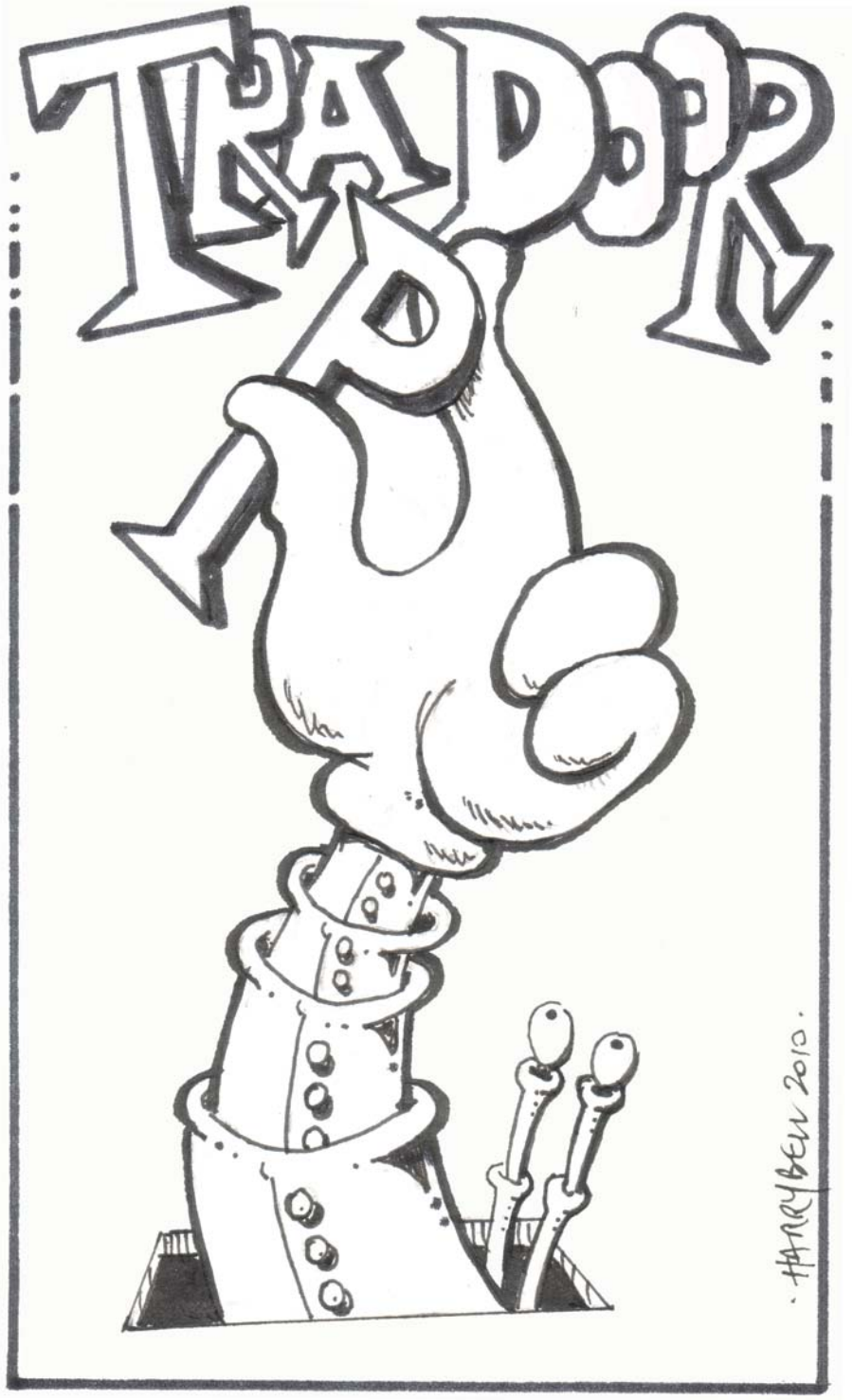

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Last issue I wrote about some adventures I had while running the Farm's grocery store. But my talents at being a buyer weren't limited to food and sundries. From time to time I was called upon to do the purchasing for our seasonal or specific needs—what might be characterized as "special operations."

My first such assignment was in 1973, a period on the Farm marked by rapid population growth and the inevitable construction of larger houses to accommodate it. At the first hint of cold weather, it became apparent that we would need more heating stoves. As our households grew larger, some of us were moving out of buses and converted vans, and the small stoves that worked fine before were inadequate to heat the new, more spacious digs. I was given a list of the households that needed larger stoves, and was told to find as many as possible. I loved seeing new places and people off the beaten path, so it was very appealing to have a reason for driving around the back roads. I was given a large chunk of cash, instructed to pay whatever price people asked, and told there would be more money when I ran out. Since as Store Man I was kept on a weekly budget that started out as insufficient and barely budged from there, this largess was extremely unusual. Fortunately, those in charge realized that mass hypothermia and illness were too chilling (sorry!) to contemplate.

For readers who may be familiar with the present generation of wood heating stoves (others may leave the room)—thermostatically controlled, with a large picture window on the front door so you can watch the fire burning (stoves with a view, so to speak)—those available and affordable to us in the '70s would seem primitive. Indeed, they were models that had existed for decades, but they nevertheless did a good job.

I felt privileged to have primary use of a late model, full-sized Dodge van and I used it for most of my shopping. (As none of you will remember from what I wrote last time, the Cracker Truck—the one whose wheel fell

off—was used for our flour run because the Dodge couldn't handle a 3,000-pound load.) I had some veto power over what else it got used for—firewood hauling, for instance, would have been too heavy a load and have left too much of a mess. Large households frequently borrowed it to haul giant mounds of dirty clothes and platoons of diaper pails to the Farm's laundromat (a facility so unusual it deserves its own article). It would also be ideal for hauling the stoves I would bring back to the Farm.

From personal experience, I knew there were two basic kinds of heating stoves: one type designed primarily for coal but which could also accommodate the wood we used, the other only for wood. Both kinds were limited in the size of wood that could be burned because of their small feed doors. The aptly-named "Wood King," however, had a valuable feature the others lacked. The entire top opened wide, so that really big pieces of wood could be dropped in late at night—and, if properly damped down (ask me how any time), stood a good chance of still giving out heat in the morning. The possibility of not having to wake up to freezing temperatures made it the most popular and sought-after heating stove.

On the first day of the hunt, with a strong sense of "plenty" (the ample cash) and a full tank of gas (freedom to roam without watching the fuel gauge)—so different from the usual Farm experience of financial deprivation and strict limits on travel—I headed north to areas where I had sometimes seen unused household items on the front porches and in the yards of rural houses. Before I got very far, I noticed a coal-burning stove in front of a dilapidated farmhouse and stopped to have a closer look. A hefty, bearded man in overalls and a bright red flannel shirt came out to greet me. I introduced myself, pointed to the stove, and asked if it might be for sale. He said, "that old thing?" and asked twenty dollars for it. He was clearly happy when I accepted. He helped me load it in the back of the van, and suggested a few other neighbors who might have similar items. It was a good start to the day.

By late afternoon I had four or five good specimens crowding the van, and was nearly out of money. It was time to go back and make some households happy.

The next day, with a new helping of cash and a mandate for another batch of stoves, I drove south to visit the tiny general store at Possum Trot (sic), a wide spot in the road with a few houses. I had remembered a bulletin board there where I hoped to find more leads. But the proprietor gave me the best one—a couple of elderly gentlemen who collected scrap iron. "Sometimes they have wood stoves or pieces of wood stoves," he said.

I went there immediately. The men resembled a rural Mutt and Jeff. Jeb was tall and thin, Sam short and round. They were both very friendly, with thick Tennessee accents. When I explained what I was looking for, they led me to a barn behind their house, and pointed out a big pile of…I could hardly believe it!…Wood King cast iron stove parts. They were all in a jumble, and it was a long, sweaty job, but once we were done we had four complete stoves. The only thing missing was the large piece of sheet metal that would hold the parts together, but the four lucky households would be happy to do the necessary work after being blessed with the Cadillac of heating stoves.

After we settled on a price and they helped me load the van, Sam asked if I'd like to come in and rest a while. Wonderful! I was tired, thirsty, and interested to learn more about these men. We sat down at a big table in a corner of the main room, and I did my best to answer their questions about the Farm. Once their curiosity was satisfied ("No, we don't believe in free love") Sam did most of the talking, but Jeb held his own. From their loquaciousness I began to sense that they were, perhaps, somewhat mood-enhanced.

And sure enough, after a while Jeb asked me if I'd care for a drink. When I said yes, he produced three tumblers and a quart canning jar nearly full of a clear liquid. "This is our own 'shine," he said proudly. "We hope you like it." They thought that in spite of my long hair and full beard, as a fellow Tennessean I was by definition fond of home-made whiskey.

I had to think quickly. Alcohol was forbidden on the Farm, but Stephen Gaskin, our guru and rule-maker, had always held that a person's "sacrament" was holy and not to be disrespected. In the context of the Farm community, this meant one didn't turn down a joint when it was offered. But if moonshine was Jeb and Sam's sacrament, it would be rude of me to refuse.

Jeb filled each tumbler about halfway and asked me to make a toast. Without any hesitation I said how glad I was to meet them, and hoped they'd have more stove parts in the future. They took healthy sips and I a more modest one. It was strong stuff, but it was also very smooth and didn't burn my throat.

"Good shit!" I said, although those were not my actual words. I took another swallow, and then another. They were very happy, I was getting happy too, and before much longer we were drinking buddies and fast friends. "Come back in a couple weeks," they said as I left. "We'll have more stoves for you."

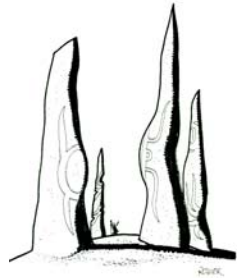
I drove home slowly, a little high but not impaired, and fortunately I wasn't far from home and on lightly traveled roads. I decided on the way that it would probably not be a good thing to tell anyone about the 'shine.

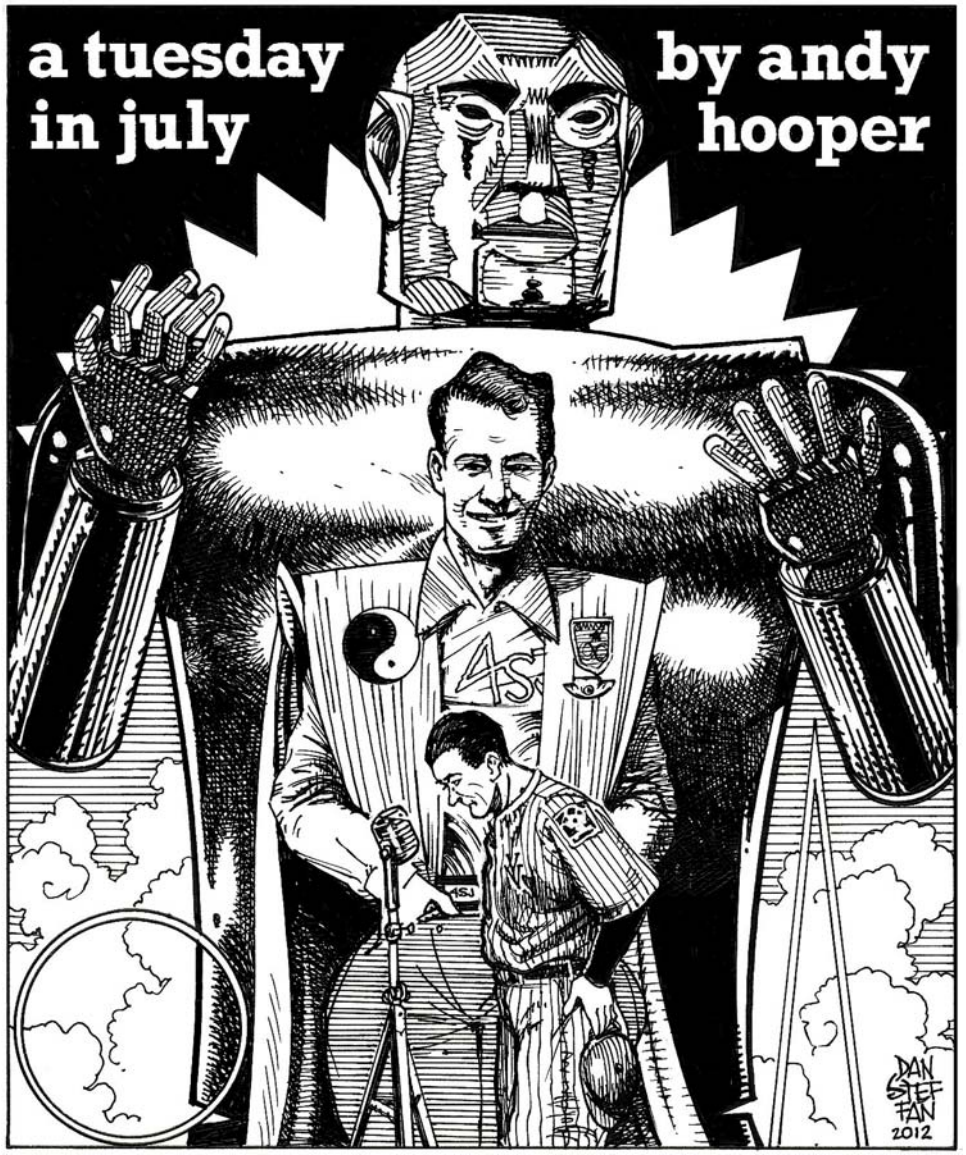
A couple of weeks later I went back, got some more Wood King parts from my new friends, and again shared sacrament. That last haul was so big that it completed my assignment for the year.

Since the Farm continued to grow and add housing, the following year I was sent out again on the same assignment. Trusting that I'd be back, Jeb and Sam had gathered a very large pile of stove parts—and the new batch of 'shine they proudly shared with me was even better than the year before. In the end, they supplied most of the stoves I bought that second year, and it was very satisfying to me that I'd not only provided these two fine people with additional income, but had also made so many Farm residents happy that they could heat their homes the best way possible.

As with many earlier issues, some of the articles in this one enjoyed a previous life. Andy Hooper's piece comprised his contribution to the 2011 edition of WOOF, the Worldcon Organization of Faneditors (one of Bruce Pelz's longest-lasting creations), which had limited distribution. The article by Greg Benford—which first saw print in his brother Jim's FAPAzine, which appeared in the 75th anniversary mailing in August—had little if any circulation outside the apa, and since very few FAPA members receive *Trap Door* it will be new to well over a hundred readers. The two articles by Charles Burbee that make up his column were not collected in the two volumes of his writing edited by Terry Carr. I was pleased to receive comments and clarifications on them from Charlie's three offspring. And finally, Lenny Bailes's piece represents a major expansion to a post he made on the Trufen Yahoogroup list a couple months ago about Jo Walton winning the 2012 Hugo for best novel. I hope you'll get as much pleasure reading them as I did rescuing them from their relative obscurity.

In closing, I want to give special egoboo to Carol and her Photoshopping for the time and hard work she has devoted to making sure the custom headings in this and many previous issues look their best. Back in the day it was a fanzine editor's pride if he or she mastered stenciling artwork. These days, the ability to make electronically submitted artwork reproduce well is the equivalent. There oughta be a FAAn award…!





Above the Fruited Plain

In 1939, July 4th fell on a Tuesday.

That's the first thing that surprised me when I began doing research on a date that has become a personal fascination. Many, if not most, active science fiction fans are aware of the date's association with the first World Science Fiction Convention, later dubbed "Nycon I" by Forry Ackerman. And many fans of the American game of baseball also know that July 4th, 1939 was "Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day," at New York's Yankee Stadium, when the terminally ill Hall-of-Fame first baseman made his dignified farewell to baseball, and by implication, life. And given that the day would be the final American Independence holiday before the outbreak of another European war, it has a certain degree of pathos attached to it which no one vaguely familiar with the 20th Century can fail to appreciate. But before attaching too great a sense of moment, it is useful to reflect that all these events took place on an objectively unremarkable Tuesday, and that the immediate effect of any great event which took place that day was to make Wednesday feel like Monday, and leave the working world with one of those truncated, sleepwalking post-holiday weeks.

Life is anticlimax: After the outpouring of emotion that flowed back and forth between Lou Gehrig, his team mates, and his adoring fans, the Yankees had to go out and play the second half of a double-header against the Washington Senators. The fans were already in a dark mood after the Yankees dropped the first game 3-2. Senators pitcher Dutch Leonard scattered six hits and went the distance for the victory; he also notched two hits himself and drove in his first run of the season.

In newsreel film of the event, you can see that the red, white and blue buntings are out for Independence Day. There would have been a big crowd even without the celebration of Lou Gehrig's career. Gehrig's last game was a painful 0-4 performance against the same Washington club on April 30th. He was diagnosed with the degenerative condition that bears his name and announced his retirement from baseball less than ten days later. On the 4th, a parade of well-wishers, officials and former players hand Gehrig a series of handsome trophies, plaques and souvenirs. Lou carefully places each on the grass beside him. He no longer has the arm strength to hold them up for long.

Very few of the people in the stadium had any real understanding of how sick Gehrig was. It would have shocked many of them to know that the remarkable endurance he had shown as a ballplayer was probably responsible for his impending death. Gehrig had never missed a game in seventeen seasons; he played 2,130 consecutive games, a record broken by only one player, Baltimore Orioles star Cal Ripken Jr. But on at least six occasions during his career, Gehrig lost consciousness after being hit in the head by pitched balls. On two occasions, he was actually taken to a hospital for treatment. But in all six cases, Lou was in the lineup the next game the Yankees played. Over time, his first nickname, "Columbia Lou," chosen to reflect his status as a college graduate, changed to "The Iron Horse," because of that remarkable endurance.

Recent research on Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, now commonly known as "Lou Gehrig's Disease," shows a very close correlation with head injuries of the kind Gehrig suffered. In some cases, concussions cause the release of toxic proteins in the brain. These do not appear to be especially dangerous if they remain *in situ*, but in some individuals, the proteins are released into the cerebrospinal fluid and dispersed to the rest of the nervous system. And these people appear to be very likely to suffer from ALS or other degenerative conditions later in life. But even more disturbing, research shows that concussion victims who rest until they no longer feel the symptoms of the injury are far less likely to spread the toxins they cause through the rest of their bodies, than those who immediately return to work or activity before the symptoms have passed. So Lou Gehrig, who never let more than 24 hours pass before he was back at his position, would appear to be the very prototype of a likely victim of ALS. The fact that he suffered at least six concussions might partially explain why the disease struck him so young – he was still just 36 years old on July 4th, 1939.

The speakers lauding his play ran the gamut from his manager and team mates to Yankee Stadium grounds-keepers and the U.S. Postmaster General. Baseball's ceremonial persona was still in its adolescence, and tributes to retiring or "old-time" players were relatively rare. The Yankees, who have now retired enough uniform numbers to make several license plates, retired their first, 4, in Gehrig's honor that day. Celebrating Henry Louis Gehrig, native New Yorker, was just as much a commemoration of the amazing string of World Series teams of which he was a part. Babe Ruth, Gehrig's only argu-

able equal or superior as a Yankee Hero, was sold to the Boston Braves at the end of his career, and no "Day" in his honor would be held until 1947. Retired only three seasons at that moment, the Babe was on the field for Lou Gehrig Day, and every flash bulb in the stadium popped when the two of them shook hands. In those pictures Gehrig's smile is knowing, satisfied; putting the two of them in the same batting order made them exponentially more dangerous, and doomed a generation of pitchers to self-destruction. When Hollywood reset the scene for Gary Cooper in *Pride of the Yankees*, Ruth played himself, but his countenance is far more solemn, fully aware that Gehrig would be dead in less than two years.

After the procession of speakers had reached its end, Gehrig's remarks were as brief as Lincoln at Gettysburg, and nearly as powerful. Newsreels shortened them further, leaving only the preamble and the conclusion, the famous "Luckiest Man" sound bite. In between those brave lines, Gehrig praised four baseball men – Jacob Ruppert, Ed Barrow, Miller Huggins and Joe McCarthy – all of whom now have plaques beside him in the Yankees Monument Park. He spoke of his closest family members – his mother and father, his wife and her mother – and only in those moments did he come close to breaking down as would any contemporary sporting figure saying goodbye to the game. Gehrig was saying goodbye in a much more final way, and there is no question that the event shook observers who were aware of what they were really seeing. How many hundreds of fathers and mothers had to decide that afternoon how they would explain what was happening to Lou to their kids? The crowd, sometimes reported as 61,000, was actually measured at 41,000 and change; relatively few of them stayed to see the end of the double-header. The Yankees responded to the moment by scoring eleven runs to win the second game; they would go on to beat the Red Sox for the American League Pennant by seventeen games, and sweep the Cincinnati Reds in the World Series.

Lou Gehrig would die on June 3rd, 1941, at his home in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. Despite the terminal nature of his illness, he remained hopeful and continued working as a member of the New York City Parole Commission until the last month of his life.

In the course of superhuman events

Anecdotal evidence suggests that at least one science fiction fan and member of the First World Science Fiction Convention, was in the stands at Yankee Stadium on the afternoon of July 4th, 1939. I dimly recall it having been Jack Speer who took in one or both games, but so many of fandom's Old Boys simply *live* to correct an error like that that I won't take the time to confirm it right now. Anyway, at least one fan felt that two days of science fictional oratory was enough, and made his way to the Bronx. Not being a particular Yankee fan, the event probably had less effect than the drama which had played out between members of New York Fandom over the previous 48 hours. The programmed portion of convention had officially ended on Monday evening, July 3rd. Besides the baseball game, the holiday also offered New York attractions like Coney Island and the New York World's Fair, which had inspired the addition of the word "World" to the name of the convention. Despite all these distractions, a significant number of fans gathered on the afternoon of the 4th to Determine The Future Course of Fandom, or at the least, plan for another convention in Chicago in 1940.

