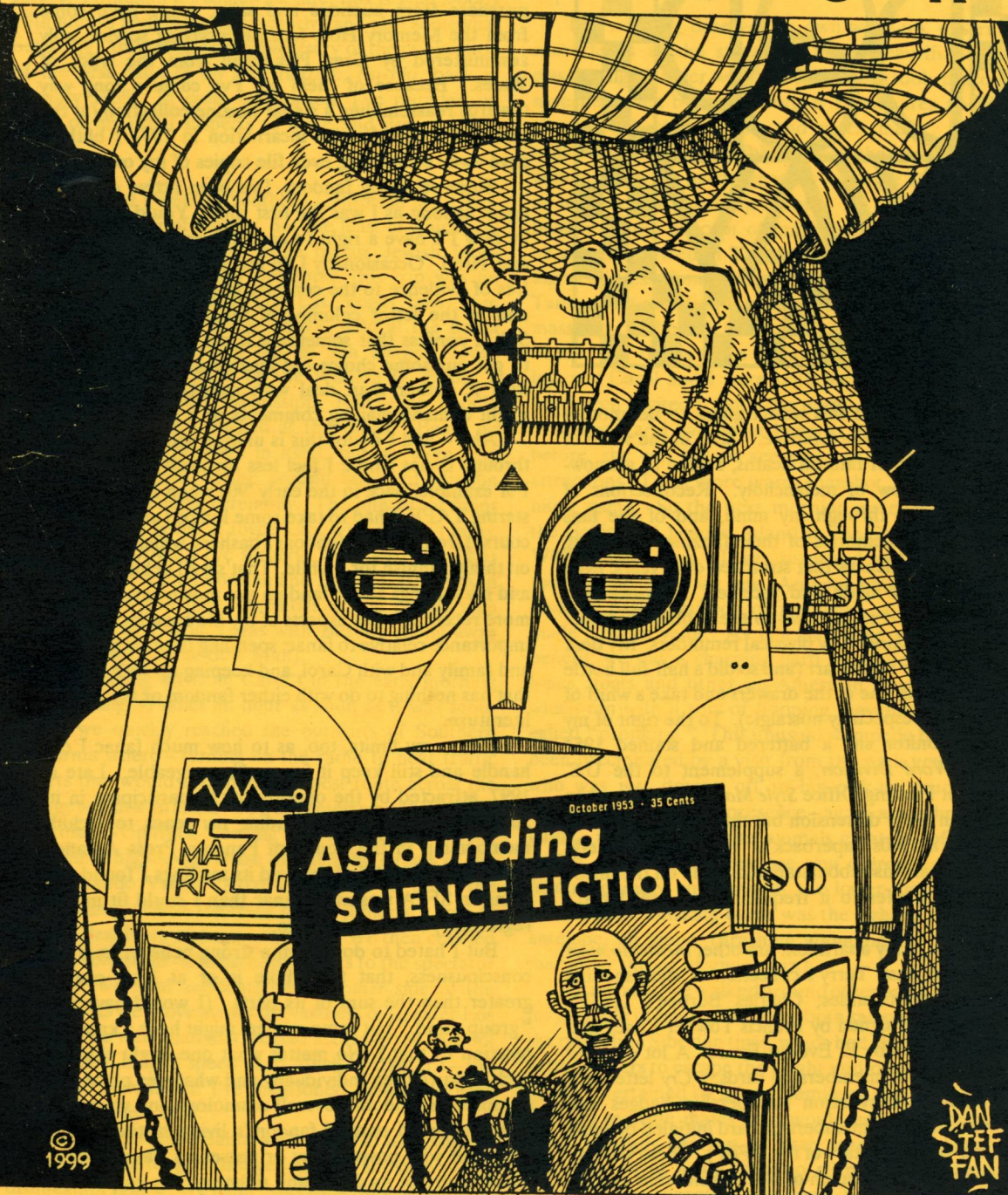


T R A P D O O R



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DAN
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I promised myself this wasn't going to be another issue of *Trap Door: The Obitzine*. Still, in the wake of yet another flurry of fannish deaths, I need to acknowledge an undertow of melancholy. Recollections of fandom past run through my mind, and of the fans who've left us – memories of their fanzines read long ago; of correspondences that stretched over years, even decades; of visits made and received; of convention experiences shared right down to the rubber chicken.

I'm also surrounded by physical reminders. My desk used to belong to Terry Carr (and so did a half-full bottle of corflu I keep in one of the drawers and take a whiff of whenever I feel especially nostalgic). To the right of my computer monitor sits a battered and stained 1954 edition of *Word Division*, a supplement to the U.S. Government Printing Office *Style Manual*, smaller than a postcard in every dimension but thickness, its binding as brittle as a 1940s paperback's. It used to be Redd Boggs' and bears his rubberstamped name on the inside front cover. I refer to it frequently and feel Redd's presence every time.

Elsewhere in my apartment are other *memento mori* of our fannish past: Terry's collection of styli, shading plates and lettering guides; Charles Burbee's LASFS membership card signed by Francis Towner Laney and Ron Ellik's signed by E. Everett Evans. A lot of other rElliks, too: FAPA membership cards; a *Cry* letterhack card; numerous convention membership badges and cards; even an NFFF membership card initialed by Janie Lamb (one-time Secretary of the NFFF). These were all in an envelope with a bunch of old fanzines that used to be part of Ron's collection, probably misplaced there,

which came to me through a third party.

Then there are the fanzines. My rebuilt collection would be much diminished without the contributions of Burbee and Boggs. In addition to smaller acquisitions from various fellow oldpharts and the occasional purchase from auctions and sales, many have come from the Memory Hole fanzine recycling service, ably administered by Greg Pickersgill from the wilds of Wales. Because of them all, I've come a long way towards reassembling a stellar fanzine collection (at the end of my first fannish incarnation in 1971 I blithely gave away everything, even file copies of my own stuff).

Since rejoining fandom, I've been active over half again as long as I was the first time. You'd think that by now I'd have a right to consider myself an Old Fan and Tired. Occasionally I do feel that way, but there is lots of evidence to the contrary in my various apazines and in the letter columns of fanzines far and wide. Still, I confess that sometimes it can be more relaxing to get out some choice old fanzine and snuggle down with it, rather than deal with something new which might demand mailing comments or a LoC.

Also – and I doubt this is unique with me – I do go through cycles where I feel less involved with fandom. For example, back in the early '90s when I was administering TAFF, I had to take some lumps (unjustified, of course) from a few of fandom's bashers, which soured me on things fannish for a while. That's well behind me now and my feelings about fandom are mostly positive. But more recently, other aspects of my life have increased in importance relative to fanac: spending time with my sons and family and with Carol, and keeping up with reading that has nothing to do with either fandom or the mother literature.

I have my limits, too, as to how much fanac I can handle and still keep it fun and manageable. Late in 1997, attracted by the opportunity to participate in its 200th mailing, I tried extending my reach to include membership in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. Unfortunately, while I enjoyed its mailings I found that being in SFPA was more fanac than I could fit in and, regretfully, I had to let it go.

But I hated to do it. I'm a strong believer in group consciousness, that the whole is or at least can be greater than the sum of its parts. (I would have said "group mind," but some readers might have a kneejerk reaction to that.) No matter what one might think of each departed fan individually and whatever place they occupied in fandom's overall cosmology and your own, they embodied part of fandom's living history. With every fan who passes away or passes on, fandom loses a little more of its depth and richness. My response to this is to want to remain as active as possible, to fan a

little harder to make up for the loss, to contribute my own chapter to fandom's history.

So far I've dwelt on my feelings about fandom's past, but that doesn't mean I don't look forward to its future. Although it's somewhat late, this is *Trap Door's* 15th anniversary and, more significantly (and also somewhat belatedly), this is the 40th anniversary of the publication of the first issue of my first fanzine, *Psi-Phi*, back in January 1959. In quiet celebration, I've rounded up some of my usual suspects to write and draw for this issue.

Carol and I went to Southern California last October for a number of reasons, not the least of which was to renew our supplies of triple bypass Jewish foodstuffs. But what initially prompted this trip was an invitation to the wedding of Las Vegas fans Tom Springer and Tammy Funk. It was held at the Bahia Resort Hotel on Mission Bay in San Diego. More specifically, it took place on the William D. Evans, a restored New Orleans/Mississippi River-type paddle wheel steamer that's docked at the Bahia. Being on such a boat is a pleasure in itself, but we were also treated to a 1½-hour cruise around beautiful Mission Bay after the wedding ceremony. The only other fans invited (besides Arnie & Joyce Katz, who couldn't make it because of Joyce's eye surgery) were also from Las Vegas: Ken & Aileen Forman and Ben & Cathi Wilson (who some of you may remember as the couple who got married at Corflu Vegas with Burbee giving away the bride and Ken as Best Man).

After taking off from Carol's in the early morning and traveling 80 miles an hour as soon as it was semi-lawful, we quickly reached the outskirts of Southern California where—turning on the radio to hear traffic reports that would determine the best route across the smoggy urban wasteland—we were entertained by reports of a stolen 7-Up truck “leading” (as the radio put it) the police on a high-speed chase through the streets of the San Fernando Valley. After about half an hour, the drama climaxed with the truck driver climbing a tree in his final desperate attempt to escape. We then crawled through several six-mile backups thanks to the spectator value of two fatal accidents on the *other* side of the freeway. As we drove across the vastness of Greater Los Angeles, we were glad that we had access to the carpool lanes, which helped speed us to lunch at Canter's—the venerable Jewish deli I've mentioned before in these pages—and beyond.

Checking in at the Bahia, we found that our assigned room reeked of tobacco smoke (cough!) and heavy-duty disinfectant (gak!). We hadn't specified these features in our reservations. After some major negotiations, we

were shown to a huge, clean-smelling suite with a great view of Mission Bay. It turned out to be a great party room in the evening after the reception when Tom, Tammy, Ken, Aileen, Ben and Cathi came over to hang out.

The wedding deserves its own write-up, describing such things as the steamer's huge, beautiful stained glass skylight under which the wedding took place, the speeches given by Tom's former roommates about his checkered bachelor past, and much more. Such an article could not possibly ignore the preacher who administered the marriage vows—picture Billy Graham as unsuccessful stand-up comic. At one point, while belaboring the concept of faithfulness to one's spouse, he actually winked in Tammy's direction while appearing to address Tom. Carol and I wondered if Tom and Tammy had specified this presentation or if it had been massively ad-libbed (and also if they'd noticed the wink). But this is not a complaint; the wedding was a joy, and Carol and I were both happy and honored to have been invited to join the party.

Since Carol had never been to the San Diego area before, she was hot to see some of its more touristy attractions. I was more warm than hot, but I was definitely game. So the next morning we checked out of the Bahia and headed inland to the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park. I was surprised and delighted by some of the things we saw. An hour-long monorail ride took us past hundreds of residents of a huge, man-made African veldt. As if it had been staged for our benefit, we saw a charging herd of exotic sheep, antelopes, goats and other un-American species, some of which ran with a sort of hopping movement the guide called “pronking.” This unusual stampede had actually been precipitated by a visit from the park veterinarian, who was just driving off in his pick-up truck as we cruised by, and whose presence—again according to our guide—always caused the animals great fits of consternation. In another area, we saw a group of giraffes feeding daintily on leaves of the lower limbs of trees, but the most amazing event was the sight of an African antelope, all alone, thrashing about on the ground in the initial throes of giving birth.

Afterwards, we walked around other parts of the park for a couple of hours. We were both sad not to get to see the rare white Siberian tiger, which had already retreated to its quarters to escape the bright mid-day sun, but were highly entertained by a large family of gorillas—especially two teenage males who would emerge from their caves, playfully beat up on each other, then disappear into their caves again, only to reemerge for the next round. They repeated that cycle half a dozen times. There were also three younger gorillas who chased each

other more or less constantly and practiced pounding their chests in classic gorilla style, while through it all the huge patriarch gorilla glared in his corner and occasionally scratched himself.

When we'd had our fill of wild animals, nature conservation displays and gift shops, we drove back to San Diego to visit my brother John and his girlfriend Karen. Carol was meeting them for the first time, and I hadn't seen John since our father's funeral in Los Angeles in late '95. This was the first time since the late '70s that John and I had spent time together as halves of a couple (both our marriages ended in the early '80s), and there was less tension between us. (I think being happily coupled agrees with us both.) In fact, it was downright enjoyable to hang out together and, among other things, compare notes on our memories (Carol's and Karen's, too) of our late father. They took us for dinner to a place called "The Ragin' Cajun." Being unfamiliar with Cajun cuisine, I ordered a combo plate of red beans & rice, jambalaya, and shrimp etouffee. It was all very good, but of course I had little to compare it to – and still don't know just what "etouffee" is.

We also ate several times at a Carlsbad seafood restaurant, Pelly's Cafe, recommended by Marta Randall and Chris Conley. Carlsbad is an attractive coast-side town some thirty miles north of San Diego. The restaurant was in a most unlikely location: a suburban shopping center next to a huge supermarket and behind a Subway sandwich shop. The food was fresh, inexpensive and incredibly good. Pelly's is also a market with fresh fish displayed on ice. The dining room walls are decked with netting, pictures and plaster castings of fish, and a photo gallery of fishermen and their catches. Bottles of many varieties of hot sauce are prominently displayed. Rounding out this fairly kitschy seafood restaurant decor are plain formica-topped tables and those "resin" chairs one finds on sale at every discount store. The food was served on TV-dinner type plates with plastic utensils and lemonade was self-dispensed from a cooler into huge paper cups.

After our first visit to Pelly's, I drove the old, pre-freeway coast route back to San Diego to show Carol some more local color. Cruising through downtown La Jolla, she had been immediately muck-struck and crazed (her terms) by its many exotic- and upscale-looking shops; however, it would have been inconvenient to stop right then because every available parking space was taken. So Monday morning we went back to La Jolla for breakfast and some daylight window-shopping. The latter didn't take long because the shops were less interesting and more generic than they had appeared in the dark. We ate breakfast at a nondescript, unintention-

ally retro cafe with a friendly staff. The waitress asked us if we wanted coffee, and as soon as we said yes she told us we probably wouldn't like it. When we looked skeptical, she offered to bring us a sample cup. It tasted like the third pressing of yesterday's Nescafe. Later, passing for a final time through Carlsbad before getting on the freeway, we spotted a higher-octane roadside coffee-house and stopped for a jolt.

Then it was back to L.A., which didn't provide us with the same level of highway entertainment as earlier, thank goodness. We drove directly to Universal City, where we took the Universal Studios Back Lot Tram Tour, a nearly one-hour ride through their extensive collection of sound stages and sets. There were also intermittent surprise attacks of cutesy stuff – one is roared at by a huge, in-your-face King Kong; shook up by an earthquake in a simulated San Francisco subway station; nearly washed away by a flooded Mexican village street – but it was worth enduring it all for the Good Stuff: the familiar streets of many movies we'd seen. We learned an interesting piece of filmic trivia from the tram driver: that the outside sets were created in seven-eighths scale to make the actors appear taller.

Monday evening found us guess-where again for dinner, after which we waddled back to our motel room on Fairfax Avenue to spend quiet time reading and digesting. I'd brought the current FAPA mailing with me and turned Carol on to Arnie Katz's ongoing personal faanish history since he was writing about getting into the Fanoclasts, a club with which she had been familiar in the '60s. She also read Bob Silverberg's annual FAPAZine, about his ventures into the world of computers over the years. Then, surfeited with fanzines and Los Angeles, she happily returned to her *New Yorker*.

Tuesday morning bright and early, we had a final breakfast and zipped home on that conveyor belt called I-5. It was a good trip.

	'98	'97	'96	'95	'94	'93	'92	'91	'90	'89	'88	'87
Australia	12	9	11	12	13	16	18	16	16	12	15	32
Canada	16	19	14	16	14	12	17	1	2	2	1	4
U. K.	64	58	47	52	60	51	50	44	30	61	51	33
U. S.	91	109	108	143	109	91	104	85	66	55	67	58
Others	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	5	0	4	3
Totals:	183	195	180	223	199	171	191	147	115	130	138	130

Fanzines Received – 1987-1998

Some comments on the above chart: I must say I'm tickled that these statistics have continued to take on a life of their own. Since one year's tally was reprinted in *TimeBytes*, the two-volume British fanthology produced in 1995 by Christina Lake and Lilian Edwards, it's also been mentioned in various other fanzines.

With that in mind, I should clarify that they reflect only fanzines received directly and ignore genzines in the FAPA mailings I'd probably receive if not in FAPA. In a recent fanzine, Harry Warner Jr. complained mildly about statistics like mine, saying the appearance and disappearance of frequent, regular zines like *Apparatchik* skewed such tallies. That might be true, but *Apak* ceased publication in mid-'97 and its absence has been more than made up by other fanzines. However, in 1998 I began regularly receiving John Hertz's *Vanamonde*, a single-sheet fanzine he does weekly for APAL. John sends them out in groups of five, and to avoid the skewing Harry deplores I count each mailing as one fanzine; you can do the math.

Without belaboring the point, I think fanzine fandom continues to be in good shape.

In late August, access to the Internet and the World Wide Web arrived on my desk at work, and fandom for me hasn't been the same since. Because my Internet connection is where I work, my participation in the electronic aspects of modern-day fandom is limited to what I can

squeeze in on my own time at the beginning of the day and occasionally during lulls between assignments.

Fans have been writing for years about the speed and wonders of electronic fanning, and I've been mildly dubious. No more. Although I'm not in a position to take full advantage of the cyberfannish revolution (certainly not to the extent reported by Lucy Huntzinger in this issue), I now better appreciate it. You won't see a Web edition of *Trap Door* — I'm still completely devoted to paper fanzines — but as you can see in this issue's colophon I've established a special e-mail address for letters of comment.

I hope that having this connection will encourage more of you to respond, and am hoping that this won't lead to abbreviated comments due to the seductive shorthand of the medium. (Happily, most of the few e-LoCs received on the last issue, via Carol, were well-considered — and, as an added bonus, a few fans I hadn't heard from for too long came out of the woodwork.)

Of course, I continue to welcome contributions on paper and diskette, too. In fact, I'm counting on them.



Issue No. 19, May 1999. 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 (or to locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com). Founding member and Past President₁₉₉₁: fwa. Also a supporter of 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. If there's an "X" on your mailing label, think twice before not responding. All contents copyright © 1999 by *Trap Door* with rights reverting to individual contributors upon publication.

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TIJUANA TAXI

by RON BENNETT

Craig Smith



Actually, the short ride in the Tijuana taxi was only a minor part of my trip

A few years ago, I attended the San Diego Comic Convention. Every collector I've ever met has faunched for a visit to the event, the world's largest gathering of comic fans, professionals writers, artists and retailers.

My motives were somewhat pecuniary. I'd been a comic retailer ... okay, okay, a retailer of comics ... for some twenty-five years, starting way back in the days before there had been official price guides, the days when dealers conjured asking prices from the tops of their heads.

Like, in my case, forty-five cents for a Golden Age *Captain America*.

No, put down your fax machine. I don't still have it.

The trip to San Diego had to be cost-effective. It would cost me approximately £1,000 for the flight, at high season rates, and a week's accommodation. I calculated that if I could spend a further grand on stock which I could sell back in the U.K. for around two point five to three thousand pounds, the trip would be not only enjoyable and worthwhile in the wider sense of seeing the sights and meeting people, but would also boost the jolly old bank balance.

And how, you may well ask, could one hope to make such a mark up on a comic book? Surely, once the price is set, it's set world-wide. There might be minor fluctuations on certain items, but a three hundred percent mark up? Never!

On the whole, this is true. But there are a few exceptions and peculiarities.

For example, in the early seventies, long before specialty shops were springing up in every city, town and village throughout the western world, the only American comic books which could be obtained in the U.K. were some twenty titles a month which were shipped over and distributed through the newsstand trade (a practice which still exists today). Collectors were able to pick up their regular supplies of titles like *X-Men*, *Avengers*, *Conan* and *Fantastic Four*.

Except for one minor point. There was little consistency in the distribution. For example, *Conan* was distributed in the U.K. from #11 through to #35. Numbers 36 to 40 didn't appear and distribution picked up again with #41.

Those missing issues were in demand over here and they rated higher asking prices than in the United States. This mark up applied particularly to *The Avengers*. Issues around #140-#150 could be purchased in the U.S. for \$2.00 a throw, or even less, and could be readily sold in the U.K. for £5.00-£6.00 a time, around \$10.00 each.

Brilliant mathematicians will not need to have their powers extended by the realization that this represents more than a 300% mark-up. Nor will they have to rack their brains to appreciate that at two dollars a throw a thousand dollars' worth of comic books will take a little heaving.

Wait! There were more expensive items which, though demanding a greater outlay, would yield a similar profit.

In great demand in the U.K. at the time were pre-November 1959 comics published by the National

Group, the company which has made such a mark on the century's popular culture with its range of Superman and Batman books. A variety of these titles, under the company's D.C. logo, had begun to be distributed in the U.K., again through the newsstand trade, with the November 1959 issues. Even thirty years down the line, these distributed issues are not too difficult to find in the U.K. They usually fetch between £5.00 and £10.00 apiece.

The previous issues, say from a month to two years earlier, run to between four and eight times that amount. And, as there was no difference in availability in the U.S., they can be purchased for the same prices as the post-November 1959 issues.

I flew from Manchester to O'Hare in Chicago. I took my place at the rotating carousel to await my bags.

Almost immediately I was aware of something small wriggling around my feet. I stepped back suddenly and almost tripped over a small dog. It was wearing a green baize jacket. I wasn't altogether certain whether I was taking part at a Disneyland parade or was expected to applaud the winner of a PGA tournament.

The beefy customs official, stomach bulging over belt, stomach *sagging* over belt, put me right in two seconds flat.

"Your flight bag, sir," he said, politely. "May I look inside?"

Before I could answer, he'd bent—yes, it took some effort—had opened my bag and had extracted the apples I'd brought with me to chomp during the flight.

"I'm taking these," he informed me, equally as politely. "You're not allowed to bring fruit into the USA."

"They're American apples," I protested.

"It makes no difference, sir."

"Er, do I get them back when I leave?" I asked.

He turned away. "On your way, buddy!" he snapped over his shoulder.

I had a couple of hours' wait before boarding the shuttle to San Diego. This was fine with me. Chicago's art gallery owns a favorite Renoir painting, *Sur La Terrace*, which I've never seen and I welcomed the opportunity.

