course, but then I got to wondering why? Turn to dictionary. On the same page I found *chirognomy*, *chirography*, *chirology*, *chiro-mancy*, *chiro-megaly*, *chironomy*, *chiropody*, *chirosofpy* and *chirotony*, all well-behaved, with only *chiropractic* standing out in defiance of good order. I suppose the founder was as scornful (or ignorant?) of linguistic as of medical orthodoxy, though some of those other words are pretty weird themselves (examples left as an exercise for the reader).

Shelby Vick mentions that "growing up where you were born ... is a rarity these days." True enough. In my own case I did grow up where my parents lived when I was born, but the actual birth was in a different state: an interesting effect of living where the nearest hospital was across the state line.

You note in response to Ted White that you were one of only two in your class to support Stevenson in 1952. In my high school that year, I wasn't quite that alone, but I was one of the only two who tried *organizing* for Stevenson. (We were the only intellectuals in our age group. It was frustrating. We fought all the time but had to make up, because in the final analysis we didn't have anyone to talk to but each other.) There was going to be a poll of the student body, so we decided to put up posters and the like to try to influence the vote. But we were quickly squelched; taking a genteel poll was one thing, but actually *electioneering* in the school? No way. (In my college a couple of years later, permission was denied to organize Young Democrats and Republicans on campus. The fifties were weird, weren't they?) {*Yes and no; after all, today we have PC.*} (P. O. Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Stn., Cambridge, MA 02142)

CHUCH HARRIS

If you see me sitting in my armchair smiling happily at nothing, don't just write it off as senility. I'm probably thinking about Carol Carr's sewing session on her waterbed. Geri offered her waterbed to Sue and me when we visited but, even when pruned right down to the quick, my toenails (such intimate details!) are still razor-sharp. And Sue, remembering the inflatable mattress fiasco on our camping honeymoon (which was more youthful exuberance than toenails or anything else), wouldn't even entertain the joyous waterbed idea—even when I promised to keep my socks on and my feet pointing heavenward during every ecstatic moment.

It's still a bit of a shock to find all our intimate

fannish relationships exposed in *Trap Door*, and my fabulous Mom oh-so-casually mentioning that I now have a tiny cousin – a tiny girl cousin at that! I can hardly wait to see Susan Levy Haskell again just for the delight in calling her “Aunt” – and to get another chance to plunder Uncle Fred Haskell’s bookshelves.

The intricate Langdon Chart showing all the pairings and couplings, licit and otherwise, of U.S. fandom (the BRE project was abandoned – and I use the word advisedly – when the mainframe blew all its gaskets on account of the profusion of twigs) would be nothing compared to this Choose Your Own Family project, but the constraints and limitations are still horrendous. Sure, “a boy’s best friend is his Mom” – and she is! she is! But it still punches holes in my ego every time we meet in airports and railway stations. We hug each other in mutual delight until she pats my head maternally and says, “Cool it, Oedipus. People are staring.”

But seriously, Geri’s main point that fandom really is an extended family is perfectly true. We share our joys and triumphs, and the family mourns its losses. When ATom or Susan Wood died, we all mourned because a little bit of us had died, too, and we rejoice in the triumph when one of “our” family wins the Hugo or Nova award....

Ever since one magical night at the Normandy we have always thought of Ted White as an exotic gourmet. There were perhaps a dozen Corflu people around the table but only Ted ordered the honeydew melon for starters. It was an enormous and beautiful-looking portion and Ted, talking happily across the table, absently started to sprinkle salt all over it. Sue was horrified. She thought he had mistaken the salt for the sugar bowl. “It’s salt, Ted. *Salt.*”

“Sure is,” said Ted, and dug away happily with his spoon, never knowing that he had just become A Legend. Ever since that, whenever we eat out (which isn’t often), we watch other melon fans hoping to see another salt gourmet. So far we find 65% of people add sugar, 20% add port wine, 5% add ground ginger, and the rest take it naked and unadulterated. The next time we see Ted we will *buy* him melon just so we can sit there and shudder horrifically as he eats it.

But gourmet or no, we won’t buy him snails. I think they are disgusting and that horrible stomach-churning revolting bubbling green goo they are served in is something straight out of a horror video. It beats me how any decent, sane adult person can violate their body by sticking something like that into their mouth. It is something I shall never understand.

We look on Ted as a long-standing special friend who rates very highly indeed in our affections, and yes, we realize that, being flawed by his time editing prozines

– it’s a well-known fact that all pro-eds are crazed deviants of one sort or another, and I have rejection slips to prove it—we need to be especially understanding and make allowances. But ... Jesus, Ted! Horrible, slimy *gastropods*!

Don’t try to evade the point by muttering about winkles. Winkles are *entirely* different. From the moment they are hatched they are washed continuously in a strong salt solution before being wrenched from their environment, boiled hygienically, and sold outside the pub on Sunday.