This was the fallout from the Exclusion Act, by which convention organizers Sam Moskowitz, Will Sykora and James Taurasi had barred six rival fans from coming to the event. The alleged provocation for this was the discovery of an insurgent pamphlet secreted behind a radiator in the convention hall. Dave Kyle was its anonymous publisher, but escaped the dragnet, and was an attending member. Taurasi physically stood at the door and told off Jack Gillespie, Cyril Kornbluth, Doc Lowndes, John Michel, Fred Pohl and Don Wollheim when they tried to enter the convention, saying they were "on the blacklist," and he was powerless to help them. During the convention, Will Sykora addressed the topic of "New Fandom," essentially a title which the triumvirate had invented for their committee. New Fandom's members did not heckle or pass literature around – rather, they were devoted to getting things done! With this gauntlet thrown down, and with the cold rejection of Julius Pohl's plea to allow the excluded fans to enter near the end of the first day, there can have been little doubt that New Fandom managed to seriously inflame the debate it had sought to truncate.

The purpose of the meeting, later dubbed the "Futurian Conference," was to initiate a series of rotating, or at least traveling conventions, to begin with an event in Chicago the following year. But it was necessary to debate several tools into existence to accomplish that, so a lot of time was spent discussing the "Future Club," under the direction of which these future conventions would occur. We might say that they were groping for something that would eventually become the WSFS, but at the time, the mere idea of fomenting another convention without the permission, or even the knowledge of New Fandom, was far more the point.

Most of the names in question had been associated with an alphabet soup of competing clubs for at least three years. At the July 4th Conference, a lot of time was also devoted to the future of FAPA and its role in their efforts, as it was an organization of which many of the attending fans were members, with established bylaws and rules of operation. This lead to a general resolution by the FAPA members present to present a "FAPA Day" The only foray into the Futurians supposedly radical politics was a discussion of Michelism, an anarchic pro-science philosophy formulated by John Michel. An effort to rename Michelism was tabled, then returned and passed by majority vote, and a committee appointed to come up with a new name.

To some extent, these proceedings were the continuation of conversations that began at social gatherings after the official program on the 2nd and 3rd. On Sunday evening, the convention had an official auction – presumably to help defray the money which Sykora had sunk into the convention – and this went so long it had to be concluded Monday evening. Just as it would today, this drove a significant number of convention members, both pros and fans, to socialize at diners and bars away from the convention hall. The format of the convention allowed no time for discussion, and relatively little to even ask questions of the professionals in attendance. The vision of the convention seems to have been a dignified gala at which fandom would be introduced to the professional science fiction community, and then hopefully invited to become part of that profession. The attitude at the July 4th conference was different – for all that many of the fans present would soon be working professionals – Pohl, Kornbluth, Wollheim – they were far more focused on their interests, needs and rights as fans. They did not regard fandom as a larval stage of a life as a professional writer, and seem to have understood that it was something that they might remain associated with for the rest of their lives. They instinctively understood the inspirational and predictive capabilities of science fiction in ways that we have largely obscured with decades of debate and deconstruction, and wanted profoundly to be part of that process. They stood up – well, Dave Kyle did, because he was allowed to speak – and said "Science Fiction develops creative imagination. Creative imagination is that thing which stimulates progress." Such simple certainty and optimism is breathtaking in the sagging second decade of the 21st Century

For all that it was informed by teenage bluster, the Futurian worldview really was very different from that of New Fandom. In their future, the benefits of progress were not to be restricted to the well-behaved and the well-connected. After the discussion over Michelism, the Conference concluded by endorsing the formation of an "Association for Democracy in Science Fiction Fandom." Dave Kyle was appointed to organize it.

Give to him your floral bouquets

About an hour before the Futurian Conference, another group of socio-political

theorists were about to meet, across the Atlantic Ocean, in Nuremburg, Germany. A crowd was waiting for the *Gauleiter* of Nuremburg, Julius Streicher, to make his first public appearance in two months. Beset by political enemies, he had suffered a late-season skiing accident, and his recuperation had provided a much-needed pause in his struggle with other members of the Nazi party leadership.

Streicher was that rare Nazi whose passionate anti-Semitism predated his association with Adolf Hitler. After winning an Iron Cross and a commission as a lieutenant during the First World War, he joined an independent anti-Semitic paramilitary group in 1919. Educated, literate, a former member of the German Democratic Party, Streicher believed that Jews were "behind" the failed German Bolshevik Revolution of 1918, and made their destruction the center of his political philosophy for the rest of his life. He struggled to create some coherent body from the galaxy of anti-Semitic groups active in the early 1920s until he traveled to Munich in 1921, and heard Adolf Hitler speak. Like many of his generation, Streicher spoke of the event as a catalytic experience: "I saw this man shortly before midnight, after he had spoken for three hours, drenched in perspiration, radiant. My neighbor said he thought he saw a halo around his head, and I experienced something which transcended the commonplace."

From that evening, his devotion to the National Socialist Party was complete. Streicher was with Hitler in his first attempt to take power in Munich, and stood in the front line that faced the bullets of the Munich police. From that experience on, Hitler had the most complete trust in Streicher and regarded him as an irreplaceable friend. Streicher's political newsmagazine *Der Stürmer* became the absolute voice of the anti-Semitic movement in German society, and Streicher used it to target and destroy many individual political opponents. And there were plenty of those, inside the party and out. Streicher was never reluctant to use violence and intimidation against his fellow party members, and his party political office of Gauleiter gave him enormous authority with almost no legal restraint. To protect himself from any civil action arising from his anti-Semitic editorials, he also arranged to be elected to the Bavarian Landstag, which provided him with "Parliamentary Immunity." This was not an idle gesture; twice before the Nazis rise to power, Streicher was convicted of criminal libel, and on the second occasion served two months in jail.

He was equally ruthless to rivals within the party, and spread particularly poisonous rumors against the future Reichsmarshall Herman Göring. Poison was a stock in trade: Perhaps Streicher's most famous work was *The Poison Toadstool*, a children's book that compared Jews to an attractive but deadly mushroom. He ordered the destruction of the Great Synagogue of Nuremberg, and later explained it by saying he had objections to the architectural impression it made on the city. His list of crimes as petty as theft is far too long to recount, and he was fond of striding the streets of Nuremberg in uniform, cracking a bullwhip. He was called "King of Nuremberg" by those brave enough to say it, and his political district or *Gau* of Franconia suggested another nickname, "*Der Frankenführer*."

In his comeback speech on the evening of the 4th of July, he touched on a list of familiar themes, praising Hitler and his program, predicting disaster for Britain and France because of the dual influences of the Jews and Soviet Bolshevism. He appealed to the "good, honest men and women" of Nuremberg to support him in his struggle with his political opponents. And he closed on a note of unwavering political and national optimism that was difficult to find in 1939:

"Never again during hard times will it be possible for a few to live well while others suffer. In such times, we will be sure that the same duties, and the same rights, apply to all. I urge you: March with us whom fate has made the political leaders of our wonderful Franconia. Follow the Führer with the same faith as always. Give to him your floral bouquets at the coming Reich Party Rally of Peace. Our greeting to the Führer should rise up to the heavens like a prayer: Our Führer: *Sieg Heil!"*

The effort had little impact on Streicher's political fate. In the spring of 1940, he was found unfit for party office, and stripped of his titles. Hitler continued to send him money directly, to keep *Der Stürmer* in publication, but he was largely on his own when the war came to an end. He was picked up in Austria, and was one of the most difficult and uncooperative defendants in the Nuremberg War Crimes trials. Although he had never held any significant military rank within the Third Reich, he was found guilty of crimes against humanity for his lifelong career of inciting hatred against Jews. He was hanged, with difficulty, on the morning of October 16th, 1946.

The Trial of the Trylon

German plans for an invasion of Poland were well-developed by the beginning of July 1939, but for most of the Western world, the most important challenge was the ongoing international economic depression that was staggering into its second decade. Many nations were experiencing the most economic growth seen since 1930, but most industries were still struggling. In America, isolationists were digging their heels in against any involvement in another European war – just in case. What a wonderful time for an enormously expensive and innovative World's Fair, with a theme designed to tug at the sense of wonder: "The World of Tomorrow."

Looking at images of the 1939-40 World's Fair, the impression is certainly not of a world on the edge of a dark abyss that would claim millions. If anything, it is a world bright with optimism and proud of the trials it had already suffered. How could fans have resisted its blandishments? The organizers even arranged a cross-promotion with Street and Smith to use their most popular pulp adventure hero, Doc Savage. The unfinished fair appears in the climax of *The Giggling Ghosts* (1938), and *The World's Fair Goblin* takes place entirely at the fair. But for every piece of "kid stuff," there were two real pieces of innovation or imagination that you were not going to see anywhere else before at least 1950. To us, *Futurama* is a science fiction cartoon show about alcoholic robots and heads in jars, created by Matt Groening. But Groening was inspired by the autocentric exhibit of the same name created by General Motors for the 1939 World's Fair. Why else do that show's prankish technicians awaken the cryogenically-frozen with dramatic cries of "Welcome to the world of tomorrow?"

By 1939, the mixture of education and entertainment offered by the World's Fair was a well-known quantity, and visitors knew they could expect to find things to please any height of brow. But 1939 was special in the technical advances that it presented – television, nylon, florescent lighting, color photography, and gadgets by the dozen were everywhere. The heart of the fair was the Trylon and Perisphere, a 700-foot tall three-sided spire and a 183-foot diameter ball, housing a huge futuristic utopian diorama titled "Democracity." Visitors viewed this from moving walkways, while slide shows and lighting effects enhanced the impression. After viewing the interior, the visitor exited via the "Helicline," an 800-foot long spiral ramp to ground level. They were surely some of the most iconic buildings in a tradition which includes the Eiffel Tower and the Seattle Space Needle. They would be torn down in 1942 and scrapped for use in war industries.

Elektro haunts my dreams

Like most World's fairs, the 1939 fair had a different theme for every day of its operation, honoring every possible group and occasion. I assume that the 4th of July had a patriotic theme to coincide with the celebration of Independence Day, but none of the accounts that I can find make any mention of the theme for that date. Today, of course, any World's Fair juxtaposed with the World Science Fiction Convention would go to some length to attract the members of the convention, but in 1939, even the highest

published estimate of the convention membership (200) would not have attracted that much attention.

Other estimates set Nycon I's attendance, even on day one, as no higher than 120, of which no more than twenty were women. Only a handful of those would have been interested in the technical wonders of the suburban kitchen of the future, one of the fair's most enduring presentations. From a marketing perspective, the fair was targeted at what was hoped to be a growing American middle class, whose hard work and desire for consumer comforts would drive the West out of the Great Depression – preferably behind the wheel of a new Chevrolet. The war that was soon to begin would first delay this process, then accelerate it five-fold in the Pax Americana to follow. But by its own projections, the Fair proved to be an all-electric, all-talking and -singing financial sinkhole. The innovative promoter and politician Grover Whalen was removed from his position as Director at the end of the 1939 season, and a banker was appointed to replace him. The 1940 season saw far less of the educational wonders of the 1939 edition, and far more emphasis on the more traditional amusements such as the parachute ride, which is still in use at Coney Island today.

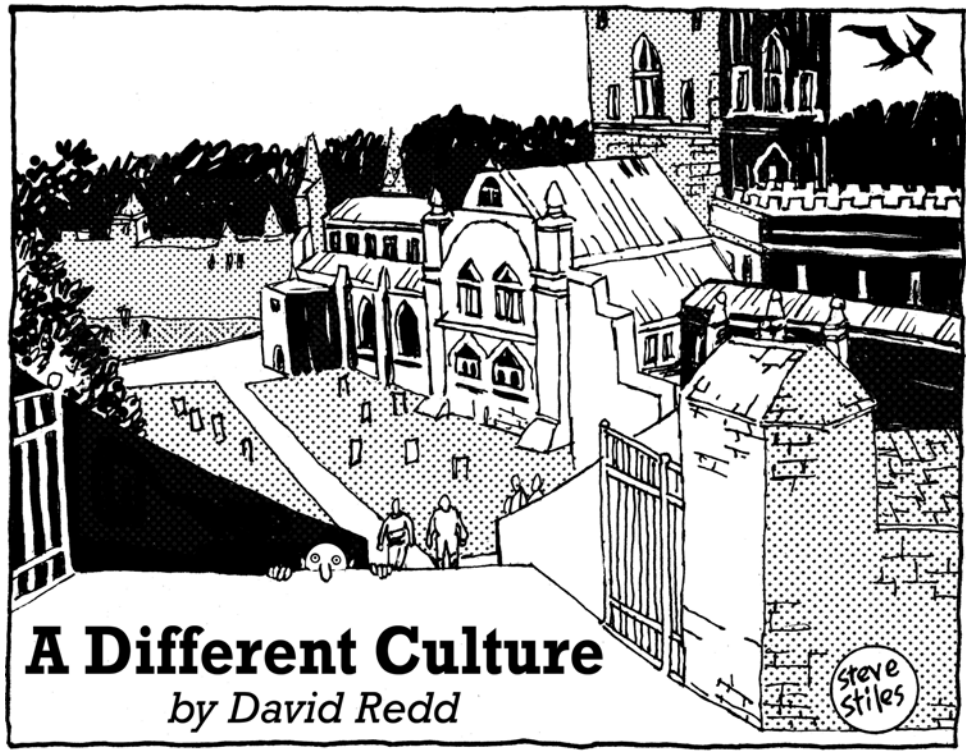
By then, the world was understandably less optimistic about tomorrow, and Americans were concerned over their part in the war which began on September 1st, 1939. By the summer of 1940, several nations with exhibits at the fair had been overrun by Nazi Germany – Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Holland, Norway, and shortly France – so their exhibits became particularly poignant symbols of national pride. Germany itself had made no contribution to the fair, citing budget issues. The Soviet Union razed and abandoned its huge exhibit after year one, and it was replaced by a nearly vacant esplanade known as "The American Square." Parts of the fair, like the aforementioned parachute ride, were dismantled and applied to other uses; the Belgian pavilion is still in use today as a sports arena by Virginia Union University

When the fair closed at the end of the 1940 season, the treasures of occupied nations on exhibit in New York had to be dealt with. One pragmatic response came from the Polish government in exile in Britain, who ordered the many sculptures on display to be sold to the Polish-American museum in Chicago. The only exception was a statue of the Polish-Lithuanian King Jagiello. New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia had taken such a shine to the statue that he arranged for it to remain in New York, where it can still be seen in Central Park today. Britain was also forced to let one of its treasures remain in America when the fair ended. The copy of the Magna Carta kept at Lincoln Cathedral had been displayed in New York, and it was decided to keep it in Fort Knox with the original copy of the Declaration of Independence. It was returned to Britain in 1947.

The people associated with the fair were a more complex problem; many of them could not return to their homes when the fair had ended, and others understandably preferred not to, given the danger of intercontinental travel during the war. Their presence was of great cultural benefit to America, as some of Europe's finest designers, composers, musicians, chefs and architects gave their adopted home the benefit of their talents. The Fair has always enriched the nations that undertake to host it; perhaps it is no coincidence that America wallows in the grip of a creative malaise when it has been 27 years since the last American World's fair – in New Orleans, 1984.

I'm still building the scene – trying to incorporate all the elements, from Elektro the talking robot to the exotic dancers of the Lama Temple – "approved by the technical advisor to the motion picture *Lost Horizon*." On that long afternoon of July 4th, 1939 there is time for all these things – even the world of tomorrow.

—Andy Hooper



A Different Culture

by David Redd

I married into a different culture. Welsh culture.

This is a story not of culture-clash but of discovery. I grew up in southern Pembrokeshire, the "Little England Beyond Wales" below a centuries-old ethnic divide, where we spoke in English and shared all England's assumptions about our place in the world. Only my grandparents in distant South Wales lived a genuine Welsh life, in one of the mining communities portrayed by Hollywood's John Ford in *How Green Was My Valley*: singing coal-miners with helmets and blackened faces; terraced houses where everybody knew everybody; strict chapel religion; pit disasters. A land of song and coal, nowadays transformed into a fast-food Wales of hard-drinking sports fans in scarlet Rugby football shirts. However, when I met Meriel I found yet another kind of Welsh people, less well known, more rural, brought up in a much older way of life.

Meriel was born in Solva, a picturesque West Wales harbor village formerly based on fishing, coastal trading, and supplying the surrounding farmlands. When she was young her home was still without electricity. Mains water was new. She spoke the old Celtic Welsh language first, English second, and in her early schooldays she used slates and chalk rather than paper and pencil, yet at the age of twenty she watched moon landings on TV. Her home was a former two-bedroom terraced cottage, extended piecemeal amid long struggles to rent and later buy the house on workman's pay. Potatoes and other vegetables from the back garden helped them survive.

The little row of houses stood on an unsurfaced track carved from stony sloping ground, all wearing the haphazard look of random growth rather than planned development. In the old Welsh tradition everybody did know everybody else, and most people were related in some way – very different from the characterless council-owned estate where I grew up. Meriel's parents Lydia and

Walla welcomed me and then our growing family with Sunday roasts and warm genuine love. Walla was a painter and decorator, cutting people's hair as a sideline. He and Lydia spoke English to me out of courtesy, and gradually taught me a few Welsh phrases. As a "down-below" marrying into Solva, I was privileged to discover this largely Welsh-speaking community while it still existed.

Nearby lived Peggy and Bill, plus Peggy's and Lydia's father "Data" – an ex-roadman, mole catcher and water diviner. Bill, a former marine refrigeration engineer, now worked on freight locomotives at an armaments depot. Data, like Walla, had worked on local farms until mechanization and low pay drove them into more general work. (Meriel and I were lucky, starting our first full-time jobs as trainees at County Hall, although for her this meant a double half-hour trip of twelve miles into town.)

Peggy's door was always open to family, neighbors and friends; small children were especially welcome. Her front parlor was devoted to knitting and dressmaking and creating costumes, or simply mending for people, with clothes for "Mrs Skyfog" and others hanging from ceiling beams above cardboard boxes and bales of material. Skyfog? Farm names such as Sgeifiog were used in place of surnames. Mending? Yes, people generally mended clothes and darned socks well into the 1970s, until the next generation got persuaded to buy new instead. Next door to Peggy, an oversize front window remained from a former one-room village shop. In those days I found several such micro-shops for food, clothing and other essentials still around, soon to be replaced by the little meat or bread vans of which Peggy kept saying, "We've got to use them or they'll be gone" – and eventually they were indeed gone.

Below a strip of grass where I parked my car was a second unsurfaced road serving a few more houses. One family no longer farmed – their old land now grew speculative housing – but they still sold milk and always had milk-bottle crates stacked outside. The next house belonged to Meriel's uncle John, who sold some drapery out of his house and garage, and was known for dashing off little poems – in Welsh of course – about daily life, someone's birthday perhaps, or a cat learning to use a human toilet.

Further down, at the pink house on the corner where Peggy claimed to have seen a phantom funeral a week before the real thing, our road met the long lane running from the main highway to the wild sea-cliffs. In this clutch of houses lived people such as Uncle Joe, who taught me in a Haverfordwest school long before he became my uncle, and Beryl Vidler Davies who famously moved into a caravan each summer, renting out her cottage to visitors as the tourist industry grew. Meriel and I would walk from here along grassy cliff paths above the harbor; these tranquil slopes were lovely for a young couple to wander in the evenings. Data, years ago, had carried sacks of flour from the harbor all the way up these paths, for Mam to bake bread in that time before supermarkets. We were less active, gazing quietly at the yachts and water and the last tumbledown limekilns, disused now after centuries of providing burnt limestone to improve the fields. Further west, horses grazed fields, seagulls flew, and on the wild rocky headland of Pengraig tiny purple squills flowered each spring. The Pembrokeshire coast is a world-class landscape.

Our view on these walks was of Y Cwm – The Valley – separated from our part of Solva by an uninhabitably steep hillside. The lower village in those days still had traces of its coastal-centre nature with pubs/inns, a garage, shops, an old warehouse or two, and a former printing house where a county-wide local paper had been published. A redundant chapel became a butterfly farm. When I first took an interest the Cwm was becoming rundown, starting to look dull, dilapidated and gray, until outsider money moved in to prettify the buildings and create a new tourism-based economy around this section of the Pembrokeshire National Park. The coastal path is not the only attraction. Solva lies near the tiny "city" of St. David's, where our patron saint's sixth-century monastic settlement eventually grew into a centre of pilgrimage, particularly after the little shrine of St. David was incorporated into a large modern cathedral in 1181. (The shrine itself was stripped following the Reformation of 1536, but was restored in 2012. I attended the rededication service.) In the last forty years or so a wider tourist income has spread from the Cathedral and the coast to the whole area, and this has helped to revive Lower Solva. The shop "Window on Wales" has expanded into a quality emporium featuring bought-in and local clothes – in its early days Peggy knitted for it – and is incidentally famous as the sometime home of multi-million-selling singer David Gray. The garage where my first car was serviced became a National Trust souvenir shop.

That was the Cwm, but Meriel's family lived in the upper village. This, Solfach Draw or Solva Over There, set in a less rugged landscape with more room for housing estates, was always more residential in character. A center for society rather than trade. I found the last micro-shops here, also a junior school, a pub for the drinkers, and a surgery. The Post Office doubled as a small general store for stationery, light edibles, souvenirs, books and playthings. Here Peggy bought many a small present of crayons or puzzle-book for various children, a tradition she carried on with great- or great-great-nephews and nieces all her life. Peggy baked cakes for the family; Lydia regularly gave us a weekend parcel of packet bacon and other bought food which was less affordable for her than for us. After generations of sharing what little they had, these people could no more stop sharing than stop breathing.