"You'll never make it," the cab driver kindly informed me. "Get caught in the cross-town traffic and you'll miss your flight."

Sur la Terrace would have to wait.

The flight to the west coast flew over the Grand Canyon. Wonderful.

The day after I arrived in San Diego, I managed to squeeze in a side trip across the border to Tijuana, remembering to take my passport with me. One British retailer had, the previous year, made the trip without

the document and had had to spend the night in a holding cell while a colleague had gone back to his hotel to retrieve it.

I took a bus into the town center, a highly enjoyable journey with a colorful array of *real* Mexicans, several carrying baskets crammed with different fruit and other produce. I think that they found me just as interesting; I seemed to be the only non-Mexican making the journey.

The fact that first a trolley from San Diego and then a bus into Tijuana were required was interesting in itself. I'd always believed that the two places virtually straddled the border, with perhaps a narrow buffer zone between the two, very much as existed between East and West Berlin and which even now exists, sadly, in Nicosia, now the world's only divided city.

Once in the town center, I bought a stack of postcards to send back home but found it difficult to find the stamps to go with them, being directed either to the post office, which was far across town, or to various local tobacco, liquor or clothing stores. I soon picked up three Spanish words, "*timbres correos aereos*," which brought back memories of my schoolboy stamp collecting days and which just about doubled my working knowledge of the language. Indeed, of *any* language.

At one store I visited the elderly proprietor was treating a couple of American teenagers to a free sample from a bottle, obviously in the hope of making a sale. We retailers can tell that sort of thing. He poured me a shot, too. I drank his health. "*Yam sing!*" I declared, reveling in my linguistic flair.

"Wow!" declared one of the teenagers. "What is that?"

"Tequila," the elderly proprietor told him, looking sadly over the boy's shoulder and shaking his head.

And at a clothing store a young salesman who took me for German conducted the entire conversation in that language. His German—he could count up to *funf*—was marginally better than mine and he kindly let me beat him down to thirty-five dollars for a tee-shirt.

I finally found the *timbres* at a lobby booth at the Hotel Caesar, where, Harry Harrison later informed me, the famous salad originated. I'd already written out the cards and needed only the translation of the home country's name. What *was* the Spanish word for "England?"

One of the barflies at the lobby soda counter kindly offered to help. He took the first card and at the foot of the address panel carefully began to print "E-N-G-L..."

Yes, you're right. I took a taxi back to the border. I lined up at U.S. immigration.

The official examined my passport.

"You only arrived in the U.S. yesterday?" he queried.

"Yes," I replied, a little uncertainly.

"Didn't take you long to decide to leave, did it?" he asked.

"At least I came back," I said. We both laughed.

At the convention I took my time selecting which comics to buy. There were hundreds of retailers and I covered approximately a third on each of the first three days, making notes as to which retailers could offer what at which prices. On the fourth day I made my purchases, picking up an excellent range of late-fifties D.C. titles.

There were some fabulous items on show. I saw the first Captain Marvel *Whiz* comic, the first issues of the Fiction House *Planet*, *Detective Comics* #27 with the very first appearance of Batman and the exceedingly rare issues of the *World's Fair Comics*. There were stalls specializing in original artwork, in magazines like *TV Guide* and even in single comic book titles like *Classics Illustrated*. I remembered a range of the Classics from their distribution in the U.K. and their numbers not always coinciding with their U.S. originals, but there was no great demand for them in the U.K., so I quickly discounted them and moved on.

There were even more valuable and sought after Silver Age books than could ever be collected by any individual in his or her lifetime. They were all beautifully presented – the comic books, not the collectors, I hasten to clarify – in new plastic bags, all virtually mint and priced accordingly.

On one or two of the stalls, these goodies warranted close examination. *Very* close examination. I found books which looked as though a crease here and there had been neatly "touched up" with a carefully applied fiber pen. The comics, remember, were being presented *and* priced as mint.

And, that wasn't all. If you have any older comics to hand, say from 1970 or earlier and in some degree of a high-grade condition, have a look at the page edges.

No, not right now. Finish your coffee first.

The chances are that these comic books, so carefully stored away at the back of an attic, will have been affected by age and will have taken on a slight yellowish or brownish hue. Just like most of us.

Not so the little San Diego beauties on a couple of stalls which boasted large displays. Large? Massive! Ginormous!

The edges of these pages were pristine white. Not just the odd lucky issue, but all ten thousand or so on display. Phil Clarke pointed out to naive little me that all these comics had been carefully "shaved" with a guillotine.

It's called "enhancing."

Remember that the comics concerned were being offered as mint. And priced as mint, too.

I suppose that the practice is entirely acceptable if the buyer knows he's purchasing a comic book which has been so mistreated – sorry, "enhanced" – and is happy to pay the mint price for that comic book but, after all, such a book is damaged.

Still, I had to smile. Sitting at one table there was a guy actually operating a large guillotine, ready to shave and "enhance" any book brought to him, for a price.

I had been hoping to meet Bill Rotsler at the convention; he'd been due to make an appearance but, sadly for me, he didn't show. Still, I did meet Harlan Ellison for the first time. And also Dave Gibbons to whom I'd previously spoken on the phone. Dave had once done a superb heading for an article of mine about comic dealing in Singapore and later had kindly given me permission to reprint it when I ran the article as a precursor to an issue of my mail order catalogue.

I renewed acquaintances with Chris Claremont whom I'd previously met in England and listened to Jack Kirby telling a group of acolytes about having watched a group of Nazi seamen in uniform walking down some New York city street in mid-1943. I didn't like to remind him that by that time the U.S. had been at war. Mid-1941, yes, but 1943! I listened politely and moved on.

One evening I went out for a meal at a boardwalk restaurant along with two other British retailers, Jeff West of Conquistador and Phil Clark of Nostalgia in Birmingham. We sat and waited for some attention for what really was an overlong period while a succession of waitresses moved to and fro, serving other diners and ignoring us. Eventually we walked out. One of the waitresses called after us, "What did you expect on a Friday evening?" To Phil answered, and the words really require to be imbued with a Brummy accent, "Service!" This is the only experience I've ever had of American restaurant, cafe or diner service falling below the highest standards and it rather shocked us.

There were a number of parties, hosted by different publishing houses and a good, social gathering for July 4th on the roof of the Conference Center overlooking the harbor. This event culminated in a fine fireworks display. One American retailer, questioning my attendance at the shindig, solemnly informed me that the celebrations were to commemorate the U.S. breaking free of British rule. "It works both ways," I said. "We celebrate because we got rid of you." He thought this over for a minute, before replying, "Yeh, I can live with that." We drank each other's health.

The flight back to Chicago initially took a lengthy route along the US-Mexican border, offering the chance to view different Mexican towns sprawling out midst well-tended green plains.

Back in Chicago there was another lengthy wait between flights. But still not sufficient an interval to whip down town to the art gallery.

Ha! The wait lengthened – and lengthened. To two, to two-and-a-half, to three hours. Eventually passengers were told that there would be a further two hours' delay. We were all given vouchers which we could use against a future American Airlines flight.

Yes, had I known about the delay when I'd first landed, I'd have had ample time to have taken the opportunity to view the Renoir.

I got my comics back to the U.K. without any trouble, loading them into two flat-pack boxes which I assembled and taped together. It's always interesting to declare a load of comic books at a customs post. In the past I've had to unload every single box from my car at Dover and once was refused entry to France and

deported back to England on the next ferry.

This time there was no trouble at all.

Within two days I had five phone calls from British collectors.

"How was San Diego?" they each inquired. "Did you pick up anything nice? Any *Classics*?"

"*Classics Illustrated*?" I echoed. "No, but I did get hold of some excellent late fifties *Superman* and *Batman*."

Tastes change. *Classics*, the very *Classics* I'd examined and rejected were now the flavor of the month. No one wanted the stack of fifties *Superman* and *Batman* comics I'd carried halfway around the world.

I may not still have that early issue of *Captain America*, but those D.C. titles ... ?

Yes, I still have them.

Anyone want some fifties *Superman* and *Batman* comics?

Real cheap ... ?

– Ron Bennett



WALT WILLIS' FAN COLUMNS

FROM

NEBULA
SCIENCE FICTION

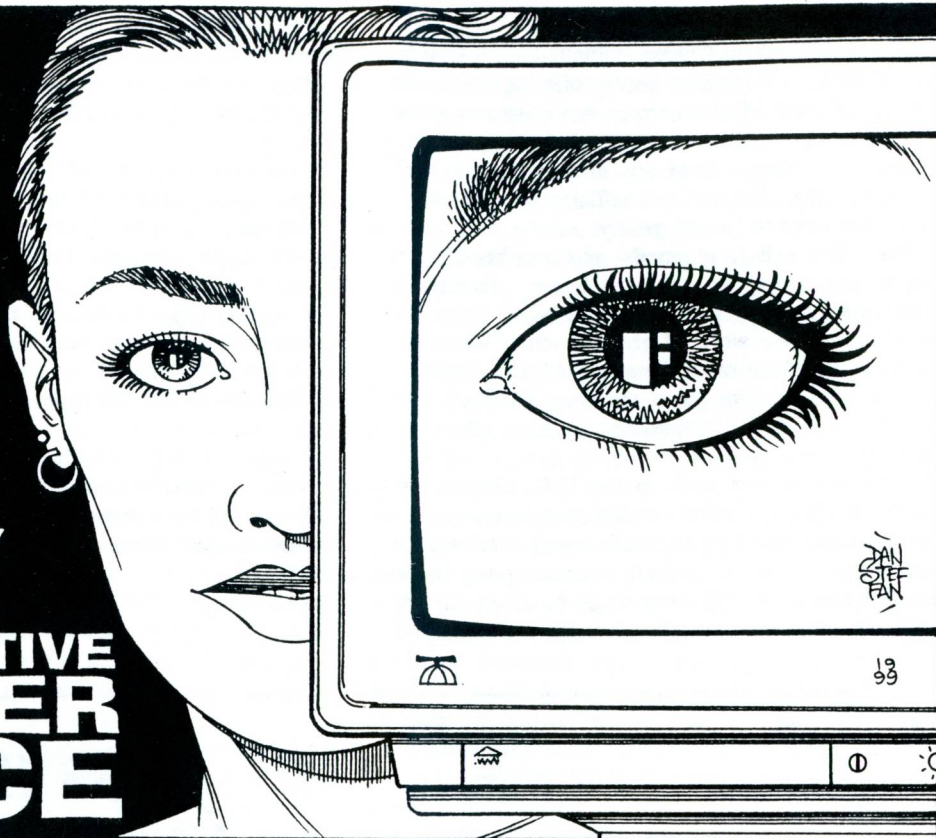
STILL AVAILABLE

This 100-page volume (with stiff Hyphen-green covers) includes all forty of Walt's columns from *Nebula* (1952-1959) as well as five others—one that appeared in my own *Psi-Phi* in 1960 (an installment that was orphaned after *Nebula* ceased publication) and four others that were published in Pete Weston's *Zenith* in 1964 and 1965. I contributed an introduction which also includes some commentary from Darroll Pardoe. Artwork from *Nebula* by Arthur Thomson (ATom) and Alan Hunter graces the covers and interior.

Published last November in 150 numbered copies, there are now fewer than twenty left. *Fanorama* is U.S.\$10 postpaid to anywhere in the world. Please send your order to the editorial address in the colophon.

**LUCY
Hunt
ZIN
ger**

**MY
SENSITIVE
CYBER
FACE**



The Internet has changed the way I participate in fandom. In fact, it's chiefly responsible for getting me back into fandom after a long, slow spiral into gafia. By switching from paper to HTML, I have reconnected to the tumultuous, argumentative, opinionated, and highly amusing community I always loved. By publishing almost daily, and interacting via e-mail, chat technology, and Usenet, I'm in contact with a much larger – and by far more diverse – range of fans than I ever was as the editor of a paper fanzine. I've found new inspiration and more than a little addiction in the almost instant responses possible in electronic fandom. Halleluia, I have been saved!

I started my fannish career editing paper fanzines, rarely retaining the same title for more than a couple of issues. Now I do an on-line diary called *Aries Moon*. I think it's fair to also call it an on-line fanzine; it's personal journalism chock full of references to fandom, fans, science fiction, and the occasional fanzine trope such as publishing photos of fans to illustrate my con reports. The biggest difference between the traditional fanzine and this one is you don't have to trade for it. You can just look up the URL (<http://www.mindspring.com/~10~>

~huntzinger/dindex.html) and go read it.

My gafia, brothers and sisters, was brought about by a sense of isolation, physical and emotional. In 1989 I moved to a town with a fan base I found intolerable, and no one from my former social group wrote to me or called me on the phone. If only I'd had e-mail I could have kept in touch, but I didn't realize just how wired fandom was. I confess I used to deeply resent fanac that took place only on the Internet and the Web when I didn't have computer access. When I finally jumped on the bandwagon six years later, I was amazed at how much I'd been missing.

It does feel like a conversion, some days. Now that I'm part of the HTML-based crowd, I'm not going back. If someone really wants to read my diary/fanzine and doesn't have Internet access, I will send it to them via e-mail, but I no longer bother with printing out anything I write. It's not that I think it's a bad idea – far from it – it's just that I find it more trouble than it's worth, and a lot more expensive. I'm far more likely to get my ish out if the process is simple and quick. It is, and I do.

I published approximately twenty paper fanzines in

eleven years. I contributed to other fanzines, but infrequently. Let's say I wrote a total of 100 essays in that same 11-year period, and I think that's a generous estimate. My mailing list topped out at 80 when I was doing some of the collaborative zines like *Abattoir* and *Rude Butch*. I sent out four mailings a year when I was at my most inspired.

In contrast, I've published over 400 essays in less than two years for my on-line diary. More than a hundred people read it every day; some days the hit count climbs as high as 160, and the numbers keep going up as I get more publicity. A large portion of those readers are science fiction fans, but there are many more who are simply fans of on-line diaries. My counter is pretty sophisticated, so I'm quite sure those are actual readers and not merely search engines looking for "Hot Aries Moon Babes."

An on-line fanzine is not the same as a paper fanzine, of course. I rarely get letters, or e-mails, of comment, for instance. But to be honest, I never did much care about that. I wanted to know people were reading my writing and talking about it, but I didn't particularly want to hear what people thought of my opinions, my writing, and my layout. This is completely opposite from the way editors of giant genzines, or those who desire to be the nexus of fanzine fandom, operate. They crave that feedback; they thrive on a meaty letter column. It's a way of giving back to the community, letting those voices be heard as well as giving them a forum for interaction even if they don't have a mimeo or a computer.

I was always a bit of a loner in this regard. It's not like I was a devotee of the good old hand-cranked school of mimeo, either. Virtually all of my fanzines were photocopied. I never was a purist. I used to get letters chiding me for not having a lettercol in my personal zines. I felt kind of bad about it, so every once in a while I'd make the effort and put one in. After all, I wanted the maximum number of people to read my fanac, and some people will only read fanzines to see if their names appear in it.

And it still matters to me that my friends and fellow fans are reading my fanac. It's nice to hear from them. They're mostly who I write for. But I also write for strangers, and posterity, and to see if I can compete with good writers in other circles. I don't want to be restricted to fandom, and thanks to the Web, I don't have to be. It's up there for anyone to find, unlike my paper fanzines which must be directed to the readers, and which tend to languish in boxes or get used for kindling. That's why I don't regret switching mediums.

I love the flexibility of writing for on-line consumption. I write every day, though not always with the

diary in mind. Formerly, I found writing a cohesive essay a bit of an effort. Being a perfectionist was hard on me, and I tended to turn down requests for articles from fanzine editors unless they already had a topic in mind. Now, I don't need to worry. I come up with topics for my 200-500 word essays four days a week. I am also less concerned with perfection, but part of that comes from having learned to write well enough that close to every essay turns out just the way I want. I have to credit that in part to writing so often. It took me quite a few years of hacking out fanzine articles to write stuff that wouldn't embarrass me horribly. Some of those fanzines are still around, but unlike the fanzine material, I can go back and edit my diary when I belatedly discover spelling errors or stupid mistakes. The perfectionist in me really likes that.

Doing an electronic zine has made other changes in my life. For instance, I still receive a few paper fanzines in the mail, but they're dropping off year by year as I have nothing to trade and rarely LoC (of course, I rarely LoCced in the old days, either). Thus, I have no way to gauge the current state of paper fanzines, and to some extent I feel I'm missing out on an important shared cultural experience. On the other hand, I can definitely attribute my decision to attend both Worldcon and OryCon this year to having been active on-line. It reminded me of how much fun it is to talk to people in person. It's always tempting to hang about in chat rooms rather than getting out and having a life, but I don't think this is significantly different a temptation than paper fanzine editors face. Some people will always find it easier to stay in their bedroom or their office bashing away at yet another incisive and witty editorial rather than interacting face to face. I like both the private devotions of writing my fanzine, and participating in the communal rites of conventions where I reaffirm my faith in the power and the glory of the written word no matter how that word is received.

Oh, it's a fine thing to be an electronic fan. It's given me back my identity, and brought me closer to old friends after a long separation. It's helped me make lots of new friends. It keeps me stretching myself as a writer instead of lapsing into old habits. It's exciting to watch the daily readership grow as the hits jump up with every new article I add to the database. And you never know, I might yet bring someone into the fold. A neo is out there reading even as we speak, feeling strangely drawn to this concept called fandom as he or she works their way through my electronic oeuvre. I can feel it. Praise Roscoe!

— Lucy Huntzinger

SAN FRANCISCO AND THE BIG BEAT **Wm. Breiding**



We were sitting in Hamburger Mary's one day in 1989 talking after taking in a matinee of "Scenes from a Class Struggle in Beverly Hills." Mary's was its usual mid-afternoon-on-a-Sunday-nurse-your-hangover-self: There was a line out the door. The cute Samoan doorman that liked Peggi pulled us out of line, much to the disgruntlement of the many ahead of us, seating us in the center of the larger dining area. I happened to be facing the wall where a mirror had been placed just at head and shoulder height. One could either preen during their meal or glance uncomfortably at one's own face, depending on the disposition of your vanity and self-image. I was slightly disturbed at my own countenance, which was a bit ragged and puffy looking.

I have problems with trendy places and trendies. I love fashion and observing people, an inveterate watcher, seduced by the idea of bars, clubs and upscale restaurants where the hip hang out to be seen and to see, but ultimately I am uncomfortable in these places and around such people. I am not a barfly and could hardly be construed as much of a trendy in my blue jeans and cowboy boots. I'd really much rather be at a working-class diner checking out Joe Normal. But even at these diners I feel out of place, a poseur. There isn't anywhere in public that I feel at home or accepted. Though I go to my share of bars and night clubs, I don't think I'm trendy. I certainly don't feel trendy. Therefore I must not look trendy. When I'm in what I think of as a trendy place, I'm somewhere between awkward and amused. In a working class dive I'm awkward and slightly paranoid.

Looking in the mirror across the dining room, I saw a balding man growing into middle age. My face showed signs of hard living and didn't look particularly handsome to me. I didn't much like what I was seeing and turned to Peggi, saying, "I don't have a trendy face." She looked at me quizzically. "What do you mean?"

"I don't have a trendy face," I repeated. "I don't have a hip, pretty face." I looked around as I said this, realizing what an idiot I was being. I noted that most of the people in the room didn't qualify for the height of trendy, either. They were just trying to get through their hangovers.

A tall, good-looking waiter with shoulder length black hair and a curt demeanor took our order. The food came in a fairly timely manner considering the rush and the slow drain of alcohol abuse that I suspected the waiter was suffering from, and probably the cook as well. There was a long black hair in my home fries. Peggi picked it up gingerly between thumb and forefinger, handing it back to the waiter. Not assuming it belonged to the waiter, she said, "Take this back to the kitchen, would you?"

Our waiter's mind was elsewhere. A tall, skinny blonde woman was seated at a table in a corner where two windows met, superbly arranged and on display, both to the outside world and the dining room. He mumbled a brief apology, dropping the hair on to the floor as he moved towards Tall Skinny Blonde and hovered there, radiating sex, with one hip arched. The blonde's companion, a small, slightly frumpy brunette,

sat shy and uneasy staring at her plate. It ran through my mind that some of us surround ourselves with people that makes us look better, and that these relationships are a variation of S/M. Peggi shook her head in disgust as she eyed where the hair had fallen.

We had also asked the waiter to bring us some mustard. Since the waiter was ignoring us in preference to the blonde, Peggi borrowed from a neighboring table. My gaze moved back to the mirror, studying the face therein. As Peggi was about finished with her burger, the waiter returned. Upon seeing the mustard at our table he said pointedly, "Oh, I thought you had asked for mustard." He clanked the Poupon jar down on our table next to the borrowed mustard and moved towards blonde. "Do you want some poppy seed cake?" He asked the woman. Tall Skinny Blonde giggled. In the mirror I was smirking. And deciding. Though I wasn't trendy or good-looking, my face was acceptable. It looked like the kind of face a cowboy might have. I could live with that.

Perhaps out of a sense of guilt, or perhaps at the insistence of the other two waiters who had seen the hair being handed to him, our waiter returned and offered us something on the house. Peggi smiled, dazzling me as usual, and ordered some crispy French fries. They came almost immediately, crispy as ordered, and piping hot. After that the waiter dismissed us entirely. He moved once again to Tall Skinny Blonde's table and stood there beguiling her, apparently, with amusing anecdotes. She was laughing and swaying back and forth while her partner at the table sat quiet and uncomfortable. The Samoan doorman who had seated us and the other two waiters began to visibly bristle. I watched as, with heads together, they conferred, the occasional dagger-eyes crackling sharply over my head, to be absorbed without notice by our waiter. I wondered how many other customers were being ignored, and if this was a daily pattern. The other waiters weren't hiding their irritation. I drank from my water and chortled. When our waiter finally pulled himself away from Tall Skinny Blonde, I turned casually in her direction to see what all the fuss was about. Tall Skinny Blonde was staring right over at me, her Way-farer shades lowered slightly on her nose. My face remained immobile as I turned, just as casually, away from her. Then my face split into a ridiculous grin in the mirror.