Well, outside London pubs—we never see them up here in the boondocks. My grandfather, after his traditional Sunday pre-lunch pint, would buy a pint or a pint and a half of winkles from the shellfish man’s barrow outside the pub and we would all have them for Sunday tea. And so did most of the other people in the street – it was a sort of Sunday treat; you never had them any other day. The man, using a pint beer mug as a measure with a few extra on top as lagniappe, poured them into a thick brown paper bag and, if I had been taken to the pub with him, I would be able to carry them all the way home to my Nan.

(Children weren’t allowed in the pub but I was happy enough waiting on the pavement with all the other kids, clutching a huge arrowroot biscuit and a glass of fizzy lemonade. Rich families bought shrimps but we weren’t rich; anyway we preferred winkles after grandad told us how the man refreshed his shrimp when they began to look limp—although, decently, he always poured clean cold water over them afterwards.)

(This reminds me that years and years later Dean Grennell told me that all his brood positively refused to eat shrimp at all after they found out that the interesting, irremovable brown vein running down the center of each one was no more than concentrated shrimp shit.)

But back to winkles and how to eat them. Hawk-eyed tyros will immediately notice that each shell is a spiral. So, you place the pin just beneath the thin scale that seals the entrance, carefully rotate the pin, being careful not to break off the thin and delicate tail piece, and draw out the winkle. On average they must be about an inch long and perhaps a quarter inch diameter at the thick end just below the seal. Sunday tea could take about an hour or so depending on how many winkles you get and how practiced you are at winking them out. Once they are out and naked, you discard the sealing scale, pop the winkle in your mouth, bite the bread, and start the next extraction while you are chewing. They taste salty and iodine-y. After you get over the shock/horror of the shell ritual you’d probably like them. If you come and visit at Glasgow time we’ll see if we can find some.

Finally, possibly because of their smallness and general appearance, the word "winkle" is also used as a nursery synonym for a wee lad's penis. And, by word association I suppose, a wee lass is blessed with a twinkle. And when the nurse came out of the delivery room en route to the incubator with a baby under each arm, she said, "A winkle and a twinkle – aren't you lucky?" And I nodded, gulped, and burst into tears.

I mustn't close without saying I loved Kinney and ShelVy, the letter column is always a delight, and the artwork is of an incredibly high standard unequalled by any other fanzine I can think of. (32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants NN1 5EB, U.K.)

PAMELA BOAL

I think "comfortable" best describes this issue. Nice people talking about events one can relate to and nod one's head in agreement with. Beware assuming that absence of offspring will always give you head space. The last of ours to leave the nest did so fourteen years ago, but last year was devastatingly awful and created a downturn in my letterhacking because our offspring all suffered variously severe health, financial, employment or accommodation problems.

Geri Sullivan's thoughts on family and home reflect my own to a great extent. I am blessed with a very warm and close family, but I still enjoy the worldwide family that corresponds through zines like *Trap Door*. Ghastly childhood experiences created a desire in myself not to shun relationships or abstain from parenthood but to try and create a home where love could flourish. Our children are close to each other and us, not from any sense of duty but from a genuine pleasure of being in each other's company whenever possible. Fortunately, the two with permanent partners have partners with the same attitude to their own family and our family.

Jay Kinney's experience is most interesting. What a contrast to Western ways of thinking! When my husband Derek handed a £10 note he had found over the counter of the shop in which he had found it, everyone called him a fool. (4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, U.K.)

PASCAL THOMAS

It felt good to find *Trap Door* No. 13 in my stack of mail when I came back from my three-month stay in the U.S. this fall. (Madison, WI, a fun place, but also one where my wife and I could spend usefully part of our sabbatical, working with people at the university there.) I had glimpsed a copy at another fan's house, had leafed through the editorial, eyes glued to references to Con-Francisco—I'd really have liked to make that Worldcon, although I don't make many these days, but too many

other trips intruded—and I was wondering then whether I was still on the mailing list, still in the family after too long silences. Guess I am.

And family, fannish and otherwise, is still the main theme, I see. Sometimes the articles are so personal/anecdotal in nature that, enjoyable though they are, it's difficult to respond to them. At least for me. At least in a semi-articulate way. {*Try harder, s'il vous plait!*}

Geri Sullivan's article was good, but even better was Dan Steffan's artwork. I guess when you've been reading *Le Journal de Mickey* before a certain age, some buttons stays with you forever, waiting to be pushed by clever parodies of Carl Barks' work.

The standout piece in the issue for me was Jay Kinney's article about his lost wallet. Beyond the dramatic charge (what a suspenseful story!) and the philosophical/religious consideration, it was a really interesting sociological sketch of the dolmus culture. It was fascinating to me, because it embodied something we have lost (in the USA, and in France even well before that – for once we're ahead!): honesty enforced from the roots, by social consensus. Would that students and colleagues at my university had the same attitude towards library books!