Meriel's family worshipped at the Congregational chapel, named Mount Zion but always called Capel Ucha, Upper Chapel; Data was a deacon, Bill played the organ, Peggy taught the Sunday School, and Walla took many parts. The Baptists had their own chapel. Also nearby was the Memorial Hall (Neuadd Goffa), busy with cookery demonstrations or concert parties; these last were generally held in Welsh under the name of Noson Lawen (Merry Night) and included music, stand-up jokes and humorous sketches usually performed by local Pembrokeshire or West Wales people. In Wales as a whole there is a strong tradition of spotting and supporting talent in the performing arts, particularly in the Welsh-language youth movement (the Urdd) which runs summer camps and an annual Eisteddfod where thousands of children perform in music, drama and literary competitions. This tradition feeds into the week-long adult National Eisteddfod in which a tent city becomes the cultural capital of Wales. Meriel entered Urdd competitions at school in St David's, and in later life as a school assistant took children annually to the Urdd centre at Llangranog for weeks of sea, sport, and Welshness.

This Welsh-language culture was often surprisingly literary in a small-scale way. Books in Welsh tended to be short and physically small, presumably to fit into a working man's pocket and spare time. (Nowadays they are as varied and colourful as print books anywhere, and you might see, say, a homegrown "Sasgwats" next to "Lladron Amser" by Terry Pratchett.) Poetry is still highly regarded; the language is rich in allusions and long traditions. You will have seen that "Y Cwm" (The Valley) and "Solfach Draw" (Solva Over There) are much more expressive than the plain map-makers' English of Lower Solva and Upper Solva.

Meriel and I sometimes ventured north to Welsh-language concerts at Fishguard secondary school hall. For me, the English-speaker, it was odd at first to see DIM YSMYGU signs rather than NO SMOKING. Another detail new to me was a batch of empty seats in the front row, to which an elderly little man, rounded and stooped, shuffled forward with his entourage. He was D.J. Williams, writer and arsonist, famous across Wales for helping burn down a Royal Air Force bombing school in the Thirties. (Celtic arson against invaders has a long history in these islands, possibly beginning when Boudicca torched Londinium. Rather later, at a time when English-owned holiday

homes were somehow catching fire quite regularly, even my wife's pillar-of-the-community father expressed a certain sympathy for the perpetrators.) As for the music in these concerts, around 1970 their homespun blend of country and classics gave way to a more promising folk-based Welsh pop. Unfortunately, mass-market electric guitars soon took over, giving some performers a wider reach but ensuring that purist Welsh music remained only a minority interest. Our favorite singers such as Dafydd Iwan or Solva's own Meic Stevens could have had substantial careers in English – and in Meic's case very nearly did – but chose to keep working in Welsh, for love of the language.

Welsh, more properly Cymraeg, has its own non-English world-view. One example: it treats time differently. Take the simple sentence "Mae David yn mynd" or "David is going." It begins with "mae" or "is," establishing present-time before communicating anything else. The Welsh past tense is an after-present tense: "Mae David wedi mynd," literally the statement "Is David after going," rather than "David went." The Theory of Relativity might have been conceived differently in Welsh. Old language, old culture from a harder and simpler life; a different sense of time, a long continuity with the land and previous generations. *Very* long, for some Welsh ways. The garden walls around the family vegetable plots, made of stones cleared from the land, were until recently little different from the loose dry-stone walls of 2,000-year-old Iron Age fields nearby.

Am I exaggerating the antiquity of tradition in Welsh-speaking Pembrokeshire? Let me bring you a tale from local historian Roger Worsley. He liked to tell of visiting an ancient stone circle at Gors Fawr in the Preseli mountains, and meeting a Welsh-speaking shepherd there. *That man could tell the date and time by glancing at the stones "as you or I might our watch," said Roger.* Such people must have been reading the stone circle since the era of Stonehenge, at least 5,000 years ago.

That particular tradition faded and vanished as the English mass culture spread. The clash was violent at times; the Normans who had rolled over all England in a few years took two centuries to conquer mountainous and fiercely independent Wales, a fact which the Soviet Union and others putting troops into Afghanistan would have done well to remember. More usually, modern life brought a long slow cultural collision before which Welshness gradually gave way. I'm sorry to say that I was part of the process, never acquiring any great skill in using Welsh; we brought up our children as English-speakers, thinking wrongly that full English fluency would better serve their adult careers. Much of West Wales saw conversations in church or pub move from Welsh to English with the arrival of incomers better able to afford property, and as the language changed all the shared knowledge and world-view (remember that different time sense) died away.

So the Welshness I married into couldn't last. Family and neighbors grew elderly, passed on, or moved away. Meriel's home and most others have gone to incomers. My mind's eye, though, still sees Solva people of the 1970s. Characters and indeed physical appearances seemed more distinctive then. On the main road we would meet neighbors like the tall grave sisters Mair and Enid walking up in stately fashion, or Terry Perkins smiling within his huge black beard as he went to meet his crow-pie dining club friends. Football secretary Ken Jenkins, squat and always busy, would call needing the key to my father-in-law's garage – the football club stored their gear there, before the nearby pitch gained its clubhouse. Glenys on the corner would greet us with her smile and cheery wave, always wearing a light housecoat as did many women in those days of coal fires, manual cleaning and lengthy food preparation. Later I learned that Glenys' home was where the last local shoe-repairer had lived and worked: another micro-business, a cottage industry, helping the village to supply nearly all its own needs

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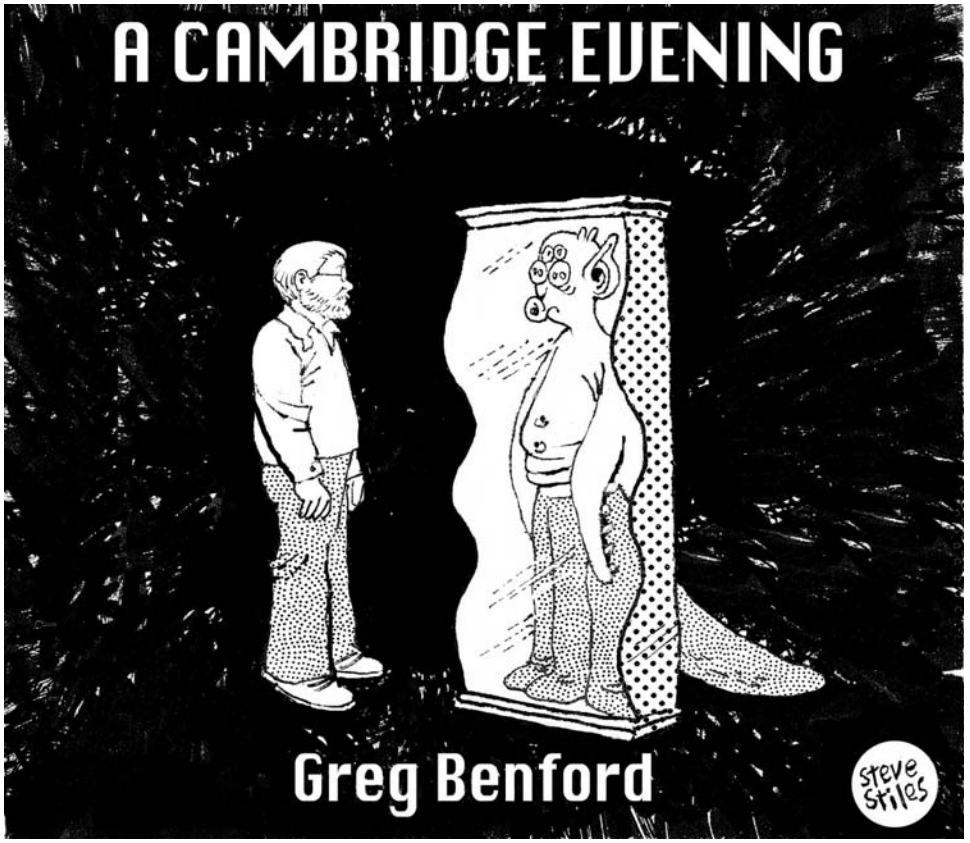


The invitation was on heavy bond in a delicious oyster color. I opened the Trinity College envelope noting it bore no stamp, apparently placed in my Institute of Astronomy mailbox by hand. Flowing script invited my wife Joan and me to evening meal with Professor Martin Rees.

Very good; the full High Table college show, then. In 1976 I was on sabbatical as a visiting fellow in Cambridge, England. I went there to study pulsars where they'd been discovered, but quickly became more interested in the luminous jet just seen in radio frequency maps of M87, the nearest active galaxy.

Martin Rees was then the Plumian Professor of physics and the director of the Institute of Astronomy, appointed just after the departure of Fred Hoyle. He had agreed to host my sabbatical, a stay that began my astrophysics career; I've spent the decades hence mostly on pulsars and galactic jets. In Cambridge I learned much more than I anticipated.

Precisely on time Joan and I walked through the Great Gate, the main entrance to the college, leading to the yawning Great Court. In the center of the court stood an ornate fountain, traditionally fed by a pipe from Conduit Head in west Cambridge, not the unreliable Cam River nearby. A solemn porter in a black bowler hat welcomed us, remarking gruffly on the chilly air, and nodding at the invitation as I presented it. "Ah, the Rees room."

Trinity College undergraduates passed in gowns of dark blue. A statue of the college founder, Henry VIII, greeted us from a shadowy niche above the doorway. Martin Rees stood beside it, a slight man with a

hawk nose and incisive gaze, bowing to Joan with a broad smile. I imagined we'd eat at the high table, as I had before for lunch, but instead Martin took us into a private dining room. I walked in with Joan and saw at the table two men and their wives: Paul Adrien Maurice Dirac and Stephen Hawking. Martin had said nothing to alert us.

Newton, Nehru and Maxwell were alumni of Trinity, and Dirac stood in such company; soon, so would Hawking and Rees.

The dining room was small, with room for six at the table. Soft lighting cast glows on the dark wood walls amid the scene of 700 years of academic elitism. The leadened plates stamped with the famed Trinity monogram framed a small salad. The flatware was heavy, dark silver and tall stemmed glasses ranked to the side. The servers wore formal tuxedo-styled clothes and professionally disinterested faces. The headwaiter handled all dishes with white gloves and led the two solemn under-waiters.

I said very little through the salad, letting Joan carry our side. She entertained them with stories to adapting to English home appliances, her tinkling laughter softening the atmosphere. I reflected. Dirac had won a Nobel in 1933 for the first relativistic theory of particles, the Dirac equation. "The great papers of the other quantum pioneers were more ragged, less perfectly formed than Dirac's," my friend Freeman Dyson had said to me when I was in graduate school. Freeman had taken Dirac's Cambridge quantum mechanics course as a precocious 19-year-old. Of Dirac's discoveries, Freeman said, "His papers were like exquisitely carved marble statues falling out of the sky, one after another. He seemed to be able to conjure laws of nature from pure thought."

This is an evening to keep your mouth shut, I thought, sitting at the centuries-old table and sipping a light Chardonnay (French, of course) served with the salad. Next, a tasty soup arrived, attended in strict silence by the stiff waiters. I noted that the French red wine was older than I was, a 1938 from the Fellows' Cellar. A Haut-Médoc, it was deep and rich with a surprising plum aftertaste.

Famously, Dirac's wife Manci spoke little, and he even less. His colleagues in Cambridge jokingly defined a conversational unit of a dirac—one word per hour. Dirac was a slight man and autistic, widely known as hard to draw out. He said this concentration proved crucial to his success as a theoretical physicist, for he could remain focused on a problem for a long time. He also could order information about mathematics and physics in a systematic way, employing his visual imagination and determination. (Decades later, I saw medical practice focus on this supposed disorder, "fixing" it with drugs and therapy. How many geniuses have we lost this way?)

I asked him how he concentrated solely on his research. "Don't talk," he said with admirable brevity and a smile. He also said he only stopped work on Sunday, when he took long strolls alone. He had struggled to find the Dirac equation for months, getting nowhere, then took his usual Sunday walk—and the entire solution came to him when he was crossing a small bridge. He hurried to a nearby pub, asked for lunch and wrote the equation on the back of the menu so he would not forget. He seldom looked directly at anyone, but this time he stared me in the eye. "There it was, out of nowhere."

"Do you still have the menu?" I asked, eyes wide. When I said it would be a charming historical memento, he dismissively waved his hand. He had used it to start a fire in his chilly college rooms.

The Navy bean soup done, talk moved on. Some mention of English politics arose, at a time when Maggie Thatcher was moving to the fore, Martin squelched with, "I'm entirely infra-red," which meant something like Trotsky. He had no wife then. Hawking's wife rolled her eyes at this statement, saying nothing.

As the waiters smoothly placed plates of veal a la brochard before us, Hawking changed the tone of the conversation with his halting words. He wanted to talk about science fiction. Martin had told him I wrote the stuff. I'd had the impression that at Cambridge science fiction was something serious scientists never would do, and seldom discuss—especially at a table where Newton changed the world over bowls of steaming lentil soup, and said so. Hawking gave a slanted grin. "Fred Hoyle has left us, but he is not forgotten."

Hawking talked in slurred tones about what we now call his "chronology protection conjecture." Why does nature apparently abhor a time machine? He said, "It seems that there is a Chronology Protection Agency which prevents the appearance of closed time-like curves and so makes the universe safe for historians."

Martin pointed out that there was strong experimental evidence in favor of the conjecture —from the fact that we have not been invaded by hordes of tourists from the future. All this discussion Hawking eventually included in a book in the 2000s, along with his fears that our TV broadcasts, would bring ravening aliens to our door. He thought about such speculations in the 1970s, but apparently kept them largely to himself during his climb to fame.

Dirac spoke about the walks he took around Cambridge, relating favorite routes in great detail, but otherwise had no small talk. Slowly Hawking turned the conversation around to what books we read, asking each of us. He then announced that since he was thirteen he had never bothered with the assignments in Literature classes, preferring science fiction. Dirac remarked, "In science one tries to tell people, in such a way as to be understood by everyone, something that no one ever knew before. But in poetry, and I suppose in fiction, it's the exact opposite."

To my surprise Rees assented. "But science fiction leads to science," he said. Dirac was silent and looked puzzled.

Stephen spent a long while relating memories of SF short stories he'd read. Like many fans, Hawking could recall ideas but not authors or titles. He was a big Robert Sheckley fan, I deduced, from what his remembered plots. Rees said he thought science fiction was like a literary dialect. It had its own vernacular and insider terms, its unusual pronunciation patterns and rhythms. A native SF "speaker" uses the argot of an audience, one that knows what Delany later called the SF reader protocols—signals of broader meaning. A good example is, "The door dilated," implying a changed world. Nods all round, though Dirac said he had read little SF beyond Wells and *Brave New World*. "Perhaps I should."

We all agreed that aliens in fiction serve as a distorting mirror to show what humankind is not. Hawking spoke with jerky gestures, fighting the erosions from his Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, which I knew as Lou Gehrig's disease. His speech was slurred, brief and almost unintelligible, his conciseness a skill that later worked well in *A Brief History of Time.* Hawking's fame was rising on his striking research ideas—that empty space wasn't empty after all, and black holes aren't black.

His wife, with her tight, focused look, scoffed at ideas like aliens, likening them to imaginary beings. Stephen retorted tartly that so were angels. A sudden silence around the table. I sipped the wine, which was excellent and still blossoming with rich new tones. This incident prefigured the issue of her Baptist faith versus his firm atheism, which eventually split them up.

I recalled this evening lately, looking over notes I made that very evening. My wife Joan died of cancer in 2002. In 2005 Rees was elevated to a life peerage, sitting as a cross-bencher in the House of Lords as Baron Rees of Ludlow, a seat in the County of Shropshire. By then Astronomer Royal, he told the British Interplanetary Society, "It is better to read first-rate science fiction than second-rate science; it's no more likely to be wrong and is far more stimulating than second-rate science. And I think it's good to read the great classics of science fiction."

After a five course meal we had the finishing treat: an English, less sweet, version of crème brûlée, known as "Trinity burnt cream."

Now Martin is master of Trinity College and the best known astronomer in the world. Recently, in *Our Final Hour*, he predicted

that one of the two following outcomes is inevitable for humanity:

** Extinction from runaway effects of new technology (nanotechnology, robotics) or else from uncontrolled scientific research; terrorist or fundamentalist violence; or destruction of the biosphere; or else*

** Our expansion into space, survival through colonization. He now advocates free markets and believes that the wealthy will push back the frontiers of space.*

Not infra-red any longer.

I never saw Dirac again, but have kept up with Hawking and Rees through the decades, visiting Cambridge often. They both use science fiction in their popular writing, whereas in the 1970s that was not the sort of thing you mentioned at High Table. Our world has changed, partly because of those men.

What distinguished them the most, I think, was their quiet verve, their wish to grapple with life. They were eager to deal with whatever came at them. Dirac probed our fundamental understanding of the world in his monk-like solitude. Hawking persevered against his crippling disease to become a major cosmologist. Rees cannily wove his way into great power, urging the Institute for Astronomy to the forefront of the field, becoming Astronomer Royal, and a major figure bringing science to the public as well.

The evening left a deep impression on me. From my time there I gathered background that eventually appeared in my 1980 novel *Timescape*, which explores how scientists confront the unknown. Cambridge is steeped in tradition, but its scientific culture is radical.

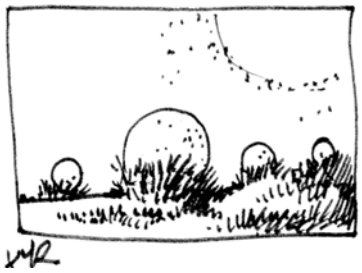
—Greg Benford

David Redd (continued)

before mass-production made us all so dependent and vulnerable.

How sad that this old community is not renewing itself, but is being replaced by a less capable, less closely-knit society, as big business drains the life from town centers and villages alike. In the Felinganol Baptist Chapel, where our friend Jenny was married and walked out under an arch of longboat oars, I know that the congregation dwindles year by year. Most of its familiar names such as Mair and Enid have gone. We do not miss the hard life without mains electricity or running water – still within living memory of the Solva-born – but we miss the people. A few local families do hang on, or some who have moved away retain old habits; my sister-in-law's home in Milford welcomes family and friends as Peggy's once did. But for the most part the old Solva is fading into the past. New houses are squeezed into tiny corners lacking any cultivable gardens, let alone field-stone walls. Productive employment is rare. The traditions now are Facebook and mobiles, the main interests of youngsters are dance music and video games – but not entirely. Around St David's and elsewhere Welsh is still heard, and schools still promote eisteddfodau and the Urdd. For the moment, while it lasts, you can still find something of that different culture I married into.

—David Redd



Escape From Lemuria

Earl Kemp

[Because I personally knew all the major players in this farce, Richard Toronto asked me to write an introduction to his book War with Lemuria, *the definitive compilation of all the pertinent Shaver Mystery data. However, Toronto's publisher, McFarland Books, had different things in mind. They rejected this introduction out of hand with comments like "His disdain for Shaver is palpable," and "interesting reading, but we'd lean against it barring some revisions and tweaking." There was nothing positive about Richard Shaver, so why pretend?]*

Ego, or lack thereof, has never been my problem. Always being in the wrong time or the wrong place has, if I ignore all those times when I've really lucked out and been in the right place at the right time. Never could make them happen the way I wanted them to be when I wanted them to. Part of that was because I had always been pushed ahead of my time. I was three years behind my contemporaries in school, physically, emotionally, and intellectually. I was always the runt of the litter, the "kid," the put-upon one, lagging behind and envious of my elders.

I had this pushy way of intruding, forcing my presence upon people I thought I admired. I didn't even think twice about it, didn't know how offensive it was to others, especially the ones who didn't want to see me in the first place.

So there I was in 1945, fifteen years old

and surely a pain in the ass, and addicted to trashy pulp magazines. That's when Richard Shaver's (who was 22 years older than me) "I Remember Lemuria" appeared in the March issue of *Amazing Stories.*

I thought it was a piece of crap, and the writer a complete idiot. It wasn't my kind of fantasy because it overlapped into the ridiculous and I was much too busy to waste any time on it. Besides that, the real world was falling apart as World War II was ending and Germany closing up the killing machine.

By June 1947, when I was seventeen, *Amazing Stories* erupted with "The Shaver Mystery" and I felt totally betrayed. My favorite form of escape literature and my favorite magazine were treating me to another round of absurdity. I didn't know if I could survive or not.

That was when I made my first foray into pretend adulthood as I ran away to Chicago to "find my fortune." Only I didn't. I was much too young and immature to make it on my own, so I surrendered to my incapabilities and returned home to the backwoods of unbelievably rural Arkansas (decades before Richard Shaver found it existed). I stashed away every dollar I could get my hands on and, in 1948, as I turned nineteen, I tried the Chicago thing again.

This time I made it into reality, almost. What I did was find a job and immediately did something else stupid, got married…and inherited a ton of the best part of the past.

Unknown to me, someone up there had elected me as the official depository and mechanic of the local science fiction mystique. Those who had been in charge during the 1930s and '40s were gradually retiring, being replaced by a whole new crew who would own the gestalt for the 1950s and '60s.

Good-bye to all that. Hello, Future!

They were all mine. I was the boss and I knew for sure that I was in control and I couldn't even force myself to be a little humble around them.

Ziff Davis had dumped its last load in Chicago by 1949 and split for New York City with Howard Browne the heir apparent, and it was up to me to gather up all the pieces, the debris of a glorious past, and at least observe them, if not push them, as they worked out new routes of existence.

By 1951 I was formally an adult, 21, and stretching my abilities to the max. I was working two jobs, attending regular meetings of the UofCSFClub, making babies, and a social butterfly soaking up everything remotely related to science fiction.

I forced myself onto everyone I could get close to, starting with Ray Palmer, my hero, especially after he hired Bea Mahaffey, my lust object for years. And there was the wonderful Frank M. Robinson, of whom I had been jealous for ages because he had been the person I wanted to be…the office boy at Ziff Davis.

And never-to-be-forgotten Frances Ferris Yerxa, and her and Leroy's children, and the ever-popular William Lawrence Hamling who became my good friend, mentor, and boss for more than a decade of unforgettable malice and resistance and rebellion against authority! Never trust anyone over thirty!

And Harold McCauley, and Chet Geier, and Henry Bott, and Curtis Fuller, and *Fate, Other Worlds, Flying Saucers,* and that damnably infuriating Shaver idiot.