As Peggi and I finished up, Tall Skinny Blonde In Shades And Ripped Jeans stood to leave. She was followed by the short plain woman with mousy brown hair and timid demeanor. As they passed us, I turned once again to look at their table and saw that an eight-dollar tip had been left. I wanted to rush over and see

if there was a phone number on any of the bills. I turned again to watch them leave. Our waiter was nowhere to be seen, but the two other waiters were watching Tall Skinny Blonde as if she were a big wet rat in need of a bashed head. Their eyes followed her out the door, along the windows, past her table, and around the corner. Then they looked at each other, briefly, sneering in disgust.

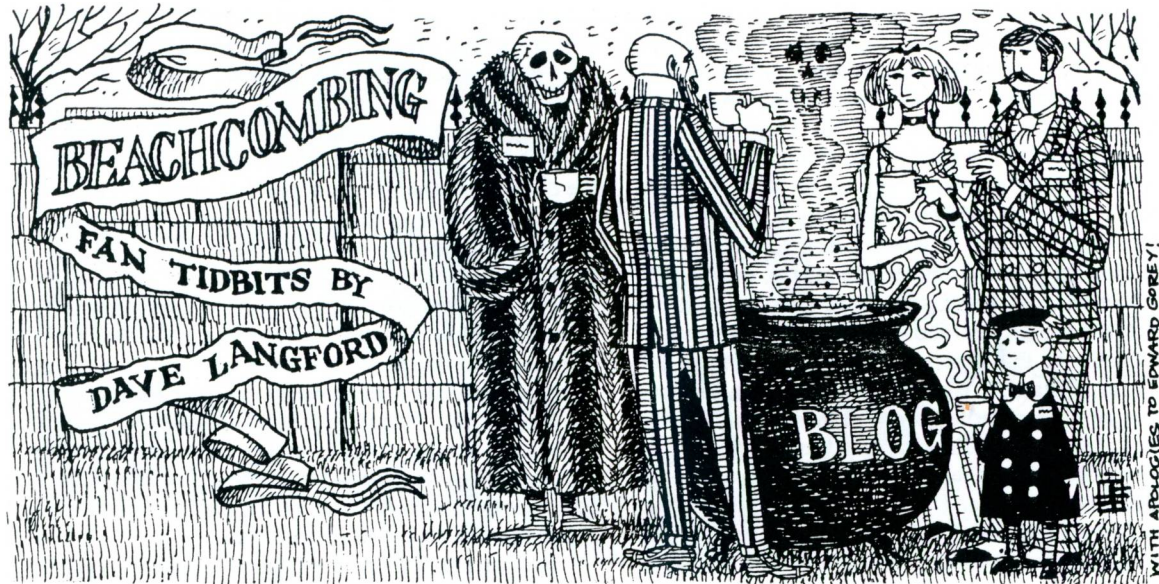
Peggi looked over at me. "Did you catch all of that?" She was grinning. I nodded, laughing. Her eyes widened in disbelief. "That was just amazing!" We discussed the entire sequence of events, laughing, trying to decide on our own tip. I didn't want to leave anything at all. Peggi, however, had worked a great deal in the service industry and felt we should leave a tip, no matter how small; a minimal tip would be a better clue than none at all. We agreed to leave a one-dollar tip, less than 5% of the total.

Back at our flat on Moss Alley, Peggi was reapplying her lipstick, looking into the mirror in our bedroom. She was readying her lips again, after the meal, as she often does. She studied her face, then looked over at mine, studying me where I sat on the bed, watching her. "I don't have a trendy face, either," she said with a slight petulance.

"Oh yes you do," I replied, "a very trendy face, a very hip, beautiful face." She smiled and blew me a kiss. We went down to the sidewalk and Peggi straddled her little blue motorcycle, a Kawasaki KZ440. She put on her black lambskin gloves and pulled the collar up on her black French leather jacket. Just before she pushed the dark round shades up her nose to cover her eyes, she winked and smiled at me. I watched her glide to the end of the alley and turn right on Harrison Street.

I stood under the thin warm sun of spring smiling. For as long as I could remember, I had felt uneasy wherever I was, whatever I might be doing. I treasured these moments where self-doubt and insecurity were assuaged with a larger sense of belonging to the world. Shortly after Peggi and I had met, only half joking, I asked her if she hung out at Noc-Noc, a closed-door club in the lower Haight. We were passing the club on her bike. She turned slightly, cocking her head as I held her about the waist and said, "I got my own scene going on." Peggi was beautiful and arty and had chosen me out of all the other boys in San Francisco. It didn't matter if I was trendy or not. I had my own scene going on.

— Wm. Breiding



When John Clute visited Reading and surveyed my book collection with a polysyllabically critical eye, I was quickly crushed by remarks like: "Ugh! You permit *reprint editions* on your shelves?" At the end of it all, he allowed as how there were two books in that 25,000-odd which he wouldn't mind owning. One was the first edition of Terry Pratchett's *The Colour of Magic*. The other was a 1931 collection of bits by newspaper columnist J. B. Morton or "Beachcomber" (1893-1979). That Beachcomber column ran for over fifty years and spawned at least twenty such volumes of selected extracts, leading me to the erroneous belief that I could attain riches and book publication by writing a long-running column for *Interzone* ... but I digress.

Speaking of Beachcomber – yes, experienced fans will have recognized the tell-tale signs of a highly contrived Langford opening link – one of my rare contributions to fan history is a tentative theory of his influence on fannish terminology. At one of the early British Eastercons, Cytricon in 1955, the Liverpool SF Group convulsed the audience with their "tapera" (tape opera) *The March of Slime*, which included ad jingles for a product fated to enrich our microcosm's language:

Blog's the stuff for work, Blog's the stuff for play,
Blog's the stuff, when you feel rough, to chase the
blues away ...

Now among the hotchpotch of weird fragments that made up his columns ("SIXTY HORSES WEDGED IN CHIMNEY / The story to fit this sensational headline has not turned up yet"), Beachcomber had a similar habit of inserting joke ads. One collection, *Captain Foulenough*

and Company (1944), contains the following sensitive, aristocratic dialogue:

"Why is Sir Arthur looking so gloomy, Sir Harry?"

"Poor devil! It's like this, Sir George. [Lowers voice.] His capillaries, set end to end, wouldn't circle the earth more than once."

"Phugh! That's dreadful, Sir Harry. Poor blighter! Is there no hope?"

"Oh yes, Sir George: BLOGGO. A year ago my capillaries, set end to end, would barely have reached China. Today they would circle the earth three times. But where are you dashing off to, Sir George?"

"I'm going to buy some BLOGGO for Sir Arthur..."

So was Bloggo a fabulous fannish influence that led to Blog? (And what indeed of resonances between the rival product Slobbo and Lower Slobbovia?) I have no hesitation in leaving the question undecided, and digressing in the direction of Beachcomber's other – far more frequently mentioned – universal panacea, called Snibbo. Snibbo had a million uses, including art restoration. ("For three years I was a martyr to dirty pictures. Then one day a friend told me about Snibbo ...") and treatment of obscure psychological symptoms:

Dear Sir – For many years I thought there was a little Persian milkman in iron trousers riding a zebra round my room. Then I was recommended to take Snibbo, and I have not seen that little Persian milkman since.

(Signed) F. Toggleton.

[If you suffer from little Persian milkmen,
mice in tartan overcoats, yellow gasworks with
bristles all over them, neuralgia, depression or
boils, write for the free Snibbo Booklet, recommended by 123,784 doctors.]

Any critic who pursues sources and influences with the enthusiasm of the late Sam Moskowitz would surely detect a link between Snibbo and the fannish enterprise which likewise offers solutions for absolutely everything ... Widower's Wonderful Products, the brainchild of Eric Needham.

King Canute defied the tide,
But couldn't stop it flooding:
He should have made a barricade
Of WIDOWER'S XMAS PUDDING.

See Geri Sullivan's *Idea 6* for many more, as creatively misremembered by Chuch Harris. . . . There is a compulsive fannish charm about this kind of template verse, although I admit the only Widower's quatrain which I myself have written are the following dubious specimens:

Harlan's shrieking mad this week,
Regretting wrong decisions:
He missed our sale of one last bale
Of WIDOWER'S DANGEROUS VISIONS.

From voodoo gods to Joan-the-Wads,
And hex-charms drawn in crayon,
Our magic stall's what John Clute calls
The WIDOWER'S APOTROPAION.

On Van Vogt Day we think Null-A,
We drink a slannish dram –
And true fans send each dearest friend
A WIDOWER'S SEVAGRAM.

But I did once do a series of fearful SF clerihews. . . .

Theodore Sturgeon
Allowed his emotions to burgeon:
On sighting a friendly visage, he
Always attempted syzygy.

Marion Zimmer Bradley
's fan club doesn't do badly,
Since founded and urged to carry on
By Zimmer Bradley (Marion).

Jerry Pournelle,
When his *Mote in God's Eye* wouldn't sell,
Asked friend Larry to cure its failings
By putting in some aliens.

Digressing back into mainstream humor while keeping template verses in mind brings me to Paul Dehn's

obscure little 1956 collection of essays and squibs, *For Love and Money*. (No sneering, Clute! Mine is a first edition, and – what's more – is printed for no apparent reason on pink paper.) For reasons which will emerge, this had been on my wants list for aeons, and ace book-hunter Brian "It Will Cost More Than You Can Imagine" Ameringen finally tracked it down. Proudly he pressed the volume into my eager hands at the 1997 Clarke Awards party, only to snatch it back as he realized in embarrassed horror that his original purchase price – probably about 20p – was still pencilled inside. *Me*: "I don't mind knowing the mark-up, I just want the book. . . ." *Brian, frantically accosting revellers*: "A rubber, a rubber, has anyone got a rubber?!" Fortunately he remembered not to put it this way to U.S. visitors Norman Spinrad and Pat Cadigan.

Where was I? One treasure in the Dehn book was his set of "Alternative Endings to an Unwritten Ballad," which introduced a new template character to the world of letters. Samples:

I stole through the dungeons, while everyone slept,
Till I came to the cage where the Monster was kept.
There, locked in the arms of a Giant Baboon,
Rigid and smiling, lay. . . MRS. RAVOON!

I stood by the waters so green and so thick,
And I stared at the scum with my old, withered stick;
When there rose through the ooze, like a
monstrous balloon,
The bloated cadaver of MRS. RAVOON.

And so on; I think you all get the idea. The interesting point was that, just like Widower's Wonderful Verses, Mrs. Ravoon rapidly began to acquire imitators. Dehn was vaguely bemused by what he called Ravoon Sightings in distant and unexpected parts of the literary jungle. These outbreaks continued long after his death in 1976, and some later ones were published in John Julius Norwich's *Christmas Cracker* commonplace-book selections (guaranteed fannish, since the 1992 *Cracker* included highlights from Hazel's Language Lessons, as featured in *Ansible*) . . .

Below the salt Channel they're drinking champagne
And ministers jostle to board the first train.
Emergency bells ring in French and Walloon,
For there on the buffersquats. . . MRS. RAVOON.

What could I do but send the whole dossier to that connoisseur of high fannishness and low taste in the arts, that martyr to dirty pictures, Chuch Harris? He was, as it were, ravished, and in his erratic letterzine *Charrisma* he put out a call for new Ravoon sightings. The tragedy was that no one wrote any. "So okay," Chuch told his

readers philosophically, “keep your measly talent under the bushel, and don’t come creeping round me for these very special pies and exquisite pints of Tetley’s bitter the very next time you see me...”

Not wishing to inflict disappointment on this staunchest pillar of the wolf-whistling community, I scratched my head and tried to draft the next best thing – some verses so deservedly rare that even John Clute probably doesn’t have a first edition:

Who Needs Mrs. Ravoon Anyway?

A sculptress who’s famous in crafts and in arts
For molded impressions of gentlemen’s parts [1]
Invested her fortune in plaster of Paris
So she could immortalize ... CHARLES
RANDOLPH HARRIS.

Prince Hamlet retreated in sudden dismay:
Was this the wrong universe, or the wrong play?
For a counterblast came as he skewered the arras,
A flood of invective from ... CHARLES
RANDOLPH HARRIS.

It wasn’t exhaustion, it wasn’t the booze,
But the sight of our Lucy’s strategic tattoos [2]
That weakened the man whom so few could
embarrass,
And brought some rare blushes to ... CHARLES
RANDOLPH HARRIS.

A New Age believer in mystical bliss
Suspected the gods might be taking the piss,
When a whiff of that dope known to Hindus as
charas
Gave luminous visions of ... CHARLES
RANDOLPH HARRIS.

All down the long coastline, North Wales to St. Ives,
They lock up their daughters and shackle their wives,
For the rumor has run from Land’s End to
Beaumaris [2]:
’Tis the holiday fortnight of ... CHARLES
RANDOLPH HARRIS.

Scholarly Footnotes:

[1] One of Cynthia Plastercaster’s subjects was my little brother Jon Langford of the Mekons and other rock groups (a True Fact). He is trying to live this down, which is why I feel it my duty to remind the world once in a while – say weekly – of his peculiar heroism in inserting tender parts of himself into a jar of goeey pink dental mould. As Jon proudly puts it, “For God’s sake never tell our Mother.”

[2] Lucy Huntzinger would prefer not to be identified as the subject of a veiled poetic allusion concealed

in this line.

[3] Beaumaris is in Anglesey off the North Welsh coast, as any fule kno.

[4] There is no note [4], but here’s an even more poignant and politically correct bonus verse:

A Hollywood actor of Charlie Chan fame,
Mishandled his accent and mangled that Name:
“Foleign devil who mocks the Impelial Palace!
It’s the Thousand-Cuts Tolment for ... CHARLES
LANDOLPH HARRIS.”

Never let it be said that I don’t try hard to boost our Chuch’s fame. Will someone let him know that the invoice from Proxyboo Ltd. (Now A Wholly Owned Subsidiary Of Ansible Information) is in the post? Meanwhile, we pause and allow the great Beachcomber himself to have what John Clute might call the post-antepenultimate word:

Erratum. In my article on the Price of Milk, “Horses” should have read “Cows” throughout.

Finally ... in 1989, Edward Gorey published a tiny, tiny chapbook of illustrated verses entitled *Q.R.V.* – reissued in merely miniature format as *The Universal Solvent* (1990). And Gorey’s mysterious product *Q.R.V.* is indeed the modern-day Widower’s Wonderful Snibbo, capable of almost anything:

She floats around
above the ground
Ignoring gravity,
Although they scoffed,
she rose aloft
By taking *Q.R.V.*

Or, somewhat more along the Harris line of aesthetics ...

If you would know
your privates grow
To such immensity
That all who saw
Would ooh in awe
Then write for *Q.R.V.*

Doctoral fame must surely await the first academic fan to write a lofty thesis called *The Influence of Beachcomber and Widower’s Wonderful Verses upon Edward Gorey*. It could even be a collaboration between John Clute and Chuch Harris.

– Dave Langford



CLOSE CALL

Richard Brandt



It was a fine spring morning in El Paso. My cameraman Raul and I had been dispatched to some inconsequential and long-forgotten weekend assignment. In another van that morning were Pat, a young but prim substitute high school teacher who moonlighted as a pale imitation of a reporter on weekends, and her cameraman, John Nicholls.

John was, like so many of our crew, starting out as an intern while still attending the University of Texas at El Paso. A boyish redhead with a skewed sense of humor, he and a fellow student were producing a satirical revue called *Pirate Television* on the local public-access cable station.

Pat and John had been assigned to cover a cat that had been stuck atop a utility pole in its owner's back yard for three days. We'd had a rash of such cases lately. David Trevino had covered just such a story recently, where the little old lady who was the kitty's owner called the local fire department to get her cat down from a telephone pole, then watched in horror as the fire fighters hooked up their high-pressure hose and blasted kitty from its roost. Dave ran the feline's descent in loving slow-motion accompanied by a narration in verse, an unfortunate fad among us reporters for a few months.

As Raul and I were driving back to the station, we got a call from Priscilla, our weekend assignments editor. She had just picked up on the police scanner that a man had been electrocuted at such-and-such an address. We changed our course to get to the story.

A couple of minutes later, Priscilla called us again.

"It's John," she said.

We pulled up at the address we'd been given. An ambulance, its back doors wide open, was parked in front. Pat and John's news van was parked in the driveway. Pat stood near it, looking even paler than usual.

I glanced into the back of the ambulance as I walked towards Pat. Looked like John was in there, all right, lying on a gurney with an IV drip plugged into him.

As Pat explained it to me, she and John showed up, interviewed the pet's distraught owner, and shut down their gear. Then John turned to her and said, "I'm gonna get that cat."

John had climbed up to the top of the utility pole and tried to grab the cat. The cat went wild and started swinging its paws around. One or the other of them touched a high-tension wire, and in a shower of sparks, John and the cat came plummeting to the ground.

I went into the back yard to check out the scene. The utility pole stood in one corner of a rock wall, behind a large azalea bush. I peeked under the bush and saw the cat, a calico, lying on its side. I reached forth a finger and gingerly prodded it.

With a furious yowl, the cat shot upright on all fours and stood there, quivering.

I went out front and suggested to Raul that he head back to the station on his own; I'd take Pat back in the other van. I figured she was in no condition to drive.

As we headed back up the North-South Freeway, I asked Pat how she was doing.

"Don't hit that car in front of you," she replied with glacial calm.

"Whoa!" I said, and figured maybe I needed to focus on my driving.

The ambulance took John to William Beaumont Army Medical Center at Fort Bliss which, as luck has it, boasts some of the finest microsurgeons in the country. They reconstructed the accident: when John and/or the cat made contact with the high voltage, the current arced through the forearm he had wrapped around the pole and shot out through his thigh, scorching the flesh at each point of contact. To complicate matters, his head clipped the rock wall on the way down, and his brain was swelling alarmingly.

The odds were thus dicey that he would pull through at all, and if he did, chances were good he'd lose either an arm or a leg, if not both. I have trouble thinking of the results as anything other than miraculous. He pulled through, and the microsurgeons at Beaumont were able to save both limbs. Sure, he

wouldn't have full use of either, but he'd be able to get by as a local news cameraman, anyway. In fact, I ran across him months after I'd left the business, shooting weather video in the park. We shook hands, although he kept the other tucked in his jacket pocket.

Bill Mitchell, our news director, half-jokingly suggested that as a feature story we reunite John and the cat.

"I'll kill that cat if I see it," John replied with no trace of irony.

Which about puts a finish to the story, except that in a way it probably signaled the beginning of the end to my broadcast news career. For, as I was sitting in the van with the radio in my hand, hearing Priscilla tell me that John—our John—was the unfortunate electrocution victim that had just been reported, I did not press the transmitter key and reply:

"Priscilla . . . do you want video?"

The thought did occur to me, though.

— Richard Brandt



ANNEX

Last fall I received a surprise envelope from Australian fan Kim Huett, with whom I have a friendly though sporadic correspondence and who's aware of my ongoing desire to acquire old fanzines. Upon opening it, I found a copy of *Pneumo*, a one-sheet oneshot that Burbee published in the spring of 1948. Kim had discovered it sorting through a pile of old fanzines and thought I'd like it. He was right; I didn't have a copy and was pleased to have one appear out of the blue.

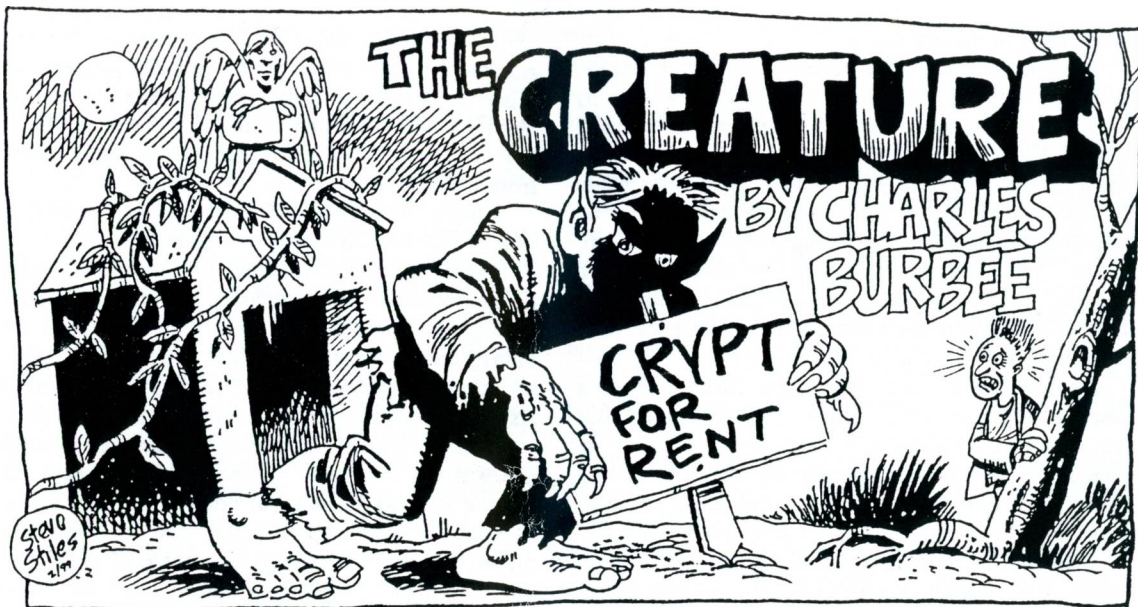
When I went to file it in the folder entitled "Burbee — Miscellaneous Oneshots '40s/'50s," much to my

surprise I rediscovered some stuff that had been included along with the huge mass of fanzines Charlie had given me five years ago: some manuscripts of his. I'd probably just stuck them in there for later consideration and then forgotten about them.

One was an original typescript for "I Was the Captain of a Spaceship," with Burbee's handwritten changes. I'll have to compare it sometime to the published version to see if it diverges from it in any significant way.

The other manuscript was an undated primitive photocopy of six 1½-spaced pages and was titled "The Creature." I have a theory that this fictional tale—I'm pretty sure it's not a true story—dates back to the '60s or '70s, when Charlie was being urged by Rotsler to submit his work to the prozines—though of course Bill meant *Rogue* and *Gallery*, not *F&SF* and *aSF*. (In fact, Burb's "The Assman Takes A Poll" did appear in one of those venues after it first ran in *Mota*.) I don't believe that it's ever been published, and neither did any of the half-dozen or so knowledgeable fans to whom I sent the first couple pages of the manuscript. Unfortunately, the fans who would know for sure are, er, unavailable for comment.

This is probably the fannish equivalent of finding an unpublished play by Socrates—old *Frap* joke, for those of you who remember it. More Lovecraftian than Insurgent, "The Creature" is quite different than the general run of Burbee material. I hope you find it as unusual and enjoyable as I did.



