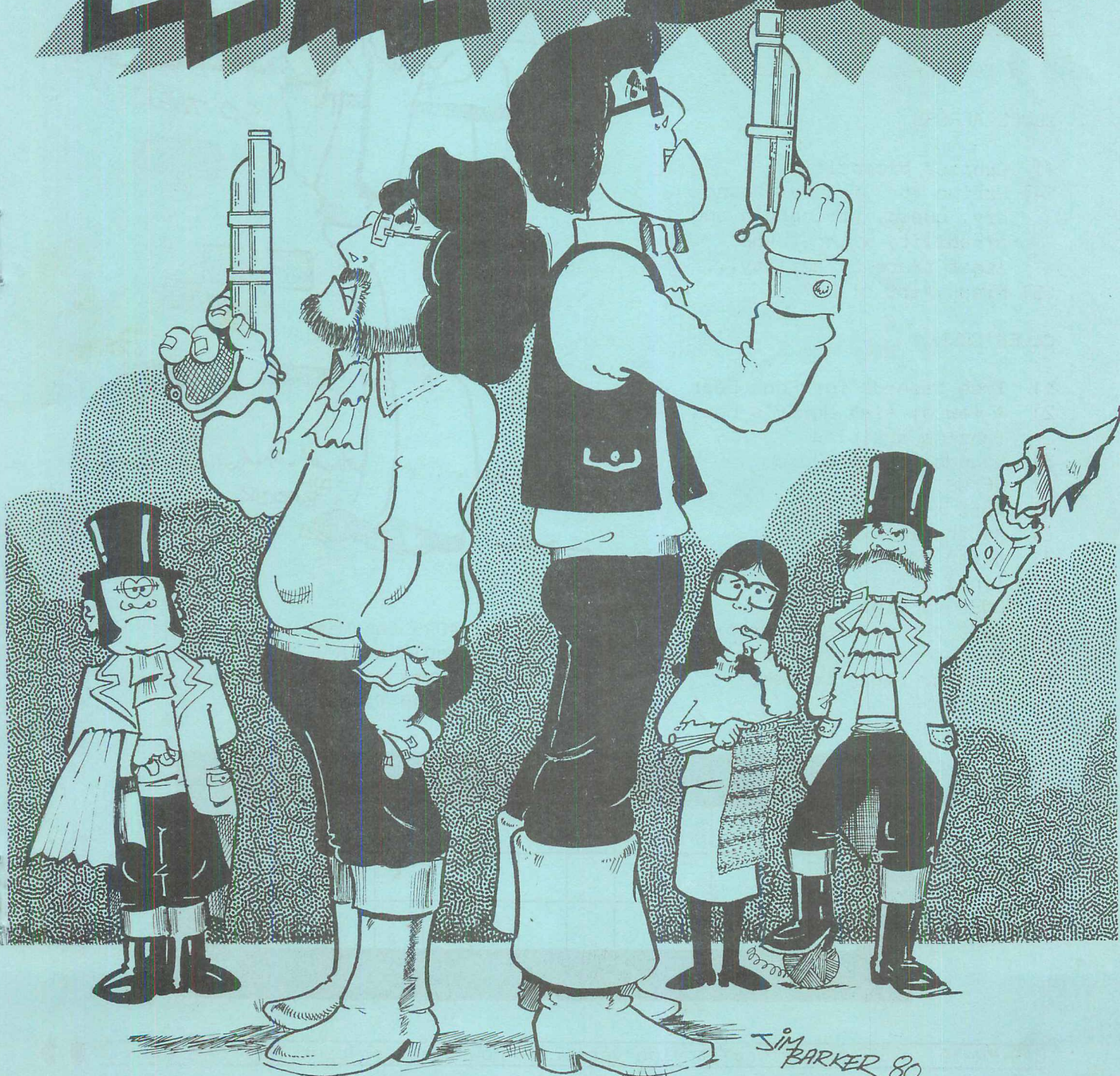


SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL TAFF CANDIDATE!

# TAFF-DOO





BARKER TO LANGFORD: 'OK, let's support each other and stomp on anyone else...'

LANGFORD TO BARKER:

Jim Barker I loathe and abominate  
(Scots rivals are easy to comminate...)  
But just for a laff  
If he's standing for TAFF,  
I suppose it's my duty to nominate.

BARKER TO LANGFORD: → → → → → → → → →

LANGFORD TO BARKER:

a TAFF crossword follows.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1) Dubious proposition
- 14) Recipe for victory: hound cry, queen, stronghold and affability without the least trace of ability...
- 15) Freak fart of BR?

CLUES DOWN

- 1) Tree hazards for Pooh Bear
- 2) A few of Alan Dorey's best fanzine articles
- 3) Sounds like the end
- 4) NF(US)?
- 5) Rest & relaxation
- 6) Southerly exit
- 7) Keith Walker zine and its final grade
- 8) Cockney pipe
- 9) Left out vowels in error
- 10) Famous golfing river
- 11) Amateur athletic association

- 12) 4095 (as Martin Hoare would say)
- 13) Every good boy deserves three favours



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14												
15												

BARKER TO LANGFORD (or was it vice-versa?): 'How about a joint TAFF fanzine...'



**WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:** An unholy compact has been made between BEASTLY JIM BARKER (the Fiend of Falkirk), a known fanartist, and LECHEROUS DAVE LANGFORD (the Reading Ripper), who is guilty on several counts of near-literacy. Between them they produce TAFF-DDU, and the fabric of Western Civilization begins to crumble. What chance has the hapless READER against this joint assault? What consolation is it that his/her 60p went to a Worthy Cause (see p.13)? Read on:

## *TD or not TD?*

*Well, is it or isn't it?*

Have patience. An announcement follows: This is *Taff-Ddu*, a special fanzine produced by Dave Langford and Jim Barker (not necessarily in that order) to raise vast sums of money for TAFF. Only available for money (60p, or 75p by post, at the very least: dollar rates to be fixed by our US agent), from DAVE LANGFORD, 22 NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, READING, BERKS, RG2 7PW, or JIM BARKER, 113 WINDSOR ROAD, FALKIRK, CENTRAL SCOTLAND, FK2 5DB. All proceeds go to TAFF.

*That's pretty unambiguous.*

On the other hand, this is also *Twll-Ddu* 17 from Dave Langford, since it's absorbed the energy and precious bodily fluids which might have generated a 'normal' TD. Trades etc. are suspended for this issue; TD completists should send vast sums of money (as above) at once.

*I suppose you need some such miserable cover-up, considering it's been 7 months since TD16. Running out of ideas, Langford? Burnt out with only 42 fanzines to your name? Time to move over and give Alan Dorey or someone the chance to rise on stepping-stones of dead Langford to become the Keith Walker of the new decade. Even this editorial dialogue business is a bit rancid, you know.*

I was coming to that. Look at the rewards which came to past users of the grotty dialogue gimmick: Dick Geis with enough model spaceships to supply the *Star Wars* sequel or (at a conservative estimate) 5,271,009 episodes of *Dr Who*; Terry Hughes, winning TAFF on his first attempt; Chris Priest, incredibly famous pro and doyen of the Jacqueline Lichtenberg fan club...

*So which reward do you expect?*

Ah, no doubt I'll win TAFF as often as Geis, receive as many Hugos as Priest and acquire the internationally famous professionalism of Hughes. And all because I let my attention wander at Yorcon. There I was one morning, happy and carefree as a tissue sample preserved in the pathology lab, when Peters Weston and Roberts galvanized me into inaction by telling me to stand for TAFF. "Hic," I remember pointing out to them; "Me... TAFF... you... nominate?" Peter Roberts gave me a look which would have skinned a carrot at 40 paces. "You silly person," he said, "I'm the impartial administrator."

*Little did you know that at that very moment, Rob Jackson and Harry Bell were making similar vile suggestions to a Jim Barker still limp from drawing 5,271,009 'LA IN 81' cartoons.*

I expected Jim to run on a platform of fuel economy—so many hundred cartoons to the pint. It turned out that I was terrified of his savage pen while he felt the same way about my inadequately domesticated typewriter; so to spare the world a rash of satirical limericks (about inarticulate him) and obscene caricatures (of deaf me), we swore a frightful oath to support one another through all adversity or insobriety, and to piss mightily on any shreds of opposition. Some opposition seemed a good idea, all of a sudden: full of false smiles and bonhomie, we invited Joe Nicholas to fulfil this necessary function. Without recording the actual reply, I will mention that shoulder-bags gave way and glasses of Cinzano curdled for several furlongs all around at the merest semicolon of his comments.



Meanwhile, I sought material for a TD which would utterly astound TAFF voters. Ah, Seacon! The helium filled bin liners rising in the stairwell; Cas Skelton in shorts with a helium balloon tied to the zip; such luminaries as D. West falling-down drunk before the con ever started (Hazel wanted to know whether D's strange locomotion was a new dance); people at the info desk asking when was the next plane from Zagreb or how to find 'Hall 13' and the Astral League initiation; Dave Piper gaping as 'Superman' signed 5,271,009 autographs—"You'll believe a man can write!" (Jim Barker's strongest memory of Seacon is of being totally ignored by Christopher Reeve...); Peter Weston explaining how FGOH Harry Bell was a great fanartist, to an audience of thousands, none of whom admitted to having seen the Bell progress-report covers—"There'll be a special display of Harry's work in the fan room," Peter shrieked in desperation, and we fan-room hangers-on went running to concoct some such display while all the time, over Peter's head, was Harry's Seacon logo blown up to 30 feet square, but never once did he think of pointing up...

*That's all you can remember?*

Tact prevents my recalling of certain things, like Greg Pickersgill swaying up to the fanroom barmaid offering to "rub a certain part of my body against a certain part of yours," and his horror when he sobered up and was told about this, and the endless succession of go-betweens who had to buy his drinks in the fanroom thereafter. I don't know whether Simone Walsh wants to remember how after the Weston blitz on hotel security, she cried "I used to hate you, Peter Weston, but tonight you're wonderful!" and bought him a drink. There was Joe Nicholas displaying amatory prowess (Cathy Ball: "I'm looking for Joe... I've heard he's good at snogging." Helen Eling: "He always goes to sleep at the crucial moment."), breaking off every few minutes to shout "Fucking hiccups!" while John Harvey claimed to be "so pissed I couldn't tell Ian Maule from Ian Williams"... and other memories less coherent....

*Like your collapse against Joyce*

*Scrivner on Brighton beach at dawn, and how she picked you up by the scruff of the neck and put you back in your hotel?*

Don't exaggerate. That's not in my notes. The next entry, after the torn-out bit, is a week later: telling Dai Price about the Kev Smith Butter Joke. (Kev always complains about Langford butter being frozen and unspreadable. Personally I think the tooth he broke was rotten already.) I was coming down with a cold at the time; as we started lunch I sneezed mightily and studied the results with morbid interest. "Must be the special powers of the cold virus—blow your nose once and the whole handkerchief goes grey and damp and ineffably revolting." Daio shut his eyes for a bit. "I suspect Kevin complains about the butter in order to take his mind off the conversation," he said. Which brings me neatly to how I'm standing for TAFF on the strength of great conversational ability.