Letter column stimulating as always, but perhaps the best thing in it you cleverly located last: Jessica Amanda Salmonson's both grumbling and humorous letter was a blast! (7 rue des Saules, 31400 Toulouse, France)

CANDI STRECKER

Thanks for *Trap Door* No. 13, the fanzine that's the *perfect size* for reading while breastfeeding, my new criteria for determining whether anything gets read around here at all. My favorite line was your editorial's "The headspace opened up by the absence of offspring is enormous." After having leased out that headspace for just five months myself, I nod in agreement and a bit of envy. Of course we love our Nicola with fierce delight, but the biggest change she's made is her colonization of our consciousness. It's something that has to be experienced to be believed. {*Yes, indeed!*}

My favorite article in this issue was Calvin Demmon's report on his hospital and medical adventures – well-observed and well-written in every aspect. Now I've learned there is such a thing as Shunt Fandom, and I'm boggled to know it. A side-note on the sleep-deprivation-induced hallucinations he experienced: My mother had a close brush with death last summer, due to a chance confluence of conditions that unexpectedly led to peritonitis. Though weak and barely alive, she was rational for her first day or two in the intensive care unit; then she started talking in a paranoid whisper about the new, deadly "ice disease" going around, and

the terrible clanking medical machinery, and the rude things she was hearing the nurses say about the patients. The nurses explained that this behavior is so common that they even have a name for it: "ICU psychosis." The round-the-clock lighting and constant interruptions for tests and medications in the ICU interrupts the patients' REM sleep and leads to hallucinations. As soon as they move into a regular room and get a night or two of unbroken sleep, they're fine again.

Best jolt of the issue: With a mere handful of words (specifically "The Moody Blues' song 'Melancholy Man'"), Jay Kinney was able to evoke in me all the nostalgia/horror of the 1970s that so far it's taken me 76 pages (and counting) to try to evoke in others! Brrrrr, I'd forgotten that turgid, lugubrious song even existed, let alone that it was on an album that I owned and played repeatedly at the age of fifteen. (If that's any excuse, and I think maybe it is.) One thing I stress in my writings about the Seventies is that an amazing number of people seem to have a self-induced amnesia about the decade, and that I want to shake them out of it by dunking them under a waterfall of pop-culture memories. So it was amusing to catch myself exhibiting the same amnesia, to find that I have my own blind spot! *{For those who wish entertaining reminiscences about the decade that brought us both Watergate and Disco Duck, send Candi \$8 for the first two volumes of It's A Wonderful Lifestyle. I highly recommend them. Her address....}* (590 Lisbon, San Francisco, CA 94112)

LLOYD PENNEY

Geri Sullivan's article reinforces my own ideas about how fandom can become family. New Year's Eve is just past as I write and, as most fans do, many members of Toronto fandom gathered for a New Year's Eve party. I party without alcohol, so once I've had a good time, I often sit by myself for an island of quiet in the maelstrom of talk. I thought about many of the people who were surrounding me, and how many of them are very dear to me. My own family now lives in various places in British Columbia and I cannot afford to visit, so the phone suffices. My wife's family all lives in the Toronto area, but we all have our own lives and we meet only at family birthdays and holidays. We see friends socially, at parties and conventions, and these people are the ones with whom we discuss problems, network, party and share some of the most enjoyable parts of our lives. Every so often we tell them, in one way or another, how much we love them and how much of a gap there'd be if they weren't there. A touch of the hand, an embrace or hug, an arm around the waist, a massage or rub — there are many ways to say I love you and you mean a lot to me. (This sentence shows you how important

physical contact is to me.) (412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, Ont. L6T 4B6, Canada)

LAURIE YATES

Geri's article really hit a chord with me. I first felt the family effect of fandom at Corflu in Southern California. Since I had attended without Bill [Kunkel], I was feeling a little lost. After learning he'd been hospitalized, though, I was panic-stricken. The sense of security that Jeanne Bowman, Geri Sullivan and Joe Wesson offered really helped me through the rest of the weekend. Since I hadn't met any non-Vegas based fans previously at the time, this familial extension awed me. Geri's sentiment is the right one, though: "Fandom is a good place to be." (805 Spyglass Lane, Las Vegas, NV 89107)

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK

I am not sure how Geri Sullivan would react to my current family life. I have little in the way of fannish family, and instead in the last year have grown much closer to my immediate family. This is because I now visit my brother's house several times a week to access "RecoverNet" on his BBS system and to play with my three nieces aged eight, six and four. I have been with the family to Disneyland and Knotts Berry Farm, and once took Helena (the eight-year-old) on an all-day trip to Magic Mountain and its roller coasters. We both had a lot of fun. I am not sure where it will all end, although I share Geri's intention of having no children of my own — helped out by a vasectomy. (P. O. Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510)