A casual glance at a J. Allen St.John cover painting could send my mind into fantasyland for hours, if not days…or at least John Carter's fifty-minute hour. And there was Ted and Judy Dikty and Melvin Korshak and their inspirational Shasta Publishers…and in 1952 the best of all possible worlds, the World Science Fiction Convention…where I met all of my heroes and made forever impressions on them. Rog "the fabulous" Phillips was high on the list of favorite people.

I spent much time with Ray Palmer, who was by then a bit on the off-and-on commuting to Evanston, Illinois, from far off Wisconsin, leaving me lots of time alone with Bea in the office chain-smoking killer nicotine, blowing clouds of death over those glorious Hannes Bok cover paintings hanging on the office walls, coating them in filthy yellow scum.

Hannes himself had become a great friend by then and I would visit him once or twice a year in his New York tenement. And damned near everyone else even remotely associated with science fiction…all the editors, publishers, artists, writers…ever single one I could corner and force to pretend to pay attention to me as I begged for more and more of that good stuff please sir thank you very much.

Ray was my friend. Most of the time the two of us spent together had us both jostling for sanity. After our initial meeting I never saw Palmer as a physical mistake, because, for me, the man overrode the physical and he and I spoke the same language.

I ridiculed him, put him down at every opportunity, and criticized him for all that "puerile Lemuria garbage" that he kept perpetuating, pushing that pathetic Shaver guy light-years beyond his capabilities and his value. And Ray just kept coming back for more, that warm, reassuring grin on his face, those sparkling twinkles in his eyes registering how very much he, too, was enjoying our unrealities.

Flashforward! Years later, after Hamling had moved me and his paperback publishing empire, better known as Greenleaf Classics, to San Diego, California, the feds came knock, knock, knocking on our front door. It seemed that they needed us in Houston for a major federal trial regarding some alleged pornography called, in those days, smut.

And wouldn't you know it, Richard Shaver was right in the middle of it all. Seems, way back when, he became one of the corporate owners, thereby guilty of the alleged crimes against the U.S. citizens perpetrated by yours truly and a host of righteous First Amendment soldiers. And I rated a very special assignment.

My boss somehow felt the need to divert Shaver's attention away from reality (Again? His feet rarely touched the ground as it was.) for at least the duration of the trial. He assigned me that special duty…keeping Shaver's mind occupied. He expected that I would…again as usual…perform miracles. And I did.

At that time I was 37 and Shaver was 59. I had never met him before…avoided everything he ever published. We had not one single common element, nothing to share. Secretly I felt he was a total loser, an atrocious writer, and a mental nutcase. And even after all this time I was/am still right in those feelings.

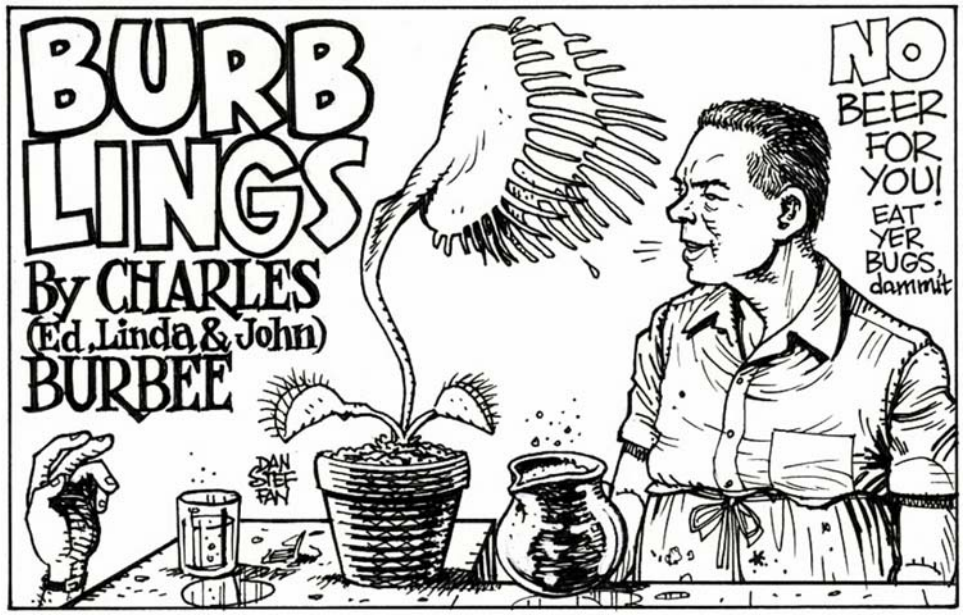
Nevertheless, for all practical purposes, for two weeks, we were inseparable…best buddies going the limit for each other. We prowled the streets of Houston, went shopping in stores neither of us even wanted to enter. We made a trip to Galveston and waded in the gulf waters. Ate far too many meals and drank occasional beers and never, not for a moment, did either of us dare mention Lemuria, or those stupid things inside those rocks, or that awful language, or the dreadful Deros…just two good old boys ploddy plodding their way through a nightmare of FBI prodding, illegal snooping, and evil name-calling.

Much to my surprise, spending that time with Richard Shaver wasn't totally negative down-time. I decided that, unexplainably, I sort of almost liked him. Just another good old boy from the sticks with too much imagination to be contained inside one mind. Too much memory of times and places as yet uncreated.

And then the whole thing got thrown out of court and everyone had a big laugh about it all and Shaver went back to Summit…

…and I was finally able to escape from Lemuria.

—Earl Kemp



THE VENUS FLY TRAP STORY

Awhile back, I saw in the garden section of one of our local supermarkets a garish red-lettered poster which said:

VENUS FLY TRAP! IT EATS MEAT!

I said to Cora, "Like all right-thinking persons, I've always wanted a Venus Fly Trap."

"So go buy one."

"A Venus Fly Trap is necessary for my well-being and happiness."

"So buy one."

Actually, I was trying to work myself up to paying the advertised price of $3.17.

"At that price? $3.17?"

"What's the difference, if it means so much to you to have one?"

I shook my head. "Too much," I said.

So Cora went over and bought one for me.

I took it home. It looked sort of wilted when I got the package open. It was sitting there in a pot with dry soil in it. I gave it a shot of water and it perked right up.

How to keep it happy was the problem. I carefully read the information on the package. It said the plant grew well in full sun, needed no fertilizer, and throve in slightly humid atmosphere. I tried to provide this as best I could. I put it in an empty ten-gallon aquarium and put on a plastic cover to keep in the moisture, but the plant didn't do very well.

I searched for further information about fly traps. Actually, I found some in my files. I'd been collecting fly trap material in case I ever became the owner of a fly trap.

I found that we have four or five flesh-eating plants right here in the United States. All of them live in swampy areas where the soil is deficient in nitrogen. They all extract their nitrogen from insects they have learned to capture one way or another.

There are the pitcher plants of the genus *Sarracenia*, which use the cup system; the victims fall into the digestive juices and are absorbed. The Cobra Lily is one of these. It grows in the swamps of Northern California and around creek edges, lying in wait. Another group uses the flypaper principle. It has sticky little hairs that wrap around its prey. One example is the Sundew, or *Drosera*.

But the most spectacular of them all is the Venus Fly Trap, the *Dionea Muscipula*, because its traps snap shut. More than 145 years ago, Charles Darwin called it "the most wonderful plant in the world."

It operates like a steel trap. Its clam-shaped traps stand agape until something enters and touches a sensitive hair twice. Instantly then, the trap snaps shut upon the intruder.

The blurb on the package the plant came in reminded me of a circus poster. It showed huge colorful plants with red and white flowers and with traps four inches in diameter; they were gobbling up horse-flies right out of the air. The actual plant was small with no flowers and two tiny traps about a quarter-inch in diameter. After awhile it grew another trap, somewhat bigger.

One day, when I wasn't around to observe, it captured a gnat or a Mediterranean fruit fly. The trap was translucent; when I held it up to the light I could see the tiny victim through the skin.

Another time it caught an ant.

But though it was eating, it was still drooping.

Was it lonely?

Was it yearning for its kind?

I saw another store's ad for fly traps. They had a much better deal. They sold two in a package for $3.59. I bought two packages.

My son Ed was visiting us and I gave him one of the packages. I planted mine in a pot full of washed sand, according to the directions on the package, and put them in with No. 1.

Well, now they had togetherness. Did they need more?

I suppose they did need something more. They were rather lackadaisical about the whole thing. They put out new traps as the old ones grew brown and dropped off. Every now and then they caught small insects, but at no time could I ever have described them as being healthy or robust or even doing as well as expected.

I never once saw them do their thing—that is, "snap shut" on their prey.

When I visited my son Ed, I noticed his fly traps were flourishing on his window sill in full sunlight. They had sturdy traps the size of dimes and had developed a taste for raw hamburger.

They turned eerily towards visitors who walked in the door, especially if the visitors were made of meat.

I asked Ed how he had brought them to that glorious state of lushness. He said he'd disregarded the directions on the package and had merely torn open the plastic shipping bag to give them air and had left them in their plastic root packing and put them in a dish of water on the window sill. They'd come to this flourishing state all by themselves.

They ate all the flies in the house and would eat hamburger off the end of a toothpick.

When we got home again, I looked at my traps. They were sickly. They were unhealthy. They were dying. And die they did, a week or two later. I had tried to duplicate the conditions of Ed's plants. Perhaps the therapy came too late. They all died.

I'd done something wrong or had failed to do something right.

I did some more reading on plants that suffer from nitrogen deficiency. I said to myself that if I ever got more fly traps I'd see to it that they grew strong and tall and mean as hell.

I might even train them to catch sparrows.

To my surprise I found that many desert plants suffer from nitrogen deficiency, too. Now, we have seven hundred different kinds of plants living in our California deserts. Had any of them developed a carnivorous appetite? It seemed pretty likely. A lot can happen in a few million years.

I ruminated on this for a time. Then, it struck me that in the Anza-Borrego desert, about seventy miles northeast of where I live, there is an expanse of thousands of square miles from which desert-sheep hunters sometimes do not return. They have all the niceties of modern science and technology like dependable vehicles and two-way radios; still, they don't return.

Years later, we might find their automobiles, marvelously preserved among the beer cans by the dry desert air, a rifle or two or a hump of discarded clothing, but of the hunters, not a trace.

It is my belief that somewhere in that bleak, desolate expanse, there are some gigantic man-eating fly traps—undiscovered except for some unlucky hunters. Or rather, man traps.

Since we haven't discovered them yet, they have no scientific name and here is my chance for immortality. I will find those man

traps. I will name them after myself.

What is the Latin form of Burbee?

(from *Esdacyos* #22, August 1973)

Ed: My dear father did give me a Venus fly trap, yet I cannot recall mine flourished. I remember concluding a Venus Fly Trap needs too much attention. I still feel uncomfortable that mine quit this life though I tried to tend it with care. How could my father know mine "ate all the flies in the house"? I believe he got that part about eating "hamburger off the end of a toothpick" from me. I tried feeding mine that way. Looking back, I believe a Venus Fly Trap needs a natural setting rich with dumb insects that stray in to its jaw of leaves.

Yesterday, I talked with my brother John about my father's adventure with the Venus Fly Trap. He said our father still had his plant when he moved to Garden Grove. So he must've found a way to nurse it to health.

Linda: I remember that bowl of over ripe fruit and all the fruit flies. I thought it was disgusting. I don't recall the Venus fly trap but it makes sense that Dad would have rationalized that he was feeding the plant!

John: When Dad lived in Garden Grove, he kept the plant on his table by the window. Very messy table—papers, mail, magazines, crossword puzzles in various stages of completion, newspaper clippings on a bulletin board plus a few coffee cup stains, maybe a dirty dish or two. Near the Venus fly trap he kept a bowl of usually overripe bananas, which attracted fruit flies. The always circling fruit flies annoyed me, but Dad delighted in seeing the flies caught in the sticky trap, watching it slowly close and stay closed while the fly was digested. He kept bananas and also ate a lot of microwaved potatoes, primarily for the potassium. The fruit flies as plant food and live entertainment were a side benefit.

BURBEE, BARTENDER

"Gimme twelve beers," said Pete Daily, jazz trumpetman, to me. The request was a fairly reasonable one. I was the only person behind the bar at the time.

This was back in the Fifties. I was serving a stretch at the bar during a meeting of the Southern California Hot Jazz Society. In those days, a $1.50 entrance fee entitled you to all the coffee, soft drinks and beer you cared to drink. And a plate of food around 5 p.m. We met the third Sunday of every month at the American Legion Hall near Griffith Park, right by the Los Angeles River. We had about 250 members, musicians and foot-stompers. The musicians played a lot of old-time music and the foot-stompers and musicians did a lot of listening and talking and trying to seduce each other. A lot of affairs got started at those meetings.

The club still meets once a month in the little town of Bell. Some things have changed. The food and drinks are no longer free, but must be bought from the Legion people. But the people still play music and listen and talk and try to seduce each other.

I was the secretary-treasurer at the time. I collected the money at the door and often alternated at the bar while the president of the club, Ernie, took over at the door. Our usual bartender was a man named Paul de Revere and it is easy to understand that he had to contend with a lot of bad jokes. Actually, he loved meeting new people and nudging them into making jokes on his name.

We filled the ice tub with soft drinks. The 50-cup coffee urn sat on the west end of the bar, wooden spoons, powdered cream, paper cups and sugar cubes ranged alongside. Half a dozen white, chipped enamel pitchers sat on the bar, too, and we kept them filled from the keg behind us. The people would come up and fill their own glasses. A couple of people brought quart beer mugs.

"Tell me, Burb, didn't some of your members run into trouble on the way home? I mean, with all that free beer?"

"Well, yes. Concrete abutments on the freeway slowed some of them down. And cops. Mustn't forget cops."

So, there I was, one Sunday afternoon, tending bar and occasionally touching my lips—for testing purposes—to a 12-ounce flagon of brew, when Pete Daily walked up and said, "Gimme twelve beers."

"Can't do that, Pete. We haven't got any trays and you have only two hands."

"So gimme a couple of pitchers, then."

"Can't do that either. We keep the pitchers on the bar. We don't allow them out in the hall. Why don't you ask a couple of your friends to come help you?"

"I'll do that," he said. But he didn't come back. Half an hour later I looked into the hall and there sat Pete at a table with some other people and six or eight glasses on the table. So he'd solved the problem his own way.

Another time, a banjo man, Aud Alexander, who's played with Paul Whiteman in the old days, came up to me, a great big professional smile on his face and asked for a beer.

"Sorry, Aud, but right now I'm out of glasses. Ernie and Norm are out gathering some empties and until they get back and I have time to wash up some, we're out of glasses."

The sunny smile went from his face. His voice dropped an octave as he said, "Gimme a beer, I said."

Thinking maybe he hadn't heard me, I repeated my story and indicated the empty shelves besides.

"I asked you for a beer, you son of a bitch," he snarled, and swung a fat fist at my face. Missed. For a split second there flashed through my mind the impulse of bouncing a chipped white enamel pitcher off his old bald head.

But I resisted the temptation. I'm sorry now that I did. For the rest of my days I could have gone about the world with a fine remark to offer up in any discussion on music: "I once banged a banjo player on the head with a chipped white enamel pitcher."

There is a brave ring to that sentence as it sounds in the ambient air. For all of the thoughtful and discerning people in the world who know banjo players for what they are, that statement would have been a candle lit in the darkness of North American culture.

Another time a nice looking woman, a regular, came for beer. As doorman, I had noted that she frequently came with a young man, a different one each time, and that she always paid for both. A patroness of the arts? Was she subsidizing young writers while they pondered a great novel? I never found out.

As she stood there pouring beer she looked up at me rather bleary-eyed and said, "Dnnna Wan ded."

"What?"

"I said 'Dinah Washington is dead.'" This time, each word carefully enunciated.

"Oh? That's too bad."

"Did you ever hear Dinah Washington sing a false note?" She leaned further over the bar.

"I don't know, lady. I'm not familiar with her work."

With a louder voice she declared, "Did you ever hear Dinah sing a false note?!"

"Hell," I said. "Even Elvis Presley can carry a tune."

She jerked her head back as though she'd been struck in the chops with a week-dead barracuda, then she leaned back toward me as said, in a low, confidential tone, "I hate to say this, but fuck Elvis Presley."

Then, with great care and commendable accuracy she picked up the two glasses of beer, turned, came back to me, leaned far over the bar toward me and said, with some gravity, "And fuck you, too."

Told you us barkeeps have more fun than anybody.

(from *Esdacyos* #36, February 1984)

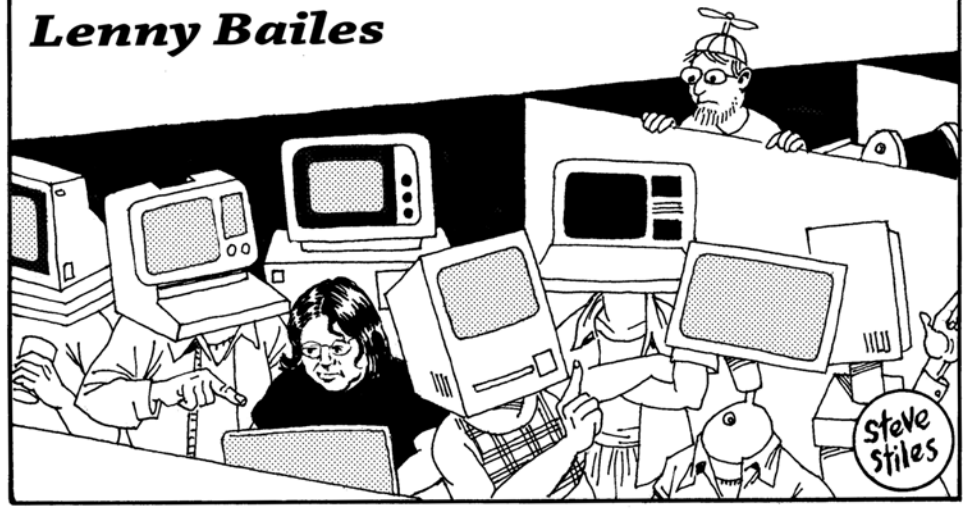
Ed: Yeah, my father did involve himself in the Southern California Hot Jazz Society. He helped out in several ways over the years. He brought some order to its doings. I went with him two or three times to gatherings of the SCHJS. It must've been after the freebie period, because I recall paying for a meal for a hungry performer short of cash.

By the way, I can attest concrete dividers on the freeway slow down drinkers, having run into one while boozed up. Thank goodness I never tested an abutment.

Linda: Our mother used to do the cooking for the SCHJS. She would be reimbursed for the expense of the food she prepared and my guess is that is why there was a charge for it. Even then food was expensive in comparison with income.

The "Proud and Lonely" Thing Re-examined

Lenny Bailes



This year, a writer named Jo Walton won the Hugo Award for her semi-autobiographical novel titled *Among Others.* (In 2011, the novel also won SFWA's Nebula Award.) The novel is framed as "fantasy," but large portions of it are simply the diary of an adolescent girl at boarding school, whose life is made bearable by the presence of books to read—mostly science fiction novels.

In the narrative of her novel, Jo draws quite heavily on her adolescent fascination with Tolkien—using his secondary universe as a kind of algorithmic spawning ground for a "magic or not" universe in the protagonist's own mind. The fantastic elements in *Among Others* are real, but their operation is not the principal force that drives the story. Instead, those fantastic elements are used to flesh out the protagonist's life-of-the-mind. The magical elements in the narrative reflect ~~in~~ the protagonist's emotional life. But the logical problems and solutions she discovers in reading classical science fiction novels are guideposts in her intellectual growth from a child into young womanhood.

Mori, the protagonist of *Among Others* has a heightened (some critics call it "distorted") sense of how reading science fiction novels has saved her life. The stfnal elements that Mori encounters in her s-f reading also cement the cornerstone of Jo Walton's rigorous intellectual life. Mori's insights into novels such as James Blish's *A Case of Conscience* and Robert Silverberg's *Dying Inside* inform her decision making process as she sorts through the problems of her life. Mori's insights reflect Jo Walton's own encounters with the s-f classics we all know. Those insights shine through the narrative of *Among Others* to re-evoke the sense of wonder in readers, who rediscover those classic works along with Mori.

The actual Jo Walton has spent the years since the 1980s as a fan diarist and s-f scholar. In addition to winning a number of awards for her professional fantasy writing, she's well-known in the larger fan community that operates outside of Corflu and the Yahoo E-groups. She coordinated the events for the *Human Culture* division of the Montreal Worldcon program in 2009.

Anticipation was an atypical Worldcon. Panel tracks were conducted in the French and English languages, simultaneously; and the whole thing was overseen by academic scholars with a strong track record of organizing smaller literary events. Fanzine fans had autonomy to do anything they liked in the almost-24-hour Fanzine Lounge; and Sharee Carton put the space to good use. She celebrated her return to North America from her native Australia by organizing (with Colin Hinz) a "classical" fannish oneshot—with contributions typed onto real mimeograph stencils and run off at the convention on a real Gestetner. Sharee told me she was inspired by the idea of roping younger generation fans into the oneshot so that their "first time" could be experienced with typewriter and stencils.

While events in the *Anticipation* fanzine lounge were in progress, the larger Worldcon experiment—in having a program with meaningful discussions related to, and *also not specifically related to,* the literature and production of science fiction—unfolded.

Montreal had one of the best Worldcon programs I've ever attended or participated in. On Friday evening, Charles Stross and Paul Krugman out-Heinleined Robert Heinlein's "As I See Tomorrow" in a two-hour open kaffeeklatsch. On a "Future of Medical Care" panel, I cited financial statistics to an anti-reform "just cut-the diagnostic testing" A.M.A. elitist. I also got to sneak in a few opinions about movie treatments of P.K. Dick novels, sitting next to John Scalzi on a panel called "Hollywood's Favorite Screenwriter," presented a slide show on Wonder Woman as a rallying figure for feminist fund raising, and participated on a "Why I Fan" fantrack panel with Amy Thomson, Keith Kato, and Steve Green.