*Of course. Now, what about Novacon and all the parties you usually write up for TD? Where are the witty and wholly misleading facts?*

Um. I've decided that as an Artist it is for me to deal with Life—Real Life. It is from the grey and teeming mundane existence that the true visionary distils his Art. Whatever that means. Thus, following a brief visit to town for material, I'm trying to assemble jokes from things like the FRESH MUSH sign I saw in the green-grocers', or the ads for Fullers beer (I mean, I thought they only made earth), or International Stores' horrible boxes of 'facial tissues'—which I always read as 'faecal tissues', or local newspaper placards like WHITLEY CHURCH HALL MAY BE WINE BAR (can hardly wait for the results of the investigation), or the book in the 'Teach Yourself' series which seems rather appropriate to this conversation with an italicized alter ego...

*What's that?*

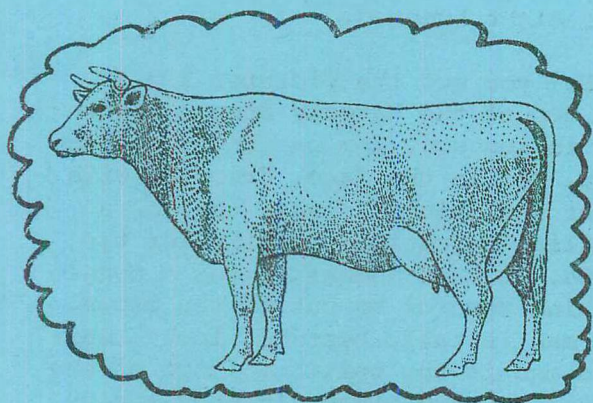
Would you believe 'Teach Yourself Schizophrenia'?

*No comment.*

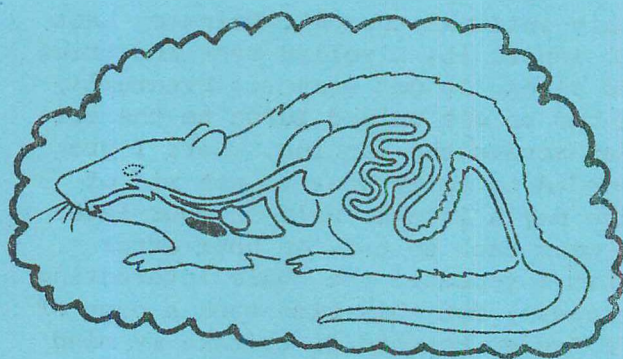
---

*Dave Langford*





Number 12 curry  
please, waiter!



With or without  
antidote, sir?

## the day i think i nearly met Larry niven

This article may offend people of a delicate disposition. Indeed, I had reservations about publishing it in such a well brought-up fanzine, but just at this moment I can't think of anything else to write about. So if you are offended... blame Mick Dickinson.

After all, it was all *his* fault to begin with. He and I and several dozen other worthies were in the process of enjoying Harry Bell's Weekend Party (otherwise known as Silicon 3) back in the summer of '78. It was my first Silicon and I'd really been enjoying the relaxed party-like atmosphere. All that stopped about 4 on the Monday morning... It had been a regular practice for a large number of fans to troop off to a local Indian restaurant for their evening meal. I'd gone on Saturday night and ordered my usual safe mild beef curry. When I went again on Sunday night, I decided to be adventurous and try something new. The typical Indian menu is a mystery to me, however, so I turned for advice to Mike, who was sitting beside me blethering on about

what a curry expert he was.

"All right," I said. "Recommend something."

With practised ease he scanned the menu and, after a few seconds' deliberation, pointed to a particular dish. "I had that last night and it was very good." Now, since I've seen Mike go into raptures over a good curry and have erotic experiences with the chutney containers afterwards, I assumed he knew what he was talking about and ordered it. I forget what it was called, but it was beefy and had lots of herbs and spices and was very, very good...

Afterwards we wandered back to the hotel to spend the remaining few hours of the con's last night drinking and talking, playing video games and assaulting chandeliers with balloons. I outlasted most people, purely because I was sticking to a non-alcoholic diet in the vain hope that it would keep my weight down. I toddled off to bed around 4 in the morning, leaving more experienced fans like Harry Bell and Leroy Kettle to keep the bar open until breakfast-time.



I woke up about 5, aware of a certain internal turmoil. Doing my best to ignore it, I rolled over and tried to sleep. It got worse... Eventually I had to get up and lurch to the toilet across the landing, where I proceeded to to my best to get rid of the day's intake. Half an hour later I went back to bed. An hour after that I repeated the whole interesting process, but this time took a copy of *SF Review* to read... to take my mind off it. It didn't work. I'll spare you the messy details of what happened between then and breakfast time, but let's just say I was very glad the landlord had replaced the toilet rolls I'd pinched to throw at the previous day's football game.

I don't know how the trots affect you dear readers, in other ways besides the obvious. Me, I tend to go very white, tremble and sweat profusely. That was exactly how I felt that morning when we gathered to say good-bye, though since there were a few others in much the same condition (but for different reasons), no-one seemed to notice. At that point I still hadn't connected my bowel trouble with Mike's curry (not being in a fit state to connect anything with anything), so I was still speaking to him as a group of us rode into Newcastle to get our trains home. I was the only fan heading north, all the others being silly enough to live south of Newcastle, and, having no travelling companion to help take my mind off things, I settled back and tried to read an article in *SF Review* about Larry Niven, one of my favourite authors. That didn't work, either. Two hours and several trips to the loo later, we arrived in Edinburgh: at Waverly station. I was still waiting for the tide to recede and by this time was bathed in perspiration. I was carrying a heavy suitcase and shoulder bag, as well. Naturally, I decided to visit the Edinburgh *SF* bookshop before heading for Falkirk.

Being mean, I resolved not to waste money putting my case etc. into Left Luggage for an hour... I took it all with me. I'd forgotten that the quickest way from the station to the street is up the Waverly Steps. Eighty-odd steps there are... that day it felt

like eight hundred.

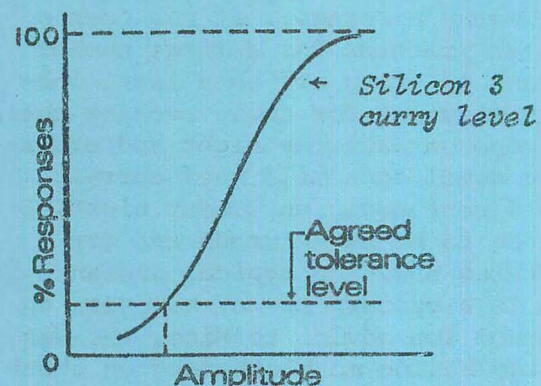
So: you get the picture. I'm at the top of the Waverly Steps, festooned in luggage. I'm panting very heavily, red in the face, dripping with sweat and (since I begin to feel a familiar sensation) looking for the Gents. At that moment, I see a couple walking towards me out of the crowd. The man is tall, bearded, looks American and is the spitting image of the photo of Larry Niven I'd been studying on the train.

[There will now be a short pause while you consider what you would have done in a similar situation.]

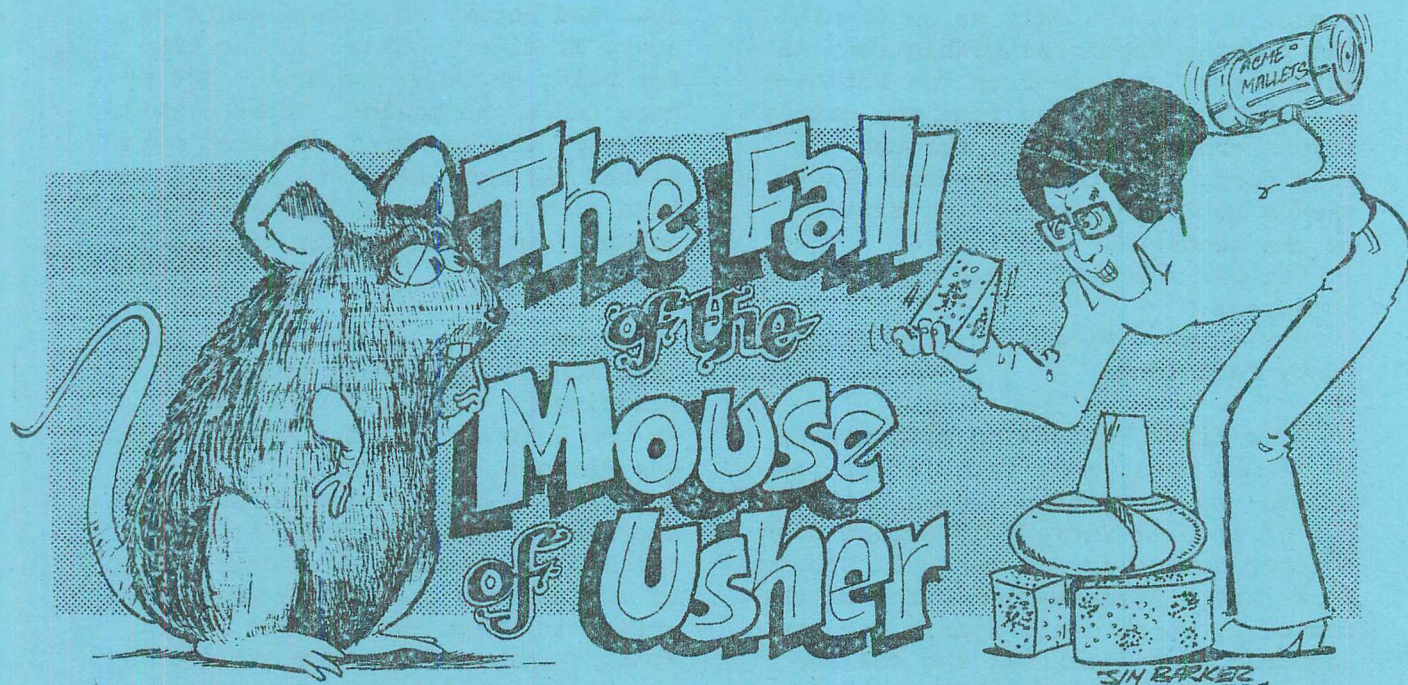
If I'd gone up to him in that state and said "Hi! Are you Larry Niven? I've always wanted to meet you," and it was him, God only knows what image he would have of British fans (me in particular). If it wasn't him, God only knows what image he would have had of Scots (me in particular). I have a phobia about getting involved in embarrassing situations, and felt daft enough just standing there. So in the end I played it safe and did nothing while the two of them disappeared into the distance. Then I dashed for the Gents.

I never did find out if it was him. The Edinburgh Festival was on at the time; the city was full of visitors. Rob King at the *SF* Bookshop knew nothing about it, and when I finally did meet Larry Niven at Seacon I forgot to mention it. Meanwhile, I'm never going to eat anything Mike recommends again. Who knows who I might miss meeting this time...?