"Yet who can say which shape
Nature's babe astray will take."

— anon.

Peering through the one-way oval window of the door, I briefly studied my old friend Phil, who was relaxed and reading with a sneer on his face, imprisoned in a room at the State Hospital. He was sitting at a dreary-looking metal table, of the institutional type, flipping the pages of a novel by Ray Fadbury (a popular scribbler of low-grade science-fantasy stories).

As I entered Phil's room, he looked up alertly and noticed at once that I had observed his sneer. Immediately he remarked in an irritated voice that State patients were permitted to read nothing worthwhile, just trash. While saying this, he pointed his finger at the Fadbury novel.

His irritation was a sign of sorts to me. Quickly agreeing with him, I picked up the Fadbury novel and commenced to sneer at it myself. Upon seeing this, he broke into a laugh that was friendly but edged with a strange ring. This peculiar laugh momentarily left me feeling off key. But there was no time for me to dwell on its possible meaning, because right after this little exchange about books he grew impatient to get on with the discussion for which he had summoned me. I was his best friend, and he had much to tell me.

Our talk lasted about three hours. But I will make the description of it short, filling in the picture by adding a few facts from the record and some personal memories of my own.

Before going further, however, it might help the reader to believe more easily what follows if he is first given the approximate time and place of this little story. Otherwise some of the things in it will appear to conflict with modern-day circumstances, and rightly so, for all these events took place in the deep South during the 1950s, in the state of Mississippi, where the most backward conditions and beliefs have always found fertile soil in which to grow and thrive, and to some extent still do.

The first matter Phil brought up was our previous meeting three years ago, just before he went to live in the thick forest of lower Mississippi. He had been suffering at the time from an ailment he vaguely called fits and wanted to go live by himself in the forest until it passed. I suggested seeing a doctor, but agreed that the forest too might help some.

One day after talking with me about his fits and about going to live alone, he disappeared.

Our visit in the State Hospital was the first meeting between us since our talk three years ago. I showed intense gladness at seeing him again, as you can imagine, but nevertheless I felt it best to let him do most of the talking, mainly because it is not part of my nature to pry, but also because he might have gotten the wrong idea about our visit: he was very suspicious (I saw that plainly).

In any case, he told me almost everything. He said that he had gone into the forest in order to isolate himself from people, because he was afraid of committing some awful act, although he could not then arti-

culate what he feared doing.

It seems, however, that he had been having strange blackouts ("fits") every now and then a few months prior to his disappearance into the forest. After each of these blackouts, he would experience a nightmare in which he was apparently going over his actions while blacked out. In these nightmares he dreamt that he was savagely attacking and killing people with his bare hands. Soon the nightmares began occurring more frequently and finally grew so vivid that he suspected them of being more than just bad dreams. It was then he decided that the forest was the answer.

He told me that his stay in the forest worked a beneficial effect at first; his nightmares had ceased. But then one day, after being without any for nearly six months, he experienced another nightmare. He fled further back into the forest, but to no avail. Several weeks later he dreamt again, the same terrible dream.

Near the end of his stay in the forest, he had been having these nightmares once every ten days or so. And then the State Police captured him, but not without a violent struggle. Using his great natural strength, he put up such a fight that it took nine full-grown men to subdue him. One man he almost drowned in the swamp. Two other men got their arms, legs and rib cages either broken or badly bruised. But he was finally stopped, receiving a minor concussion to boot.

He was charged with the first-degree murder of twenty-seven people, but the authorities were finding it impossible to make the charge stick. Their only hard evidence rested solely in the testimony of a young person who was alleged to have eyewitnessed one of the slayings. This young person – an older boy who often fished in the swamp – had rapidly developed signs of insanity, which the authorities gloomily blamed on the shattering experience of viewing the slaying. The boy would drift into shock at the mere mention of the crime. And so at the time of my visit to Phil in the hospital, he was officially being held on two lesser charges: assault with intent to kill and resisting arrest.

I might say here, in parentheses as it were, that while Phil told me the details of his account, he appeared at points to be extremely unsure of himself. This disturbed me a great deal, having never before seen Phil in such doubt. I knew for certain something was very wrong.

And I must have shown how I felt, because it was reluctantly that he handed me several sheets of official-looking paper stapled together. One these sheets was a statement that had been extracted from him by means of a mind-influencing drug, probably truth serum, since it was widely used (and abused) in those days.

I could not reveal to him that I had already read his statement in the office of the hospital administrator. His trust in me would have evaporated at once. And neither could I tell him of the newspaper stories that had been accumulating in the three years of his absence from civilization.

I forced myself to read the statement, pretending as well as I could that it was new to me.

When I finished reading, our eyes met, and we communicated without speaking a word. His agitated gaze grew quiet and mild. His features came to rest. Shortly I stood up, and we shook hands, saying goodbye to each other several times and mentioning a return visit. As I departed his room he was beaming at me warmly.

Passing through his doorway, it occurred to me that this was our last time together. All at once I felt a pang of sadness for him, but oddly (I say "oddly" only because I cannot explain it right now) this sad feeling shifted gradually to affectionate but cool detachment, and it changed to this even before I left the hospital grounds, as if I was already thinking about him in the past tense, as if something solid had become intangible, so much smoke. And I never did see him again.

To show the weakness of the State's case against Phil, I offer here an excerpt from his truth serum statement. As the reader can see, the excerpt is not incriminating. But then it is highly suggestive and tallies closely with newspaper accounts of how victims were murdered; and just for this very reason – that it tallied closely – the authorities could never be certain whether Phil was reporting his own experiences or an article he had read (or even one of his dreams, I might add). In view of everything known, however, the obvious conclusion must be faced, even though it cannot quite be proved.

"... so you see I was walking back home through the forest when I saw this crypt. It was all covered with dead vines. And I can remember seeing the crypt and the vines clearly – the moon was full.

"As I got near the crypt, suddenly a man-like creature in rags stepped from its entrance. It took three steps away from the entrance and stopped. I was nailed to the ground with surprise and fear. My eyes were fixed on the creature's face, but I couldn't make out its features – the moon was behind its head. So its face was just a shadow.

"I felt too weak to run. But I was hyper-alert to every noise and movement in the night. There was a strange stillness in the forest, which I had not noticed until just then. I could even hear the sea in the distance, beating on the shore. It sounded like a hiss or a whisper. Very eerie. All these impressions came to me in a moment.

"The creature remained motionless and silent after stopping. It was about forty feet away from me. I do not think it saw me at first, because I was slightly off to one side. But I am sure that it somehow *sensed* me. I have seen dogs and other animals stop short when they detect something by their sense of smell, and the creature's way of stopping reminded me of that.

"Furthermore, I am convinced beyond question that if the creature had seen me and sized me up before it sensed me, it would have attacked so fast that there would have been no time to think or prepare myself. I picture my body lying on the ground, throat in shreds, voice box clawed out, eyelids peeled back in final shock, with the creature ripping chunks of flesh from my torso, after first having removed my scrotum and penis in one swipe. I hear the sound of eating, and the last of my fading attention is focused on the chewing action of the creature's jaw as it devours pieces of flesh and bone pulled from my body. I am begging silently for death to hurry.

"... Anyway, none of this happened, as I said before. Instead we both stood very still, like garden statues, for about thirty seconds. Then I saw the creature's head move a few degrees in my direction. It must have detected me, because several instants later it turned around and vanished into the crypt, disturbing for a moment the drape of withered vines hanging across the entrance.

"I bolted through the forest, aiming for the road and praying that I had not become lost during my wanderings. My brain was filled with terror. I must have tripped and landed on my face at least six times,

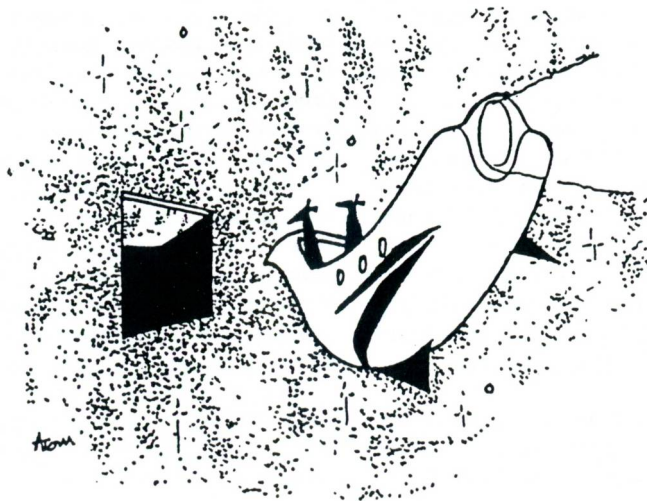
which magnified my terror, especially the first time, since I thought the monster had me. Anyhow, after about ten or fifteen minutes I finally reached the road and ran straight for my car."

My story about Phil ends here. On the day following our visit, he died mysteriously in his room at the State Hospital. The authorities there would say nothing regarding his death, and the obituary column in the local newspaper listed it as owing to natural causes. No other information was given, leaving me in the dark and unsatisfied, until a few days later when I had the opportunity to talk with one of the doctors who examined Phil's body. He told me something that I find hard to believe, much less accept: it seems that Phil willed himself to death.

To clarify this remark, which even today sounds so fantastic, so unlikely, the doctor informed me that this is like a person ordering himself to give up living, and supposedly is very common in primitive societies among older members who perceive themselves becoming a burden to their people.

Even so, I still do not know just what to think about this whole business. A part or a link seems missing. I thought I understood Phil pretty well. But now it appears that his personality had a side which nobody knew of, not even himself at first. A terrible force of some kind was at work in him, that is obvious. But what the nature of this force was is beyond me to say. All I know is that it gripped a man for a short time and turned him into a monstrous creature.

— Charles Burbee



CRAIG SMITH
c/o Famous Obscure Fanartists' School
HUMPTULIPS, WA 98468



HARMONY

BY JIM HARMON

A Column for Fifty Years

We are all trapped in Plato's cave, trying to make sense of the shadows on the wall. Some of us try to communicate with the shadows. We write.

Those who do, write little stories, often write and draw comic strips, from the age of six or earlier. I began trying to write what I read – science fiction stories – from the age of thirteen. One story I had published in Art Rapp's fanzine, *Spacewarp*, was called worthy of professional publication by writer Rog Phillips when I was about that age. Actually, it took me to the age of nineteen when I sold my first stories to Lowndes' *Science Fiction Quarterly* and Gold's *Galaxy*.

I also began to issue commentary on life and art. God knows why or how. I knew almost nothing about either, but I began to write letters of comment to prozines and fanzines – and when I was about thirteen in 1948 I began a column for Lee Riddle's *Peon*.

"Harmony" lasted as long as the fanzine, which was seven or eight years. I still have those fanzines, but buried deep in the back of the den closet. I may be off on some of these dates. After *Peon*, several fanzines carried the column briefly over some years. In more recent times, Lee Sapiro's *Riverside Quarterly* has carried the column for over twenty years. But *RQ* seems to become an annual, and now I haven't heard from Lee for several years. Yet I still have many more columns itching to get out.

In this last year, I have been writing about the deaths of the "founding fathers" of fandom and of science fiction itself – like Isaac Asimov, Redd Boggs

and Lynn Hickman. I do not quite feel the cold breath of Mr. Death on the back of my neck yet. These great fellows were almost a generation older than me, but it does cause one to think about mortality.

Even Harlan Ellison, one year younger than me, was on TV wondering if his fame would outlast his life by much, citing the example of some once-celebrated *Saturday Evening Post* writer – was it Kelland, or Yates, or – ? Of course, Ellison is a fantasy writer and fans keep alive the fame of a lot less talented writers than him. Ellison seems to be at the absolute peak of his ability, fame and success, although he may surprise us yet.

On the other hand, I consider myself a work in progress. I've had a measure of success in writing books about nostalgia, primarily radio drama, the latest being *Radio and TV Premiums* (Krause, \$24.95), and producing new radio dramas, like the cassette album, *I Love A Mystery: The Fear That Creeps Like A Cat* (Harmon, \$19.95). But I hope there's more to life.

I finally felt I had enough experience in acting in radio dramas – as I have for over twenty-five years – to do a lead, as I have in an upcoming cassette series, *The Haunted Eye* ("Eye" as in private eye). I would also like to get back to writing SF and do a few novels. I've had dozens of short stories and novelets published, but no novels (except for highly sexed detective novels).

Maybe it is time to retire. I don't want to keep taking "farewell tours" like a European tenor. I want to get into new things. If the world expects me to have to learn how to use a computer in late middle age, it

owes me a chance to try to do something new.

Of course, life never owes us anything. One can only achieve what one is strong enough, lucky enough to do.

At least Heinlein and Moskowitz, for instance, lived long enough to get their full share of chances. I often think of two friends of mine (and of each other), Ron Haydock and Bob Greenberg, who died young—both at 38, I believe—and did not live to do all that they could. Bob was a lot closer to where he wanted to be than Ron. If he had lived, Bob would have been co-writer and associate producer of a hit Disney movie, *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids*, and his career would have been made. One of his next projects was a series of TV specials (following ones he did on “Amos 'n' Andy” and Sherlock Holmes) on early TV, which I was going to write and produce with him.

I can't help but think about mortality, but more than ten years ago author Richard O'Brien assured me I had one less worry in this life: “Jim, you no longer have to worry about dying young.”

Art for Cash Sake

Maybe I'll take a prize for being the thousandth writer to complain about last summer's American Film Institute's Top 100 Movies list. It is disturbing that an organization supposedly devoted to the preservation of the best of American film presents this list of movies obviously designed to suck up to surviving film makers, to appeal to young viewers who generally know nothing about anything before last Saturday, and to help video rental outfits like Blockbuster make money.

Some of the greatest films are not generally known to the public. Some reliance must be put on critics, historians, buffs. These people will name these films in the hopes that the general public will discover them.

We SF fans should be glad to see a number of fantastic films made the list, movies like *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Strangelove* and *King Kong*. But there are others deserving. The Flash Gordon movie serial with Buster Crabbe was honored on another list of the Library of Congress as a “National Treasure.” To the knowledgeable, *Bride of Frankenstein* is an even better film than the first in the series. The silent *Phantom of the Opera* is a better film than the—to me—insipid *E.T.*

Star Wars was a culturally important film, and deserves recognition. But an even more culturally vital contribution was *Star Trek*. A survey revealed that half of American citizens consider themselves *Star Trek* fans. I was too old and jaded to get carried away, but I recognize the importance of the TV-film format. I would say the best of the theatrical films was *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*.

What really makes some of us mad is the dubious, even downright bad recent films that are on the list, instead of classics that deserve to be. *The Unforgiven* is a fairly interesting recent Western, if a dark and bloody one. Clint Eastwood is still around to take a bow, but *The Unforgiven* can't compare to almost any film directed by John Ford, including the silent *Iron Horse*. I would say it is inferior to my favorite, Tom Mix, in the silent *Riders of the Purple Sage* and the talkie *Rider of Death Valley* (aka *Riders of the Desert*). I would even consider putting Gene Autry's *South of the Border* above *The Unforgiven*. Even Eastwood's derivative *Pale Rider* was better.

The Sound of Music has long been a very popular film, but can't equal the glorious musicals of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, including *The Gay Divorcee* and *Top Hat*, none of which made this list. Astaire is often considered the most talented individual ever to appear in films. I like Julie Andrews, but not that much.

Several days after the AFI list appeared, *Los Angeles Times* readers wrote in their choices, mostly just rearranging AFI's list. They placed *Gone With the Wind* No. 1 as a sentimental favorite, moving *Citizen Kane* to No. 3, leaving *Casablanca* as No. 2. They added a number of other titles to the list, including the new *Titanic* but also two great Mel Brooks films, *Blazing Saddles* and *Young Frankenstein*. I was fortunate enough to be at a special showing where Brooks introduced a rough and much longer version of the latter film. I thought all the material that eventually got cut was equally as good as what remained. A public showing of the long version of *Young Frankenstein* would help it gain its place on the 100 Best list.

The important thing is, I suppose, that people keep talking and arguing over which films are the best of all time, instead of merely comparing the blockbusters from the last few years, featuring Big Booms and Big Boobs. I like those things—the latter more than the former—but unless there is a major turnaround, the greatness of the movies lies in their past.

— Jim Harmon



dave van ronk & SONGS OF THE BOSSSES' ARTISTS

BY BOYD
RAEBURN



What a coincidence that in *Trap Door* No. 18, Jerry Kaufman mentions Dave Van Ronk and in the following letter Fred Lerner mentions *The Bosses' Songbook*, for the two are connected.

I had received a letter from Dick Ellington, wherein he related that Larry Shaw and Lee Hoffman were getting married, and a party was being held for them at The Dive on Saturday. The letter had arrived that same Saturday. I passed on the news to Ron Kidder and Gerald Steward, the other two members of the Derelict Insurgents, and the thought hit us simultaneously: "Let's go."

We rounded up some U.S. currency (not easy to do on a Saturday) and got a flight to New York which would land us there early in the evening. A taxi to The Dive, and ...

"Surprise. We've come to the party."

"Oh wow! Look who's here. 'Surprise' is right."

After the party had partied on for a while, in walked a slightly stocky young guy carrying a guitar. "Oh sheesh!" I thought, thinking we were probably in

for some earnest but amateur folk singing. The presumed folkie sat down and started to sing. At the end of his first song, I said, "Somebody bring me a tape recorder" and, somewhat surprisingly, somebody did. The singer obligingly started over from the beginning, and thus I got on tape Dave Van Ronk singing Songs of the Bosses' Artists.

Songs of the Bosses' Artists were the creation of a small group of fans and friends who, while of leftist bent, enjoyed mocking and parodying the hard left Peoples' Artists. I still have the tape, but haven't heard it for some time, as my reel-to-reel recorder is not functioning. However, the following two songs are so firmly fixed in my memory banks from many listenings that I am sure these are faithful renditions of Van Ronk's actual performance.

One of my favorites is "The Ballad of Pete Seeger." On the tape, Dave does a spoken introduction: "This is a song about Pete Seeger. He's a Communist. This is also a song about Peoples' Artists. *They're* Communists, too. [sarcastically] We all love them, and know

them well, especially those of us who buy Stinson Records regularly. It's to the tune of 'The Wreck of the Old 97.' "

Well, they gave him his orders
Up at Party Headquarters,
Saying, "Pete, you're way behind the times.
This is not '38; this is 1947,
And there's been a change
in that old party line."

It's a long, long haul
From "Greensleeves" to "Freiheit,"
And the distance is more than long,
But that great outfit that they call
Peoples' Artists
Is on hand with those
good ol' Peoples' Songs.

Their material is corny,
But their motives are the purest,
And their spirit will never be broke,
As they go right on in
their great noble crusade
Of teaching folk songs to the folk.

I asked Dick Ellington about the significance of '38 and 1947, but he didn't know. I subsequently learned that it was about that time, probably 1946, that Pete Seeger joined the Communist Party, so that may have been the reference. Stinson Records was a record company that included in its releases a number of left wing and union songs.

A little later, Lee Hoffman became very interested in folk music and taped in her apartment a number of folk singers, including Van Ronk. Included in his tape (Lee obligingly made me a copy, and I still have that tape also) were a number of haunting Irish folk songs which Dave said he had learned from his Irish grandmother. And I think it is on that tape that he recorded what sounds like a Peoples' Artists anti-war song, vintage WW2, but obviously before the USSR entered the war and became Our Glorious Ally. It has a great sing-along type chorus:

(verse) I was at my mother's side
The night before she died,
And I promised her to war I'd never go.
Now I'm wearing army jeans
And I'm eating army beans,
And they tell me J. P. Morgan
loves me so.

(chorus) Well, Franklin Roosevelt told
The people how he felt.
We damn near believed what he said.
He said I hate war

And so does Eleanor
But we won't be safe till
everybody's dead.

To finish on a Bosses' Artists note, we have Van Ronk's "Talking Stalin Blues." As the title denotes, this is spoken, not sung. Unfortunately I can't convey on paper Dave's wonderfully mocking delivery. (On this one my memory had a couple of gaps, but Robert filled them in for me.)

("The Vozhd," Dick Ellington told me, was a title applied to Stalin. "Kulaks" were prosperous peasants, whom Stalin "eliminated" as "Enemies of the People." Yeah, good thinking, that by eliminating the most skillful and industrious farmers, agricultural production would be increased. But then, collective farms weren't the smartest idea either.)

Now come all you members of the old C.P.,
Come sit in a circle and listen to me.
And when I tell you you'll sure stay told,
Gonna sing about the Vozhd —
Marx, bless his soul.

Gone to glory ...
Workers' Paradise.

I wonder if he'll overfulfill his quota?

Now in the *Daily Worker* and
the *New York Times*

You've all been reading about Stalin's crimes.
But if you view it dialectically, I'm sure
you'll find

That Uncle Joe's been much maligned.

A product of the Trotskyite
McCarthy combine — no doubt.

Now Joe was never a maniac,
Nor a child-molesting necrophiliac,
And in party circles we should never speak
Of his non-existent sadistic streak.

He was just misunderstood.
Loved children ...
Dogs ...
Kulaks too!

From what Robert tells me, the second printing of *The Bosses' Songbook* really wimps out on "The Ballad of Pete Seeger." In this printing, the title is changed to "Ballad of a Party Folk Singer" and, as I recall, there is further bowdlerization. So we appear to have two parties regarding the Bosses' Artists songs: the Van Ronkians and the Wimpy Revisionists. However, this article concerns Dave Van Ronk, who was the prime exponent of the original Bosses' Artists songs, and so I have presented his original renditions.

— Boyd Raeburn

MUSINGS OF A PSEUDO PHILOSOPHER



by GARY DEINDORFER

(This piece was written first draft on stencils in 1972 or 1973 at Mike McNemey's apartment in San Francisco. Lost these many years, it was exhumed last year. Robert and I think you might find it of interest as an exercise in abnormal psychology.)

You know what happens when you have too much disparity in your head. You get to the point where you think you have all the answers. For whatever arises, you will arrange certain of your discrepancies to match it. The discrepancies do not exist outside of you. No matter how chaotic and out of rhythm things might seem, still there is a pattern there. But if it is a pattern you do not recognize, and you persist in matching your huge array of internal discrepancies to it, then, what ho, you are going to take some of that upon yourself. You will gobble up still more weird "facts" into your brain and say, "Things are getting more fucked up every day. Everything is falling apart. See? Thus I demonstrate this to myself on my most recent trip through North Jersey. The oil refineries are a blot on the land. There is such and such so much polluting material added to the atmosphere every hour. This ties in with such and such so much polluting material added to the atmosphere in the Lake Erie realm every hour."