I trace attendance at s-f conventions back to the time when they all took place on one day, and in one room, like some others of you who may be reading this. Exposition that I've been reading recently, in our tight little world of PDF fannishness, has been suggesting that we should make skeptical noises around the notion that what goes on in those little podium-studded rooms might still be *interesting.* For those of you tempted to share that skepticism, I'd like to offer in evidence the excellent Convention Guide produced for the *Anticipation-sf* Worldcon, with its Taral-drawn skunk hockey player cover. This publication is available for you to inspect, also as a PDF, on the *Anticipationsf.ca* website. You have my testimony that it's a classy-looking fan publication, worth checking out. If you browse through the panel/ event descriptions, you might even find one or two entries that stir a "wish I'd been there to see that" feeling.

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> "Most of the early writers of science fiction seemed to be either amateurs who began writing sf when they knew of no market for it, or professional writers on mostly quite other themes, who jumped over to science fiction for its freedom of plotting. Then it became more and more true that the larval stage of the sf writer was the fan, beginning with a scant handful of deeply committed fans who graduated to making the stories others would read."
>
> Frederik Pohl in "The Way The Future Blogs" 19 November, 2012

Recently, on one of the Yahoo E-lists where old fanzine fans hang out, someone posted the question "Who is Jo Walton?" upon learning that she'd just won the 2012 Hugo award for Best Novel. The question attracted some general answers along the lines of "Jo Walton is a nice pro lady who's always considerate and friendly with her fans." Because I've known Jo for almost twenty years as a fellow fan, I found myself wanting to answer the question in greater detail. This is an expansion of my response on that E-list.

Jo Walton is a hardcore science fiction reader, who turned fanwriter after discovering there were others like herself. She started attending s-f conventions back in the 1980s and contributed to a few fanzines back then. She got her writing chops down, and has gradually become a widely-acclaimed novel writer and science fiction scholar. Like some other "Profans" who've traveled this road before her, Jo has managed to do this without losing her friendly connections to s-f fans and fandom.

Like Terry Carr and Gordon Eklund (two examples of the Profan species who come easily to mind), Jo honed her writing skills through her written response to other fans, through essay writing, and through the

creation of whimsical literary pastiches. But, unlike the "Profans" we might cite automatically, if asked for examples, Jo's roots in fandom are less traceable to paper fanzines and more traceable to frequent contributions in the *rec.arts.sf.fandom* and *rec.arts.sf.written* online newsgroups. (I reprinted "Under Milk Dune," her whimsical reworking of Frank Herbert's *Dune* as a Dylan Thomas play, in *Whistlestar #6*, in 2002. It's still lurking around E-fanzines.com in PDF format; but that item may be her only appearance on E-fanzines.com.) Jo gained attention in fan communities of the 1990s through her excellent writing published and distributed in the USEnet newsgroups that predated the World Wide Web, not in *Innuendo*, *Lighthouse*, or *Genre Plat*; but her writing might not have been out of place in those fanzines. Her sendups of popular s-f novels and Shakespearean plays have been published and performed at a number of small s-f conventions over the last ten years.

On the Yahoo electronic lists, we old fanzine fans tend to reminisce with one another about old writing, old acquaintances, and old conventions. There's something about the larger Internet, and the fandom it encourages, that we, in "Corflu/E-list/fanzine" fandom, tend to overlook. We probably overlook it because it's been stated to us too many times, by people who impress us as being exploiters of our hobby:

S-f fans invented the communication paradigms that gave shape and purpose to the early Internet. By "early Internet," I should emphasize, that I'm talking about the *non-commercial* Internet.

The forums and blogs of the modern Internet are bastard children of our fandom, now come of age. The Internet has propagated more coherent writing by intelligent readers, writers, and artists than we ever dreamed could appear in an APA or in a genzine letter column. This is a truth that's hard to swallow for some of us, who look at "s-f fandom on the Internet" and see self-promoting publicity seekers, boilerplate fiction factories, and large exposition events steered by convention runners who proclaim themselves to be the "Secret Masters of Fandom."

We're familiar with (and tend to avoid) associations in s-f fandom that evoke the *Big Time Operator* syndrome: fandom as a commercial operation designed to sell people and their creative work as commodity products.

Historians and sociographers in the larger world tell us that the Internet is a singular paradigm. The "Information Age" replaces the "Atomic" and "Electronic" ones of the 20th century to create new shapes for contemporary thought. For some of us, that paradigm is hard to buy into. We grew up in a world where going to the library and reading thick books were our signature acts of nonconformity. Writing long letters to one another and publishing fanzines was our response to a society of "mundanes," the TV-watching non-readers who preferred to ignore us.

My involvement with the early personal computer industry and my life experience as a hippie/Grateful Dead fan made me see the evolution of the early Internet from a different angle than those fanzine fans who saw it as a just a mechanism for spreading more irrelevant blah. I met some of the inventor/geniuses who designed the computer systems that would become the backbone of the Internet and some of the administrators of those systems. They all read science fiction. Hanging out with hippie technogeeks in the late 1980s and 1990s allowed the "restless rebel" in me to combine with the "fanzine fan/diary writer." I saw the early Internet as a playground for "fannish communication" to be conducted through a new medium. For me, the early "online adopters" from Stanford University, who filled screens and screens with accounts of their MDMA experiences and debates about Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, were our 1980s brothers and sisters. They were teenagers and twenty-somethings experimenting and building their own version of fandom with computers instead of mimeographs. The early USEnet newsgroups were their letter columns and APAs. They had discussions of "expansive love" and s-f novels; but there were no prozines and newsstands in their lives, and they didn't get our stapled fanzines sent through the mail.

(If you're wondering how I know about the Stanford University MDMA trips and Internet involvement, it's not because I was on those newsgroups. I was employed for three years in the 1990s by a group of psychologists and social workers as a tape transcriber. The social workers got government grants to interview the students about the details of their MDMA trips. And I dutifully recorded the details of their conversations into WordPerfect documents.)

I was a hippie fanzine fan turned "computer geek" in the late 1980s. Shortly after acquiring my first personal computer, in 1986, I joined The Well (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link) bulletin board system. I did it because "Deadhead" (and underground DJ) David Gans told me to do it on his Grateful Dead Radio Hour. Robert has chronicled his connection with some other "Well-heads"in early issues of *Trap Door*: John "Tex" Coate, Clifford "Fig" Figallo, and Nancy Rhine. I met them after the heyday of their time with Stephen Gaskin in Tennessee. They were now Macintosh and UNIX computer geeks, living in Marin County. They were busy transplanting Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* into "cipherspace." The earliest version of The Well had no Internet gateway, but it did have strong ties to both the California hippie communal movement and to the burgeoning computer inventor population of what was to become Silicon Valley.

It wasn't very long before The Well acquired both a USEnet (early Internet) gateway and a science fiction conference. Soon after that, archives of *Cheap Truth*, the great Pro-fan/fan-Pro focal point fanzine, became downloadable. Bruce Sterling, the instigator of *Cheap Truth*, became a permanent Well conference host.

William Danner, Ted White and Jeanne Gomoll were never members of The Well. But Mike Gunderloy, the editor of *Factsheet 5*, had his own conference there. From its inception, The Well featured 'zine reviews, discussions of amateur publishing techology, and it had feminist discussion forums. After a time, I was no longer the only WELLbeing who shared membership in the tribe who knew the wit of Willis, Bloch, Burbee, and Tucker. A "fancy seeing you here" message from Jon Singer popped into my mailbox. And one afternoon, I dozed off at a "Well gathering" being held in Sausalito. The early afternoon was all about wine drinking and responding on the Mac to "send" messages from people not in the room. I dozed off for about half an hour, and when I woke up I was sitting in between Mike Farren and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, who greeted me with a cheery "hello." Teresa and Patrick Nielsen Hayden, and Tom (Scraps DeSelby) Weber joined Mike Farren and Jon Singer as regular Well contributors in the early 1990s. We all frequented the *s-f* conference moderated by Ron Hogan, as well as the various literary conferences. Teresa being who she is, she was most drawn to the "Words" conference moderated by Scott Marley, who, at that point, had yet to become a celebrated underground musical playwright.

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In 1990, I was lucky enough to be hipped to a more widespread "cipherspace" presence of s-f fans and pro writers by Patrick Nielsen Hayden, that great stalking-horse of technology in the world of amateur journalism. "Sign up for the GEnie *Science Fiction Roundtable* BBS," he told me. "Damon Knight is on there, posting like a neofan!"

And Damon was! The man known for being a founder of both the N3F and the Science Fiction Writers of America (at twenty-five year intervals), was also an early telecommunications adopter. He became a prime instigator in the largest pre-World Wide Web system dedicated to s-f fan discussion forums. One typical example of his many postings on the GEnie Science Fiction Roundtable:

> Category 10, Topic 11
> Message 887 Tue Apr 11, 1995
> DAMON.KNIGHT [potlatch] at 00:36 EDT
> Ray Palmer, who published the Shaver Mystery, told me that deros had melted his typewriter.

I invoke the long gone (and now mostly forgotten) GEnie SFRT to you because the conversation there was *rich*! There were

sections of it devoted to personal diaries, discussions of classic literature and history, as well as to the living history of science fiction. It was a place where fans, pro s-f writers, editors, critics and literate bystanders wrote to one another on equal terms. As in the best fanzine letter columns, the only criteria there for commanding attention were a clear, good writing style, and a sense of humor.

If I dared to poke my head into a certain kind of theo-fannish discussion, I would call the GEnie SFRT a focal point fanzine—for the expanding science fiction community of the 1990s.

The SFRT conversations took place as long streaming chunks of clearly-delineated text from individual participants. It was interesting enough to the core community of about a hundred regulars that we all spent several hours a day downloading topics through local modem connections, replying in an offline composition program, and uploading our daily series of posts. Like The Well, it worked because of a friendly interface system that organized the discussions into forums and topics. You could choose the ones you wanted to see and easily grab new messages since your last visit.

The GEnie SFRT wasn't the first of the online BBS forums devoted to the discussion of science fiction. It was preceded by a duller, s-f pro dominated forum on Compuserve that was overseen by Jack Chalker. The SFRT attracted a more diverse, populist assortment of s-f readers and writers than the Compuserve forum did. (A large number of writers and editors in the s-f community were lured into the SFRT with free subscriptions that allowed them to commingle with the fans. But there were over a thousand members willing to shell out $4.95 a month from their own pockets to participate.)

I remember Damon Knight's participation in the SFRT in the same way that I remember some of Harlan Ellison's letters to various fanzines, and the "fan-historical" exchanges with pro s-f writers that took place in the 1960s in the pages of *Beobehema* and *Lighthouse*. Damon was moved to declare in his personal SFRT Topic, one day, that anyone foolish enough to step into one of the "Transporters" depicted on the Star Trek TV show would be committing suicide—the person who stepped into the portal ending with the molecular disassembly of the body, while a new "clone duplicate" steps out at the other end of the "beam" with the recorded memories of the original. Would that matter to the Kirk who stepped out of the transporter? Maybe not, the first time. But the original Kirk would be dead, dead, dead!

This casual observation of Damon's triggered a long discussion on the "philosophy of consciousness" that contained hundreds of thoughtful messages. (I put in my two-cents worth by asking what would happen if the molecules of the original body could be *carried* to the reassembly station instead of being *duplicated*; and I traced s-f treatments of "continuity of consciousness in clones" back to Raymond Z. Gallun's novel, *People Minus X*, published in 1957.) The "continuity of consciousness" thing is, by now, a commonly-used trope in the canon of science fiction. It was mined by John Varley in the 1970s, and is, more recently, central to novels written by Cory Doctorow and John Scalzi.

Cory Doctorow was a young teenager when he first joined the GEnie SFRT. He enjoyed populating discussions that turned too stuffy with screens full of ASCII cattle. Cory was taken to task, several times, by SFRT moderators, who threatened to ban him for uploading too many impromptu "cattle stampedes."

-o0o-

Some recent fanzine editorializing by my old friend Arnie Katz proposes that, by this time in our life journeys, we longtime fans should be ready to set aside the fixation on science fiction that was such an important element in our first coming together. He argues that almost no one was willing to give science fiction stories the credit they deserved, back when we were young, so paying attention to them, then, was a mark of our discernment. But now everyone knows about science fiction. It's been milked dry in the media of TV and motion pictures. Arnie suggests that this rehashed, dull stuff attracts a different sort of person to attend modern science fiction conventions than we were, when we were kids. So, it's useless for us to expect members of this larger community (which he sometimes classifies as "all known fandom") to be our new comrades—just because they buy convention memberships and socialize with one another on the Internet. If any of these people are destined to become "core fen" or "trufen," then they should seek us out in our small "Jophan reunion" weekend parties, club meetings, and e-lists.

There are several things about this proposition that bother me. I'm trying to explain why by composing this piece for Robert. One obvious thing is that I enjoy my relationships with people who go to modern science fiction conventions, who are *not* specifically ajay publishers, and who are not well-versed in the wit of Willis, Bloch, Burbee, and Tucker. Earlier in this screed, I asserted that *the Internet has propagated more coherent writing by intelligent readers, writers, and artists than we ever dreamed could appear in an APA or in a genzine letter column*. One of the benefits I've derived from my *non-fanzine* associations at modern science fiction conventions has been the ability to meet some of these *very smart* people, whose thoughts are expressed *outside* of our eclectic ajay publishing community. (In fact, I first met a fair number of fans and pros I see at modern s-f conventions in the cipherspace of the GEnie *Science Fiction Roundtable*.)

Another notion that bothers me is the idea that interest in the literature of science fiction is a vestigial component of being involved with fandom that we should put behind us. If our community still voices appreciation for the great publications of Earl Kemp: *Why is a Fan?* and *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, should we not continue to recognize the spirit that drove Earl's 1960s contributors when that spirit manifests itself in the modern science fiction community?

It's true that the modern s-f community flourishes pretty much without our paper fanzines, letters-of-comment, and semi-private Yahoo E-lists. The s-f fandom we joined up with was about belonging to a community of artists, writers, and thinkers who hang out with one another for the fun of mutual entertainment. We didn't, and don't, involve ourselves with the commercial world of science fiction in the way that some baseball fans involve themselves with the careers of paid professional athletes. Unlike people we see promoting businesses on the Internet (writing businesses, "s-f magazines," and "Baseball Digests") we don't view s-f fandom as a market to cultivate so that we can pay the rent.

But I don't think the wish to avoid the BTOs means that we should now bypass the fans and pros who circulate in the current s-f community. That community is much larger, now, than it was when many of us first discovered it; and the common glue that connects the community appears to be stretched and more tenuous. There are too many people who consider themselves to be part of "fandom" now for us to ever get to know personally. We're not going to know the entire community—in the way that we forged bonds with one another in "pre-cipherspace," small convention, paper-exchange times. But that shouldn't preclude us from seeking connections with people whose words and thoughts stand out to us in the newer media of pixels and plasma.

I don't think we want to lose our connection to the brave public intellectuals who get paid to think and write about the future(s), either. We've shared the experience of having our minds awakened by reading science fiction novels and by discovering fellow science fiction readers—just as Jo Walton's protagonist does in the "alternate world" of *Among Others*. We know that world from our own adolescent experience—attending at chess clubs, debate clubs, and s-f book discussion groups, searching in libraries and at science fiction clubs for someone we can talk to.

Some of the "best of us" continue to find the family of fandom through science fiction reading; and some of us even still become "Profans" in the classical tradition that Walt Willis embellishes for us in *The Enchanted Duplicator*. That's still happening in the world where typewriter ribbons and correction fluid are scarce commodities.

—Lenny Bailes

LENNY KAYE

Thanks for sending the recent (months ago!!!) issue of *Trap Door*, even though I believe I missed the traditional responsive LoC the last time around. It's always great to read a traditional fanzine, especially since in my universe at least you're the last man standing (reminding me of the classic shortest story ever told, of the last man left on earth, and then there's a knock at the door....). But it's great to dip once more into the fandom that is so much than a hobby, and I appreciate your visitation to my mailbox.

It is kind of synchronous to be reminded of the pleasure of zines and their authorship, since I recently went to an exhibition of Ed Sanders' classic *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts* at Johan Kugelberg's great gallery on Canal Street. Seeing these mimeographed artifacts of the lower east side of New York's literary scene circa 1964—about the time when I was still a working fandomite—made me understand the parallel universes we all exist within. They had a classic "stencil" on exhibition, and it led me not only to search the fashionable "web-o-net" for further elucidation, finding Lee Hoffman's "filk" fandom centering around folk song, but also to unearth and leaf through those boxes of fanzines that move back and forth throughout the basement.

It is a pretty complete collection from the early '60s, and it was obvious I also bought a few collections since there were some early fifties zines (by such as Robert Silverberg and Bob Tucker!) and of course, *Hyphen*s, and *Cry*s and *Yandro*s and *Fantasy Collectors* (with unbelievable prices) and Bo Stenfors' tantalizing Swedish babe zines, and on and on…even, unearthed (though of course, in science fictionese, that might be unSaturned, or unMarsed) the 56th Silverdrum Publication of one Bob Lichtman, of South Croft Avenue, in LA 56. This, with the barely legible ditto'd title of I*mpromptu* #2, described how the 13th mailing of N'APA was put together in June of 1962, with fans dropping by your garage to assemble the various contributions in rather humorous detail.

It reminded me of the camaraderie that was/is fandom and also the hard work entailed in putting together fanzines. I was amazed, as I leafed through the boxes, how many names and addresses came together for me, the small towns everyone lived in, and how I could put together fanzine and editor in a display of memory that I thought only reserved for b-sides and 45 original labels. Not to mention the immersion into a world which required mucho reading and writing and keeping track of who be who. An amazing journey, and one which I will take again and again. Which then brought me back to Gordon Eklund's excellent comparisons of the Walt Willis Harp reportage in issue #27. Anyway, appreciations for the exquisite time travel, and for bringing me back to the present in good shape (without killing the butterfly of course, which would change future history).

And your discussion of the Farm also prompted a flood of memories. As a youthful hippie, of course, making the journey to the Valhalla of San Francisco in the Summer o' Love, I had heard much about the Farm, and even knew a few people who embarked upon the pilgrimage to settle in Tennessee. Perhaps you knew them. Susan Solomon worked as a dental assistant on the Farm, and I knew her—major crush—from college at Rutgers. In fact, in the great might-have-beens of life, she invited me in the summer of 1971 to travel across Canada with her in a van, which I couldn't do because I was engaged in writing the liner notes to an Eddie Cochran retrospective that was moving toward massive…have ever since regretted not being able to take that dream trip. Sigh….

And Mike Gavin, who was a carpenter on the Farm, and I played together in some college bands. Great people, and I always thought Stephen's message was quite righteous and seductive, though I am of course a resolute city dweller. Anyway, thank you again for the *Trap Door* that opens and slides one into an alternate universe. *{I knew Susan, though I don't recall much about her. And I definitely knew Mike, who these days is the preservation specialist for the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and coauthor of a book,* Barns ot Tennessee. *See more at http://www.mtsuhistpres.org/ about/staff/gavin.}*

PAUL SKELTON

I've read a few pieces recently by Earl Kemp and whilst they are invariably fascinating and full of famous names, I always come out of them seeing Earl as some sort of *eminence grise* and that, of the celebrity in his company, I should be asking "Who's that guy with Earl?"

For me the best thing about Dick Lupoff's "At The Cosmic Saloon" was Dan Steffan's illustrations. I accept that the poems were a neato idea, but they simply didn't do anything for me. Pretty much the theme for a few bits of T*rap Door* 28 in my case, sad to say. Oh, it was all interesting and readable, just not "very" interesting.

Gordon Eklund's piece lacked the magic ingredient his "The Great Gafia of 1967" had back in issue 26, so that when I finished I wondered what the point had been. I'd spent my time reading about a fan who doesn't exist when I'd far rather be reading about fans who do exist. Actually this is my normal reaction to fan fiction, which is why I was so pleased and surprised at having so enjoyed his earlier piece. So, just to get the last of my "Bah Humbug" grumps out of the way I have to say I did not enjoy your (admittedly totally successful) experiment at finding for a second time something less than delightful by Graham Charnock. Yes, apparently it can be done, but just don't do it again, please.

Oddly, Fred Smith's "A Boy and A Song," which given my lack of appreciation of the sort of music covered I might have expected to leave me cold, was nicely evocative of its time, place and sound. In the end I shared in his disappointment that the recording of the vital song was marred by being scratchy, especially as current technology makes cleaning up recordings so easy (albeit time-consuming). One can only conclude that the people responsible either couldn't be bothered with the clean-up, or alternatively that they wanted to maintain the "authenticity" of the original recording. Me, I'd have nixed the scratches…as in fact can Fred if the recordings he has are not digital. I know freeware is available to do this when transcribing from vinyl, but would assume it is also available for use on CDs. Unless of course the providers make the assumption that all CDs are scratch-free.

Which of course leaves only Roy Kettle's "Pees de Resistance," "To Pee Or Not To Pee." As with Gary Hubbard's piece in the previous issue, when a lot of us are starting to get on a bit, and older bodies are increasingly succumbing to the illnesses of age and deterioration, then writing about what you experience will increasingly make fanzines resemble issues of *The Lancet*, the British Medical Journal. In fact, once fanwriters tumble to the fact that this journal is even more prestigious than *Trap Door*, I believe they will begin placing their articles there instead, and then I fully expect to see *the Lancet* up for a FAAn award in the not too distant future.