*Jim Barker*







My first nostalgic childhood memories are of mice...

This is of course not really true; it's just the sort of way one's expected to begin a serious and morally uplifting essay on Mice I Have Known. If my parents were to learn I'd been giving the impression that my cradle was infested with small furry writhing things all nibbling at the infant Langford, they'd doubtless streak up the M4 from South Wales and—having once polished off the sherry left over from their previous visit—disown me. Besides, the scars have all healed now.

In fact my real earliest memories of the wonderful world of nature have to do with caterpillars—like the giant one two-and-a-half inches long which menaced the household for days, even the dog being terrified by its aura of brooding power, until at last I recaptured it in the traditional pickled-onion jar. (I don't know why pickled-onion jars were so traditional—the 2½ caterpillar looked more like a gherkin and didn't act pickled at all—but the habit was strong enough that to this day I expect caterpillars to smell of pickled onions. Maybe the pickled-onion manufacturers know something I don't.)

Getting back to mice... it occurs to me that by a staggering coincidence my most recent encounter with nature also involved a caterpillar. I was leaning on a bus-shelter and felt something squashy beneath my fingers. I took a closer look; straightaway there came that old sense of wonder at our ever-changing cosmos; here was a salutary reminder of nature's marvels, a caterpillar whose amazing tininess was equalled only by its unearthly greenness. Also, it was squashed. Mice have the advantage that they're less leaky and don't stain your fingers green; there are, however, few other advantages.

My first Wild Mouse Sighting was an unscheduled event; we'd been expecting a Stupid Bird Sighting as we unsealed the ancient, cast-iron kitchen fire from which were coming the most appalling noises. Personally I had diagnosed an unspecified number of sex-crazed albatrosses which had slipped down the chimney in search of privacy; my mother, belonging to a purer school of thought, inclined to the opinion that a pair of golden eagles were engaged in a death struggle without benefit of Queensberry rules. At last the rusted cover-plate creaked open; we pressed close with our bird-identification books opened to likely



pages; but it was only as we studied the yawning emptiness within that an after-image developed on the retina—a grey blur extending from the grate, across the stone floor, through the open door, over the back-yard flagstones and into the rotting fabric of the woodshed.

"It was a mouse," said my mother in horror.

Now I knew. Mice were grey blurs forty feet long.

This first impression wasn't contradicted until many years after, at Oxford: my last terms were spent in one of several incredibly broken-down college houses in New Inn Hall Street. There was a preservation order on the frontage, which still stands but has acquired a new backage: the college was eager to rip out everything else and rebuild with smart modern luxury rooms around five feet square. (These architects never have been able to tell the difference between 'spacious' and 'specious'.) While I lived there the entire fabric—apart from that carefully preserved frontage with its cosy coat of ivy—was in the final stages of decay, like D. West without his habitual tilt. Doors fell from their hinges at the merest touch, floorboards sagged at the impact of a dropped paperclip, and the electric wiring—hastily converted from the original Roman water pipes—buzzed and crackled behind the walls like the ghost of some departed telephone exchange. In this atmosphere of eldritch dread, half-seen Things stalked the ruined corridors (usually the pissed college boat club proving yet again that New Inn Hall Street doors would spring from their hinges at the merest touch of several muscle-bound shoulders)... and one night a sinister rustling invaded my very room.

It is a fearful thing to lie in bed, able to see the whole room in the evil, ghostly radiance of the multikilowatt street-lamp placed conveniently just outside the window, and yet unable to trace the source of a *rustle rustle rustle* seemingly louder than all the stockbrokers of the City unfurling their copies of the *Times* in chorus. Being a fan of iron will and indomitable courage, I had little hesitation in shutting my

eyes and hoping the sound would go away. It didn't. This was the time for bold, decisive action! I put my head under the pillow. After a while, however, the spectral rustling percolated through: even so, I would have held firm but that I discovered a sudden, quixotic urge to visit the toilet...

To cut a long story to mere novellette length, I finally traced the haunting to the waste paper basket. At the bottom, a rather small mouse was disconsolately threshing about amongst the drafts of Langford SF stories better forgotten: it had climbed the curtain to forage on top of my desk and chosen the wrong direction in which to leap off again. (This theory was amply confirmed by the trail of tiny droppings across my opened copy of Woodgate's *Elementary Atomic Structure*. I was startled to find a mere mouse echoing my own critical judgement.) Throwing a swift towel over the top of the basket, I staggered back to bed and slept the sleep of a man who has thrown a towel over all his problems; next morning, feeling humane, I furtively transferred the beast to the breakfast room of the nearby college annexe, Frewin Hall. There, I thought, it could lead a happy life without disturbing anyone, or at least anyone not living in Frewin Hall.

I now knew that, when not being grey blurs, mice were wont to emit a hellish rustling noise. I was destined to know much more: when I told a friend about the horror in the basket, he smiled evilly and began to creep about with his nose to the floor.

"You've got mice," he told me.

"Great heavens, Holmes, this is incredible!"

"No, no, you've got *more* mice." He pointed to the ancient electric toaster which stood in the fireplace. "Look there!"

I looked. "Those are crumbs. Mice are bigger than that."

"Crumbs, he says. Crumbs. Those are lovely, fresh mouse droppings."

I sat on the edge of the bed and thought about that.

"Did you know," said this former friend, "that mice are incontinent?"



They've been wandering hither and thither, widdling all over your bread, your butter, your cheese, your Earl Grey tea..."

The bit about the Earl Grey tea hit me hard. It seemed that even when they didn't stain your fingers green, mice could be even leakier than cat-erpillars.

"What do I do?" I screamed resolutely.

"Well..." There was that in his voice which reminded me of dentists suggesting that everything come out. "Well, I think Robert Peach has a trap somewhere."

There was a long silence.

Robert Peach was something of a phenomenon. Robert was laden with all manner of scholarships and top grades and glorious prospects which he carried about with him rather like an ant dragging something many times its own weight: a burning urge to be ever so good at theoretical physics had seemed the only distinguishing feature of his personality until recently, when he'd developed something which he called a sense of humour and which tended to consist of blowing things up or taking them apart (often both). To turn Robert loose on my mice seemed rather like inviting Attila the Hun to move in and solve one's population problem.

I thought about the precious Earl Grey tea again, and again corrected my mental image of a mouse: a long grey rustling blur emitting a fine spray of urine like a peripatetic lawn sprinkler. After some very half-hearted attempts to convince myself that living in an atmosphere of mouse-pee was healthful, organic and good for the complexion, I climbed the creaking stairs to Robert's room and suggested he might like me to take his mousetrap out for an airing.

His wide smile would have unnerved a shark. "You want to *kill mice*?" he said with relish.

"Well, I can't see my way to opening diplomatic relations."

Robert looked puzzled for a moment, but was soon rummaging in his toolbox. "Kill," he murmured meditatively, and fished out a tarnished mousetrap of the model favoured by Torquemada. He studied this with satisfaction, pulled

back the spring and let it snap loudly into place. "Take your fingers off if you're not careful," he crooned.

"I'll be careful," I said. Carefully.

"Perhaps I'd better set it myself," he said. "It's really very touchy. And you have to bait it just right. I'll come down now and set it up for you."

On the way down to my room he told me all about the horrific lethality of the machine, of how it could break necks, snap spines, crush skulls; how its mighty power was such that mice several yards away would fall stunned as the trap sprang shut, how he himself had slain kittens and small dogs with traps quite similar to this...

Possibly I exaggerate. But I did make a mental note concerning my habit of walking barefoot in my room at night.

Robert set the trap, put it in the corner by the toaster, and went on telling me of past slaughter wrought amongst small furry animals by his skills. I was halfway through my fortieth or fiftieth encouraging nod and attentive yawn when a feeble *click* sounded from the region of the toaster.

"Hah!" said Robert, and dextrously extracted a very, very small and dead mouse from his trap. The victim really was extremely tiny: hardly bigger than a caterpillar, or a gherkin. Robert put it into a plastic bag which happened to be handy (he kindly emptied it of its previous contents—biscuits—first, so I could hardly complain), and placed it on the mantelpiece as a souvenir for me to treasure. Possibly he thought I'd like to have it stuffed. Bloodlust partially slaked, he retreated to read quantum mechanics in bed; it was around midnight, so I too went to bed and wrestled with feelings of guilt about destroying such a small pathetic rodent... since I have always been good at wrestling with such feelings, my sleep was delayed by mere seconds. It was about half-past one when the snap of the trap woke me again; I removed a second corpse identical to the first, added it to the body in the plastic bag and beat my own record at speed-wrestling before going



back to sleep. A repeat performance was given by special request of mouse number three, at two o'clock; in the morning my bleary gaze fell on yet another corpse, and my bleary stomach informed me that to eat breakfast would be mere vanity and vexation of spirit. What does one do with four very tiny mice in a tasteful plastic bag? I had no notion. Possibly the college authorities should have their attention called to the matter; possibly the thing to do was to post the whole lot to the Domestic Bursar. This was not a wise idea, I decided after several microseconds' cogitation. Instead the bag stayed on the mantelpiece while I went to a lecture: this too was not a wise idea, since the cleaners discovered it whilst vacuuming the room, as I could tell from the fact that only half the floor had been vacuumed.

In the end I dropped the polythene sarcophagus into a handy dustbin with military honours, though not before Robert had dropped in to gloat a great gloat over his machine's death-toll.

I was mildly reproved for having wounded the delicate sensibilities of the college cleaners, but with Jesuitical cunning pointed out that by supplying hot and cold running mice the college itself had provoked the whole outrage. "This thing is bigger than both of us," they said then. "It is time for Higher Powers to be invoked." And they summoned the council ratman.

The ratman was something of a disappointment. I had enough Robert Peach in me to hope he'd seal the room and pump in vile corrosive fumes at the very least, muttering *Cold Comfort Farmish* things ("Ar, they vermin, 'tis flyin' in the face o' nature... they do say when the spring lambs be bleatin', they mice be excretin'...") whilst tiny rodent screams echoed within and a miniature thudding of corpses to the floor could be heard above the hiss of the nerve-gas cylinders... Instead, a neatly-dressed chap called, pried up a few floorboards and deposited cardboard trays of something not readily distinguishable from the breakfast cereal served

in college. (Even analysts would probably have been baffled. Should you ever visit Brasenose College, avoid the cereal, the jugged hare and the curried eggs.) I waited for the tiny rodent screams, but none came.

Next day a tiny rodent came in person. It weaved across the floor, twitching and staggering like a Bing-ley man trying to convince one of his suitability as a con organizer, and fell over with its legs in the air. Even this classic pose was too much for the poor creature; it rolled over and lay on its side with a slight air of satisfaction at the performance.