Soon you are yourself a perambulating blight. Such and such so much polluting material added to your mind every hour. Suicide soon looms up as the only recourse. "Ah, I slit my throat what with all these things in my head warring all the more so the last year after year. It is all too much with me!"

This concern is all very well, indicating you *care*. But such concern for such as worst pollution realms of the land grows to the point of suicide decision if (1) you persist in traveling through these poison realms when you could just as well make certain judicious detours (from Manhattan north to Albany and westward and down through northern Pennsylvania through the countryside of Pennsylvania down into the horse country of Maryland and so on, I don't know); and (2) you keep adding to the oil refineries and smog in your own head, making the mind blight the more horrible as the external industrial blight grows the more horrible and so on and so forth. *Harumph*.

There is a *pattern* there all right ... flickering red lights in the Mordor-like black smog. Whatever it is, away with these rapidly exploding cancers of discrepant statistics internalized to self-polluting effect. Make a painting out of it ... write a song about it. Transmute it somehow; change it upward. Fast. Otherwise, of course, your head will bring that knife to your throat.

I say, we must resist these modifications of the mind. Patanjali says this in his raja yoga sutras but I

am in no position to understand him clearly at my present stage of development. However, it is obvious that it is pro-survival to reject from outside what taken inside will entrench itself as a North Jersey of the Mind. Not the same as being pollyannical about it and saying, "Oh ho. There is nothing at all to worry about here." Rather you must realize this: the spirit lurks even within the oil refineries. But this same spirit, being subtle and self-effacing and notoriously shy as it is, exists in the silent areas of the Catskills (those that are left). So if you would resist this self-pollution, this taking the most intense form of the blight upon yourself, hang out where the spirit has more porosity of grooviness to shine through, staying the hell out of North Jersey if at all possible.

The Tao is the Tao anywhere you go. Why take North Jersey into your head and from there on to the Catskills (non-commercial parts) there to run it around in your head like some nasty tape loop? Just as well take the still relatively unspoiled Catskill realms to North Jersey (if you must go there in spite of my advice), there to run a pleasurable tape loop around and around in your brain, to remind yourself, "Tao be in the green hills, Tao be here, though the more occluded, the far more occluded, but it is *everywhere*, so it must be here, too. If I keep those green leaves in my head, maybe that will give me the strength to chop down these goddamn oil refineries with a bandsaw."

Don't feel too bad if you find it difficult to generalize the mindless happy nothingness even in the cruddy neighborhoods. The Gautama Buddha himself would have found it hard going sitting underneath an oil refinery tower, there to wait for intersection with Enlightenment. If because he would have suffocated before he was able to achieve yogic separation out of poisons from the breathable air in his holy nasal passages—yes, even he.

We live in a world of extreme imbalances, one will have noticed. This indicates, however, that there are middle places of calm to be found between these outrageous samsaric warpages. And whatever minds can give those protected places a home are welcome to do so. I have been riding the roller coaster of emotional extremes most of my life (unpaid testimonial). I have always had a tendency to give in to my highly charged emotional nature. I know whereof I speak regarding the psychic danger of attachment to and incorporation into the mind substance of the cruddy aspects of machine age insanity. All the more so, then, do I consider myself grateful that I am beginning to acquire a sense for avoidance of outrageous astral detours. I have a hold now on the tropism for balance. But I remember, so I do not think I will allow myself,

around the age of 80 or so, to proclaim, "At last I am at *perfect peace with myself*. I am an Illuminated One. I will teach your crippled people the way, rather, The Way."

I think I will have sufficient good sense instead to say to myself, "I have learned at last to Cool It in this weird century. Enough for myself. I can hardly presume to teach anybody else anything about this subtle essence." I mean I will say this in subvocal manner when I am 80, beyond sex (sometimes I feel that way already but it isn't my fault girls like to tear me apart once I have fallen too much in lust with them), not now, when I am still young, sexy (though consider the paragraph above but what do these snotty bitches know about that), and foolish.

Restrict modifications of the imagination, you science fiction fans! Bringing it back to myself again, I for one have always had the kind of imagination which tends to rush in where angels fear to tread. Enough of this capacity for vivid form building. Enough form intensity. This has led me astray on the spiritual road more vigorously than anything else, especially coupled with the mentioned emotional excess. Get to the sense of the cool, silent formlessness out of which baroque complicated mind fantasy structures are thrown up (thrown up in more than one sense, haha). If you have my kind of trigger-happy Walt Disney speed-image imagination, that is not easy. But I know this: trammel an overactive, exuberant imagination the more so when it is about to take you to especially pleasurable fantasy worlds, and thereby deny yourself solipsistic gratification and it must come out somewhere, so it will finally manifest as simplifying realization. I have gotten enough tests for simplifying realization to know how much more healing it is to my battered brain than exacerbated fantasias, fugues of ideas, etc.

Each moment as pureness is insurance. Formless knowledge being patterned but subtly patterned compared to the patterns of imagination matrices, formless in the sense of not obviously apprehensible, Novalis' "formless that clingeth the formed," hath the power to kill aborning the seeds of karmic complication arising out of exacerbated form building. It is just as good as Mutual Life, and cheaper.

Secret connections. I have long had a habit of seeking these inward connections and the resultant tendency of reading supercharged imaginative meanings between the lines of psychic longitude, latitude and platitude. But consider, instead of imposing "meaning" on felt secretive connections, it is enough to sense links between experiences in your life that normally you find no link between, sense them without imposition of your own made-up ideas. Then they will rather manifest not

as the confusing and paranoia feeding association chains of the high IQ acid-head. Rather, manifest less obviously to inward scanning perception as intuitional realization considerably detached from perception forms (sense dharma's, dig?). So that in newly arisen life situations it will be easier to go *wu wei* through it (go *flat*, surrender to it) as the complement to the situation of what you may have done or not done a week earlier in what seems on the perception level an entirely different situation but in the form-detached realm is basically the same situation. Thus you will feel your "luck" to be improving. Not a mystical thing, this luck or lack of it. Just plain old karma yoga in action. You are being better to yourself than you used to be, that's all. You are finding spiritual doorways through all this hopeless samsaric complication and hyperactivity which once your outrageous paranoid acid-head imagination managed to constantly slam in your face.

I keep writing myself into what feels like blind alleys here but each time my guardian angel (to whom I have not bothered to attach a visualizable face as you might realize from the above) nudges me through a chink in the wall I can fit through but nobody else can. This happens with increasing frequency for the kid these days. I get through the difficult moments easier and faster than I would have even half a year ago. And now I have this little game of pretending on occasion that something nice is a crisis and wait for an escape hatch to open, as it always does. I do not then make the mistake of congratulating myself. Rather, I sub-vocalize or clairaudialize or something, "Nothing has happened here. Nothing has happened at all. This has been up to now a pleasant evening and it remains so." But as a result of this perhaps to you meaningless bit of psychic activity, when a day or a week later I am confronted with some kind of hassle whether exterior, interior or both, I sail through it without even having to think about finding the spiritual escape hatch. The exitway from the bringdown is already there waiting for me to step through, the doorway I trouble to unlock in a moment of peacefulness. Lying in bed before falling asleep is a good time to be peaceful and unlock escape hatches for use later on in moments of hassle. Know what I mean? Not worrying about something cruddy that might happen, rather detachedly and dispassionately in peaceful moments searching out escape ways, having a sense of passing through them while imagining doing this during an uptight out of bed waking moment. Then when you stumble onto a draggy situation inside of you and/or outside of you, as I say, the doorways are there merely to step with no effort having to be made to get out of something you don't want to be immersed in, for in an earlier non-hassle moment you troubled to

carve your own trail for yourself.

I am writing around a point here that may seem one not sufficiently pointed. You could say I give an impression of taking it upon myself like North Jersey getting into your head and polluting it bit. But this I know: whatever blueprint from the worlds above underlies this freeform article is the same blueprint reflecting the timespacepsyche situation of everyone who now reads this, no matter the external detail situation of the surroundings of the various minds of those whose eyes now track this sentence. This is a matter of who I am karmically that this can be and is so, which it would not be for those who read this page. Do you realize as readers of this article in a magazine by Brother Mike under the byline of Gary Dawson, this in the High Machine age, where your percept commonality lies? What everybody spiritually as he or she reads this shares in common, and I mean a specific shared eternal fact? Let those of you who are in touch with your intuition figure it out. One clue, however: after hours at Minton's in good old Klacktoveedsedstene, memories of the days of the future yet to be traversed ... 52nd Street in the Apple early forties as seen from without, a good bit less drastic and more mellow and Paradise-like arrangement of perception dharma's over the common blueprint as seen from *within* ... the Bird returns, but does he see it as mucked up as you do. Where is Kistimbilawa?

We must seek to be *most* helpful to others in what seems to be their worst moments. Apply a little humor to the situation and you can do it without having to be saintly about it. Realize that this is when one's highest and best and truest nature is most blocked from manifesting itself thuse to remove the basest and worst disharmonies from this world, the much more so that this be habitually done ... forgive during the fact without letting anybody's shit get you down ... they'll be better off and you will be better off and in fact just about everybody will be better off.

And cynicism in any form is the most crippling of all attitudes. It closes escape hatches on you more surely than anything ever will. That's why cynicism goes with stupidity or hadn't you noticed.

And if you assume the opposite of that is a dumb ingenuousness, you have missed the point. Are you ready to go to the next plateau?

— Gary Deindorfer



THE ETHER STILL VIBRATES



PASCAL THOMAS

This LoC has to begin with some sort of editorial explaining why it's late.

Well, I can't give the complete story—that would be a zine in itself, almost—but let's say that in the course of adopting a Vietnamese baby, my wife and I ended up spending five months in Viet Nam, in two stays separated by a stressful five-month interval during which the baby we wanted to adopt, and had cared for for some time, had to stay in a temporary foster family. Since August 1997, baby has been with us—so she's not such a small baby now, going on two years old. She's cute, she's smiling, I think she's reasonably smart, and she sure keeps us busy. So there goes my fanning time (not that I devoted so much time to fandom beforehand anyhow, I'm sorry to confess), but also my serious SF criticism time, and many other kinds of time.

However, using some of my indecent academic vacation time, I've been able to tidy up my study some, and chance upon some *Trap Doors* I'd been late in reading, mostly No. 16, which had arrived during our first stay in Viet Nam. I've not much to say about all this—I never knew the departed that well, even by repute—except for the fact that, of course, deaths seem to inspire more writing than births. That, after all, is one major function of writing: preserve our collective memory beyond the passing of the individuals. *Trap Door* does it, as somebody should.

But I really meant this late LoC to be about *Trap Door* No. 17, an issue I actually read some months ago, and more than once, as I kept interrupting myself and getting back to it later, having forgotten details in the

meantime. I'd be reading it another time right now, if it weren't for the notes I took last April on the flight back from Seattle, where I'd spent a few days for a math conference (and had the pleasure of renewing my acquaintance with some of the fans there). April, you might sadly nod your head, and now it's August. Yup, that's how deep I've fallen.

I'm typing the following before reading "The Ether Still Vibrates" in *Trap Door* No. 18.

Reading *Trap Door*, then, with all its returning glories and obituaries, and still feeling this odd sense of community, the same I feel when I read Paul Williams' music zine, *Crawdaddy*. A community of has-beens? Could it be just me feeling that? Perhaps. Not meaning that you or any other specific reader is one, by all means. And after all, there must be lots of precedents for communities of Old Pharts. It's just that I'm surprised to be one, coming from a youth-oriented subculture.

Anyway. Christina Lake's was my favorite piece in *Trap Door*. Her remarks about fan history (as well as the other kind) are quite sensible, as ever. As far as I can tell. I read *Trap Door* the same way—the observations about personal life (say, in this issue, Calvin Demmon's) providing the meatiest reading. Which is not to say that I don't enjoy the goofier, skiffy spoof inspired writings of Sid Coleman and Dave Langford. Nothing much to say about them, though.

On the other hand, maybe Christina will be pleased (or perhaps aghast) to note that Christine (my wife) and I have given our newly adopted daughter one of those "exotic Southern French names" that crop up in

Leroy-Ladurie's *Montaillou, Village Occitan* (which concerns the early 14th century, by the way, not the 12th, but never mind). She's now called Azalais, a name we don't think is that exotic, albeit ancient (it's a version of the Germanic "Adelaid"), and that had nothing Cathar about it in those days (all sorts of women used to be named that). And by the way, Christina, I'd rather call the names "Occitan" rather than "Southern French" – that language is (or was) about as different from French as Italian can be, say. And, well, we're not the first couple to name our child Azalais, by the way, even though the others are probably occitanists too – something like a fandom in some ways, but with political overtones.

I owe some thanks to Steve Stiles for teaching me the meaning of that Simon & Garfunkel song. Never knew what it was about.

Carol Carr writes a great parody of Woody Allen's movies. I still enjoy them, though (never cared much for maturity, anyway), and it should be noted that in his latest opus (the title of which eludes me at the moments, oops), Allen liberally parodies himself, as he's telling about a writer whose work is adapted from his own failed relationship. Fiction and reality (within the fiction) become hopelessly intertwined (as they were in *Stardust Memories*), and I still dig this kind of humor (which is not so far from a kind of SF, say Philip Dick's, come to think of it).

About John Baxter's letter in *Trap Door* No. 16, and Vicky Rosenzweig's follow-up in No. 17, I'm not so sure that French law "prohibits" revealing embarrassing facts about public figures. Although without legal training, I figured from what I'd read in the press that the law guarantees everyone some right to privacy – but public figures are the ones with the clout and money to sue the press if they start printing unauthorized photographs, stories about mistresses, and the like. This happened quite a bit a couple of years ago with the tabloid *Voici*. If I remember correctly, the persons who were suing were not politicians, but show business figures, or members of the Monaco royal family – which amounts to the same, come to think of it. It's true that the press does not print stories about the private life of politicians – for instance, there are a couple of mayors of largish French cities who are commonly regarded as homosexual, but I only "know" about this by hearsay; the newspapers would not see this as anything fit to print. There was an exception: Mitterrand's illegitimate daughter got a lot of airplay a couple of years ago (but her father was dead already, and he'd been pretty open about her, taking her on official trips for instance); then last year (if I remember correctly), she proceeded to generate even more publicity for herself because she

was publishing her first novel, cunningly titled "Premier Roman" ("First Novel"), about a young woman who wanted to become a writer, I gather. Writing as show business, as usual.

About Paul Skelton's hilarious toilet report from Hebden Bridge, Yorks.: one tends to underestimate the importance of public toilets as a marker of community ties and civilization itself, because such things are rarely discussed publicly. Driving along the country roads around Toulouse, and often embarking on the frantic search for public lavatories to relieve my or Christine's bladder, I've had occasion to notice how public rest rooms in small villages are always strategically located: near the city hall, or near the market square – near the places that signify that a village is a small town, rather than some motley collection of houses. Out in the fields, no public toilets are needed. Sadly enough, out on the street in large cities, public toilets are seldom in evidence, and suffering bladders fall prey to bars, fast food restaurants, and other privately-owned substitutes.

Thanks for keeping me on your mailing list. (7 rue des Saules, 31400 Toulouse, France)

MILT STEVENS

Bill Rotsler's death may not be the end of fandom as we know it, but it certainly takes a major chunk out of fandom as we know it. Nobody ever appeared in as many issues of as many fanzines as he did. The Rotsler cartoon has been the only thing even more ubiquitous than the Harry Warner Jr. letter. With all that exposure over all those years, nobody ever got mad at him. In an egotistical and contentious field like this one, getting along with everybody is a remarkable feat indeed.

I remember one time when Rotsler pointed out a quirk of fannish behavior to me. By coincidence, Bill and I had arrived at a local convention at the same time and were walking towards the registration area. A young woman going in the opposite direction waved and said hello to us in passing, and we both waved and said hi in return. When we had walked another twenty feet, Rotsler asked if I knew the woman. I admitted I didn't. He said he didn't either. He pointed out that we had both returned her greeting as if we had known her forever. He made a comparison to the movie business where stars have met so many people that they have to act as if they may know anybody and everybody. He reasoned that after a bit of time in fandom, fans get to act the same way. When you can't really remember how many cons you've attended, you certainly can't recall all the people you may have met and can't account for all the people who remember meeting you.

Before reading Ron Bennett's article, I had never

thought about Jules Verne's final resting place. As I understand it, the literary establishment in France is much more of a Literary Establishment (government sanctioned or close to it) than in the U.S. or U.K. I wonder if the obscurity of Verne's grave indicates he isn't considered quite respectable by the Establishment—not that the ornateness of a burial place makes a whole heck of a lot of practical difference to the person occupying it.

Burbee's article, "The Baxter Street Irregular," described many of the aspects of Elmer Perdue I already knew about. However, I'd never heard about his match ritual before. *{But I had; odd how these tales are disseminated unevenly.}* It does sound rather compulsive. While most of Elmer's life appears rather anarchistic, I guess there was a compulsive aspect to it. "Unique" is a word frequently applied to Elmer, and an anarchistic compulsive is probably rare enough to be considered unique.

As usual, the letter column in *Trap Door* No. 18 is chock full of commentable stuff. Before reading Cynthia Goldstone's letter, I thought Anton LaVey showed up in Bay Area fandom in the late '60s. That was when I encountered him. On the basis of very limited contact, he did not impress me as someone I would like to cultivate as a close buddy. In fact, I just plain didn't like the feel of the guy.

The "Foundation" rich brown partially recalls in late '50s L.A. fandom was the Chesley Donovan Foundation. The Chesley was for Bonestell, and I'm not sure what the Donovan was for. I think they were involved with what now would be called New Age Philosophy, and their path didn't cross fandom's all that often. However, they did run the 1957 Westercon at the Knickerbocker Hotel. Jon Lackey was the member of that organization who was most noticed by outside fandom for his costuming. (6325 Keystone St., Simi Valley, CA 93063)

IRWIN HIRSH

Of all the items about Rotsler, I appreciated yours the most. I suspect this is because I hardly knew Bill, and of all the writers I know you by far the most. I liked that Bill made you promise that his color computer art would never be reproduced in black and white. Similarly, Bill Warren has a lot of Rotsler art available for faneds, the only stipulation being that the first publication of the art has to be in a paper zine. I once received one of Bill's thick envelopes of artwork. At the time it had been five or six years since he'd been on my mailing list, and most of the art was pieces I didn't use—didn't fit in with the look and feel of my fanzines. Out of that I gained an impression that Rotsler was somewhat indiscriminate in handing out his

artwork, and I'm please to now find that he did have a method and a standard I hadn't allowed for. *{When he sent me those thick envelopes of artwork, Bill always assumed that I'd make my selection and pass whatever I couldn't use on to other faneds, which I always did. As for that color computer artwork, I'd still love to publish some of it but the cost is prohibitive on top of the rest of the issue. For a brief time last year, it appeared that an angel was going to step forward, but once the price for even a single sheet was revealed that potential angel, not surprisingly, flew away.}*

In your comments to George Flynn: Even though I file my fanzine collection by editor, it isn't a reflection of how I like to read a fanzine for the first time. I've found that when I read, say, issues 5 through 11 of a fanzine each separate issue gets blended into one whole and I lose a feeling for how the fanzine evolved. So whenever I get a stack of old fanzines, I deliberately read them over a week or a month or whatever is appropriate—an issue every two or three days. The advantages you see in Harry Warner's filing system are attractive. Instead of filling gaps in my collection of Joe Faned's fanzines, I should be out there trying to fill in the gaps of specific two-month periods.

David Thayer's remark about the slide rule showing "not only one specific answer but the relationship of a whole series of calculations" fits in with Terry Hornsby's comment that DTP and older methods of publication "require a certain discipline." Long ago I realized that it was the discipline and looking for the wider relationship that greatly assisted me in acquiring skills in an area. When I was studying Media Studies, I got really bored and frustrated with the amount of time our teachers devoted to explaining the chemical processes involved in photography. Later on I appreciated learning the chemistry because understanding what happens in the darkroom and what happens to a roll of film which is exposed to light improved the quality of the images I took. These days my photography is limited to happy snaps of the family, but Wendy and I have noticed that my basic SLR produces better photos than Wendy's point-and-shoot. I'm sure it's because the process of manually setting the focus and aperture and shutter speed subconsciously makes the eye look more carefully at what is being photographed. (26 Jessamine Ave., Prahran East, Vict. 3181, Australia)

ED BURBEE

Overall, I liked *Trap Door* No. 18, although of course it left me feeling sad because of the passing of our old family friend, Bill Rotsler. I enjoyed reading other people's views of Bill's personality and doings. I realize from these views that I took Bill's varied artistic

talents for granted, but I had seen or heard of all these artistic expressions as an ongoing development since my first awareness forward. Like others, I marveled at his artistic ability, yet it formed part of my youthful environment. I miss Bill for other reasons that I find difficult to clarify, probably because I feel a very personal loss in his passing. A permanent hole seems to have grown in my psyche where Bill's living persona once existed.

In an earlier letter I characterized Bill as an iconic personality. In my case, whenever I think of the word "brio," I picture Bill Rotsler. The man and the word call forth each other. As another example, your contributor Marta Randall saw Bill as embodying Courtesy. Others, I would venture, pictured him as the definition of Eros. Let me add big-heartedness and generosity to the nouns that one can attach to this individual, Bill Rotsler. Many people will miss Bill for large reasons. Peculiar to say, though, I will miss him for the indefinable little family kinds of things that built up over the years of my youth. I had infrequent contact with Bill once I reached adulthood, except through my father's descriptions of his adventures and accomplishments. All the same, Bill's bright visage often appears in my imaginings, and his memory in my thoughts, and always will. He remains for me an unforgettable person.

Reading my father's article, "The Baxter Street Irregular," in your publication really pleased me. I believe that your reprinting it would have pleased my father, too. He greatly liked Elmer as a friend and saw him as a most interesting character at the same time. The article appreciates Elmer on both levels. (48015 Pechanga Rd. #4, Temecula, CA 92592)

GARY HUBBARD

I didn't know Bill Rotsler had died until a few months ago, when I came across his obit in *Locus* (which I get to read for free at work). But, you know, I had a bad feeling at Corflu Wave when it was announced that he was in the hospital. So, yet again, someone who I really would have liked to have known has checked out before I got a chance. Maybe I should be a little more assertive the next con I attend.