DAVID THAYER

Geri Sullivan's article touched me. And I finally sense how she felt when her brother died. My daughter's maternal grandfather died last Saturday. Last week, sensing the distress her mom was feeling, and making a mental connection, my daughter hugged me more tightly than usual. (701 Regency Dr., Hurst, TX 76054)

TERRY JEEVES

In the lettercol, Jenny Glover is quite right in saying that the *original* aim of the BSFA when we formed it in the fifties was to "bring new faces into fandom." What we hadn't anticipated was the floodgate opening of media sci-fi and fantasy hype which not only swamped fandom with new faces, but so broadened its scope as to virtually kill our old pulp-based society. (56 Red Scar Dr., Scarborough, N. Yorks. YO12 5RQ, U.K.)

DEREK PICKLES

Seeing that descriptions of meetings with leaders occupy your loccers, I must relate my experiences in that area. I saw Winston Churchill twice. The first time was during WW2 when he came to Bradford to visit a local factory that made pistons for tanks and planes. He drove down the road sitting on the folded-down hood – feet on the rear seat – of a Daimler convertible. He had his right hand upraised giving his famous “V for Victory” sign (palm facing forward). He originally made the sign with the back of his hand facing forward until someone got up enough nerve to tell him that it was a rather indelicate sign, the making of which usually resulted in the perpetrator getting punched in the face. I later saw him in the Chamber of the House of Commons during a debate. I initially didn't recognize the small, old, bent figure of a man who had obviously suffered a stroke. The press, newsreels and TV of the time exercised very strict self-censorship in Britain as they did in the U.S. – look at the way Roosevelt's polio was covered up.

I also met the Duchess of Kent (wife of one of Elizabeth II's nephews) when she opened a new wing at the college where I lectured. A very pleasant woman who seemed genuinely interested in the work we did. She had just had a baby and the Nursery Nurse students made cratefuls of stuffed animals and toys for the infant. The Duchess had an aide-de-camp, a young officer in a red tunic, breeches and long, spurred black boots. He also had a sword on long chains hanging from his Sam Browne belt. He was kept busy dashing up and down the stairs carrying toys, lengths of cloth (we have a textile department – Bradford was the wool capital of the world in the 19th century). After getting his trailing sword caught up in his spurs a couple of times, and consequently falling down the stairs, he removed the sword and put it in the boot (trunk) of the limousine. He couldn't unfasten his over-tight collar and maintained a complexion the color of a tomato for the duration of the visit. (44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorks. BD5 8LX, U.K.)

ROBERT BLOCH

You might tell Sid Birchby to stop Mossulow's “Steel Foundry” from crashing in his mind's eye, if not his ear. According to the half-century-old RCA Victor recording, the composer's name is spelled “Mossolow,” and the composition is titled “Soviet Iron Foundry.” I am fairly certain of this, because I am staring at the record right now. (2111 Sunset Crest Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90046)

WE ALSO HEARD FROM

MICHAEL ASHLEY, DOUGLAS BARBOUR (“enjoyed it all, even the snark of Jessica Amanda Salmonson”), SHERYL BIRKHEAD (“Ted White's prozine column on fanzines is where I first heard about fandom... a shame such a forum doesn't exist today to entice new members to the ranks, but somehow we seem to manage”), HARRY BOND (writes between changing nappies, saying “time is short”), ROSS CHAMBERLAIN, NORM CLARKE (“gafia is a terrible thing”), MOG DECARNIN, GARY DEINDORFER, BRAD FOSTER, JOHN FOYSTER, DAVID HARTWELL (“I remember Lee Thorin at Discon in '63 – so *that's* who Gary Deindorfer was talking about!”), DAVID HAUGH, FRANK LUNNEY, MIKE McINERNEY (who wrote two huge letters full of fan reminiscences which I may squeeze into a future issue), LEN & JUNE MOFFATT, VIC MOITORET, JOSEPH NICHOLAS (“While Ted White is no doubt correct that every LP I have will be reissued on CD at some point, the high cost of CDs in the UK (much higher than in the US) means that for all practical purposes the LPs *are* irreplaceable – I couldn't afford it!”), PATRICK NIELSEN HAYDEN, BERNI PHILLIPS, JOHN D. RICKETT, TRACY SHANNON, NOREEN SHAW (“I always read and enjoy *Trap Door* – would love to do something for it.” Any time, any time....) (CoA for Noreen: 5223 Corteen Place, #7, Valley Village, CA 91607), STEVE STILES, TARAL WAYNE, AMY THOMSON (“I wonder what non-fans do without the network of vintage weirdos, perverts and solid, thoughtful friends that comprise fandom? Watch lots of TV, I guess.”) and HENRY WELCH.



DOOR