"Poor thing," I murmured, realizing. "It must have eaten some of the curried eggs." Tenderly I transferred it to the traditional waste-basket, along with supplies of water and selected crumbs from the toaster (perhaps some of these were mouse droppings, but I felt that those too would help reassure it). I thought I'd now taken sufficient pity on the beast, but Hazel arrived and took a bit more. Under her guidance the mouse was transferred to the cellar in an empty plastic dustbin (normally used for such simple undergraduate pastimes as brewing 40 pints of beer each fortnight) and nursed back to health with my best ginger biscuits. The nursing only took a few hours: on our next visit to the cellar we found this supposedly poisoned mouse doing standing jumps eighteen inches up the wall of the bin, *boing boing boing* like a hyperelastic ping-pong ball with St. Vitus' Dance.

"What a marvellous creature," said Hazel. "I shall call it Harli. Harli the Amazing Jumping Mouse." She reached down to stroke it. "Eep."

"Where's it gone?" I asked.

"It's up my sleeve," she told me in a strained voice. There was a pulsating lump in the region of her elbow; by the time we'd rolled up her sweater that far, the lump had vanished again.

"Oooooo," said Hazel.

Curbing my maniacal laughter, I enquired about the new location.

"There," she said, pointing delicately.



What could have been a ticklish situation was solved by Harli, who suddenly erupted from the neck of Hazel's sweater, attempted to carry straight on for the lightbulb and sailed in a gentle parabola to the floor. It landed with a plop, momentarily became a grey blur four feet long, and was gone.

"Under that old desk," said Hazel. I lifted the desk and the dingy grey lightning flashed again. "Under the roll of lino." Same results.

"Let us be scientific," I said. "If we remove all the furniture from the room there will be nowhere for this mouse to hide." At this late date I can't remember exactly what we intended to do with the amazing jumping mouse: certainly there was little attraction in a pet which kept one awake by thudding like popcorn against the roof of its cage. No doubt we would have given it a chance to start a new life in Frewin Hall or anywhere else not too close. At any rate, we did indeed carry all the old, broken furniture out of the cellar room (having carefully blocked the doorway with a piece of wood—we might have been stupid, but we weren't stupid), chase Harli three times round the bare floor and watch in wonderment as he or she gave a final leap straight up the chimney. With one bound, Harli was free! With several slow dragging motions, we put all the junk back into the room. Then, weary and disillusioned, we went away and left college and got married and started a new life in Reading. The mice, however, were there before us.

After living in the new house for a while, we began to detect this lurking presence. The presence would display its love of noise by dragging large pieces of aluminium foil about the kitchen floor; there would be a suspicion of grey blurs as you entered a room but before your eyes had time to focus; there were furtive gruntings and noises as of tiny honey-moon couples behind the skirting board. It was almost as tedious as *The Amityville Horror*. But Hazel didn't mind too much. "Mice are nice little creatures," she explained. "We can peacefully coexist."

"There was a mouse in the kitchen," she added some days later. "A horrible little mouse, just sitting there and staring at me. I chased it with a broom and it vanished under the stove ..."

"What happened to peaceful coexistence?"

She produced a well-nibbled Mars Bar. "That was my lunch for tomorrow! Peaceful coexistence is all very well, but this creature has struck at our very means of support!"

The next time we heard a rustle in the kitchen, I surged into the room and blocked all likely escape routes before investigating such hiding places as the washing machine, the bin, the pile of empty yoghurt pots, the grandfather clock (not that we own a grandfather clock, but it would be the natural hiding place if we did)... Bit by bit the room was stripped bare for action; in this arena, man would meet mouse with no place to hide! I cornered it under the spin dryer and after a mighty struggle with many fell blows given and received (I kept concussing myself against walls when diving for the kill), the nibbler of Mars bars was sentenced to transportation for life. As I dropped it over the neighbours' fence, it gave a squeak of fond farewell and peed all over my hand.

Art is short and mice are long (not merely forty-foot blurs, but blurs lightyears in length as Einstein reckons time): there is no room to tell of the mouse I hunted down in the kitchen cupboard and transferred to the school playground





nearby, nor that which I found guzzling my favourite cheese upon a rather high counter—I can only suppose the relentless pressures of evolution have led mice to perfect the thirty-inch standing jump. It performed the slightly less difficult Thirty-Inch Plummet, went into a Brownian motion routine about the kitchen floor and surreptitiously vanished into the gas-stove. It was never seen again, even though I vindictively turned all the gas-taps on. Through insane blood-lust coupled with a lack of mousetrap and a surplus of beer, an implacably vengeful Langford went on to construct an electric trap. Stunning in its (not to say the inventor's) simplicity, this Final Solution comprised a piece of old printed-circuit board wired to the neutral side of the mains, and in the middle a wire-caged lump of cheese connected to the 'live' terminal. The whole lay treacherously on the kitchen floor: "Surely it's dangerous?" Hazel said.

"Only if you touch it," I said reassuringly, not worrying over much about my barefoot wanderings through the kitchen to the toilet. As a concession to safety I added a fuse, so that the current sizzling through mice or bare feet would be limited to a puny 13 amps at 230 volts.

All night we slept fitfully, ears ever straining for the distant sizzle of success; in the morning I went down with much trepidation to tidy away the charred mouse (or mice). There is that scene in *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* where innumerable knights are fried and fused together by a cunning electric fence: would I find a scene of furry carnage extending in great mounds about the original trap? Of course, there was nothing there at all. Our mice weren't stupid. To catch them, I had to buy an ordinary mundane trap which came from Woolworths and lacked all subtlety or finesse. The beasts had no soul, no appreciation of artistry.

This was years ago, and the shadow had long passed when Terry Hughes brought a caterpillar to visit.

"Hello Terry," I said with a swift grovel. "Come in. There's a caterpillar on your coat."

Our friendly TAFF delegate smiled uncertainly, unfamiliar with the strange British conventions whereby one's host is permitted to brush caterpillars from one's coat. I showed it to him: it was plump and green and tasty-looking. He recoiled slightly. "My god, there really is one," I thought I heard him mutter, emotions chasing one another about his face and vanishing round the back of his neck as he inwardly compared the USA (Land of the Free) with this country where caterpillars came and roosted on your coat. We turned Terry's passer out to grass, and changed the subject. Now doubtless it must be sheer coincidence, but mere weeks later the Mouse Problem reared its whiskery head once more. A small but crazed mouse zipped from under the stove and was caught by me with less than the usual ado... in fact it behaved like a mouse which had consumed some Brasenose breakfast cereal or nibbled at my collection of Terry Hughes fanzines. Not, you understand, that I wish to implicate Terry in any way. These things are better forgotten. I decided on extreme measures and took the mouse across the road before releasing it... but while I planned this disposal, perhaps tossing the rodent meditatively from hand to hand, the vile creature turned savage and bit me. (I really shall have to speak to Terry about this.) Imagine the horror, as this feral monster sank its gleaming fangs deep into my soft white flesh! We humanitarians are sadly misunderstood. I had a vague notion that one had to suck the poison from the wound, or even slash one's finger open to release the instantaneous accretions of venom and pus: I compromised on iodine. At last, I thought, I had paid the price in blood; perhaps now the mouse curse would be lifted? Moreover, this time I'd taken special pains to throw the exiled mouse at an inviting-looking mansion which I hoped it would find more hospitable than ours. (I am trying not to consider the possibility that I'm being hunted by the local police as the Mad Mouse-flinger of Northumberland Avenue.)

This unending saga of one man's struggle against the representatives of a hostile nature will have to stop



somewhere (i.e. here). I am resigned to my fate. You think the curse is safely lifted, and then, just as in a Lovecraft story, that rustling. That eldritch squeak from beyond the furthest portals of the skirting board! Iä! Iä! Shub-Niggurath! God, those unspeakable whiskers... that grey blur... I can write no more...

better mousetrap need no longer worry about my beating a path to his/her door: I'm awaiting the genetic engineer who gets around to devising better mice—ones which know their place, which is in someone else's house. For myself, I'll be content with a pickled-onion jar and a caterpillar. You know where you are with a caterpillar.

It is my fate. Anyone devising a

Dave Langford

## SECRETS OF THE ANCIENTS REVEALED—OR, WHAT IS TAFF ANYWAY?

It has occurred to the perpetrators of this TAFF fund-raising fanzine that somewhere out there in the illimitable void, beyond the farthest shores of sf fandom, out amongst the distant galaxies of sanity, there may be people who buy or read this and wonder what it's all about. To quote at length from the 1980 TAFF ballot form:

*The Transatlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans across the Atlantic. Since that time, TAFF has regularly sent European fans to the USA and brought American fans to European conventions. TAFF exists solely through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted for by experienced fans all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation of not less than fifty pence. These votes and the continued interest of fans are what makes TAFF possible.*

Which sums it up nicely; TAFF is part charity (for the impecunious fan), part pat on the back (for the well-loved fan) and above all is a continuing link between the once quite isolated US and UK fan communities. *Continuing* is an important word: it's never too late to donate something to this worthwhile cause, because there will always be a next trip, a next race between fans to win TAFF—and the fares always go up. If you bought this copy of *Taff-Ddu* you've contributed—thanks!—since all proceeds go to the fund.

The TAFF ballot also includes cunningly devised 'platforms'; this year's are printed on the right...

**JIM BARKER:** After lurking for years on the fannish sidelines, Jim burst into view in 1976 by illustrating for MAYA (that notorious Hugo-nominated genzine). Since then he's been a prolific supplier of high-class, witty fanart to many places, including TWLL-DDU, DNQ, DRILKJIS, NABU, GONAD THE BARBARIAN, MAYA, MOTA and publications of the BSFA (British SF Association). His co-authored cartoon strip 'Half-Life' (with Chris Evans) has an enormous following in Rutland; he is fan GoH at the 1980 UK Eastercon. Jim is large, bearded, partially drunk, somewhat inaudible, and like all the best UK fans is a convivial Celt (ie. Scots): he has thus topped the CHECKPOINT poll (as fan artist) and received both Hugo and FAAn nominations. It's obvious that Jim is uniquely qualified to be the 1980 TAFF delegate.

**DAVE LANGFORD:** After lurking for years on the fannish sidelines, Dave burst into view in 1976 by publishing TWLL-DDU (that notorious Hugo-nominated perzine). Since then he's been a prolific supplier of high-class, witty fanwriting to many places, including MOTA, INCA, GONAD THE BARBARIAN, NABU, DRILKJIS, DNQ, TWLL-DDU and publications of the British SF Association (BSFA). His co-edited serconzine DRILKJIS (with Kev Smith) has an enormous following in Liechtenstein; he has featured on many UK con committees and programmes. Dave is tall, clean-shaven, partially sober, somewhat deaf, and like all the best UK fans is a convivial Celt (ie. Welsh): he has thus topped the CHECKPOINT poll (as fanwriter/editor) and received both FAAn and Hugo nominations. It's obvious that Dave is uniquely qualified to be the 1980 TAFF delegate. [DRL]



NOT A NUMBER...

A FREE FAN

Just suppose you're a well-known fan artist. You're highly active, providing artwork for all and sundry. You belong to the BSFA, for which you do the majority of your work. The one day you decide you've had enough. You want to resign. They won't let you. You quit anyway. No explanation... just a short, sharp letter of resignation.

You go home after posting the letter, start to pack for a long overdue holiday from fandom... and get gassed in your own bedroom.