I was gratified by Bill's comments about Beatrice the Muse in the *Trap Door* before last. I guess it's no surprise that he, if anyone, would understand what that whole episode was all about. Especially since he was partly responsible for Bea's creation. I like to think that I gave Bill a little something to smile about before the end, and that maybe on some higher level of quasi-reality, he and Bea have struck up an acquaintance. I'm sure they'll get on famously together. (2203 Amherst, Kalamazoo, MI 49008)

R. GRAEME CAMERON

It's sad to live in a world without Bill Rotsler. He helped define the spirit of fandom. But as long as his illos are reprinted (and they are every bit as ubiquitous as Harry Warner Jr.'s LoCs – no fanzine is complete without both) and stories about him and his life circulate in print, I think his genial influence will continue to be felt. *{No need to reprint: it will probably be at least another decade before unpublished Rotsler illos have all been used.}* Certainly fandom has its share of people who take our hobby too seriously, but Bill's illos frequently spoofed fannish pretensions in a friendly, generic way of insult to no one yet a lesson to everyone. Perhaps Bill's greatest contribution to fandom was that he offered living proof that the purpose of a fannish life is to have fun.

Bill Donaho's article about the life and decline of Dan Curran is very sad. A life of promise destroyed by alcohol. When Dan died on that mountain trail, he must have felt terribly alone and helpless in his final moments. And yet, not alone. Thanks to fandom, to Bill Donaho, he is remembered. Most people in life rate a tiny obit in a newspaper, if that, plus sorrow among their circle of friends and relatives, but in fandom there is a tradition of character essays ("The Baxter Street Irregular" by Burbee being a non-obit example and a highly entertaining one at that) which preserve memory of individuals beyond their circle of acquaintances. Herostratus burned down the Temple of Diana in a desperate bid to be remembered beyond his lifetime (it worked!) but among fans, all you need are good friends who are inspired to write tributes as moving as Donaho's.

And speaking of "In Search of Immortality," it is indeed disappointment to learn that Verne's tomb is only knee high. Looking at that illo in my few copies of *Amazing Stories*, I had always envisioned a massive sculpture perhaps a hundred feet in height, though if it were of such Stalinist proportions I suppose the massive slab resting on his back would have brought it crashing down. How much niftier it would be if that slab were in the shape of a rocketship, or even the Nautilus! (#110 – 1855 W. 2nd Ave., Vancouver, BC V6J 1J1, Canada)

MICHAEL WAITE

"Obitazine" indeed! I, for one, expect faneds to honor the passing of fans, by publishing testimonials, bios and articles by, and about, the deceased. (Is there a fanspeak term for deceased fen?) Thanks for sharing Bill Rotsler's "Letter to Burbee's Granddaughter."

Carol Carr's "trials and tribulations" remembrance of Bill Rotsler was moving. I never met Bill but his

humor has been a part of my life for years. I was impressed with all the heartfelt remembrances appearing in fanzines and prozines alike. Steve Stiles' illustration was great. All of Steve Stiles' illustrations are great. (105 W. Ainsworth, Ypsilanti, MI 48197-5336)

SHERYL BIRKHEAD

It still seems impossible to believe that Bill Rotsler is gone. He was a fixture in fanzines when I entered fandom (circa 1968) and I just figured he would *always* be there. Because I am not a faned (although I have pubbed several zines) I had no real reason to benefit from his artistic largesse until I was getting information together for articles on/by fan artists. I wrote to over a dozen fan artists – few have replied, though some have sent information – but Bill was the first *by a long shot*. I had asked for some of his favorite bits to run and he sent a thick envelope packed with wondrous Rotsler art. In his letter he mentioned the computer art and I hope to see some of it, someday. {*Me, too. Anyone reading this got a spare \$300?*}

It is always a pleasure to see Steve Stiles' art. I wish this were the best of all possible worlds where everyone could do what they liked best and still make a living. Until then, I hope to keep seeing Steve's art when and where he can. (23629 Woodfield Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20882-2819)

PAMELA BOAL

I was deeply moved by William Rotsler's letter to Burbee's granddaughter. Modern life being what it is, we only see our grandchildren some three times a year. Of course there are phone conversations and occasional postcards. We are great friends and have fun in each other's company, and much to my delight that continues to be the case with the two boys who are now teenagers. Even so, I suspect that with so little time together they can not really know us. I just hope that amongst my friends is a William who will tell our grandchildren about other people who loved their grandparents. (4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage OX12 7EW, U.K.)

BO STENFORS

Like everyone else, I was fascinated by Bill Rotsler and presented his work rather early here in Sweden. Bjo sent me a packet of his drawings (and other fine art, too) and I was immensely thankful to her for that.

Yes, Bill certainly was a keen admirer of female beauty. In the Whitstone book *Glamour Photos* (No. 40, 1962) he presented a bunch of lovely photos taken by him, writing: "There is nothing in the world as beautiful to me as a beautiful woman, not the splendor

of Rome, not sunset beyond Tahiti, not a dew-wet flower or the treasures of Genghis Khan. It is this beauty that it has been my privilege occasionally to capture, to select and freeze, to isolate and highlight. This is the main reason I am a photographer."

And in another Whitstone book, *Camera Studies of Figure Beauty* (1965), he really let himself go with lots of shots of beautiful girls and 24 pages of text wherein he told the highlights of the trade, such as where to get the models, glimpses of the studio working sessions, the importance of picking settings that fit the model's personality, and adding greater interest with props. He stressed that light was a most important tool. All in all, he presented a fine lesson in how to become a glamour photographer.

Yes, it sure is difficult to think that Bill Rotsler is no more with us. (*Gudmundvagen 5-B, S-182 69 Djursholm, Sweden*)

TERRY JEEVES

The Rotsler memorial pages were sad and evocative, but what more can one say than that he will be sorely missed. Life continues but, sadly, more and more aging fans are falling off the tree.

Ron Bennett on seeking out the Verne memorial was superb. Sad that Verne is no longer remembered in his own town and that his monument is smaller than expected. In our touring of Derbyshire, many years ago, Val and I came across a roadside stone almost buried beneath weeds and other growth, a small one bearing an epitaph to a local born in that area: a humble stone bearing the name of James Brindley, the bloke who built Britain's bridges, railways and canals. How the mighty are fallen from sight.

Visiting Elmer Perdue was highly amusing, but am I wrong or was Perdue the bloke who set out to index *all* fanzines, insisting on them being sent to him to verify their existence, and then died and the fanzines received were destroyed? Whoever it was, I'm glad I didn't send my *Triode* and *Erg* files. {*No, it wasn't Elmer. You're thinking of Harold Palmer Piser. He published a complete reprint of the Pavlat/Evans/Swisher fanzine index covering through 1952 with an appendix containing a form for listing newer publications, but that publication is the only trace he left in fandom other than memories.*} (56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorks. YO12 5RQ, U.K.)

DEREK PICKLES

I must have seen many Bill Rotsler drawings in the '40s and '50s but I honestly can't remember them, and I can't look in any of the fanzines I received in those years as I sold them all thirty years ago. I have seen

many of Bill's drawings since I ungafiated and although many were used as fillers they all had something special about them. They remind me of Arthur Thomson's in that both artists had a mischievous sense of humor which they were able to express in their artwork.

Ron's description of the Jules Verne memorial stone being less than impressive reminds me of a friend who, on a trip to Texas, went to visit the Alamo. He'd seen the John Wayne film and wanted to see where all the English volunteers had died, and was surprised to see a small, scruffy wall surrounded by large buildings. He had thought it was still as it had been in the film.

I had heard of Elmer Perdue in the '50s but he remained only a name until now when he is brought vividly to life by Charles Burbee. The description of his house reminds me of someone I knew thirty years ago whose house was packed with books, magazines and newspapers. You walked through aisles with walls of books in the rooms, each side of each tread of the staircase was piled high with books – and he knew where every book he had was. He gained a reputation as a wealthy eccentric – he had money from real estate deals – and was murdered by two local villains who ransacked the house in a vain search for his supposed hoard of money. They were caught and sentenced to life imprisonment. (44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorks. BD5 8LX, U.K.)

BOB SMITH

“Remembering Rotsler” made for interesting and enlightening reading, and your selection of personal remembrances was most sensitive and, ummm, tasteful. It would be *impertinent* to comment on such personal thoughts, other than mentioning how appropriate the Basho haiku was. Arthur Thomson's piece was of particular interest. Your final editorial paragraph on Bill kinda says it all, I think, probably more so for those of us who live far-oof and never had even a brief personal contact with him. My own fanzine publishing time-span was so brief that I don't think I ever asked him for illos.

Bill Donaho's “He Had Fire in His Belly” was both moving and, I can only guess, also brutally honest. It fills in another part of fandom that most of us in Australia might have known little about. Some of the incidents Bill mentions in connection with Dan Curran ring faint memory bells with me, so I guess somewhere in the fannish past these matters were published and read in Australia. Did Habakkuk the cat come before *Habakkuk* the fanzine? {Yes, the former inspired the naming of the latter.} My wife and I spent quite a number of years around cat people and cat breeding, and the Heinlein/Curran attitude and argument was

(and is!) *always* rearing its decidedly human head. We have witnessed some fantastic spraying with male cats, and if you are a breeder you learn to cope with that, but if you have house cats reality takes over.

Ron Bennett's piece was very funny and a *great* punch line! My problem is that a browse through Anthony Frewin's *100 Years of Science Fiction Illustrations*, which has an excellent selection of *Amazing* covers, doesn't show Jules Verne's gravestone. Now, am I missing something, or is Ron having us on? {Yes and no: the illo of Verne's gravestone isn't on the cover, it's on the contents page. It's also incorporated into Steve Stiles' artwork on page 19 of last issue}

Joe Kennedy's account of the early days of SAPS made interesting reading and kinda fleshed out the histories in *All Our Yesterdays* and *Fancyclopedia II*. My time in SAPS was extremely brief (early '60s, Robert?) but I think my memories are fond ones. {I have the *Spectator* for the mailing with which you joined – the 56th, July '61 – and the one after, but then my collection jumps to 1964 issues by which time you were long gone.} Chuckled at Joe's parting “cheap and copious reproduction to you!”

“The Baker Street Irregular” was *thoroughly* enjoyable reading! I note the writing style had a hint of Damon Runyon, and wonder if that was deliberate. Wonderfully descriptive titbits of the Perdue house and a fine character study – as you mentioned – or both Elmer and his lifestyle. I could read this kind of fannish prose all day.

Yes, I remember Ted Pauls and *Kipple*, and am sincerely sorry to hear of his passing. I can appreciate his feelings in that LoC on finding all those familiar names in *Trap Door*, because it made *this* ex-gafiate feel more comfortable with current fandom as well. Why do we need a focal point fanzine when we have your “fandom and family” fanzine and that warm nostalgic atmosphere? Perhaps we need that more now that we could have envisioned forty years ago. The late Ted Pauls' LoC says it all. (37 St. Johns Rd., Bradbury, NSW 2560, Australia)

GREGG CALKINS

{... expands on his Rotsler remembrance last issue wherein he wrote, “A far more memorable visit was the time he invited me over while he was doing one of his famous photo sessions of naked ladies”:]}

I forget now how Rotsler knew I was in town or how we got in touch, because I had been transferred to Seattle at the time and happened to be in L.A. for only a short visit. Somehow I got invited to a photo shoot, only late, and by the time I arrived the model was in the shower removing her body makeup and the

picture-taking was over. The shoot was at her girlfriend's home, and since that girl was also quite friendly with Rotsler they both wandered off to bed shortly after the model got out of the shower and joined us.

She was a glorious sight to behold, wearing a somewhat abbreviated set of PJs, and the two of us spent the rest of the evening doing something rather mundane like balancing her checking account or something equally unbelievable while I couldn't figure out what to do with my eyes or my hands or even my mind, which was overwhelmed with images of what Rotsler and the other girl were doing in the bedroom, and what actions I might possibly be duplicating if only I knew the right things to do or say. Did Rotsler leave me in this daunting position thinking I was up to the task, or were he and the other girl ensconced in the dark, weak with hysterical laughter, imagining my plight? I mean, I was definitely fighting out of my weight class, and I think Rotsler knew it.

Wait, it gets worse. Despite my misgivings, this lovely creature and I had a warm, friendly evening, but when it eventually got late enough that it became obvious that I was going to go home and the girl go to bed alone, she looked up at me with lovely eyes, which I had just noticed, and asked if I would like to take her out on a date the following night. Even I could realize that she meant the ending would be much different. Would I! But it had to be my luck that I needed to leave early the next morning in order to get back to Seattle in time, so once again my life changed forever on a whim.

In later years, Rotsler always had a knowing twinkle in his eye when he mentioned that night. (*P. O. Box 508, Jackson, CA 95642*)

RON BENNETT

I don't think you have any need to defend *Trap Door* against cries, shouts and screams that the mag is becoming an "obzine." I somehow have the vaguest of suspicions it's just barely possible that it's not your fault if fans keep leaving us for the Big Apa in the Sky, though perhaps if you published at more frequent intervals fans wouldn't have the same opportunity to die in droves prompting you to put out these memorial issues. Twice-weekly seems a decent enough program to me. And I, for one, would far rather that fans leave us with a little mark of respect than to be merely consigned to an ignored oblivion.

So, yes, a fitting batch of tributes to Bill Rotsler. No, scrap that. Substitute a darn good try at paying tribute to Bill. Whatever you'd have published would have fallen short of the man himself. We have fond memories of his visits to British cons, particularly

Brighton where Bill was handing out personal name badges. Nice to see some of them in evidence at recent cons.

A fine piece—bittersweet, yes—by Carol Carr. But, er, to pig out at Canter's Jewish deli? {*Well, yes, Canter's hasn't in my memory ever been 100% kosher. They've always offered ham sandwiches either solo or as part of a combination, and as the neighborhood has become more, er, diverse they've added other non-Jewish items to their menu: lasagna, veggie burgers, quesadillas, even "cheese filled pasta tortellini."*} "...The heights of kvetch..."—what a lovely phrase. But shouldn't that be "depths"? I'm beginning to realize that I need a scad of footnotes when reading Carol's writing. I hadn't realized that the medical profession (perhaps it's different over here) called the various treatments and regimes "insults." I've often thought of them as "humiliations." "Cleaning up the morning after the house has lost"—fantastic!

No, sorry, Katherine MacLean and Bill Donaho, but to say that once you've loved someone you'll continue to think fondly of them even after a break-up is a generalization (and there are more than a few of 'em in this entertaining piece) with which, from personal experience of an acrimonious divorce and being left with two young children to raise, I'll disagree. Indeed, later in the article Bill mentions, when writing about Bill Rickhardt and his first wife, "their breakup had not been a friendly one," which rather suggests that he's arguing against himself. Otherwise this was a worthy tribute to Dan. And Bill Rickhardt. He and Dan comprise another two from my TAFF trip who have gone. (Hell, is it really forty years?!) Yeah, and the Nunnery... great place. A wonderfully enjoyable evening I had there. A very fond memory. Altogether an entertaining, and rather moving, article.

Elmer's place sounds like paradise with all those mini-collections. I don't know that I'm able to empathize with the westerns but I'd faunch for a heck of a lot of the other items, particularly the pulps. And the jazz records. Mugsy Spanier in person. I've been interested in New Orleans/Dixieland jazz even longer than I've been in fandom. I have a Bix CD playing behind me as I type this and I collect Kid Ory tracks. Nice to read an article which mentions people like Spanier and Morton.

Great letter from Bjo. Loved the account of cleaning Elmer's place, particularly the description of the fridge: an added dimension to Burbee's piece. Reminded me of the Neil Simon line about milk standing up in the fridge without a bottle/carton.

Oh, good grief. Was my piece about the writers' workshop true or not? Was it supposed to be? Never

occurred to me that anyone would think it even *vaguely* true. I've never attended a writers' workshop, but years ago I did attend a couple of meetings of a local writers' circle. On one occasion there was a tale about someone who had lived for a time in India and the bit about not calling a Hindu "Ali" came from his highly enlightening (and I use the term loosely) talk. At another meeting, when the assembly was asked about possible successes during the previous month, one old duck proudly proclaimed her letter in a monthly magazine. I wondered at the time about mentioning a GDA piece I'd had in *Retribution* but managed to hold back.

The piece about the visit to Jules Verne's tomb in Amiens is virtually true, except that I had my son with me at the time, except that the cemetery worker didn't kiss me on both cheeks, and of course – sorry – I didn't trip over the headstone. Son Andrew pointed it out to me as we approached it. True, though, I was looking at eye level for something much larger. But we did go through the lengthy farce of the bar owner, brother and friend listing every Verne, except Jules, in the country and finally insisting that we needed Avignon. Bloody crackers.

This business of future historians piecing together what life must have been like in the last decade of the century: it doesn't matter whether they'll take their treatise from fanzines, from newspapers, from bubble gum wrappers (and yes, Meyer, even I will admit to there being a difference there, if only slight) ... it doesn't matter upon which source they base their learned doctrines. They'll get it wrong. As the character in *Groundhog Day* says (and says, and says), am I right or am I right? Hey, you future historians who are reading this, what did you make of *Retribution*?

This business Terry Jeeves mentions of burglars in the British comics always carrying bags marked "swag" actually has a serious side. When I was teaching, we'd run a continuous campaign instructing youngsters not to go with strangers. You know the sort of thing. "How can you recognize someone who might wish to harm you?" we asked. Okay, the kids would mention the fourth form bully, sure, but *invariably* the youngest would come up with striped jerseys, masks and bags labeled "swag." The local Theater in Education unit brought a smashing version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to the school, with breaks in the action to discuss various points with the children, emphasizing that looks ain't everything. Being of course extremely handsome, I found this rather disturbing. It says here.

I hate to disagree with or question Terry Hornsby, particularly as he works in the building which once housed the old school I attended as both pupil and teacher, but I hadn't realized that I'd said that fanzines

have nothing to say to the future. They may or may not, but I honestly can't see anyone writing for a fanzine with the idea that some reader in the future will take note of the piece, for whatever reason. What I said was that a fanzine is produced for its readership of *today*. Whether anyone in the future gleans anything at all from that fanzine or contribution therein is in the eye of the future beholder. Heavens, Terry produces a fanzine of sorts. Does he write for a future generation? Maybe so if, as he says, one of the reasons for writing is to leave behind a legacy of one's existence. Maybe this is why Terry writes, but I've never given this any consideration with my own writing. Which possibly says a lot about my writing. (36 Harlow Park Crescent, Harrogate, N. Yorks. HG2 0AW, U.K.)

A. VINCENT CLARKE

Terrific cover – brings back memories of a Burroughs serial running in a pre-war magazine here. The hero chose the wrong door, but battles the horrendous Venusian monster inside. This was illored by Fortunia Metania, who was a very good fantasy illustrator but seems to have vanished without trace. Of this issue's interior illos, I particularly like the Stiles picture of the matzo balls – something about the stippling on the balls.

Long but deserved tributes to recently deceased BNFs make it worse that many flamboyant characters departed the scene. Rotsler was certainly larger than life. Like most faneds I have an envelope full of his cartoons.

Burbee's article was really outstanding. Surely he must have taken notes about the Perdue possessions, even though at one point he says of some obscure title "one I can't recall." I always thought I was a typical packrat collector, but this account makes me feel was though I was near mundane. Marvelous! {*I suspect Burbee was writing from memory, having visited Elmer many, many times.*}

In the letters, I agree wholeheartedly with Jerry Kaufman that fan history is really family history, and you don't get sweeping generalizations and philosophical insights from that. On the remarks re mythmaking, I admit that the sort of mythmaking I enjoy was only possible in a limited group. Fandom in the old days was comprised of a couple hundred or so fans. *Plokta* is building up nicely, but right now it consists mostly of nicknames and the reality of the technological advances incorporated in the fanzine, not mythology as we know it.

On the same subject, I agree with Terry Hornsby: I'm not young enough to join the social whirl which produces incidents and remarks the web of mythmaking needs. Pity, but I reluctantly admit that time moves on.

HARRY WARNER JR.

No. 18's cover causes me to remember vaguely the old story on which Steve based his drawing. I can't remember it clearly enough to be sure, but I think I wondered when I read it if the fellow couldn't have made his choice of doors on the basis of something better than a guess. Couldn't he have moved up close to both doors in an effort to hear the noises a tiger would probably make when confined to a small room in one of them? If the doors didn't fit absolutely tight, he might have been able to detect which was which by the odor of a wild beast or the perfume of the young lady. Didn't he think to look in the dust leading up to the doors to try to see pawprints or a hairpin just outside one of them? If he was permitted to circle the structure, he might have noticed that the rear door to the tiger's compartment was larger than the other, to make it easier for the animal to be led or driven into one compartment. He might also have stalled long enough to give himself a chance to hear a roar from the tiger's area.

Danny Curran was just a name to me until I read Bill Donaho's comprehensive survey of his life and personality. I remember seeing the name frequently in West Coast fanzines but never actually bringing Danny onto stage for a long monologue. It's a shame that such a talented person fell victim to the same liquid that has brought about or cooperated in the demise of so many other fine fans over the years, and I still can't understand why the stuff is often written about in approving and idolatrous manner in fanzines by those who haven't succumbed to it yet.

The Italians have a phrase for it that goes something like, "*Se non e vero, e ben trovato*": if it isn't true, it's a good invention. I felt something like that as I read Ron Bennett's first-rate little article. Maybe everything didn't happen exactly as he describes it, but it's much more entertaining if he did utilize the arts of hyperbole and imagination that Irish Fandom perfected almost half a century ago for their fanzine writings.

Shortly after reading Joe Kennedy's account of how the original SAPS group survives, I read Sharon McCrumb's *Zombies of the Gene Pool*. I was impressed by the fact that some of her major characters had been merry fans when young and then had gone on to success as writers, Hollywood authorities, and so on. It was as if she had used those charter members of SAPS as her inspiration. But this couldn't have happened, and it had to be coincidence because nobody in fandom knew what had happened to those SAPS members until Joe's article appeared.