I seem in many respects to be following in Roy's medical footsteps. One of the good things about my brush with bowel cancer was the fact that they caught it at the earliest possible pre- symptom stage thanks to a new national testing procedure. "You are sooo useless." said Cas, "You are the only person I know who could fail a shit test!" And indeed she was correct as both she and the Mearae sailed through theirs with flying colors. Well, color. Anyway, this meant that a simple operation was sufficient with no chemo or radiation therapy required. The good thing I mentioned being that, unlike those who passed the test, I now have six-monthly post-operative scans, tailing off to annual scans after the first two years, so that I know for a fact that from chest to groin I definitely don't have any problems with cancer… except that they said "It might not pick up a problem with the prostate." So when I picked up a possible problem with my prostate I was straight round to my doctor. I told him I knew that the bladder capacity shrank to about the size of a tea-cup as the years drew down, and that it became less resilient, "But three times in one night?" Resignedly the doctor pulled on his rubber gloves and opined that indeed three-times-in-one-night did seem worth checking out. The result, though (including a successful PSA test), was that there didn't appear to be a significant problem and in fact only a "slight enlargement of the prostate." Possibly mindful of his budget, he didn't put me in for further tests and simply suggested I don't drink anything after 8 o'clock in the evening. As I wouldn't dream of starting my pint of G&T before 2000 hours this immediately left me in a bit of a cleft stick, though on the majority of nights, when I'm only drinking water this hasn't proven an insur-mountable problem.

I wholeheartedly concur with Roy's implied approval of the NHS, and to some degree with his closing worries. The problem is that Health Service needs to be paid for and as a nation we are capable of providing infinitely better health care than we can possibly afford. If we paid income tax at a rate of 100% in the pound we'd maybe be OK in that regard, but of course we'd die of starvation without ever getting to use it. The NHS and Welfare State were brilliant ideas when they were brought in, with life expectancies meaning that a significant percentage of the "working man" never lived long enough to draw much pension anyway, and as he succumbed to serious disease it was generally too late to treat it anyway. With the age demographic having shifted so much to the red end of the spectrum, and with medical technology having improved so that vastly more can be done, at ever increasing cost, the concept of a national health service that is all things to all men may become increasingly untenable. I just hope we never hear Roy (or anyone) echoing Greg's fandom sentiments when speaking of the NHS somewhere down the time line.

In the vibrating ether, Mark Plummer's ignorance in respect of P.W. Clarke is somewhat baffling given that he could have simply googled him just as I did, revealing in the process that he's a man of incredibly many talents and a major global traveler to boot! In Bridgwater Somerset he spends his time building timber roofs, but tends to specialize in the bricklaying side of the building trade when in New South Wales, popping across to Kalamunda in Western Australia to manage a Superannuation Fund when he has a bit of spare time. Another of his spare time activities is bowling and back in England, in Longton, he scooped the Parks Merit Award for this in 1977. I'd have thought this might have been how he was spending his evenings leading up to his retirement but on 15th March 2012 he bought two prize heifers at the Kendal Show, presumably to improve the herd he runs at Coal Pit Park Farm in Haverfordwest. He's not entirely a physical person though, as evidenced by his co-authoring the paper "Implementation of an electronic personal dosimeting system (EDP) at Oldbury-on-Severn Power Station" in *The Journal of Radiological Protection*, as well the article on the Casas Grandes meteorite in the archives of The Natural History Museum. His interest in good living had him founding a Wine Merchants in St. Helier on the island of Jersey, and having made pots of money from all this he now invests it in New Providence NJ, with the help of some "International Associates" which, given the reputation of Noo Joizy, may or may not be a polite way of refering to certain people of Italian extraction, dubious morals, and an even more dubious taste in suits. Given the freely available nature of all this information, I am at a loss to explain why he is so secretive about what he gets up to in East St. Paul, unless he is simply embarrassed about doing it in Canada…whatever it is. Given that this guy pretty much seems to be a workaholic it beats me how he ever found the time to read those issues of *Astounding* and *Galaxy* that Mark mentioned.

Whilst in the process of helping out your readers, I can now assist Milt Stevens with regard to his wondering. All fans do not dream about fandom. Can't absolutely prove it, with my piss-poor memory, but I certainly have no recollection of any such dream. So no more tossing and turning for Milt, whose nights can now be free from wondering and possibly filled instead with undisturbed flights of fannish fancy.

I think I can see where Greg Pickersgill is coming from in his apparently making the leap from Peter's comment regarding Bill Breiding's article to applying it to T*rap Door* as a whole. Back in the day, when fanzines were an important part of fandom, there was much cross-referencing. Fanzines talked about each other. That's mostly where we did the talking and sharing of our interest in SF fandom. Conversely I don't recall a single mention in this latest *Trap Door* to any other current fanzine (though I can't be arsed to make a thorough check so may stand to be corrected on this). Of course it's now places like "In The Bar" where fans do their talking and share their enthusiasm for SF fandom. I was reading Marty Cantor's belief, in later issues of *No Award*, that fanzines are the most important part of fandom, and have to disagree. They once were important, but not anymore. Well, not to fandom in general at any rate. Oh, they are still important to us, but then we no longer define any essential part of SF Fandom, kinda harking back to Greg's point. Fanzines are especially important to me as I've tried the on-line wossname and found it just too overwhelming, and I've tried reading fanzines on line and find it it's just too clumsy and reader-unfriendly. So I share Greg's distress that "…fandom as we knew it is now almost completely gone, and will never again reappear…." Yes, one by one the stars are going out. Still, holding back The Night is no mean endeavor so more power to the elbows of those like you who are doing it to such good effect.

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

I'm sure I've commented before on your time on The Farm, and on the rather cult-like strictures it seemed to impose on its inhabitants (what you could do, when, with whom you could do it, etc.) but if it was in response to a previous issue of *Trap Door* I can't now find it. (That might have something to do with having retired my creakingly antique desktop PC and moved up to a spiffy high-end laptop. I've backed up (onto an external hard drive) everything from the desktop, including nearly a decade's-worth of e-mails, but a slight incompatibility between the then and now versions of the e-mail application I use means that to access anything older than last autumn I have to scroll back through a vast text file to find anything at all…and, as you might imagine, that is something I don't do very often.) So I can't ascertain whether I might have previously remarked that although communes present themselves as non-hierarchical alternatives to traditional lifestyles they are in fact even more authoritarian, because they cannot allow room for the expression of individuality (you do what you're told, or they kick you out); and even more oppressive, because everyone is required to take responsibility for everything (if you fail in this you're shirking, so they kick you out). Nor can I ascertain whether I might previously have commented, half-jestingly, that communal living seems to entail (a) the consumption of industrial quantities of brown rice and (b) suffering from near-permanent diarrhoea. Very definitely not for me!

Roy Kettle's article was both amusing and slightly harrowing, but I'm not sure what non-UK readers will make of his really rather gnomic comments at the end about the NHS "under and beyond the present Government's policies." Will anyone, especially US readers, realize that what he's talking about is the privatization-by-stealth of healthcare in this country, through the introduction of private alongside state providers and thus the enforced opening up of the whole because of the provisions of EU competition law? Probably not: one probably needs to follow the detailed day-by-day reporting to grasp the minutiae of what's being proposed and what impact it will have, and I doubt that such reporting is of the slightest interest to anyone outside the UK (assuming, which I hugely doubt, that there is any reporting of it outside the UK in the first place). Roy is presumably being gnomic because he knows either that he'd have to write several thousand more words to explain "the present Government's policies" or that non-UK readers won't be interested—or even, perhaps, that as a former civil servant he still feels bound by some omerta-like code of silence that prevents him from expressing a personal view on the political issues of the day (although as a civil servant myself, that's never stopped me). But all that aside, by the

time you publish your next issue the health and social care "reforms" that have been crawling through Parliament since spring 2011 will probably have become law, and we'll be deep into territory in which integrated care, in and out of hospital, will be a thing of the past because collaboration between different groups (the management arrangements for general practitioners differ from those for hospital surgeons) will be classified as a cartel arrangement under EU competition law and thus verboten. The effect of this fragmentation (where undercutting on price matters more than continuity of treatment) on the elderly, terminally ill and long-term sick can only be imagined (especially as Roy and I are edging towards that "elderly" category ourselves).

I read everything else in the issue but have no comments, other than to say that I couldn't see the point of Graham Charnock's contribution (perhaps it read better as a series of InTheBar vignettes) and had guessed the ending of Gordon Eklund's faaaaantale the moment the "real" "Earl Foss" introduced himself at the bus station (perhaps we've had too many of these elaborate hoaxes for them to now be at all surprising). Oh well

ANDY SAWYER

I enjoyed reading your reminiscences of the Farm. I don't think I knew you were involved with the Farm, and certainly the only references I've heard to it haven't come from within fandom, so it was an interesting viewpoint. Dick Lupoff's sonnets were first-rate; Roy Kettle's description of his, er, condition made me cringe in empathy and hope I never get so afflicted. My admiration for the Health Service grows all the time.

I'm somewhat hardened to such stories as I have a nephew and a daughter who are doctors who specialize in the ailments afflicted upon body parts which are rarely displayed at dinner parties (or at least the kind of dinner parties I get invited to), but even so Roy's account was pretty much up there with some of the classic descriptions I've heard.

I can't let Melissa Conway's laudable plug for faneditors to "think of Eaton" be unanswered by a similar "think of Liverpool." This gets me thinking about Joseph Nicholas's LoC about collectors/collections: "The point about such a collection (any collection) is that it should be able to tell us something about the collector, and for those insights it should surely be retained as a whole after the collector's death." Kind of true, but there are numerous reasons why collections can't be maintained as a whole (from the fact that collectors, or their heirs, might want to realize some of the financial value of a major collection) and it sometimes seems a little unfair to prevent other collectors from purchasing items which are associated with other collectors. (Collections are built up from other collections, perhaps. While most of Walter Gillings' collection is, sadly, gone to the winds, it's pleasing that we have at least a very few books which belonged to him.) But certainly, Joseph's point is a real one—perhaps collectors should be encouraged to share their lists/catalogues! Maybe that is a way round it. At least that way, while the books have gone their merry way to the next generation of collectors we will know what Collector X valued.

And we can start a game of "trace the book round the collections," which I have to say always fascinates me. *{Me, too. I can't do it much with books although I* do *have Bea Mahaffey's copy of the Lloyd Eshbach-edited collection,* Of Worlds Beyond, *which carries his inscription, and Redd Boggs's copy of the Blish/Atheling book,* The Issue At Hand, *collecting review columns that first appeared in Redd's fanzine,* Skyhook, *also inscribed to Redd with both Blish's and Atheling's signatures. With fanzines there are more examples: in my set of Ackerman's* Voice of the Imagi-Nation *I have two that belonged to Bob Tucker and one that was Laney's; Elmer Perdue's copy of an issue of Speer's* Stefnews*; and Ted Carnell's copy of the original* Fancyclopedia, *among many others—the "many" denoting the fanzine collections I've inherited over the years.*

GREG BENFORD

Fascinating, the Farm. Having grown up in farming towns and worked on my family's farms, I looked askance at the back to the soil hippies of the era you describe. Farming is hard work, often boring and routine. I had my fill of it, and though I am an outdoor type, don't romanticize it. The Gaskin setup seemed so much like the utopian communities stretching back to the 1800s! My home town, Fairhope AL, is what remains of a utopian experiment based on the theories of economist Henry George—but he didn't use charisma to lead city types into the fields, and didn't arrange plentiful women for himself...

Roy Kettle is at his amusing best—one of our best writers. Lupoff, Charnock, also! And Fred Smith, an adroit soul. He remarks on the Willises, and I recall the week I spent with them in 1969. They had moved away from Belfast because of the threats against figures such as WAW, the Home Undersecretary for the Brit Irish government. He took them seriously. By the way, has anyone heard of Madeline Willis these last few years? I know she was in a rest home outside Belfast. With John Berry gone, she's the very last. *{Anyone know?}*

Earl Kemp had a fab life, consorting with Hef & Co. I felt *Playboy* was intrinsically a mid-western idea of delicious naughty fun, tho Hefner had a lot of flexibility and advanced ideas many thought radical.

Gordon Eklund's fan story is perfectly done, and only at its end did I see he was using a plot from Thurber! Adroitly so, too. When I wrote that *Void* editorial as a teenager, I had no idea I was immortalizing Marlin Frenzel, who really did say to me, "A fan in need is a fan indeed!" when looking for a place to stay overnight. I said no; we had no room, and I knew my parents would find him beyond the pale.

Greg Pickersgill's memories of How It Was makes me suggest we should call that fmz-oriented age as Classic Fandom, much like the Coke campaign.

Pascal Thomas should consider giving his collection to the Eaton Collection at UC Riverside—we have large French holdings as well as English. Must say I wonder why Joseph Nicholas thinks the most important function of a collection is what it says about the collector.

JERRY KAUFMAN

Steve's cover is ominous and wonderful. The black and monstrous mass behind the door looks different enough that I would guess it to be by a different artist. *{But it isn't!}*

I found your look at back at Farm life to be pretty interesting. I read some of Stephen Gaskin's material—transcriptions from Monday Nights—back then, and found them intriguing. Not so much that I contemplated moving to a farm or the Farm, but, mixed with other books of the era, enough to consider living in some sort of co-op or commune.

Roy wrote well about a mildly harrowing experience. Tamulosin has worked better for me than for him, though not so much as to eliminate all problems. I also tried another medication for a year or more that was supposed to gradually shrink my prostate, but without any noticeable improvement.

The letter column reminded me that I must read John Baxter's *A Pound of Paper* one of these days. I loved his books on Paris, and his article in your previous issue about book hunting. It's a funny little coincidence that the same day I finished reading this issue, and thinking about the disappearance of bookseller catalogues, one arrived in the mail. Bob Brown, of B. Brown Books, has a book shop in the Wallingford neighborhood selling sf, fantasy, mystery, horror and related books (next door to several other book shops). The catalogue is full of first editions, signed copies, and rare volumes, mostly outside my price range. I'm not a collector, so even the books that come in under $50 are not ones I feel a need for.

KEN FAIG

I enjoyed Steve Stiles' cover of the *Watchtower* distributor standing at the top of a lofty flight of stairs with all kinds of monsters lurking behind that door. It reminded me of the six months or so that I studied with the Jehovah's Witnesses missionaries in my then-Chicago apartment circa 1973. Apart from their well-known refusal of blood transfusion, they have many interesting beliefs—including, if I recall correctly, that human beings cease to exist between their deaths and their recreations at the end of time. I never joined as a full-fledged member.

Your account of your time at the Farm is very interesting, and one of these evenings I'm going to do some of the internet research you suggest. My daughter lived in a converted school bus for two years and took a couple performance art shows on the road with it, until the engine finally burned out., Finding a replacement engine for a 30+-year old bus proved to be impossible. These days, my daughter lives with her cat in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood and sells zines at Quimby's Bookstore.

Being an old guy, I found Roy Kettle's article on his urological procedure interesting. I think the citizens of the UK are very lucky to have the NHS. Too many people in the US are without any health insurance, and too many people lose their jobs, homes and bank accounts because of illness. But I think it will take a century or more, barring unexpected developments, for healthcare in the

US to evolve into anything like the UK system.

"A Boy and a Song" by Fred Smith is a nice recollection of a rediscovered voice from the past. And Graham Charnock certainly points out some perils of social conversation. I am so poor at this particular art that I suspect maybe I have a touch of autism

GARY MATTINGLY

Marvelous cover by Steve Stiles and more fascinating material about the Farm and your life before and after. After reading this I feel like I had/have such a mundane life. Oh well. Next reincarnation….

Most enjoyable article by Roy Kettle and a very interesting illustration by Dan Steffan as time passes in the window above. "To Pee or Not to Pee" was a mix of humor and mental squeamishness on my part as to his operation. Fortunately I've never had an enlarged prostate or whatever and urine leaves my body quite easily and with some force although I've never tried moving a matchbox around with it. Actually, since I have a tendency to get kidney stones I need to drink more than a liter of water a day. So I have to relieve myself fairly regularly. Fortunately it is usually a quick release. Other than emergency room visits for kidney stones and a colonoscopy, I haven't visited a hospital for years, certainly no overnight stays and no meals. Roy really writes in a most entertaining manner with a great mix of humor and what actually happened.

Very interesting article by Earl Kemp on "Revisiting Hef." Another interesting life. I had no idea that there was ever a *Playboy* influence at a convention. Fascinating. Now I surely must go read some Earl Kemp fanzines. What have I been missing?

Enjoyable piece by Dick Lupoff, "At the Cosmic Saloon." Very nice artwork by Dan Steffan, great detail. Wonderful.

Graham Charnock's article on "The Art of Conversation" was also enjoyable and interesting. I liked the article's artwork by Steve Stiles. Quite a look on the cat's face. I'm not a conversationalist and never have been. I cause more people to turn to talk to the cat than many others in the world, I do believe. However, I frequently turn aside to talk to the dogs while at home or simply wander over to the stereo by myself and pick out music. I don't practice conversation and only in the last five or ten years have figured out that I'm supposed to ask "and how are you doing?" when someone starts a conversation asking me how I'm doing. You mean there's supposed to be this back and forth? It was startling realizing there was something actually behind those scripted conversations I had in German class back in high school. Once in a while I do actually get started talking about something about which I'm interested but am so bad at interjecting things, sticking words into the cracks and crevices that other people leave open while they are chatting along on their merry way, that I get sufficiently frustrated and simply shut up and shortly thereafter walk off. Of course, there have been too many times where I get cornered by someone who goes on and on and on and I don't wish to anger them but it really doesn't usually interest me listening to their monologue. Nope, never much of a conversationalist. The only monologues that I've really found fascinating were the ones I've listened to while working at Social Security, the ones from people who weren't quite in this reality, not the one with which I'm familiar. But so many of their stories were so sad and depressing.

Enjoyable fiction (I assume) by Gordon Eklund and more marvelous artwork by Dan Steffan. It looks like he took so much time and effort on all the artwork throughout *Trap Door*. Not being in fandom in 1962 I can only guess but many of those names look vaguely familiar, or rather bits and pieces of them do. And why does RR1 Box 63 make me think to myself that I've sent letters to that address somewhere sometime. Must remember. I don't think it was for the International Society for a Complete Earth (Hollow Earth Society of Missouri). Hm, I know that address but it is from a long time ago. Of course there's Ed Meskys, but that is RR 2 Box 63. Hm, I'll be pondering this on and off for days if not for weeks. Glimpsed little windows from the past floating by in my mind but more often than not too fast, too little in sight, in view. Maybe it will appear. They do sometimes.

"A Boy and A Song" by Fred Smith caught my attention. Now I will have to go listen to "When Your Lover has Gone." I actually am fairly certain I have "Blonde Crazy" on my shelves of DVDs. I'll have to check that out again too. Joan Blondell, ah yes. Interesting with a myriad number of references which draw me this way and that.

And then on to many LoCs Fascinating LoC by Mark Plummer at least to the extent that I again find things that never happened in my life: a book store where I could go have conversations about books I read (see above note about my conversational ability). I had a feeling that would be entertaining but there weren't nearby bookstores where I grew up, nothing near enough to walk to and my father would rarely (normally just substitute in never) let me drive any distance to such things when I actually had a car. Besides which I'd probably just walk in, look at the books, listen over someone's shoulder to conversations that sounded interesting but which I'd never try to interject something out of my brain and through my mouth into the store environment. I'm not crying in anyone's beer (bad for the beer you know) but it does sound like something that would have been nice but I most assuredly missed it.

And gee, Pascal Thomas wants me to write longer sentences. Um, something to ponder no doubt. I grew up in Kansas. I know there are writers who grew up in Kansas and they write long sentences. I'm not a writer and I grew up around a bunch of people like my father who quite frequently said half a dozen words in conversations. I remember sitting in bars and the quiet except maybe for a Hank Williams song on the jukebox. Bud and Coors in small glasses tipped now and then, slowly, time passing, what else is there to do if you're not out in the field or waiting for that next train to come in.

Again wonderful artwork by ATom, William Rotsler, Dan Steffan and Steve Stiles throughout *Trap Door*. Many thanks for sending it to me. Sorry I didn't LoC the previous issue. It was also fantastic. What happened to me?

LLOYD PENNEY

Thank you for many more details on your life on the Farm. It's definitely a different era (and country) for me, and something totally outside my own experience, although many years ago an old friend of mine from high school moved out of his parents' mansion and into a tepee in a farmer's field. He truly lived on the land with his own crops, and was there with the farmer's blessing for about two years before leaving to tour some of the world.

At first, I might have dismissed Roy Kettle's article as TMI, but amongst the fine writing and fannish wit is valuable info for someone like myself in his early 50s. As I age, who knows what exotic ailments may befall me? TMI may indeed be the information I need most. Tell us more, Roy…

Modern fans are such contradictions, and I'm as guilty as the next fan. We're appreciative of the newest technologies that allow us to instantly download .pdfed zines and store a stack of these zines on a USB drive on your keychain. Yet, we long for the days of well-bound books, the thrill of the hunt in an old bookstore, and a pile of zines printed on Twiltone. For readers of a relatively liberal literature, we can be so stuffy and conservative. Part of our charm, perhaps?

Pascal Thomas' loc reminds me of how few yard or street sales there are where I am, but what treasures we've found at those few. We were helping Yvonne's sister with a table at a regular street sale, and Yvonne wandered to another table to find a steamer trunk, one thing she's always wanted, for the trifling sum of $5. Sold! We are reviving our interests in costuming (that's where we spent a good portion of the early 80s), and the trunk holds a lot of costuming bits and pieces.

MURRAY MOORE

The monster behind the door—Steve's "Free Watchtowers Here" cover art—makes me think of Emsh. I bought two paperbacks recently, partly and mostly for the covers. Ace Science Fiction Special, *Mechasm* by Sladek, because of the Dillons art, is the partly. Ballantine Books 179, *E Pluribus Unicorn* by Sturgeon, because of the Powers cover, is the mostly; the pb is so fragile that it is less than a reading copy. *{I've done that, too, one example (also by Sturgeon) being Ballantine 165,* I Libertine*, which I wanted for the cover by Kelly Freas. This is my second copy, replacing one I sold off when I went to the Farm in 1971. It would be a "partly," too, since I read the book back in the day and have no urge to reread.}*

Your memoir of life on The Farm was interesting but I have questions. If few people left The Farm, how was money made to pay for the collective needs? *{Few went off the land in the early days, when money from individuals joining up and subsequent inheritances provided most of the funds; but as the years passed necessity took many off to earn wages in various pursuits, many of them construction-related. Along those lines, I did drywall hanging and finishing, trim carpentry, and roofing.}* And are you, post-Farm, a vegan? *{No, but I don't eat steak, either.}*

People, uh men, didn't use to have prostate problems, or many other now-common health problems, because they died earlier. Life expectancy continues to increase. Long living comes with a physical price, if not also a mental price. I considered stopping reading "To Pee Or Not To Pee" when Roy got to "wire TURP." Roy's description of pre-op fasting and being in the hospital the next day, waiting, is fresh in my memory: recently the cataract in my left eye was replaced with a plastic lens. My opthamologist was thorough: he drew a mark above my left eye. I was his cataract surgery patient number more-than-15,000 but less-than-20,000. Five years ago he fixed my right eye. And I don't watch the cannula being inserted into the back of my hand.