You wake up in a strange hotel room. You wear a convention badge: number 1465. You've been kidnapped by the very people you worked for, and brought to The Hotel, where there's a perpetual, never ending Convention going on.

And there's no escape. Unless you tell your captors why you resigned. You refuse. You are not a number—you are a free fan! But now you've become The Captive, and until you escape or give in, that's what you're going to stay....

#

Okay: maybe that's just a bit melodramatic, but I hope that it fills in the background to my 'Captive' series for those of you who've never seen it before. (In case you haven't guessed, that's a 'Captive' episode starting over there on the right.)

I've been doing the strip for well over a year now. It's a regular feature of the BSFA journal *Matrix*, and I don't think I enjoy doing any other fan work quite as much as I enjoy the Captive.

He was born when I idly imagined the theme of the TV show *The Prisoner* translated into fannish terms, proposed the idea to Eve and John Harvey (who edit *Matrix*) and sat down to draw the first strip. At the time I was already doing my 'Half Life' strip in the other BSFA fanzine *Vector*, so in order not to hog all the limelight I asked various well-known fans if they'd like to contribute scripts based on the theme. I'm really pleased at the response I had. Such luminaries as Kev Smith, Paul Kincaid, Rob Jackson, John Harvey and Ian Williams are among those who have provided scripts.

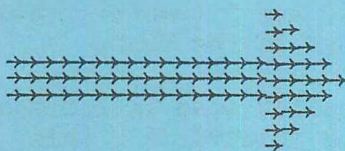
Oh... and Dave Langford, who holds the distinction of being the only fan whose script was rejected—for being too fannishly above the heads of the average BSFA members in the street. (I still want to do it, though not for publication in *Matrix*.)

When Dave and I first thought of a joint fanzine, a 'Captive' strip was one of our first ideas. We hope you enjoy this strange joint effort. At six pages, it's the longest strip I've ever done—so you'd better enjoy it!

#

PS: I have a file of scripts and plot outlines ready, but I'm always on the lookout for new stuff. So if you feel you'd like to contribute, drop me a line, huh?

Jim Barker





# the captives

Even for a Captive trapped in the hideous CONVENTION, there are moments of solace...

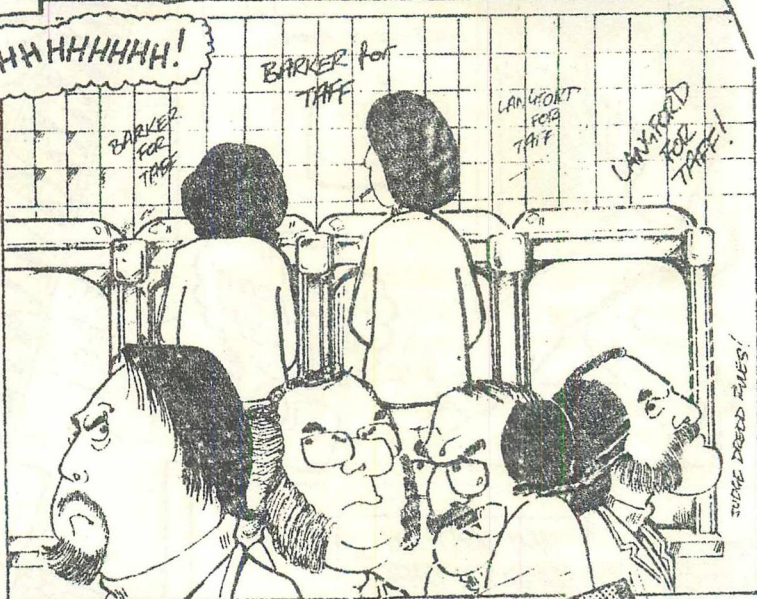


AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!

BARKER for TAFF

LANGFORD FOR TAFF

LANGFORD FOR TAFF!



THAT'S FUNNY! SOUNDING LIKE SOMEONE TRYING TO...



DIE! DIE! STRAPE!

ESCAPE!!

LEMME IN! LEMME IN!



DIE! DIE! DIE! STRAPE!

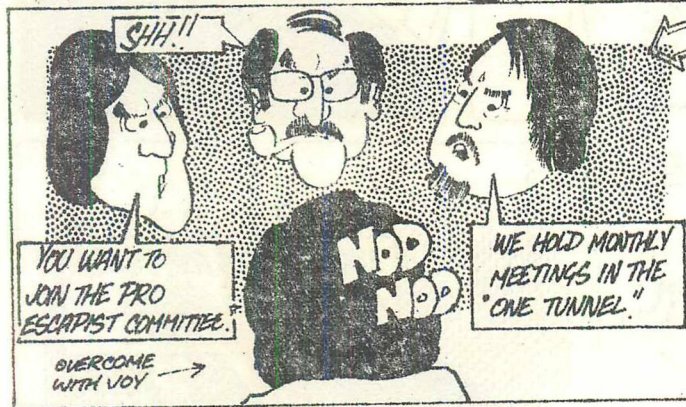
SHH!!

YOU WANT TO JOIN THE PRO ESCAPIST COMMITTEE?

NOD NOD

WE HOLD MONTHLY MEETINGS IN THE "ONE TUNNEL."

OVERCOME WITH VOY →



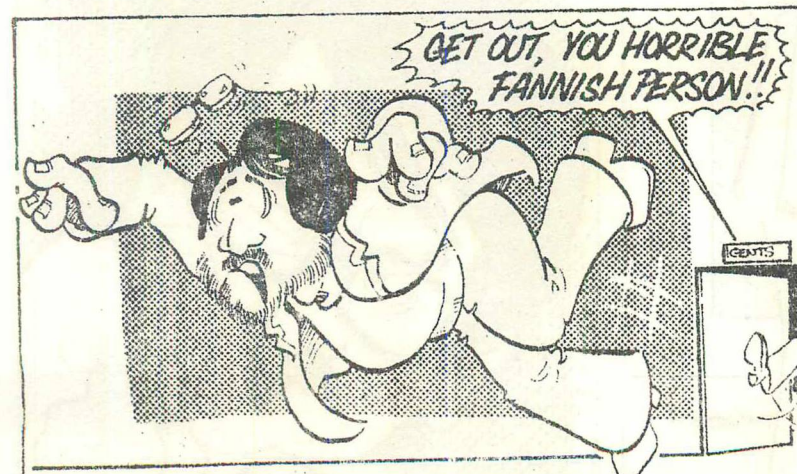
OK, WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU PUBLISHED?

er...well...



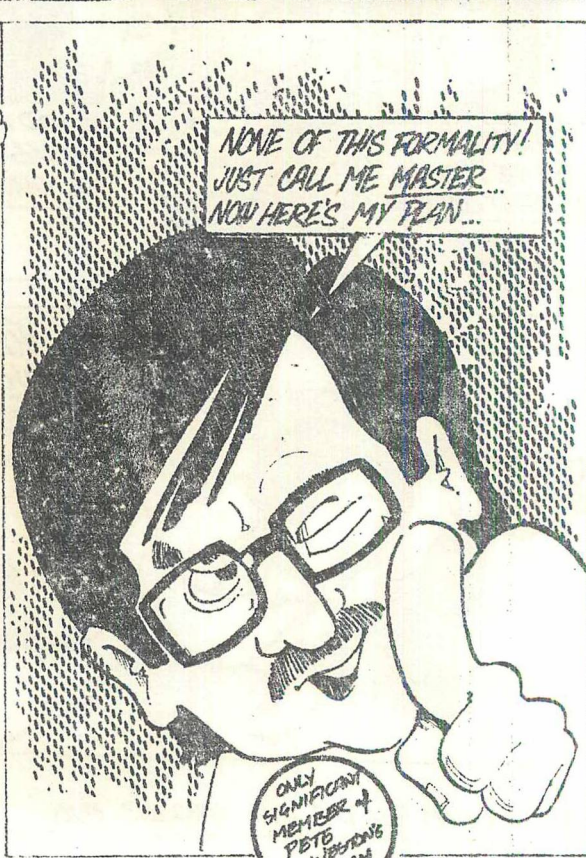
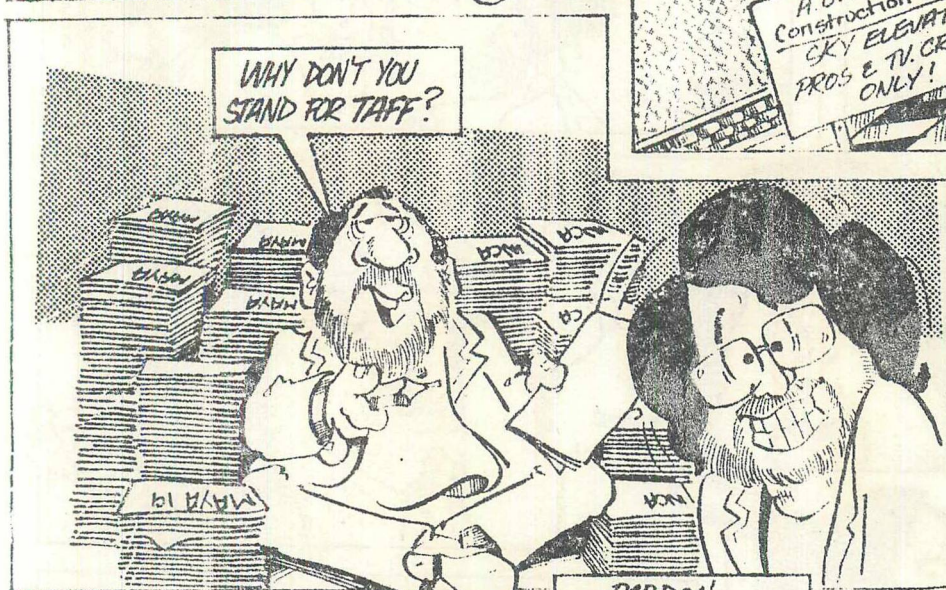
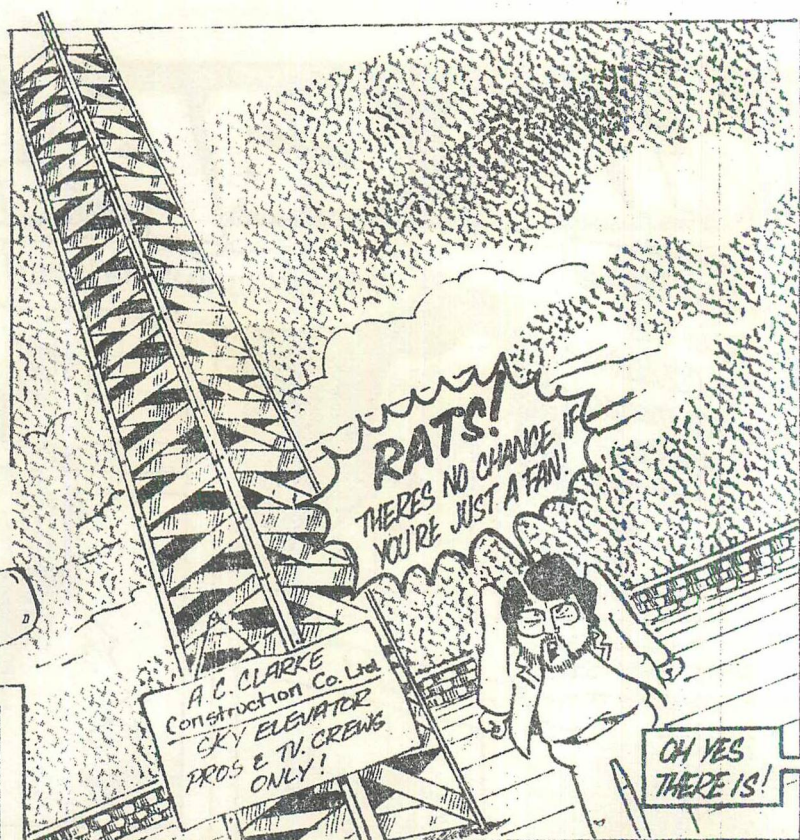
GET OUT, YOU HORRIBLE FANNISH PERSON!!