The mention of Jimmy Kepner in the Burbee reprint caused me to wonder once again why Kepner's

death has been so little chronicled in fanzines. I think Langley Searles plans to help rectify the situation, because he sent me a copy of the huge obituary and photograph that the *New York Times* gave him. Homosexuality has been so prominent in fandom in recent years that this aspect of Jimmy's career would seem to guarantee him various memorial articles and memories. *{Most probably the absence of same is because Mike's last fanzines were published circa 1945 and he lived on after that only as one of the many colorful characters inhabiting Burbee's stories.}*

Ted Pauls had one distinction in fandom involving me: he was the only fan whom I cut off my LoC list. I had been writing to *Kipple* quite regularly but found myself surprised by some of the opinions I expressed in its pages. I consulted carbon copies and found that Ted had been radically rewriting my comments, changing completely the meaning of most of them.

Bjo's letter is one of the nicest things about Elmer Perdue I've seen in a fanzine since his death. She emphasizes the good things about him without concealing the oddities of his conduct and possessions. I wish you had carried out the Elmer anthology you were thinking about. Particularly in the early years of fandom, he wrote material far different from the pontifical style he adopted in later years, and some of it was very good. *{Part of the reason I abandoned the Perdue anthology project was that I have insufficient quantities of his earlier writing in my fanzine collection.}* If Bjo ever came to Hagerstown, I could show her one intersection of two streets as disconcerting to a first-time driver as Baxter Street. When you are halfway through the intersection, there is nothingness beneath you and no way to be sure if this is a cliff or a very steep short section of hill.

Overpopulation of deer is a big problem in this part of Maryland, and has altered to some extent the economy of this county. Much of the western end of it used to be orchard land, which supplied most of the peaches and a great portion of all the apples grown in Maryland. Then the deer began to multiply out of control, they had trouble finding enough nourishment, and they decided to vary their menu by nibbling the bark and leaves of young fruit trees, killing the trees in the process. This was a serious problem for orchardists, but those who got permission to shoot some of the deer on their own land became enemies of hunters, and those orchardists often found their buildings catching fire and burning to the ground. Now hundreds of acres of former orchard territory lie fallow because some farmers simply gave up. The deer are often involved in motor vehicle accidents, too, although they probably get blamed for some drunks running off the road from

alcohol, hitting trees and blaming a deer in the road if there were no witnesses to the accident. About once a year, a deer or two will jump through a plate glass window on the outskirts of Hagerstown, scaring away humans who happen to be inside that store or other business firm, and doing considerably damage before they leave.

You misunderstood about my fanzines in paper bags. All those paper bags hold fanzines I haven't yet LoC'd. LoC'd fanzines go into pasteboard boxes that provide some protection from light, water and rodent threats. (423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740)

A. LANGLEY SEARLES

The delightful cover on the latest *Trap Door*, representing a possible climax to "The Lady, or the Tiger?", reminds me that Stockton was so besieged by queries about his story that he wrote a sequel to it. It's a long time since I read it, and I no longer recall the title, but do remember that it did not "solve" the puzzle the protagonist faced, but merely reiterated it. Perhaps some reader can enlighten me about where it was published; I think I read it in some British anthology at least fifty years ago.

There's a bad error in Terry Jeeves' letter: it is *not* true that SF hard-covered books "were almost non-existent" in the U.K. England has a rich tradition of printing fantasy and SF books, far more than does the U.S. This has *always* been true, for any particular span of fandom time you choose.

Bill Danner's reference to the complexity of Hoover Dam reminds me of a story about its construction that isn't generally known. Buried in its concrete was a metal conduit a foot or so in diameter designed to carry electrical supply cables. It was several hundred feet long and open at both ends. But because of several gentle curves it proved impossible to push the cables through. Finally some ailurophile suggested that a string be attached to the collar of a cat, who would carry it through. To this strong would then be attached a heavier cord, to the end of this a still heavier one, and so on; eventually the cables would be pulled through by a strong enough rope. A good plan, but cats being the independent creatures that they are, none was interested in cooperating. What to do? The problem was solved by installing a strong fan in the conduit after inserting the cat. Thus urged forward, this feline helped solve one of the construction problems of Hoover Dam. (48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY 10708)

BOYD RAE BURN

Trap Door No. 18 is full of Good Stuff. The tributes to Rotsler were very moving, and what a great remembrance of Dan Curran by Bill Donaho.

I liked Joe Kennedy's article on SAPS. While a young fan, I applied to join SAPS. However, Gerald Steward had printed an article in his fanzine declaring me to be a hoax, so the SAPS OE at the time, Karen Anderson, demanded that I produce some proof of my actual existence, such as a library card. I was amused by this, but didn't follow up, thus being spared membership in an apa which at the time became overly full of references to Ghu and FooFoo and Purple Bheer.

A really interesting article by Ron Bennett on his search for Jules Verne's tombstone in Amiens. It reminded me that if he had been conducting a similar search in England, he would have been given the usual tourist direction of, "Just along the road, you can't miss it." But of course one does, because often "it" is not even on the same road. Common directions given by the English to tourists: "Just along the road." Translation: at least five miles along the road. And "just around the corner." Translation: walk half a mile to the corner, then go for another two miles.

What a wonderful article on Elmer Perdue by Burbee: a great background on the rather silent figure I used to see at conventions in the "old days" (i.e., when conventions, even Worldcons, were very small). (189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)

GARY DEINDORFER

It is daunting to start a LoC on *Trap Door*. After all, it is just about the best fanzine being published today in the entire world – and whether or not that is so, it is definitely my personal favorite. Mainly because you and I go back so far in fandom, everything in the zine has a special emotional resonance for me. The quality of the articles and art is so high, and the letter-ccol is out of this world! How can this letter ever measure up to LoCs in No. 18 like Bjo's or rich brown's, for instance? Clearly it can't. I don't have their vast wealth of fannish anecdotes under my belt. So I can only write this and do whatever it is I uniquely do in a LoC as best I can, I guess.

Having assimilated *Trap Door* No. 18, I am left with a skein of vague, subliminal impressions in my mind. How do I make sense of them all? I can try to translate these feelings into words, but that will notably and notoriously falsify my pristine impressions upon eye-tracking this publication? But however far I fall short of what I would *like* to say, I will now allow words to be precipitated from my "sensorium" onto these pages in what will approximately a LoC on *Trap Door* No. 18.

What can I say about the cover? When I see something in print by Steve Stiles, I have to smile, thinking of all the times I have spent in his warm and amusing presence, and all the funny things that have

happened in that presence. This makes my appreciation of a Stiles cartoon or article or LoC more personal that would be my appreciation of, say, a cartoon in the *New Yorker* by a stranger. This cover is especially a delight for mine eyes because I am interested in Roman history and I am an admirer of tigers, something I just last week wrote in a much belated LoC to the most recent issue of *Idea*, also with a tiger on the cover. But Stiles' tiger is funnier than the *Idea* artist's tiger, and for that it is to be congratulated.

I only met Rotsler once, at a room party at the 1973 Westercon in San Francisco. As I remember, I was manic that evening, something which I was most of the time in those days, and I don't think Bill thought too much of me. Whatever, but I have always dug his artwork and what little writing of his that I've read. There is no doubt about it; he was a Great Fannish Character, and it is clear that he is much missed.

Marta Randall's article has a great Rotsler line: "Gaudy it up!" In the context of the anecdote being told, that's very funny.

Nice to see a tribute from F. M. Busby, whom I met once at Calvin Demmon's. His reminiscence, like the other ones here and all such fannish reminiscences, might leave certain readers feeling excluded, by the idea that this guy who is now dead brought all this joy and laughter into these people's lives. But it is worthy nonetheless. *{Well, in the context of this particular fanzine's mailing list, probably few felt excluded – just about everyone knew Bill in one way or another, through his artwork and writing if not in person.}*

John Hertz quotes Rotsler saying, "Quantity of labor has nothing to do with art." That's very true. Some of Rotsler's artwork was probably turned out in seconds, and that may well be among the best of it.

Gregg Calkins' memento is slight, but heartfelt.

The late ATom mentions Rotsler's conservancy of line. In a way, it approached Picasso's or Matisse's.

You've got these five big shots with squibs about Rotsler. What I am wondering about, for those who didn't know Bill, or perhaps didn't care for his work, is will this seem excessive to such people? This is not the first time *Trap Door* has featured big shots writing about a big shot. To some, it might seem like fandom's Good Ole Boy network. Just an observation I felt compelled to make.

Carol Carr's piece I exempt from this charge, simply because it is not a squib, but a complete, heartfelt article that stands up on its own merits. She is such a fine, intelligent writer.

Apak didn't impinge on my fannish world, for the simple reason that Andy Hooper never saw fit to send me a copy. I think this is because some years ago in

the letter column of *The Reluctant Famulus* I called Andy "a young whippersnapper" who was "wet behind the ears." I don't think he ever forgave me for that. So pardon me if I don't join in the panegyrics to *Apak* you indulge in here.

The way these letters are written: I turn to Bill Donaho's article, skim it for the high points, and then have to decide what to say about it. This is where an arbitrary element enters in – on another day than this, I might say something completely different about this piece on Dan Curran. But here is what I am moved to say today: Donaho is an adept teller of anecdotes. He shines at it. I had heard of Dan Curran, and had even heard a few stories about him, and long ago decided that he was a Cool Guy. Bill fills in the story of Dan's life for me. It is a Life – a wasted life, probably, but a Life. Donaho has memorialized him fittingly.

Wow, what a blast from the past: a piece from Joe Kennedy, the distinguished poet X. J. Kennedy himself. Make me wonder how you get these fannish legends to contribute to your zine. *{My secret method is: I ask.}*

And now for the best piece of the issue, Burbee's Elmer Perdue article. This is wonderfully funny and well-written, and makes me realize once and for all what a strange, enigmatic character Perdue was.

Ted Pauls was a Ghodd Man. *Kipple* was one of my favorite fanzines in my early fannish career, and I used to write LoCs to it copiously. Ted will be much missed by this person and space cadet.

Bjo writes rarely for fanzines these days. Hardly at all. So it was a real treat to eyetrack these Perdue reminiscences of hers. By the way, I met her at that same 1973 Westercon where I met Rotsler, and found that she looked exactly like those old cartoons of hers: cute, red and freckly. *(Trent Center West, 465 Greenwood Ave., #1104, Trenton, NJ 08609)*

ARTHUR HLAVATY

Your zine remains excellent even as it turns into *Trap Door to the Grave*.

I never knew Ted Pauls personally, but I bought a lot of books from T/K Graphics, and I missed it after the cold equations of publishing and bookselling drove it out of the mail order business.

Joe Kennedy is quite successful in his day job as poet X. J. Kennedy. He wrote a wonderful epigram on creativity: "The goose that laid the golden eggs / Died looking up its crotch / To find out how its sphincter worked. / Would you lay well? Don't watch."

Cynthia Goldstone: A biography of Jack Parsons could be extremely interesting; he hung out with L. Ron Hubbard, as well as Aleister Crowley. In the first edition of *The Occult*, Colin Wilson said that Parsons

and Hubbard did magick together. Presumably, lawyers for the church spoke to someone; the paperback reprint said that Parsons was involved in some sort of unsavory stuff, and Crowley was sent by Navy intelligence to investigate.

Jerry Kaufman: Complaints about the decline in fannish mythmaking remind me of the title of Simone Signoret's autobiography: *Nostalgia Isn't What It Used to Be*.

Ron Bennett: I've frequently heard the theory that art requires that the protagonists grow and change; for me it has no more absolute validity than Tom Wolfe's dictum that fiction should be about power and status or Kurt Vonnegut's presumably non-serious suggestion that the main function of literature is the exquisite description of blow jobs. Protagonist growth is a good way to give shape and direction to a story, but it's not the only one. In fact, I can't help wondering if one appeal of series books is the readers' assumption that the characters will not grow and change. (At this point, I was going to assume that no one would want Sherlock Holmes to grow and change, but there is a new series in which he married a younger woman, one perhaps not unlike the author.)

I still have my old Giant Slide Rule (a Pickett log-log). I got it in the summer of '59, between my junior and senior years in high school, for successfully completing the Columbia University Science Honors Program summer course in computers. (We worked with IBM 650s, which I believe was also Jerry Pournelle's first computer, and we programmed them at first with entirely numerical commands; by the end of summer we wrote simple programs in the miraculous new breakthrough language, Fortran.) Anyway, we all got the slide rules and gazed in wonderment at the dozens of scales. Then I wondered what on earth I would do with the device besides simple multiplication and such, which it seemed almost wasteful to do on a machine of such awesome refinement.

Twenty-five years later, just as predicted by the weirdos who read that sci-fi stuff and the servants of Satan who were promoting the New Math (my father was both, and I was proud to follow in his footsteps), there were cheap pocket-sized machines that could do calculations better and faster than people could. I hadn't learned a damned thing; I bought a calculator that would do all the wondrously complex stuff my slide rule could, and lo and behold I still had no idea what to do with it.

Actually, pocket calculators (and computers that emulate them in the standard way) are not terribly useful to me because for any operation too complicated to do in my head, I want to have a visual record that I

entered all the data and didn't typo anything. I've got a cheap old DOS program that displays up to twelve numbers and their sum, and I've gotten a lot of use out of that.

Joseph Nicholas: History-from-below is a useful concept and has produced some great work (like Fernand Braudel's), but for my own interests I'd much rather read about those who do rather than those who are done to. I do disagree with those historians who think that the political and military leaders are the only interesting ones. My kind of history recognizes the importance of writers, inventors, artists, philosophers, etc. (206 Valentine St., Yonkers, NY 10704-1814)

MIKE DECKINGER

Thanks for *Trap Door* No. 18. There was a very melancholy tone to the entire issue, reflecting on the numerous losses discussed therein. Even Ted Pauls had his first, and ironically last, letter to a fanzine in several decades.

With Bill Rotsler, it didn't really matter if you knew him well personally (I didn't): his creative genius and wit were so pervasive in the fan press that you instinctively felt as if he was one of the family. His artwork was *everywhere*, creating in some form a foundation to the myriad publications. Imagine, for instance, what LASFS publications of the '50s, '60s and '70s would have been like without his cartoons. The only one who might have had similar influence was ATom.

Bjo's account of how Baxter Street in L.A. drops abruptly into nothingness is much like several San Francisco streets that have impossibly sharp downward grade, fashioned more by the demonic geological upheavals that created these hills, rather than an effort on the part of the city to provide safe access. Fillmore Street is particularly feared where it suddenly drops down out of Pacific Heights to Cow Hollow. One inspired person regularly chalks "CLIFF" before the stop sign.

I admire Walt Willis for surrendering his driving privileges at age 78. My parents, both in their 80s and Floridians, still drive almost daily and have never been in an accident. I would feel quite comfortable driving with them. I feel far less comfortable with my brother, who is half their age and also a Floridian. He drives exactly the way everyone thinks elderly Floridians do: if he goes above 25 he's speeding, above 30 and his pacemaker is erupting.

I last saw Sam Moskowitz at the San Francisco Worldcon. Throat cancer had robbed him of his stentorian voice but he was doing quite well with an implanted voice box. "I've never smoked," he said ruefully, "and *still* developed lung cancer." He took

part in a panel on the '68 Baycon which featured, among others, Ed Meskys on the panel. Ed's guide dog was curled at his feet, hidden from sight by the table's drapery. Every so often the dog's massive tail would flick the air, right in the neighborhood of where Ed's tail might be if he had one. This brought a gasp from newly-arrived attendees. (649 – 16th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94118)

DAVID REDD

Fandom does depend on a shared community of knowledge, doesn't it? I must have spent all my last fifty years diligently picking up the "useful" detritus of civilization which enables me to appreciate the Steve Stiles cover on *Trap Door* No. 18. I just wonder what future PhD students of popular culture will make of it all.

Yet another obituary, particularly noteworthy in a still-vibrating ether, was Jerome Bixby. As the fan columnist for *SS* and *TWS* it may have been all in the day's work for him, but somehow Bixby's good humor and enthusiasm came through all his fanzine reviews and columns. I hope his passing is marked by a bit more than the usual mention of "it's a good life." I had great joy from his writing and regret that modern SF magazines no longer have the space for columns such as his.

Bixby's highlights included the first recorded fan sighting of Harlan Ellison, in the soon-to-be-great man's first visit to the editorial offices of *Starling Stories*. The Ellison reaction to seeing his activities recorded in Bixby style was to send in an umpteen-page letter giving his version of the visit in true Ellison pyrotechnics, ending (also in true Ellison fashion), "Please print the hull letter. My friends will stab me if it doesn't appear."

Interesting comments by John Baxter on the French cafe owners' views of the clientele. Contrast this with the average English cafe owner/waiter/waitress view, which is that the customer is an unnecessary interruption to the day's idleness and that if ignored long enough the customer will probably go away. The ideal cafe would have no customers at all. (48 Cardigan Rd., Haverford West, Pems. SA61 2QN, Wales, U.K.)

CATHERINE MINTZ

I have what I think is a novel excuse for not thanking you as promptly as I usually do for sending *Trap Door*. Once a fanzine has been read and answered, it gets filed, neatly removing it from the ever-changing, tottering pile of things to do "soon" that stands next to the one labeled "immediately," which is sometimes accompanied by one simply labeled, "yesterday!"

It was the cover's fault.

No, really.

Once upon a time, I knew someone who had a good enough opinion of himself that he, too, would have been certain that the barbaric king's daughter would have sent him to the beautiful maiden. The tiger has such a delightfully anticipatory expression that *Trap Door* No. 18 has been leaning against "soon" for several weeks now, provoking a smile every time I passed.

But the time has come to say the inside was good, too, although some of it made me sad and all of it made me wish we could declare a moratorium on the departures of fans, even the most senior, for that Great Convention, Collation and Correspondence Party in the Sky. (1810 S. Rittenhouse Sq., #1708, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5837)

ANDI SHECHTER

It does seem that lately, all too often, the zines coming into Chez Shiffman/Shechter have been full of obituaries. Bill Rotsler died on the same day as a fellow named Don Sandstrom, a True Fan in the mystery genre, which is my other fandom. In March, my friend Kate Ross, a wonderful mystery writer, died at 41. This is simply the pits.

I've been part of Bay Area fandom and Boston fandom. Seeing in a recent *File 770* that Monty Wells had died brought home to me how fortunate I've been to live where I have met and known *damn* good people. I knew Monty, a charming gentleman, in Boston. Now I live in Seattle, where I'm far less involved in science fiction than I used to be. But SF is still home and family to me, and SF that gave me the confidence, after twenty years, to chair a mystery con last year.

The first and so far only piece I ever wrote for *Trap Door* was a remembrance of Isaac Asimov. Opening this most recent issue to see Marta's memories of Bill was sad, but it was like coming home. As I sit here typing this, I have a stack of Rotsler drawings in front of me (doesn't everyone?). They're years old, most of them. My favorites, all of them. In 1978, Bill was playing with a bunch of new calligraphy pens. It was, as I recall, at a wonderful relaxacon that Jerry Jacks (oy, another one!) put together that I was given one of the finest honors: I received the Marta Randall Short But Fierce Award. I cherish it, and don't know that anyone else ever received this honor. And I have to agree with Marta that Bill could get away with stuff that neither of us would take from anyone else. There were things he deserved to be called on, and he was, but from the day I met him, he treated me well.

Also in this small stack of artwork is a cartoon of

Steve Leialoha entitled "Steve drawing" – all hair, all over, and one celebrating the news that there was life on Mars. It depicts a bunch of very cute little crab-like creatures crawling over someone who was intended to be Lee Marrs. I haven't seen Steve or Lee in, oh my, close to twenty years, and I haven't seen Marta in something like ten. But they were part of my wonderful life in fandom, a life illustrated in part by Bill Rotsler.

In our kitchen is a small bread plate, liberated from the Tudor Nightmare Village (as dubbed by Andy Hooper) in Southern California where the L.A. Corflu was held. As many of you remember, the banquet witnessed typical Rotsler behavior. Bill just drew – put anything in front of Bill, and he drew. (I'm really familiar with this practice, since I live with Stu Shiffman.) My souvenir bread plate shows a typical Rotsler female saying "I give good mimeo" and the caption of the plate reads "Genuine Fannish Heroine." Coming from Bill, this honor ain't small potatoes. (Okay, so I really wanted one of the dinner rolls, but I'm not sure how they hold up.)

On a more cheerful note, I *do* so love Carol's writing and look forward to seeing anything she writes in *Trap Door*. The only problem is that here is Seattle, there really are no delis, and you guys just keep writing about Canter's. Sniff. (8616 Linden Avenue N., Seattle, WA 98103)

ANDY SAWYER

Not long ago I received *Fables of Irish Fandom* published by Ken Cheslin, which contains pieces by John Berry from zines like *Hyphen* and *Grue* in the mid-'50s: madly (or sometimes slightly) exaggerated vignettes about the Irish fandom which includes people like Bob Shaw, James White, Walt Willis, etc. You could imagine a TV sitcom featuring these people: the characters are so well-drawn, each with their foibles of personality or physical distinctions. It would also – if someone were to try to do this – be extraordinarily offensive, because these were/are real people, Berry is writing about his friends to his friends, and you could never develop a TV series with that mixture of silliness and affection. I still don't know what there is about fandom which has resulted in this wonderful world of make-believe, so much *better* that your average sitcom, but when I find out I'll bottle it and make my fortune. Some people might think that all this is old-fashioned fannishness, but I don't think so. Yes, it was all a long time ago, and fans don't tend to write like this now, and that's probably all to the good, but John's tales and ATom's illustrations are wonderfully entertaining.

There were comments in the lettercol about the number of obits. I liked – no, "liked" is the wrong

word because one never likes hearing about the lives of people after they have gone – *appreciated* is perhaps better – the tributes to Bill Rotsler. It's good to know that people *do* have a legacy and one of the reasons zines like *Trap Door* mean so much is that they provide a focus for the history of the *people* in fandom. (*1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT, U.K.*)

RICHARD DENGROVE

I was glad to receive my first *Trap Door*. However, one thing puzzled me a little bit. I could understand why Big Name Fans like Bill Rotsler and Ted Pauls were being honored. Their work was seen everywhere in fandom. But I couldn't understand why Dan Curran and Elmer Perdue were being honored. Both lived in obscurity. Dan was known as a hale fellow come hearty, Elmer as a collector of the weirdest assortment of paraphernalia. And whatever endearing virtues they may have had originally waned with drink. Then it dawned on me that Dan and Elmer have more right to be honored as fans in some ways than Bill and Ted. This is not knocking either Bill or Ted; they are justly famous. No, it has more to do with my take on fandom. The essence of it may lie in the more obscure fans. One of the great myths that keeps fandom going is that it is a refuge for misfits.