Anthony Perkins' speech in Dick's "At The Cosmic Saloon" reminds me that, in the previous century, while visiting the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre, a patient told me that I looked like Anthony Perkins. *{I've been told this, too, also pre-Y2K.}*

Who (rhetorical) writes better fan fiction than Gordon? Among the real names are made-up names that I try to decipher as fronts for real fans. The Seamount fanzine *Howl of the Rocketeer* I translate as Seattle's *Cry of the Nameless*. The opinion of Mr. James Thurber of Gordon's effort ("With all due apologies to...") is unavailable.

WILLIAM BREIDING

I feel like E. B. Frohvet who, back in the late '90s, was publishing *Twink*. When I published *Starfire* 9 his LoC comprised of a short note saying he found the pieces I chose to publish of no interest whatsoever. At the time I thought how could he have zero interest in a series of well written, engaging essays? Now I have to say I understand. Sorta.

Trap Door 28 was chock full of well-written essays. I just didn't find that moment of full engagement I usually do, have nearly always done, with every issue of *Trap Door*. Your own memoir in the editorial (which certainly deserved to be illustrated by Dan Steffan!) about how you got to The Farm, what you do did there, and how you left, was by far the brightest moment of the issue.

As a youngster (12-15 y.o.) in San Francisco in the late sixties, I was all over the place. Steve Gaskin was one of my usual stops. I suppose it's a testament to his charisma that at my age he could hold my attention, though I don't remember a damned thing about his Raps. The only thing I can really remember about him, aside from his countenance, is that he would often get testy if some hippie mama's baby began crying during his Rap and berate her in a way that seemed enlightened, but was actually humiliating—what I'd now think of as manipulative and passive/aggressive. But then being a Guru is a proud and lonely thing.

My family also went to the farm, but a very different one. We returned to Sheets Hollow in Pocahantas County in the southern mountain region of West Virginia. We set up a primitive homestead on a funky old farm. Unlike you, our back to the land dream fell apart quickly, lasting just a couple of years before we disbanded, most of us heading back to San Francisco.

I found your memoir engrossing and informative.

I think I understand why you published both of Earl Kemp's and Fred Smith's short pieces: they are time binding. Earl Kemp's piece on Hef, of course, for its fannish connections. I am hyper sensitive to tone in nonfiction. Earl's piece had a similar feel to Julius Schwartz's memoirs, *Man Of Two Worlds*, that I could not cotton to, a kind of self-importance that immediately caused me to be wary.

Fred Smith's piece was fine; I just couldn't find any depth to it, which is what the piece demanded to become a singular memory piece.

I should have found Graham Charnock's piece riveting, instructive, and funny since I am an introvert and often entirely unable to start or carry on a conversation in a social situation. (Which is why you always find me among old friends in my rare attendance at conventions.) But somehow I found Graham's piece only mildly interesting. Perhaps it would have seemed a jewel if I'd read it in the bar.

Gordon Eklund continues to charm. I don't receive a wide variety of fanzines, nor graze at efanzines. But it seems to me that Gordon must be the only fan writing this kind of old school faan fiction. I find is pieces curiously odd and charmingly retrograde. "Greatest Fan" is another to add to his Collected Works.

Finally we get to Mr. Roy Kettle's opus on peeing. Just let me say that I can relate, my prostate having enlarged over the years, causing many of the same difficulties through which Mr. Kettle has suffered. Hopefully I won't have to deal with such extremes. Roy's ramshackle style in his fannish or humorous pieces can occasionally tax my patience, but it is always rewarding reading. His political asides always please me as we are in accord there. I hope Roy will always have a strong healthy stream.

Before I end this LoC I have to say, once again, what amazing work Dan Steffan and Steve Stiles are doing for you. For me, in this particular issue, their art supercedes the words they are illustrating. Dick Lupoff's piece did nothing for me, but Dan Steffan turned it into a major work of Art.

I admire LoC-hacks like Taral and Mark Plummer who fashion little gems out of experience and apply it to the subject matter at hand. I'm rarely able to do that. Except in rare cases like my 19 year old LoC about precognitive dreaming.

I don't like writing negative LoCs. Although this really did not turn out to be one, I was afraid the Frohvetesque tone of it could be construed as one. Over all I'm thinking a faned wants a genuine response and deserves one. And let's face it you publish one of the few consistently excellent fanzines, ever, and I count myself lucky to be on your mailing list.

MILT STEVENS

Your editorial in *Trap Door* #28 is a very good piece of writing. You have mentioned spending ten years on a communal farm several times over the years, so it was a bit of information I had stored somewhere in the back of my brain. However, I didn't really know much about it. It didn't seem unusual. I had the impression there were a fair number of people doing something like that around the same time. *{Yes, the late '60s and early '70s were more or less Prime Time for communes of all sizes and configurations, both urban and rural. Most of them didn't last as long as the Farm}*

The idea of communal living never appealed to me. I don't think I was ever a really chummy person. Sometimes, I have difficulty tolerating people at all. It seems there is some sort of urge among many humans to live collectively. Plans for communal living have been springing up throughout history. These plans can work as long as there are mostly workers and not many drones. Collective communities tend to collapse when they have too many drones. *{That wasn't the case with the Farm. In the immediate area there were few outside employment opportunities, and since in-house efforts were insufficiently remunerative most off-Farm work involved driving long distances.}*

While reading Graham Charnock's article, I found myself wondering whether conversation is an art or instinctive behavior. Chimpanzees converse endlessly without having words or grammar. They even manage to communicate a few ideas. Maybe we don't talk just or communicate. Maybe we talk because we have to talk. It affirms our existence.

Talking to cats, dogs and small children is strangely satisfying even if it doesn't seem to make rational sense. They enjoy the attention and can tell what we mean from our tone. It's as if we are petting them with words. At one level, talking at is petting and being talked at is being petted. Deriving meaning from the process has replaced looking for fleas as our distant ancestors did.

FRED SMITH

First time I've consciously heard about the Farm. Very interesting your experiences must have been (and interestingly told, too) although, as you might imagine, completely alien to anything in my ken. Anyway, you *are* "saintly" as that guy called you!

Roy Kettle sure makes capital from his misfortunes in "To Pee Or Not To Pee" in the sense that he makes use of the material he's gathered thereby. But it's all very familiar to me since I've had the same prostate operation. Although in my case after release from the hospital I had to be quickly rushed back in because my urethra became blocked (probably by a bit of tissue) and I couldn't pee at all! So a young (female) intern had to insert a catheter to relieve the pressure. After she had gone, however, the attending nurse found there was only a slight trickle into the bag and summoned a more experienced girl, a big, beefy, blonde who took one look and, saying "That's no good," proceeded to ram the catheter further in to my bladder! AAARGH1 Afterwards another nurse told me that the blonde had been fired from the Gestapo for cruelty!

Fascinating stuff Earl Kemp reveals in his relations with Hugh Hefner and it's a surprise (to me anyway) that William Hamling was involved in the production of *Playboy*. I knew him, of course, as the editor of *Imagination* and *Imaginative Tales*, among the minor-league sf magazines of the Fifties. Somebody (it might have been

Bob Pavlat) also sent me early issues of *Playboy* but not #1. That nude centerfold of Marilyn Monroe was pinned up on the wall of the fan room at Oblique House, by the way! Don't know how Madeleine felt about that!

Dick Lupoff's sonnets are, indeed, marvelous as are Dan Steffan's illos, all highly appropriate to the texts. You are one lucky son to have on call an artist of his caliber. I missed seeing the trailer for *Psycho*, fortunately, before going to the cinema (on my own) to see the film and I had never read the book, so the shower scene came as a terrible shock. I left the theater shaking like a jelly! Much later I did see the trailer, as it happens, and was staggered to see Hitchcock wandering around the set giving away most of the plot, surely reducing much of the movie's impact.

Not much I can find to comment about your other articles except that Graham Charnock makes some pertinent points about conversation, although that's a kind of weird-looking cat Steve Stiles has drawrn. Gordon Eklund again comes up with a very nice piece of faan fiction, a specialty of his, evidently.

Your letterhacks are great, as usual, but that letter of Mark Plummer's is virtually another article and could easily have been printed as such. I can sympathize with his "mourning for a lost world" of specialist bookshops such as Fantasy Centre although, as he says, it's so easy to find a particular second-hand book on line through ABE. Trouble, of course, with the whole book buying thing is where to put them. They do tend to accumulate very rapidly to fill the space available just like work expands to fill the time available for its completion! Hence e-books. I'm sure you'll agree, however, that a new, well printed and bound book wrapped in a colorful dust jacket can be a thing of beauty in itself and can even smell good! NESFA produces some examples in hard covers but even some paperbacks and magazines (even some of the old pulps) can be attractive and desirable objects, never mind what's printed in them.

BRAD FOSTER

Love the cover from Stiles! If I'd played with that idea, I would most likely have gone with a more "usual" idea, big monster behind the door, but still pretty much in proportion to it all. Hiking the guy up the stars, rendering the monster from beyond all time and space in negative-reversal—it's a brilliant cover piece!

Considering the graying of fandom, and the majority of that being cranky old dudes, I think Roy Kettle's "To Pee or Not To Pee" article is probably going to hit home with a huge portion of your readership. It did with this old guy. I don't have quite the level of problems that Roy has here, but do find the urge to pee coming more and more often throughout the day. I too am now thinking in advance at things like movies, and no longer pick up the three-gallon soda cup on my way to my seat. (Side-benefit of that: I save the $14 they are now charging for a drink at the movies.) And since I pretty much mainline Diet Coke all day long, I've taken to stopping any drinking at all a couple of hours before bed, just so I won't have to get up in the middle of the night to drain out the remains of those final few cans. Ah, the joys of an aging infrastructure.

Great series of illos from Dan Steffan for the "Cosmic Saloon" piece. Oh, and all his other illos done specifically for this issue. I always wish I'd see more work from Dan throughout fanzines, and he does do some work here and there—but seems like you get the vast majority of his work in *TD*. Like Taral's LoC here, I too am starting to wonder what kind of hold you have over Dan to be able to get so much of this from him when no one else does. Release him from your dungeon, and share him with the rest of the faneds out there!

Graham's "Art of Conversation" made me think it's probably more of a science than an art, and one that I haven't done any studying up on, because I sometimes feel like I'm not doing it right, either. Actually, I have found a way around conversation by being totally self-centered, but *also* by being lucky enough to be married to a woman who is wonderfully caring about others. I think I've told this story before, but it's how I figured out why people still like me, even after they meet me, as long as I'm with Cindy. It goes like this:

Cindy and I are somewhere (say, in this case, an sf convention), and we come upon another couple we've not seen for the past year. I will, as I usually do, immediately talk only about myself: what I've been doing, reading, etc. Pretty much totally self-centered. If the other couple makes any comments relating to me, I'll actually listen and even respond to that, with more information about myself. Cindy will then ask them a personal question, something related to a comment one or both of them made the previous year, and that Cindy not only remembers, but honestly wants to get more info on, because she really does care about other people. So there will now be a conversation among the three of them that ranges over a variety of topics. But, unless it gets back to me, I'll just smile and listen to the "Brad is cool" song playing in my head. When they are finished, we will say goodbye, and as we walk away, I will hear one of them say to the other, "What a sweet couple." See how that works? I did nothing at all, yet I get to take credit for the wonderfulness of my partner. I am so freaking lucky!

Thanks for the heads up from Mark Plummer about the "Buried in Books" book. Found some more info about that online, and have now added it to the "books to get" list. If I'd known about this pre-Christmas, it would have been at the top of my wish list.

RICHARD DENGROVE

Roy Kettle's article "To Pee Or Not To Pee" really hit home. The medical treatment for his prostate in England mirrored closely mine in the States. For instance, it included being prescribed Tamsulosin, aka Flomax, aka Flow Max. In addition, my self-treatment has included incontinence pads, aka in the States as diapers and briefs.

I must say our treatments differed in certain ways, but it seems to be because Roy only had an enlarged prostate while mine was actually cancerous. Which may be why, for his Transurethral Resection of the Prostate (TURP), his catheter stayed in only for a day or two, and I waited a week to have mine taken out. I suspect they widened mine more lest the urethra be swollen during the anticipated brachytherapy, and a blockage develop.

While, in some ways, Roy Kettle and I are nearly kissing cousins in experience with enlarged prostates, Earl Kemp's experiences may as well have occurred in Outer Mongolia given my unfamiliarity with that world. I have had very little contact with the porn business whether softcore, hardcore, or middlecore. However, I got the impression it resembled any other business except that the big men are more jealous and more deluded. Not that I didn't like Earl's comment on Hugh Hefner finally reaching impotence, and his twenty-something plaything flying the coop. A few seem like they have quaffed from the Fountain of Youth but, for most of us, our youth passes us by.

On the other hand, Gordon Eklund talks about experience that I am just a generation or two from, and I was able to experience the residue of in '80s fandom. Yes, a lot of fans were badddd in them days, although few as badddd as his Greatest Fan, Earl "Pigg" Foss. However, "Pigg" fits just right as a parody on the multitudinous fans plagued with youthful high spirits and Aspergers—and, of course, with an aspect of him that has White Trash written all over it.

More than fans have changed, and now it looks like the media for reading is changing.. Mark Plummer laments this, the replacement of paper books with e-books. I have to agree, yes, a whole culture will die. On the other hand, I don't have the room for my conventional books. On the other hand still, I can't get the arcane sources for my research in e-books yet. Maybe never. Still, with me, paper still lives in the PDF era. I can't read zines that come as PDFs quite yet off my desktop, so I print them out. And they are indistinguishable from zines that originated as paper. In fact, a hardcopy collector welcomes them after I am through with them.

Which is why I don't have Dale Speirs's problem when he insists that PDFs be published in single columns. Printing them out, it doesn't matter. While my experience differs from Dale's on PDFs, I agree with Taral Wayne on dreams. I have had a lot of anxiety dreams during my life. Yes, where is my car key or house key? Come to think of it, where are my clothes? And where did all the time go to make me late for some meeting, test, etc.? There oughta be a law. These are just run of the mill dreams that Taral Wayne and I have had. Maybe they differ in details but they reflect the same idea, anxiety. Yvonne Rousseau is not a run of the mill reader if she can remember references in any book. She doesn't need Google or a database to tell her. She certainly does better than I do, who often has trouble figuring out what part of a book a factlet occurs in the next day. I can be as wrong as ten or twenty pages. My brain even sets the datum amid an entirely different passage.

JOHN NIELSEN HALL

Roy's excellent and funny article about his urinary tribulations was marred only slightly by his brief polemic against change in the NHS. Why he had to slip that in there, I don't know. The

punch line wasn't as funny as wire TURP.

I wasn't utterly convinced by Dick Lupoff's description of the poetic afterlife of *Psycho*. But the accompanying artwork by Dan was terrific. Indeed, all Dan's artwork in this issue was just brilliant, especially the header for Fred Smith's article. Dan Steffan: fan art genius. No, make that: Art Genius.

MIKE MEARA

Another fine cover, which I like better the more I look at it. This is a marker of good art, I suspect. When will you (or your artists) run out of ideas, though? When it's time to change titles, perhaps. And within, the usual crop of goodies. Usual? Oh, how blasé we readers become! Your tale of the Farm was almost akin to SF for me; you describe an alien world which I could never have been part of, then or now.

Roy's piece has the fine humor we have come to expect from him, but a good deal more besides, which is perhaps an indication of his development as a writer. Having spent a little time in hospital myself—though not for this particular op—I found his description of what it feels like to be an NHS hospital patient rang absolutely true, and he recreates it vividly. This adds validity to the somewhat political nature of his conclusion, though I dare say John Hall will still find something to object to. *{Ha! See above.}*

What I like about Earl's writing is that he reminisces with such relish. That said, his piece here was something of a disappointment to me, though both reminiscence and relish are present in ample quantity. Like the organization it describes, perhaps, it promised much but delivered something less. Though the culture and the people involved in creating it are fascinating, I was never attracted by the *Playboy* ethos, never bought a copy of the magazine back in the days when I did buy other—some would say lesser—publications of that type; it always seemed to me to be sanitized, hygienic, plastic, and despite its superior production values I was always rather repelled by it. I would never have wished to visit a *Playboy* club either, even if I could have afforded to do so; I fancied that in the unlikely event of me ever getting inside a *Playboy* bunny's costume, I would find that everything of significance on the body beneath had been airbrushed away, just to be on the safe side. Are the lap-dancing and pole-dancing clubs we have today any better? I couldn't answer that, as I have never visited one of those either. Just another sleazy sparkle from the same sweaty pasty, perhaps.

Pace John Berry, I'm not normally much of a one for fonts and stuff. I even like Comic Sans, so there's no hope for me. But I must say that the overall design for the Dick Lupoff material is absolutely splendid and spot-on. And Dan's outstanding art is a fine justification for reprinting it, if one were needed.

Speaking of art, Steve's header for Graham's piece is just perfect. The text seems to need a bit more work to sharpen the focus; though it's enjoyable in a minor way, it's some distance from being his best stuff.

Perhaps Gordon's story requires some knowledge of Thurber to get the most out of it? Philistine that I am, I lack that knowledge, but the tale seems to work perfectly well on its own, anyway.

As a fan of jazz in general and Ms. Wiley in particular, I was engaged by Fred's wartime memoir. Mindful that I have only a small selection of her recorded output, I checked on Amazon and found the very CD which Fred mentions, but it was priced somewhat higher than I'm prepared to go for a CD these days.

Good material engenders good response, and the lettercol is as vibrant as ever. That opening letter of Mark's would have been promoted to article status if I'd received it, I can tell you. I have the Chilli Willi album that John Hall mentions, and also the follow-up, "Bongos Over Balham." John's description of them as pub-rockers perhaps explains the endearing off-professional quality they display in these recordings. Fred's revelation that Bruce Willis's first name is Walter suggests a fannish remake of "Die Hard" in which Walter (our Walt, that is) saves the convention from Evial in some way. There's the idea, now run with it, somebody.

YVONNE ROUSSEAU

I was shaken in "Doorway" by the moment in the 1970s when you succeeded in jockeying the Farm's heavily laden Cracker Truck on to the shoulder of the road and thus narrowly avoided 'death and disfigurement' after the truck lost a front wheel whose nuts had inadvertently been over-tightened by another member of the commune.

In *Trap Door* 28, Gordon Eklund offers apologies to James Thurber for "The Greatest Fan in the World." Appearing in 2011, Gordon's story comes eighty years after the first publication of Thurber's "The Greatest Man in the World." Perhaps the slightly stfnal element in Thurber's story makes it especially appealing for fannish development. When it first appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1931, it was describing events imagined to occur six years in the future: in July 1937.

About fifty years ago, in my teens, I first read "The Greatest Man in the World" in the Penguin edition of *The Thurber Carnival*. This 1950s edition gave no information about the date of first publication, and it seemed natural to accept the narrator's claim to be "Looking back now from the vantage point of 1950."

Thurber imagined the youthful aviator Jack ("Pal") Smurch and his non-stop round-the-world solo flight at a time when record-breaking aviators such as Lindbergh and Byrd were idolized, behaving in return (as Thurber observes) like "gentlemen" who "wore their laurels gracefully." Charles A. Lindbergh won great and sudden fame in 1927 for the first solo flight across the Atlantic. Richard Evelyn Byrd made the first flight over the South Pole in 1929. In between these feats, in 1928, the Australian aviator Charles Kingsford Smith earned global fame when he made the first trans-Pacific flight from the United States to Australia. In the year 2000, in *Down Under* (US title: *In a Sunburned Country*), the American author Bill Bryson praised Kingsford Smith for "courage, skill, resolution, and wit," and ranked him as "possibly the greatest aviator ever." Bryson found it remarkable that in 1998 the American Scott Berg's huge biography of Charles A. Lindbergh failed even to mention Kingsford Smith.

Although Kingsford Smith died in 1935, he continued to be an Australian national hero. He was the subject of a movie, *Smithy*, in 1946. From 1966 until 1994, the Australian twenty-dollar note carried his image. He was agreed to be good-looking, modest, generous, resourceful and courageous—resembling the fictional aviator Biggles who began appearing in novels by Captain W. E. Johns the year after the publication of Thurber's story.

Reading with this background, I found "The Greatest Man in the World" very topical in my teens. Smurch is an unprepossessing tobacco-chewer: "a congenital hooligan mentally" who warns his would-be publicity managers that he refuses to "ack like a softy." It is true that record-breaking aviators always receive honors and gifts after their exploits. Nevertheless, a state senator is pale and shocked when Smurch mentions that he expects to receive some money. When I first read this, the open era of tennis had not yet arrived, and I was used to hearing an aunt similarly deplore the behavior of any amateur tennis players who were vulgar enough to turn professional.

During Smurch's forced seclusion, the New York *Times* has reported on his behalf: "My achievement has been, I fear, slightly exaggerated." By contrast, the idea of Smurch himself addressing the public is as unacceptable as the idea of certain cinema stars speaking out after the invention of talking pictures in 1927. This is an era celebrated in the 1952 movie, *Singin' in the Rain*, where Jean Hagen plays the silent-film star Lina Lamont. Lina's tones continue to be incurably unround (belying the promise in her tender lips and soulful eyes) as she unscriptedly boasts to her audience that "our hard work ain't been in vain for nothin'!"