I BET YOU DON'T AIM YOUR TUNNEL IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION EITHER!



DAVE LANGFORD & JIM BARKER. 1980.







**BANG!**



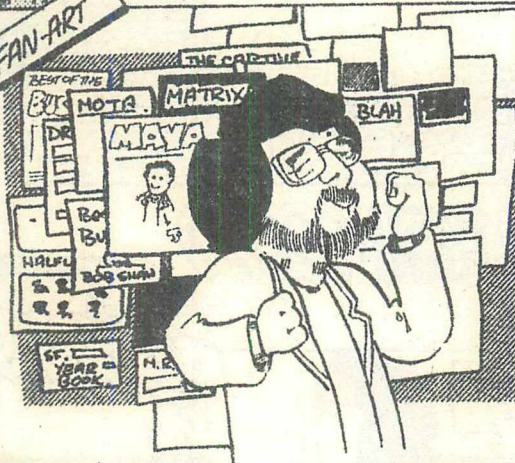
FAN-WRITING:



**Score-1350:256<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> 1465:0:4**



FAN-AR



**Score-1465: 256<sup>47</sup>/<sub>48</sub> 1350: 256<sup>63</sup>/<sub>64</sub>**



CONVERSATION:



**Score-1350:666 1465:257:1**

\* I'll get you for making me letter  
"MAY, DAVE...."

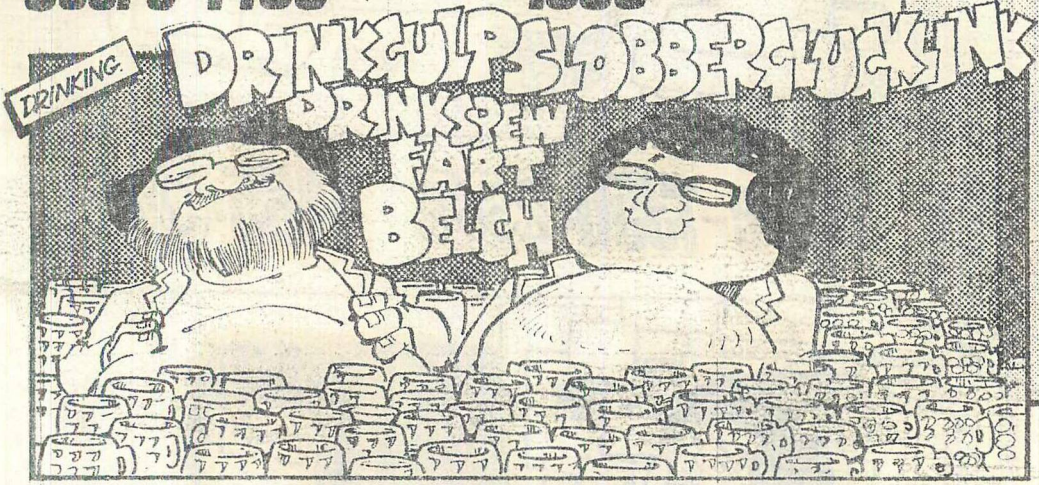


COMPREHENSION:

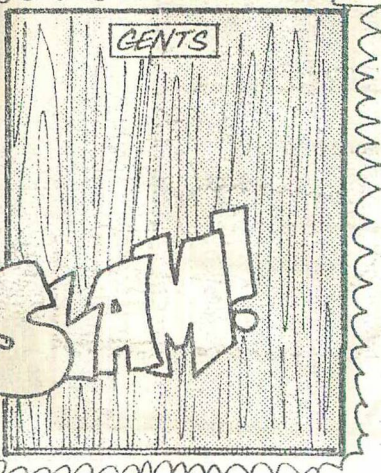
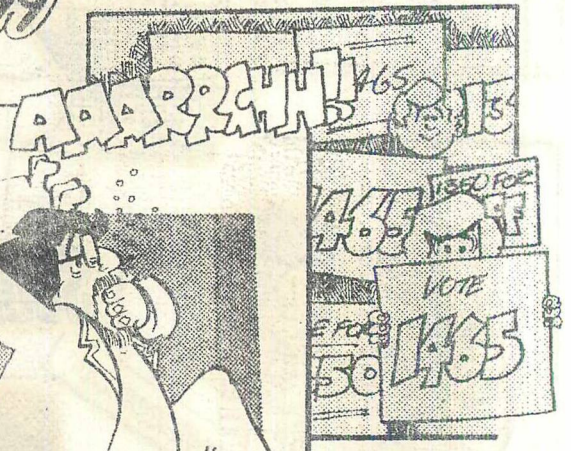
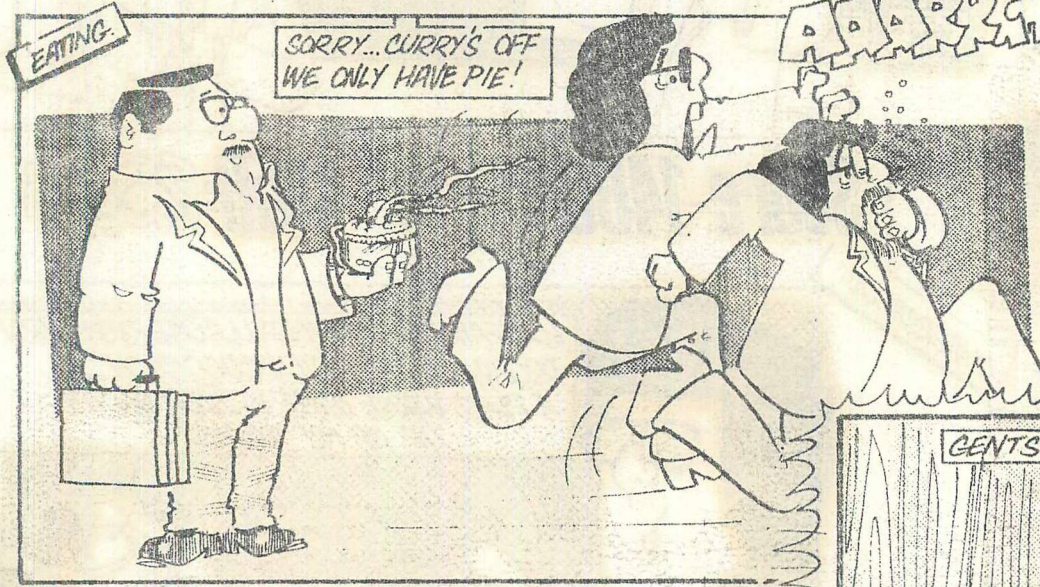
LET'S TRY AGAIN...FOR THE FIFTEENTH TIME! WANT--A--DRINK...?



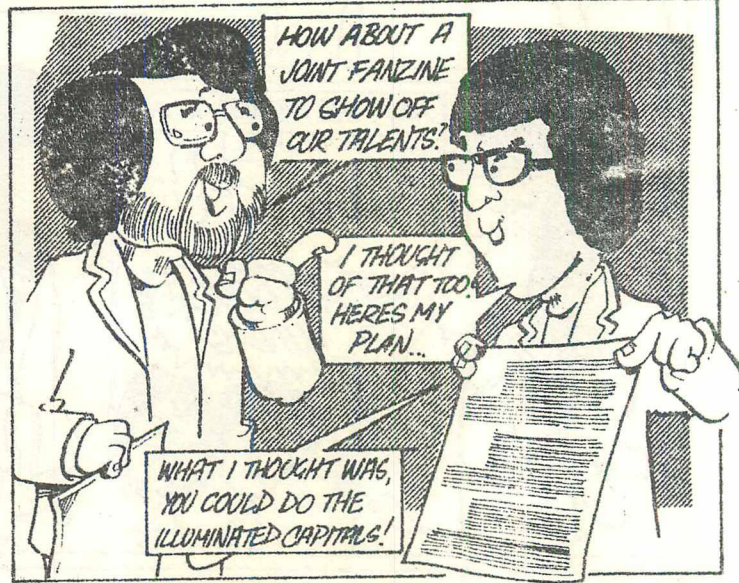
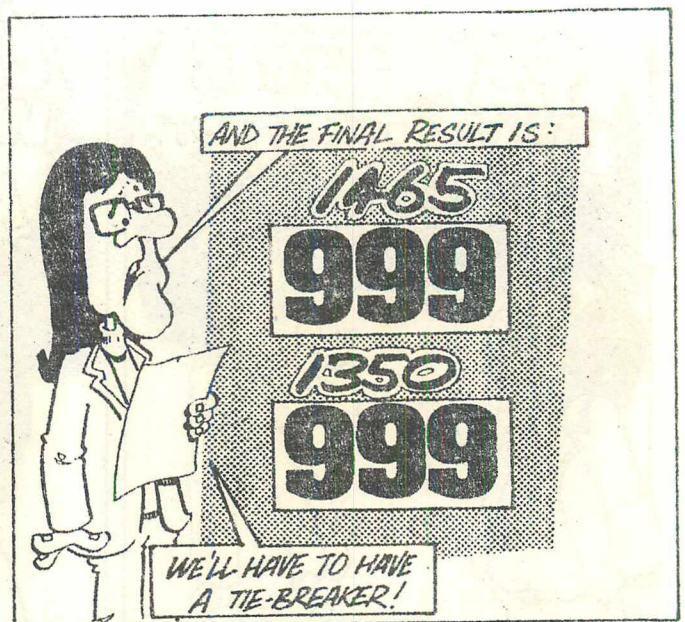
Score-1465: <sup>666</sup>AND A BIT! 1350: <sup>666</sup>AND A BYTE!