About Bill Rotsler and his un-PCness, can anyone we love be un-PC? I don't think so. He or she can make us madder than hell but he or she can't be un-PC. We tend to apply things like politics – and religion, science, grammar and victimhood – way beyond their rightful domain. PC is to prevent people from insulting strangers; it applies to generic human beings. That is its rightful domain, if any. Among specific friends, we have more relaxed standards. Or, at any rate, more idiosyncratic standards. For instance, among specific friends, sex can be an okay topic, if not Bill's rough and tumble idea of it. In fact, I have a whole collection of dirty jokes I tell among friends. Most I got from woman friends.

About Bill Rotsler's meal, I bet he really appreciated the repast you and Carol brought for him, even though he couldn't get it down. It was from the heart. Probably there wasn't any need to make a big trip out of your way for matzo ball soup, although it was an extra nice gesture. *{It was more than that; you hadda be there.}*

About the French and Jules Verne, fame is a strange thing. Those who are famous in one place are obscure in another. Jules Verne is famous here and obscure in France. I have a friend who can only get published in amateur publications in the States. How-

ever, in eastern Europe, through translations, he is a famous short story author. He occasionally gets letters from Russia requesting wisdom from such an important author. (2651 Arlington Dr. #302, Alexandria, VA 22306)

WALT WILLIS

I am at a loss to know where to start commenting on *Trap Door* No. 18; there is so much in it deserving to be singled out for special mention. I feel I should say, though, that on reading it I found myself vividly remembering the feeling of gestalt I had when typing out the pages of *Hyphen* containing next to one another letters from Rick Sneary and your good self about the issue of *Hyphen* you had just received. {*Walt is referring to page 18 of Hyphen No. 25.*} I well remember the feeling I had at the time of fandom as a world of friendships. I felt the same after reading the various heartfelt memories and tributes to Bill Rotsler, not least of them the one from Marta Randall. I should also mention the haiku John Hertz quotes about the cicada shell, which seems wonderfully, if surprisingly, appropriate.

Carol's account of your visit to Rotsler fits in well with the rest of the fanzine, including your account of his memorial festivities.

Regarding the part of your editorial about reprinting my *Nebula* fan columns, the only person I know of who was brought into fandom by them was Ethel Herself. That was what I meant when, as we were sending her off in San Francisco, I said I was proud of her. I feel something of the same sort of feeling on reading Rotsler's letter to Burbee's granddaughter. It would be kind of like being a princess. Ah yes. (9 Alexandra Rd., Donaghadee BT21 0QD, Northern Ireland)

LLOYD PENNEY

Some may call *Trap Door* a fannish history book writing in the past and present, but I would call it the depth of fandom in the fourth dimension, a record we all need to read and remember if all these fannish follies mean anything to us.

Bill Donaho's recollection of Dan Curran shows some of the above-mentioned depth of fandom ... thinking of friends gone or disappeared, wondering where they are, how they are, and wondering what happened to make them leave our happy little asylum. I have a few names in mind locally, but it is interesting how many fans leave and come back again, just like Bill did.

Most of the world doesn't have the same star system the United States does in its entertainment industry.

Perhaps that's why the U.S. remembers Jules Verne more than does France. A shame, but to be brutally honest, when has literacy truly enjoyed true popularity in this modern age? When have writers really been stars? (I would hope that day may yet come.) {*What about J. D. Salinger? Stephen King?*}

A long-lost name in the lettercol—welcome back to Bjo Trimble. I haven't seen Bjo since Maplecon in Ottawa in 1983 and at LACon II in 1984. Yvonne and I were heavily into masquerade fandom at the time, and we assisted Bjo with masquerade programming.

There was a passage in the lettercol about visiting. Paul and Cas Skelton were in Toronto recently visiting with Mike Glicksohn and Susan Manchester, and we scrounged the opportunity to visit with them ourselves. It's great to finally place a face to the name; I'm sure that's one reason why I like Worldcons.

Colin Hinz does indeed live in Toronto, but inhabits an entirely different fannish sphere than I do. Colin generally keeps to a small crowd, and Yvonne and I have our noses in just about everything else. After all this time in the lettercol, Jim Caughran and I finally met at one of the local fannish pub nights, and now he's a regular. (1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, Ont. M9C 2B2, Canada)

GREG BENFORD

A typically great issue of *Trap Door*—still the best gazette, but more frequent would be better.

Ron Bennett's expecting the Verne monument to loom large was amusing. Point is, Verne still hovers over the spirit of hard SF; he was the original (right down to the clunky prose), whereas Wells was the father of social-metaphorical SF. I just wrote an introduction to a University of Nebraska edition of one of Verne's last novels, *The Golden Asteroid*, showing that he's alive and well in literary memory at least somewhere.

Y'know, I've wondered for some time whether the old styles of fanwriting, more stylized and full of idiosyncratic voice, were actually better. Burbee gains terrifically from his assumed tone, and if you heard him once storytelling it was impossible to read him without hearing that voice in your ear. Willis, similarly, for me. A huge advantage for a writer.

But for today's fans who can't, alas, hear Burbee or Rotsler or Grennell or many of the other singular voices we once boasted, that connection cannot happen. Alas, it changes the reading in such a timebound and tribal culture. I feel the same about, say, Raymond Chandler, surely one of the most distinctive assumed narrative voices in the century. I heard him in a radio interview with Ian Fleming in the '50s and ever after

read him with that memory in the background. All literature, then, loses something when you cannot make that firm connection to the true narrator, contrasting his in-person and assumed voice. Homer was no doubt better in the original....

Paul Williams' letter on his unpublished issue of *Within* makes me wish that somebody (you, Robert?) would reprint the Breen review of that fine Ray Nelson story, "Turn Off the Sky." *{Paul gave me permission to run it, and it'll appear in the first issue with available space. But it's not exactly a "reprint" since it never quite appeared in the first place.}*

Ray's story reminds me what a great time it was, in those long lost early '60s, when SF seemed filled with bright promise. Makes me think of our current scene, where movies and TV now drive the infestation of publishing by media tie-ins, with more *Star Wars* product soon to come. There are bright aspects, though. Media-tied series books typically sell less well over time, unlike creative series (Sue Grafton's, Patrick O'Brien's) whose readership rises, putting them on the bestseller lists after many novels. This opposite gradient suggests conceptual exhaustion, the market not refertilizing. Thus are genres depleted and cast aside, as was the western.

Perhaps this comes in part because there are few social feedback loops carrying information-dense dialogue. The media tie-ins have their *Star Trek* conventions, but they are isolated from the larger SF genre discussion. Further, there is a curious mismatch between the reviewing media and the reading public. One would expect an efficient market to shape book reviewing to the great strengths of contemporary America: many genres, from the hardboiled detective to cutting-edge SF and techno-thrillers, on to wispy traditional fantasy. Yet SF particularly is seldom noticed outside its own few magazines, except when Hollywood steals its innovations—often without credit, alas.

Publishing is so rattled, losing market share steadily to other media, that I'm spending more time with TV and feature film writing. Simple defensive logic. As well, the audience is far larger than even the finest written SF can muster.

Amazing that you and rich brown can recall a LASFS meeting decades after! *{No doubt due to our both being impressionable teenagers at the time, imprinting on stuff like rock & roll lyrics and fannish doings.}* (1105 Skyline Drive, Laguna Beach, CA 92651)

F. M. BUSBY

A very good memorial issue. How lucky you found ATom's 1957 "Profile." And Bill Donaho's remini-

scence of Danny Curran: we first met Danny all spruced up in a Brooks Brothers suit—which may have given a distorted impression of the overall person. But it was surely an impressive introduction—to a nice guy.

Good pieces by Ron Bennett and JoKe (yes, I always read those *Planet Stories* lettercols), and Burbee writing of 2125 Baxter Street was in much milder vein than one essay I remember. *{Might that have been "Memories of Elmer" in No. 16?}*

An Elmer story: One time around 1960, Ghod was up here for a few days staying with a fannish couple across town. Nearing the time of his Sunday departure, our small send-off gathering was croggled to find the honored guest passed out on his bed.

One way and another he was semi-roused and stuffed (luggage and all) into his hosts' car. In those days airline passengers at SeaTac disappeared into a stairwell, emerged outdoors, walked forty to fifty yards, and climbed stairs into the plane. Our friends got Elmer to the staircase door, aimed him, watched him descend out of sight, and hoped for the best.

I knew Burb was scheduled to meet the flight, so later that day I called Whittier and asked if the traveler had arrived okay, explaining, "They weren't sure he could get to the plane."

"Elmer?" Burbee laughed. "If he had to, he could probably fly the damn thing." (2852 – 14th Ave. West, Seattle, WA 98199)

MARTY CANTOR

I must say that Burbee catches the very essence of Elmer Perdue, all the while showing why Burb was one of our best writers. While detailing all of the externals without even giving us much of Elmer's conversation, he manages to capture the real Elmer by describing Elmer's habitation. (I wonder why I find Elmer's abode so congenial? Could it be because it describes my apartment so closely? Nah!) I never visited Elmer at his digs even though I sometimes met him at cons and at LASFS and always found him congenial and somewhat of a kindred spirit. Burb's article made me wish I'd gotten to know Elmer better. *{I visited Elmer's place several times and found it exactly as Burbee described.}*

Jerry Kaufman mentions Dave Van Ronk. I knew Dave back when I was in the folk music scene (and I had read LeeH's folk music zine), but this was before I knew of fandom and the topic of fandom never was brought up by either Dave or myself (even though he once mentioned science fiction as some sort of "mind rot"). At that time (mid to late '50s and early '60s) I had the beginnings of a science fiction collection but had a larger collection of other books. My main

interest outside of work was playing (and listening to) folk music; I played blues 12-string guitar and washboard in jug bands and bluegrass groupings. I also enjoyed playing the jug and gut-bucket, but the washboard was more fun. Pick-up groups at L.A. coffee houses were the norm in those days, but sometimes one just went to listen. With Van Ronk, I mostly just listened to him play—and conversed about many things. My full-time job during this period was being a clerk at the post office; my avocation was playing and listening to folk music (picking up a bit of pocket money from some of the playing); and my intellectual stimulation came mostly from reading the eclectic assortment of books I collected. During that period I had few intellectually stimulating friends, so when Van Ronk turned up in Los Angeles I found him an interesting person with whom to converse as well as a better than average musician with a fascinating folk repertoire. (11825 Gilmore St. #105, No. Hollywood, CA 91606)

JERRY KAUFMAN

Thanks, as always, for *Trap Door*, which both Suzle and I enjoyed, although in an increasingly melancholy mood. The pieces are all well-written, but as they are nearly all tributes to recently or long-dead fans and/or friends, the melancholy seems justified, and the name of your zine begins to feel like a euphemism for death itself: the trap door of death, like the sword of Damocles, ready at any moment to drop beneath us. We know it's coming, but it's always a surprise. And when we disappear from here, where do we reappear? What's under the stage?

I see it's another all-Steve Stiles art issue, and I appreciate it. I especially like the way Steve took the tiger from the cover and used him again for your editorial. (3522 NE 123rd St., Seattle, WA 98125)

MURRAY MOORE

Trap Door is not an *Apparatchik*, a focal point fanzine. But my reading *Trap Door* six months after its distribution does not leave me at a disadvantage. This LoC is the same as if I'd written it five months ago.

Some fans might be unenthusiastic about *Trap Door* in the same way as they are unenthusiastic about *Mimosa*. This minority of fans can't see the interest in fanzines which by and large look backward at fandom, at fans who many present-day fans have not met, and at fannish events which similarly are dusty with age. What's to say about people you have not met and events you did not experience?

The stories are the characteristic which attracts me. Book reviews and well-argued essays are fine, but I am reminded of the television commercial for a burger

franchise in which a little old lady loudly demands, "Where's the beef?" *Trap Door* No. 18 is the beef. Stories by All N. Sundry about Bill Rotsler; Bill Donaho on Dan Curran; Ron Bennett on his quest for Jules Verne's grave; Charles Burbee and Bjo Trimble on Elmer Perdue; Cynthia Goldstone on Elmer Perdue and Anton Szandor LaVey; Vincent Clarke on Sam Moskowitz; rich brown on Bjo Trimble.

Thish's memorable image is courtesy of Cynthia: Elmer Perdue combing his hair with his false teeth.

Robert, thanks for your leisurely publishing schedule. I knew I could count on you not to get *Trap Door* No. 19 to me before I could LoC No. 18. (2118 Russett Road, Mississauga, Ont. L4Y 1C1, Canada)

CYNTHIA GOLDSTONE

The material about Elmer, together with Carol's article about your last visits with Rotsler, were the most absorbing to me in this issue. Bjo's letter gave me a fuller picture of Elmer, kind of rounded him out. I sent a copy of my letter to Donald Sidney-Fryer, who wrote that he "enjoyed your delicious and well-composed letter on Tony LaVey and others—in fact, sent it to Don Herron as an example of older fandom (which it is). I met Tony LaVey a few times through George F. Haas and liked him very much. His Church of Satan was really a form of therapy." I must ask Donald what on earth he meant by that last comment. If Tony practiced the line of the O.T.O. of Aleister Crowley, it was, essentially, "Do what thou wilt," which is very fascistic, disregards "Do unto others," etc., and not very therapeutic.

I also heard from Bill Sarill, to whom I sent a copy of my letter as well, who wrote: "I did indeed get a kick out of your piece in *Trap Door* No. 18. I remember a conversation with you and Lou probably back in the '70s when Jack Parsons' name came up. I think we had been talking about L. Ron Hubbard and his early connection to Crowley." (350 Dolores St., San Francisco, CA 94110)

SHERRY THOMPSON

On the bacover of No. 18, you wrote, "When someone said at Potlatch this January that *Trap Door* had become an 'obitzine,' I denied it immediately." You added that writing about deceased fans is "no departure from either past practice ... or ongoing editorial policy" and that there's always been "A focus on 'fandom and family....'"

Thank Ghu that this is true!

I'm new to fandom, by any measure you choose to use. I only found out about conventions less than two decades ago. And I really only learned about fanzines

less than a year ago, thanks largely to the Timebinders home page and to the mailing list. As a result, there's so much that I'll never experience with regards to fandom, even if I read every new ish that comes out and attended every future Ditto, Minicon and Potlatch. I mourn the lost experiences and lost opportunities. I mourn the people whom I will never know, except by the printed word.

To draw a parallel to my personal life, I'll never know what my dad could have told me about our Native American ancestry on his side of the family. He died over a decade ago, he had Alzheimer's for a while before his death, and he was never one for talking about his family or his past. The only remaining members of my family are my mother, and a brother I haven't seen since my dad's death. Lost opportunities. Lost memories. Parts of the richness of life which can never be replaced, no matter how hard one tries.

In the same manner, there's so much of fandom about which I'll never know nor experience. Short of a time machine, it's impossible to go back and take part in the early Worldcons, or to be there at the Nunnery or at one of the jams at Elmer's house. I'll never receive an ish from anyone with a brand new article by Burbee in it. (But even a reprint is a great and wonderful treat. Thanks!) *{You're welcome but, as you've seen, this issue negates your last "never."}*

So much irretrievably lost.

And yet so much to look forward to. Finally, decades too late, I've discovered fandom. And, wonder of wonders, I find in the arms of the fannish, that the past isn't dead and gone. People remember all the fans before them, all the moments they shared and all their idiosyncracies. Thanks to the reprint of Burbee's "Baxter Street Irregular," we can reconstruct the rooms of Elmer Perdue's house, even to the staph sitting on a dresser.

The past, the friends, the legendary fanac isn't lost, after all. Not as long as there are people who love and respect their fellow fans enough to preserve it—people who instinctively know that recounting the details of a mission of mercy involving chicken soup or the hunt for a legendary tombstone will mean something to others. Something that brings joy and pain and, most important, the great sense of belonging to each other. Something which makes even neos like me grateful for a past we never knew.

Thank you for No. 18. (*Univ. of Delaware Library [I.L.L.], S. College Ave., Newark, DE 19717*)

LINDA BLANCHARD

Thanks for continuing to send Trap Door. We both continue to read and enjoy it but time keeps flying past

us way too fast. (Our kids are now 4 and 7, with birthdays this summer. How are your kids?) *{Grown up: the youngest turned 22 last Christmas day.}* E-mail makes communicating a whole lot easier. I never even wrote to my own mother until she got e-mail. Now we talk a lot.

And you're right, raising a family has a big effect on our fanac but worse than that is owning a store, which eats up time so much that we think of it as our third child, but it probably eats up the equivalent to the third through fifth child. It has worn me out for so long I hardly notice flying through my days without pleasures anymore, just keep on doing it because Dave loves it so much better than stocking grocery stores at midnight (Dave was the midnight ~~stocker~~ stocker) but I think it's even beginning to wear him down, lately.

I see a lot of possibilities for the Net and fandom. I miss fandom most when I use ICQ to communicate in real time using its truest real-time interface, where you can see what people write as they write it, mistakes and backspaces and all. A great possibility for strikeover humor there: typing out a line of humorous things you shouldn't say and then painstakingly backing up to erase them. But no one I communicate with online has that sophisticated a sense of humor.

I miss fandom.

Someday I hope to have time for it again. *{In the meantime, how about writing more about your store?}* (P. O. Box 50788, Midland, TX 79710-0788 & linda@ccgs.com)

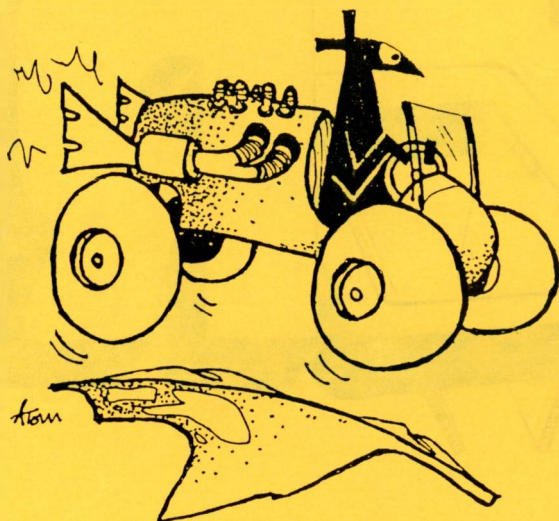
I ALSO HEARD FROM:

SID BIRCHBY, WM. BREIDING ("Carol Carr continues to be one of my favorites. I think she has a great handle on life and knows how to write about it wonderfully."), **CORA BURBEE, KEN CHESLIN** ("I always enjoy *Trap Door* but I'm one of those awful people who do not LoC as it deserves." But you send *great* trades, Ken!), **TOMMY FERGUSON** ("*Trap Door* reminds me of why I'm involved in fandom in the first place: the people."), **GEORGE FLYNN, KEN FORMAN** ("I *really* enjoyed Carol's article, even though the subject was sad. It (and many of the other articles) brought back cherished memories of Bill, and for that I thank you."), **E. B. FROHNET** ("Perhaps it is presumptuous of me to wonder, given that Donaho's article about his friend tries to maintain a positive tone, whether the gentleman would really have liked having his sexual function or dysfunction enunciated in an obituary."), **STEVE GREEN, JOHN HARVEY** ("Eve and I do appreciate *Trap Door*, it's just that we're trying to get into the Guinness Book of Records as the world's worst LoCers."), **JIM HARMON** ("I find it really

wonderful to find a fanzine that is in many ways like the ones I read and loved as a boy—*Peon*, *Spacewarp* and *Quandry*.”), TEDDY HARVIA (“Steve Stiles’ tigers were appropriately dangerous-looking.”), JOHN HERTZ (“Bjo confirms rich brown’s story.”), TERRY HORNSBY, CARL JUAREZ (“I’m something of an eccentric, but Elmer Perdue has set a standard I doubt I could ever approach, much less match.”), JOE

KENNEDY (“It’s good to see Elmer Perdue and Bill Rotsler remembered.”), DARROLL PARDOE, BRUCE PELZ, JOHN D. RICKETT (“*Trap Door* is essential reading to any fan interested in timebinding.”), DAVID L. RUSSELL, NOREEN SHAW (“I really enjoy getting *Trap Door* and seeing all the names I knew well.”), HENRY WELCH, ART WIDNER and JEAN YOUNG. Thanks to everyone; please come again.

Vinç Clarke’s 115th Dream



by Chuch Harris

Everyone is remembering little bits about Vincent, and I had a little anecdote of my own that I want to get down on paper ... and who better to try it out on than you.

I don't know if this happened to you personally but frequently, when we had Stateside visitors, Vince would take them down to Greenwich Observatory and show them around. It's worth seeing and, among other marvels and telescopes and such, there is a metal bar set in the ground marking the meridian—the first imaginary line of longitude which bisects the Earth's surface and which, together with the imaginary line of latitude found by “shooting the sun,” allows navigators to decide just where the hell they are in the middle of the ocean.

Visitors were suitably impressed and would step solemnly across the line from one hemisphere to the other—and if you were one of the visitors on the

guided tour I bet you did, too.

But that wasn't all. The imaginary line extends north and south to the poles and crosses the M25 motorway (which circles London) near Waltham Abbey to the north and near Limsfield to the south.

So Vincent, in all seriousness, wrote to the Transport Commissioners and suggested that, at the appropriate spots, signs be erected on the central reservations between the dual carriageways of the motorway. On one side they would say, “You are Now Entering the Western Hemisphere, Drive Carefully,” and on the reverse, visible to drivers in the opposite direction, it would say, “You are Now Entering the Eastern Hemisphere, Drive Carefully.”

We thought this was a marvelous idea, and so thrillingly educational for the masses. We Brits invented these fucking hemispheres and never get any credit for anything. It's about time we got flaunted. But, sadly, not right now. The high honchos of the Transport Commissioners—probably strongly swimming Yankee wetbacks or early TAFF winners who never went home—vetoed the idea. “Only mandatory road signs permitted,” the rules. Also “distracting” and even “ludicrous.” “If we took leave of our senses and permitted such a thing, every other roads authority in the U.K. would make similar demands.” And, “piss off. Yours faithfully ”

So there—but all is not lost. Vincent would have been overjoyed to see the letter in *The Times* recently from another convert demanding the very same road signs with his very same words. When you come over for your honeymoon and I collect you at Garwick, watch out for the sign on the center reservation just outside Waltham Abbey. It's not erected yet, but RSN

— Chuch Harris



ZORR