One of the subjects Smurch intends to comment upon is his rival, "that – – baby-faced Lindbergh." Smurch inhabits a story written in 1931, when he and his author could know nothing of the fatal kidnapping of Lindbergh's baby son the following year, and of how the New York *Daily News* would hinder the police investigation in its unscrupulous eagerness for scoops. After Smurch has been thrown out of a window on the ninth story, the U.S. President is smuggled away from the scene, and the editor of the Associated Press has no difficulty in persuading all of the newspapers to agree on the same suitable "story of the untimely, accidental death of [the world's] most illustrious and spectacular figure." A national two minutes silence is decreed to honor "little Jacky Smurch, America's greatest hero."

Ability to fly safely over great distances is no guarantee of chivalry or good grammar. By contrast, in Gordon Eklund's "The Greatest Fan in the World," Earl "Pigg" Foss's fannish writings make it entirely reasonable for his readers to expect a man of culture and wit and shared interests.

Eklund's narrator is recalling events from 48 years in his past, when the fannish Rocketeers of Seamont, Washington, invite a spectacular new fan to be guest of honor at PuCon in November

1962. They know that he is a lumberjack but they assume him to be a "kid," since almost every new fan at that time is a young boy "still in his teens." Foss turns out to be more than twenty years older than they expect: "a hunched-over, tobacco-chewing, yellow-skinned man in a black leather jacket, filthy blue jeans, and scuffed engineer boots."

Instead of demonstrating the "great talent and accomplishment" evident in his fanzine, *Potato Head*, "Pigg" attempts physically to attack another panelist and actually assaults a Big Name Fan from Los Angeles. Instead of delivering his guest-of-honor speech, he shuts himself away in his hotel room with a twosome of paid escorts. He has already stripped and imprisoned a hotel maid, in addition to his drunken attempt to assault the twelve-year-old daughters of the fanzine editors who were the first to publish one of his letters of comment.

Unlike Thurber's "Pal" Smurch, Eklund's "Pigg" Foss is already on the loose. He is thrown from a window on the eleventh story after he announces his plans to go further, and to tour the "science fiction crowd" in every town, capitalizing on the fannish offer of "free booze, free beer, free broads." Both defenestrations are inspired by a kind of mob mentality, but Foss is spontaneously shoved by every member of the anarchic fan community attending the dead dog party, whereas one man only is delegated to dispose of Smurch on behalf of the global establishment. Although Smurch has a huge funeral, there are only five people altogether at Foss's graveside in Mule Creek.

Smurch has boasted, "I did it, an' I'm talkin' about it." By contrast, the man the Rocketeers killed was merely a front. Foss's taciturn elder sister Mildred wrote the letters and articles and reviews ascribed to her brother, using his name (as others deduce) "because she could."

In the early 1970s, "James Tiptree, Jr." would become the leading new male sf writer (as well as a friend by mail to other writers), and would then be revealed in 1976 as a woman: Alice B. Sheldon. Although Sheldon continued to write, Mildred Foss ceased communicating with fans after her imposture was discovered. Rather in the way that Tiptree's friends by mail mourned his loss, so Eklund's narrator recalls with nostalgia how the pseudonymous Foss "came and went among us in the quick flicker of an eye": "For that one quick shimmering instant the greatest fan in the world."

PASCAL THOMAS

Thanks for a very enjoyable issue of *Trap Door*, as ever. This time, nothing sticks in the mind as powerfully as "The Wendigo in the Woods" in the previous issue. Roy Kettle delivers an especially well-written instance of geezer writing, this ever mushrooming body of work about ailments of the aging (something that comes with the demographics of your audience, and I'm no exception, even if I haven't started putting pen to paper about it). *{Whenever you're ready…}*

Otherwise, Gordon Eklund delivers another topnotch piece of fan fiction (or should I call it fandom fiction?), and Earl Kemp is in charge of big time name dropping. Both pieces read in one gulp, with guffaws and immense enjoyment (but nothing cogent to say about them). Some people in your lettercol go on about dreams of fandom. And, come to think of it, I have them too. They're of the classic kind, labyrinth and anxiety, as Taral put it. Typically, I'm at a convention (or, sometimes, a chimerical mix between that and a mathematics conference; of course in the last twenty years I've attended many more of the latter than of the former) and I'm getting lost, or find I don't have a plane ticket back home, or some similar mishap. Sometimes the hotel morphs into a train, going I don't know where. I guess I'll keep having those dreams, but then again, maybe not. They say people who are successful at school have dreams about failing their exams throughout their life, and although I did have such dreams in the past, they seem to have vanished completely from the face of my nights.

When all is said and done, I was engrossed the most by your editorial about your years on the Tennessee Farm. On my first trip to the US, back in the summer of 1977, I was always on the lookout for rock'n'roll, scavenging record stores, going to clubs and concerts whenever I could. I was based in New York, mostly (several visits to CBGB's—this was precisely during the time that Son of Sam was in activity, and CBGB's was nothing like the way it's pictured in Spike Jones' movie, end of digression), but during a short stay in Boston I had the occasion to listen to the Tennessee Farm Band playing a free concert outside at the Government Center (yes, just like the Modern Lovers song). I sort of liked it, but it did sound like watered-down Jefferson Airplane to me (I wasn't familiar enough with the Grateful Dead to make that comparison). So, ever since, I've had a vague curiosity about where those guys were coming from, and your piece certainly satisfies that particular longing.

PAMELA BOAL

Many thanks for *Trap Door* 28. Real hold in your hand paper zines are such a treat, and *Trap Door* is a joy to behold. A great cover by Steve Stiles, though I think the trap door shoot of the previous issue will remain my favorite for some time.

"At The Cosmic Saloon" is neat in concept and execution, and well served by Dan Steffan's art work. I get the feeling that Dick Lupoff has insider knowledge?

Graham, there will always be those who have not grasped the art of conversation in any group. Alas, with texting and website chat rooms their number grows ever greater. Here we have the tools to hold conversations all over the world and what do we get? Strings of letters! I do not wish to LOL, especially when the letters are applied inappropriately every other sentence, or should I say partial sentence. The sentence, like my beloved paper books, is a thing of the past.

The looking for a rest room try Amazon quote gave me a chuckle. I am at the moment having a rereading binge, going through the books that Derek and I obtained when we first met and married fifty-six years ago. No way could any electronic device replace the memories held in those books. I used to tease that he only courted me so that he could come home with me (we were both in the RAF at the time) and visit the nearby second-hand book shop with its two-for-one exchanges. Ace doubles counted as one both ways.

Not all second hand book shops have died. Where our son lives in Somerset one has recently opened. Recycling has always been a considerable part of life where our son lives. People take their books to recycling centers and place them in the waste paper bin. Alas, it is not possible to forage in the bin. Now people take their books to the second-hand shop and trust the shop keeper to give them part of any sales. Any unsold books not worth keeping after a given time (I think it is six months) the shop then puts in the bin.

DICK LUPOFF

I haven't had a chance to read the entire new issue of *Trap Door* but I couldn't resist turning to Earl Kemps "Revisiting Hef." I've spent a lifetime in and around the media world, primarily on the print side (although I've put in my share of tours of duty in broadcasting and film) and I can't resist this kind of inside, behind-the-scenes stuff.

Earl was indeed right there in the middle of it. In the early '50s I was a college kid and I bought the first issue of *Playboy* off my favorite newsstand in Coral Gables, Florida. I must acknowledge that the nude photo of Marilyn Monroe (it was a full-pager, not a gatefold or two-page spread) is the single most vivid memory I have of the event. Hey, I was a not-quite-eighteen-years-old male at the time. You expect I should remember the jokes?

A fascinating era, and of course Earl writes amusingly and lucidly. Who could ask for anything more?

My thanks, also, to Dan Steffan for the splendid graphics he provided to go with my foray into the world of verse. I was actually paid for those sonnets—fourteen bucks, and they represented barely a month's work.

You know the old saw that goes like this:

Q: "How do you make a small fortune in the publishing industry?"

A: "Start with a large fortune."

Well, I suppose one might add another:

Q: "How can a struggling author of fiction reduce his income even further?"

A: "Try his hand at poetry!"

But I can claim in all honesty to be a professional poet, now. I have been published in a real book and been paid real money for my contribution thereto.

GARY HUBBARD

I liked Earl Kemp's article on *Playboy*. I read it in the Sixties mostly, back when I was in the Army (there were always a few issues floating around the barracks), but not so much afterwards. The thing is, one day I was reading one of those ads they used to run: "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" and I realized that I was not that tall, well-dressed dude with his fast cars and expensive stereo equipment (which is sort of interesting, considering how Earl says all those *Playboy* pads were owned by gay men), so I stopped reading it. I always liked the other men's magazines, such as

S*wank* and *Rogue*, better, and I liked the sweats. You know, those mags that ran articles in the *love-starved Arabs raped my wife muchly* and *I found the lost tribe of Amazon women* vein. I used to think that there was a kind of trajectory for would-be writers to follow: first, you started out in the pulps and confession mags (and Jack Vance, you know, once wrote an article that excerpted works by famous writers who'd started out in those places); then you went on to SF or mystery magazines; and you'd finally arrived when you started getting published in the men's mags.

I realize now that was probably a simple way of looking at things, because Bill Hamling came from science fiction and got into publishing *Rogue*. Never knew he was a friend of Hefner's tho. You know, there was another men's magazine I liked that was kind of stfnal: *Cavalier*. In fact, most of the guys I knew in the Army liked it better that *Playboy*, because it was a bit left-leaning. It ran a monthly column by Paul Krassner and anti-war cartoons, but I also remember an article in it about John W. Campbell and some cartoons by Ron Cobb (who I think was working for *Cavalier* at the time).

Lately I've been more interested in the sweats, tho. I'm thinking I might write a story set in the world of 1950s men's pulps, so I've been scouring the Internet for information, of which there is quite a lot, in fact. They may be gone, but they're not forgotten, and I've managed to snag a shit pile of images of old men's magazines for my vast and powerful jpeg collection. I've also recently discovered that there was this woman named Jane Dolinger who wrote for the pulps and was known as Jungle Jane. She traveled all over the world and had adventures with headhunters and in Turkish harems, and adorned her articles with semi-nude pictures of herself, which I think was really cool. Anyway, I discovered that someone wrote a biography of her not too long ago and I went looking for it, but it turned out to be fairly hard to find. Amazon has one copy, but they want eighty bucks for it, so I'd almost given up on finding it, but it turns out that there's a copy in our very own library. So now I've got it, and you know, she was a pretty interesting woman. Besides the pulps, she wrote about ten travel books and a zillion articles for magazines of all sorts. The biography is pretty good, too, despite the fact that the writer is a little embarrassed about the nude modeling, as he's trying to establish her memory as a serious travel writer.

JIM LINWOOD

I was particularly interested in Fred Smith's reminisces of the American Forces Network broadcasts as I had a similar addiction to the Voice of America in the '50s. Because of the great reception I believe that I must have been picking up VOA transmissions from a transmitter in the UK. Although primarily a propaganda vehicle, it never seemed to be that and gave coverage to such concerns as segregation in the Deep South. The highlight for me began in 1955 when Willis Conover hosted the Jazz Hour broadcasts each night in the early evening, which always began with Duke Ellington's "Take the A Train." Conover's clear diction and knowledge of jazz was a wonderful event in my early youth, introducing me to Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, Be-bop and West Coast Jazz. About the same time the Jazz Hour began, Ken Slater sent me a bundle of US fanzines which included reprints from a pre-war fanzine called *Science Fantasy Correspondent* written by one Willis Conover who I gathered was also friendly with Lovecraft. I thought of the great coincidence of names of a teenage fan and someone who, to me, was one of the greatest living Americans. It was Archie Mercer who told me that they were the same person. *{Have you ever seen/read* Lovecraft At Last, *an amazing book chronicling his correspondence with HPL that Conover self-published in 1975? It was reissued by a commercial publisher in 2002, but the original edition is worth getting for the two-color printing on thick creamy paper—an obvious labor of love—and the price differential is not great}*

DAVID REDD

Thanks for *TD* 28, read and appreciated—although not every word read, I confess. Being someone on prostate medication myself I did retreat rather early from Roy Kettle's piece. Vivid and detailed text, but a little too v-and-d for this reader. Oh well.

In the letter column Mark's and Yvonne's updates on book hunting are both much appreciated. The book search for old-format volumes is becoming a lost thrill, rather like the vanished wonder of venturing to Bali which used to be 10% exotic and 90% getting there, and is now 90% MacHiltonAirmiles. Nearer home, our local charity shops are going upmarket, repositioning away from the the tatty old books and magazines I still like.

Agree with Pascal on CD bonus tracks and their quality as added but different value: a nicely put observation. Personally I'd give the palm for CD reissues to Elvis Costello's "Almost Blue" where the original studio album, perfectly good in itself, is amazingly upstaged by the bonus CD containing dozens of knockout live tracks and outtakes etc, plus as good a booklet of personal recollections as you'll ever read anywhere. (And the Ray Davies/Kinks track Pascal mentions was a favorite of mine too.)

Bryn Fortey gets a mention, so perhaps I should point out that his disappearance from sf fandom was due to his moving sideways into the general small press scene ("Forty Winks Press", his columns in Cambrensis, etc.) He's still one of our kind, but operating in a parallel universe.

Greg P. and Fred Smith seem to be on common ground. Almost a cliche now: when we were young, "everything was a bit special" because to the twelve-year-olds everything is, unless it goes over their heads. These days, you have to have been brought up amid brain damage or its symptoms to appreciate and resonate with much modern popular culture. As Fred reminds us, you can't go back, but going forward with this lot doesn't seem very desirable to me.

Earl: P*layboy* is now a mainstream marketing logo. You see bunny ears on old lady's car mats, kiddie makeup bags or the like. This gives me the same feeling as when I sign off Hotmail and the MSN homepage appears: Rome has started to burn. As for William Hamling, I've started reading some sixty-year-old issues of *Imagination* (thanks Greg) from when Hamling was still trying hard, and very creditable they are too. Strange how my sf interests and *Trap Door* ingredients keep intersecting when I least expect it.

GREGG CALKINS

I wanted to tell Milt Stevens that I didn't come from Utah originally. I was born in the middle of downtown Los Angeles and didn't move to Utah until I was thirteen. But mostly I wanted to correct his false impression that I was forced to drink by an overbearing, bullying person.

Bronson was a very good friend of mine even if he was my major professor, I was the fair-haired boy in his department, and he was teaching me how to drink in an appropriate fashion for the rough miners I was going to be associating with. I couldn't relate to them very well as a refined college kid know-it-all, especially as young as I was, and he wanted me to be successful. And I didn't mind drinking, I was just sissified and thought that some kind of sweet mix and ice were essential...in fact, exactly the wrong impression he did NOT want me to give them if I wanted to be accepted. His assistant professor, with whom I worked the second half of the summer, was a Mormon teetotaler. A super-nice guy, but he would not have gotten along well in the bars of the hard-rock mining community, whereas Bronson was a good-old-boy as far as they were concerned and got along well in their world even if he was a PhD. So I wanted to tell Sabella is wasn't really a social aspect of the job of Mineralogy, but actually a public relations thing with certain people associated with the job. And no, Taral, they probably never even heard of Kahlua, although perhaps Gran Mariner, although they'd probably never tasted any in their lives and wouldn't care much for it if they did, not a "manly" drink after all. Since all of the things you mention have distinctly different flavors, not liking *all* of them sounds odd unless it's something to do with the alcohol itself. I mean, it took me some time to acquire a taste for beer when I was young, ditto Scotch, but once I did I found them quite enjoyable. I admit that I never did care much for the flavor of bourbon, though, America's native whiskey, and it's true the cheaper the brand of almost all of them the harsher the taste...really tasteful whiskeys, et al, really improve a great deal by being aged but that makes them cost more. Miners are not the highest-paying members of the working class and typically they drank the cheapest stuff available, which could be, I admit, close to what I imagine weed-killer might be like. But that was part of Bronson's learning curve for me...to learn to drink it without flinching or making a face. Back at the University, of course, we sipped dry white wines at the faculty club.

Beers, of course, like their offshoots of ales, stouts, et al, also come in a bewildering variety of flavors so I'm not sure how one could not like all of them, and homebrews, like Burbee's and Busby's were as different as night and day. I much preferred Burb's, especially with Isobel's Mexican food..."Golden Treachery" he called it, and it was.

DAVE LOCKE

Roy Kettle's "To Pee Or Not To Pee" strongly reminded me of too many of my own close encounters with the medical establishment, even though they were in a different country and not at all for a similar procedure. Unfortunately one thing which remained a constant was having virtually every medical employee encountered asking me the same damn questions about my medical history and then, usually, noting the results on some fresh medical form as though each of these people were Daniel Boone trailblazing some new path through the forest. This would start at hospital admittance and continue on through to when I was being wheeled to surgery after having been administered some pre- anesthetic and could barely talk. Why I needed a make-you-dopey anesthetic prior to being given a make-you-unconscious anesthetic was never clear but I do remember that it made answering these medical history questions progressively more difficult. When I reached the point one time where I was uncertain if I were correctly stating my own name, I began to feel that the whole exercise was counterproductive. What if, while in a less than optimal mental condition, I began getting the answers wrong? I expressed this reservation, which they ignored, so thereafter I began ignoring the questions after telling them to go ask the last ten people who'd asked me all that back when I had the capacity to provide reliable answers.

And then I remember from one encounter being in surgery and the doctor was explaining what was going to happen. I'd been given a dose of Demerol and I noticed that the surgeon began changing the tenses in his story. It was no longer about what was going to happen but rather about what had already happened. The operation was over, seemingly from one moment to the next, and I hadn't even noticed a break in the action. I did, though, have a vague thought about trying to obtain some Demerol as an aid to getting through movies I didn't really want to see as well as getting past some unwelcome social moments.

Sharing hospital rooms can result in some memorable experiences both good and bad, though most of them are merely forgettable. I'd willingly give up remembering the good memorable experiences if it meant the bad ones would go away.

Graham Charnock's tips on the art of conversation seem exceptionally insightful. Fortunately Cincinnati fans explained now- deceased Mike Lalor's conversational methods before I got to meet him when I first moved there. I found the stories all rather hard to believe until I did meet him. I mean, he sounded absolutely insane. But he wasn't, quite. He was a "compulsive liar," though, as Mike Glicksohn once perfectly described him. If you mentioned you'd met someone interesting, Mike had a red phone in his apartment that had a direct connection to the CIA and he'd tell you all about it. If you'd had a particularly bad medical problem, he'd had that but got over it with a strict diet of kale dipped in rutabaga juice (Jackie commented one time she was glad she'd never told him about her hysterectomy). No matter what anyone said, he'd get into the conversation using something he pulled out of his ass. The first time Eric Lindsay showed up in Cincinnati, I used some excuse to introduce him to Mike Lalor, and then I wandered off while keeping an eye on the two of them. Eric kept tightening the grip on his glass, but then swallowed the contents in one gulp and moved off to get it refilled, at which time he told me what he thought of my social introduction.

I see there's talk in the lettercol about fans having fannish dreams. Milt Stevens notes, "I had been hotel relations at the con. A couple of weeks after the convention, I woke in the middle of the night with the disturbing thought that I had forgotten to shut down the gaming room, and the gamers were still there." There's a bit of synchronicity in that, because the only time I remember having a fannish dream was when I was the hotel guy for Bill Bowers' Corflu 4. The dream was after I'd commuted home on Saturday night. Sunday was the day I was to do a "Dialog With Two Fans for the Live *Outworlds*," and the interviewee was Bowers. Saturday night I dreamt I was driving in on Sunday and couldn't remember where the damn hotel was, and felt compelled to drive around and around trying to find it. I never did find it in the dream, so I guess it's fortunate I woke up. *{Sadly, Dave's last LoC.}*

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

JOHN D. BERRY ("The new *Trap Door* showed up in this morning's mail, in time to be my breakfast reading. And it has successfully kept me from getting to anything more pressing or more useful so far this morning. So if anybody asks me why I'm not Getting Anything Done so far, I can blame you and your contributors."), **SHERYL BIRKHEAD** ("My own tale about *Playboy* simply involves visiting my brother in his bachelor days in Baltimore. He took me to the club but forgot to mention this to the Bunny he was dating or explain it all to his roommate who was also dating a (married) bunny and hsuband - and-handgun arrived."), **ALAN BRIGNULL**, **JACK CALVERT ("**Great cover. I looked at it and muttered to myself, 'That's not a trap door.' Then 'Oh. Yes it is.'"), **GRANT CANFIELD** ("Steve's cover is one of the two or three best pieces of fan art I've seen in the last 25 years. Outstanding! I'm totally jealous. Kudos also for your great interior pieces, especially for the Lupoff verses. I especially liked the whimsical touch of the tiny little mouse figures."), **RICH COAD** ("Lovely cover by Steve and some superb Steffan illustrations throughout. Why have neither of these guys won a fan artist Hugo? It ain't right, I tell you."), **MELISSA CONWAY**, **MARLIN FRENZEL JOHN-HENRI HOLMBERG** ("Gordon Eklund is by now well on his way to proving something I thought virtually impossible: that faan fiction can in fact be written as bona fide literature."), **JAY KINNEY** ("Very funny cover by Steve and mind-blowing illustrations inside by Dan."), **HOPE LEIBOWITZ**, **CURT PHILLIPS**, **BRUCE TOWNLEY** ("I thought Roy Kettle's article was a pip—both a very personal tale of his passage through the NHS and even towards the end a thoughtful meditation on the overarching effects of that same system. Also, I feel it should be noted, that while reading it I became super-conscious of how many times I got up to take a leak."), **HENRY WELCH** ("I found your narrative about The Farm very interesting. Letha and I gave some thought years ago to creating and/or participating in some kind of communal living, but never progressed very far beyond just talk. Part of our reluctance was finding the right location that would still allow me to have a traditional career and then identifying the right people who would also participate.").

Thanks to all who wrote.