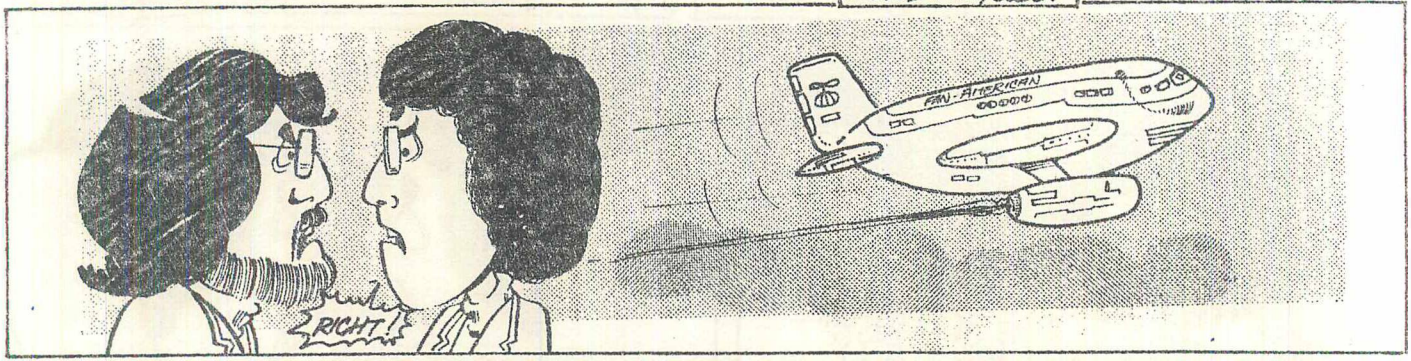
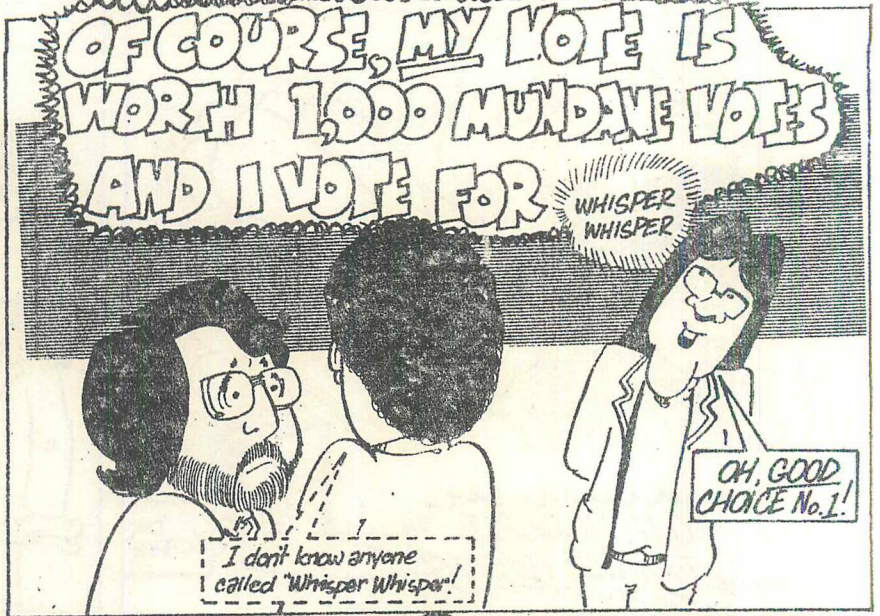
Score-1465: ~~998.99~~ 1350: ~~998.99~~



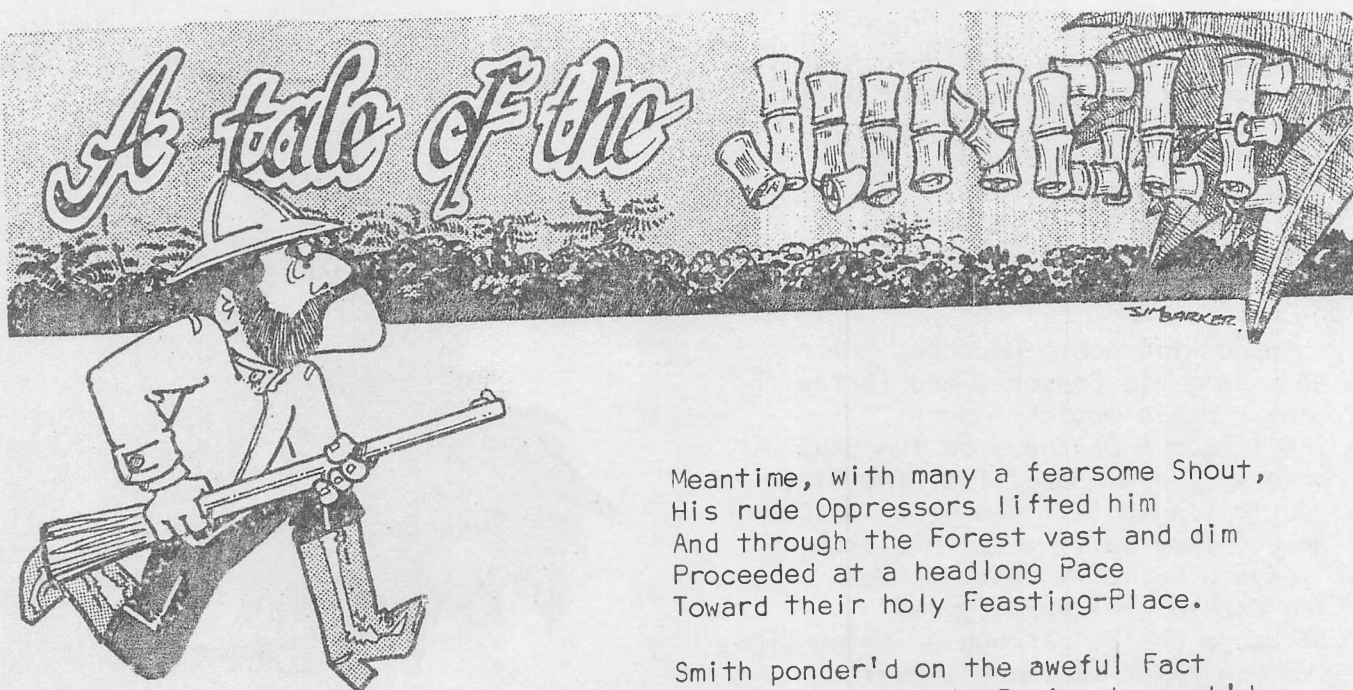












O gather, Children, round and hear  
Of one intrepid *Pioneer*  
Who penetrated *Afric's* darks  
In times when the Safari Parks,  
In their untouch'd, *primaeval* State,  
Still tempted Men to horrid Fate.  
*J. Smith*, from *England's* sceptred Isle  
It was that dared the Jungle vile;  
Full many a dark and lonesome mile  
He travers'd, many Perils fought  
(As loyal sons of *Albion* ought),  
And 'Rule Britannia' he sang  
By day: his Dinner-Bell he rang  
At night, all garb'd in *Ev'ning-*

*Dress:*

My halting Tongue can scarce express  
How well he kept Tradition, and  
Upheld the Pride of *England's* Strand.

The Sabbath came; and on his Cot  
Our Hero lay, and labour'd not.  
Unlucky chance! there wander'd by  
A Band of *Anthropophagi*—  
And ere he understood his Plight,  
They seiz'd on him, and clutch'd him  
tight!

Quoth Smith, "A *Briton* shall outface  
These Creatures of a Lesser Race—  
I'll work upon their childish Fear  
Of mystick Flame..." And with a Leer  
A Sulphur-match he boldly struck:  
O pity this Explorer's Luck!  
The tropick Clime, the humid Air,  
Had spoil'd his Matches. In despair  
He saw his Magick sputter out.

Meantime, with many a fearsome Shout,  
His rude Oppressors lifted him  
And through the Forest vast and dim  
Proceeded at a headlong Pace  
Toward their holy Feasting-Place.

Smith ponder'd on the awful Fact  
Of Capture, and his Brains he rack'd:  
A spark of Memory aglow!  
That Book he'd study'd, long ago...  
A rapid Jiggling, to and fro,  
Of *False Teeth* in a fellow's Head  
Might rouse a superstitious Dread  
In those unknowing of the *Art*  
That shapes each Artificial Part! \*  
He utter'd then a dismal Groan:  
His Teeth, alas! were all his own.

Without Decorum, though with Haste,  
Within a *Cauldron* Smith was placed:  
He looked upon it, and grimaced  
To find this Cooking-pot was soil'd  
(For in it many had been boil'd).  
O situation stark and grim!  
But no despairing Thoughts for him:  
For searching Pockets deep, he found  
A handsome Volume—leather-bound—  
On this he train'd his glitt'ring

Eye,

And with the loud and gladsome Cry  
"Before the Dawn is Night most black!"  
Perused his trusty *Almanack*;  
Wherein his eager Eye and Mind  
Did seek a Thing—perchance to  
find—

O joy! O Rapture unconfin'd!

This very Day, *Diana's* Sphere  
With *Phoebus'* Car shall interfere:

~~~~~  
\* And this is truth; I am no black-  
guard; the book was writ by Rider  
Haggard. [DFL]  
~~~~~



The latter's beneficial Light  
Occluded, *Earth* is veil'd in Night.  
In fact, to state the Matter plain,  
The Sun will be eclips'd again...  
To aid a troubled *English* Gent  
This Astronomical Event  
Is by some *Holy Power* sent!  
(And is, by Scepticks, thought to be  
Suspicious in its frequency.)

Infused with noble Courage, Smith  
Address'd his Captors, and forthwith  
Declar'd his magick Powers: "I  
Shall cast a Darkness on the Sky!"  
He cry'd; and added, that the Gloom  
Should linger 'til the Crack of Doom  
Unless they swiftly set him free—  
"Release me! or I cast on thee  
The Dark of the *Apocalypse*!"  
A Savage ask'd, through grinning Lips,  
"Do you refer to the Eclipse?"

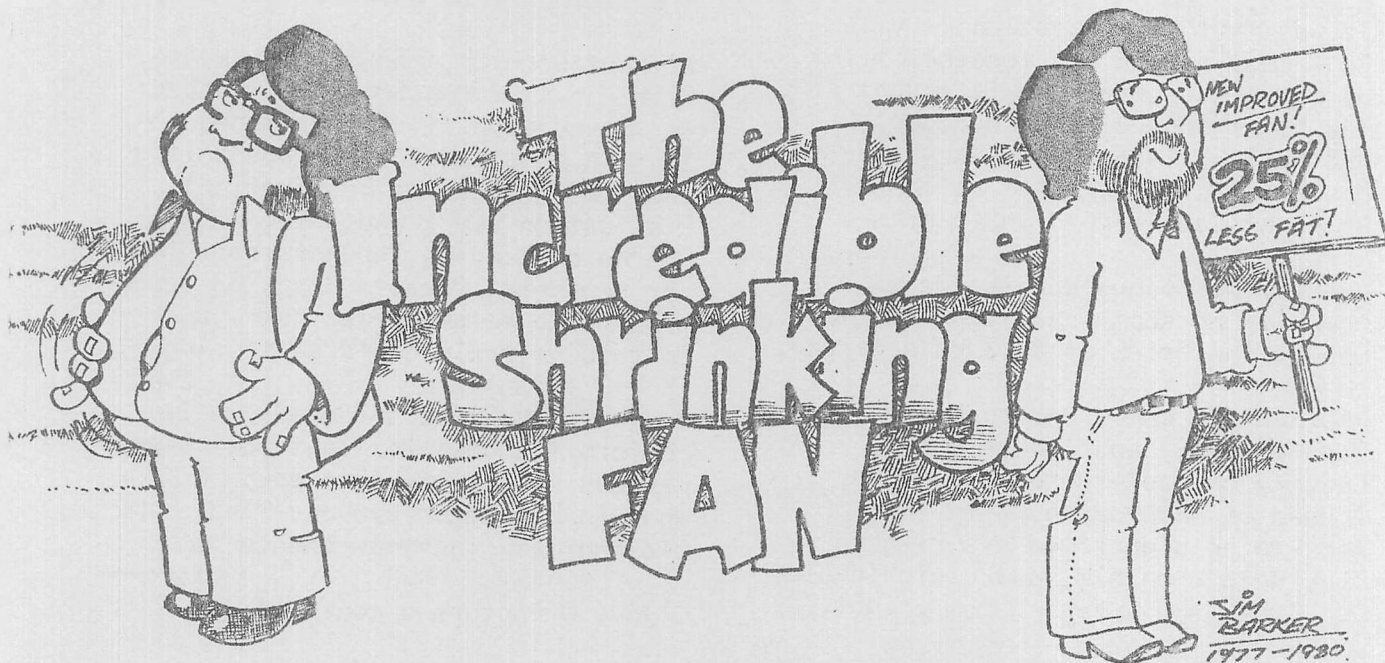
Unhappy *Smith*! Their primal *Need*  
Now rous'd the Tribe's uncultur'd Greed,  
And yielding to their base Desires,  
Without ado they set the Fires



In red *Combustion* 'neath the Pot:  
'Twas aye the rash *Explorer's* Lot.

Dave Langford

=====



Andrew Stephenson started it all. We  
were both hanging artwork at the Eastercon '77 Art Show, and he ambled  
over for a look at my cartoons. After  
a few minutes he turned to me and  
said "You're Jim Barker. My God! You  
look like one of your characters!"  
Since at that time the typical Barker  
cartoon character looked like a squat

barrel with big feet, I wasn't enormously  
flattered.

Sandy Brown helped it on its way.  
At the same Eastercon, he was flitting  
about taking candid photographs  
which were to be published in a BSFA  
fanzine. He asked me if he could take  
a picture of me, and like a fool I



agreed. When the photograph was published—on the back cover of *Matrix*—I looked like a wall-to-wall artist.

"Right!" I said. "I'm going on a diet."

No-one believed me....

Up to about six months ago\* I used to describe myself as 'mountain-shaped with long brown hair and glasses, usually drinking Newcastle Brown with a Scottish accent'. I've always been big. I was a big baby. People used to say that it was puppy fat, and I would lose it once I started to walk. Up to June 1977 I'd been walking for roughly twenty-two years, and I still hadn't lost it. I was never actually miserable about being fat, though I will admit to being a bit sensitive about admitting how much I actually *did* weigh; but there were a couple of occasions when I decided that I'd be better off shedding a couple of stone, and once I actually did it. Unfortunately I was tempted back to nice things like chips, chocolate and cream cakes, and rapidly put it all back on again. This time, though, I was determined to get it off and *keep* it off.

To make sure I was going about it properly, I paid a visit to my doctor. She told me I weighed 16 stone 10 pounds, that I should weigh 11½ stone, but since I was big-boned she'd let me off with 12; then she gave me a diet sheet to follow. It made depressing reading. I was allowed 1000 calories a day—300 each for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and 100 extra for snacks. The trouble was that all the things I really liked were chock full of calories (which is probably why I needed to go on a diet anyway). Did you know there are 272 calories in 4 oz. of chips? Or 540 in 6 oz. of steak-and-kidney pie? Or 160-220 in one pint of beer? I resigned myself to a summer full of fruit and salads. I worked out that I could have 9½ lb. of boiled cabbage for lunch, or 3 pints of tomato juice for breakfast. On the other hand, if I felt like making a pig of myself, I could have 1 lb. of spaghetti in tomato sauce and still be within my 300 limit. Grimly I got down to it, and faith-

fully followed the diet sheet. I lost my first stone in three weeks.

Apparently the first stone is always the easiest to lose because it's mostly water. After that you start attacking the fat. However, such a rapid loss is very encouraging psychologically, and I started actually enjoying watching the pounds slowly melt away. There's no point in saying that those first three weeks were easy. They were *hell!!!!* You just can't satisfy your stomach with a slice of crispbread when it's crying out for a fish supper. Gradually, though, I started getting used to



eating less stodge and more of the things I was supposed to. I started leaving potatoes uneaten on my plate and refusing extra helpings of apple pie. I discovered that Boots do a huge range of low-calorie meals, so I could tuck into a plate of braised steak or curry with the happy knowledge that there were only 350 calories in each. They also offer pills and tablets which are supposed to inhibit your appetite and make you eat less: I never trust these things because of possible side-effects. When I tried 'Ayds' for a while, they made my teeth slack. So I stuck to plain willpower and stapling the

---

\* reckoning from 1978.



lips together. (There's an old joke that the best diet of all is a lemon, sucked first thing in the morning. By the time you get your mouth unpuckered it's time for bed...)

I was beginning to feel a lot healthier. It only took me five minutes to get my breath back after running for a bus, instead of ten; most of my clothes were getting baggy on me. Unfortunately there was an unexpected drawback... In late August I had lost about 2 stone and was down in London on holiday. On two occasions I went for a drink with friends, and both times the room began to spin after less than a pint of lager. I don't know if it's true, but I've been told that this is due to the fact that I've lost body fluids; these days any alcohol passes straight through the stomach wall into my system. Result: instant drunk. Regretfully I crossed beer and spirits off my diet.

By this time I was getting into the swing of things. As well as the diet I was also following a course of exercises from a book I'd bought called *Physical Fitness In Forty Minutes A Week*. I'd chosen it because that didn't sound too strenuous. Basically it consisted of three 10-15 minute periods per week of sit-ups, push-ups and jogging on the spot, which weren't too demanding. Up to then I had religiously avoided any form of exercise; I used to get knackered getting up to change TV channels. Why, after a few sessions I even managed to stop sounding like a beached whale after ten minutes (and that was just looking at the book). All through the summer and into the autumn I kept up the diet and exercises, and every day I would step onto the scales: my food intake was governed by how much I'd gained or lost on the previous day. Come September/October, I'd lost three stone and about six inches off my waist. People started coming up to me and saying "Good Lord! You've lost weight!"; several even asked for autographed copies of my diet sheet.

Eventually Novacon rolled around. I'd told a few people at the Eastercon that I intended to become slim and sylphlike, but I felt they hadn't taken me seriously. I wondered how

they'd react to the new, improved, four-stone-lighter and eight-inches-thinner Jim. I'm pleased to say that virtually everyone who'd last seen me at Eastercon noticed a difference. Comments ranged from "You're looking trim" to "You're not looking very well". (Even Dave Langford of the whisky-soluble memory thought I looked remarkably like Jim Barker.) I was also popular when it came to buying me drinks, since I abstained from alcohol throughout that con, and stuck to Coke or ginger ale.

One of the con's highlights, for me, was having a good long chat with Brian Lewis about diets. He too had once been put on one by his doctor; he'd got down to 10½ stone, which gave me a target to aim for. I also collared Sandy Brown and bribed him to take a pic of me to replace the previous one. This time he didn't have to use his wide-angle lens.

I did abandon my diet for a few days, and with a spurt like a mushroom put four pounds straight back on. Still, I returned to the diet afterwards and with a break for the festive season I've been on it ever since. At the time of writing, I seem to have reached an impasse: I've been stuck at 12 stone 6 lb. for a couple of weeks. As long as I don't start putting any on again, I'm quite happy. I've lost just over 60 lb. in weight, and have shrivelled from a 44" waist to a 34". My life's ambition is now to lose that final 6 lb. and try to squeeze into a pair of 32"-waist trousers.

The advantages I've found in slimming:— I feel a lot fitter; I don't bulge in quite as many places (and the bits that do are meant to); I can fit into styles of clothing that it hurt to look at this time last year.

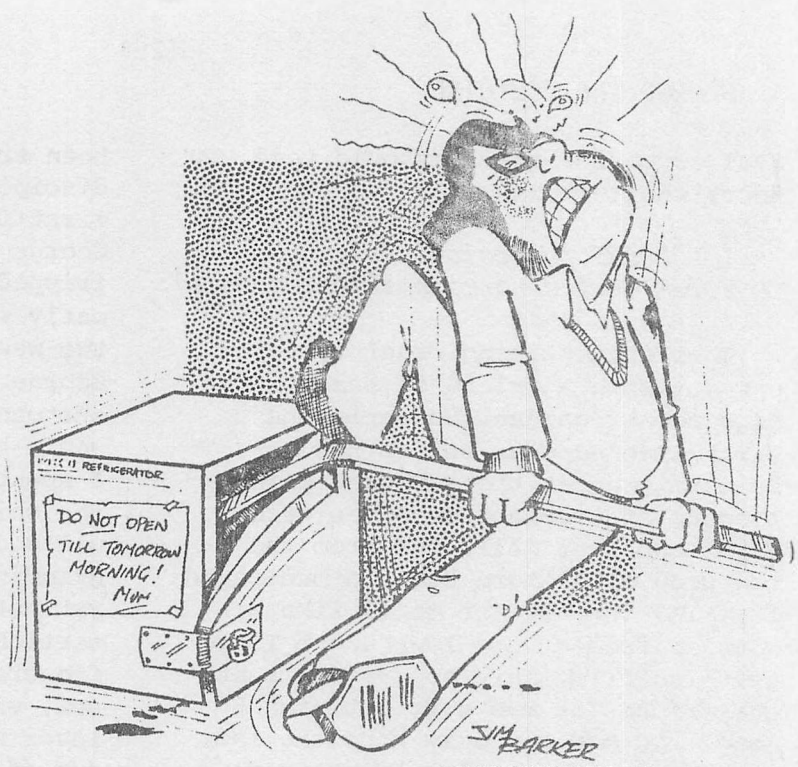
The disadvantages:— the drink problem I mentioned earlier; the fact that it's cost me a fortune to restock my wardrobe (I had two made-to-measure suits which ain't made-to-measure any longer. Apparently I've shrunk too far to get them taken in. I tried to sell them through our local paper, but nobody was interested. Now if anyone wants to buy a



brown three-piece suit, 47" chest, 44" waist and 30½" inside leg, one with flared trousers and the other plain, both worn only twice, you might let me know...). The other disadvantage is that I've never felt so cold in all my life. Without my natural protective blubber I was really freezing, until I bought my Secret Weapon—a pair of long johns. (Stop laughing at once. Some people have no sympathy.) I went out one day without them and promptly came down with a cold!

I seem to have become something of a sensation at the newspaper office where I work. Ten people, including the editor, the advertising manager and one of the directors, are currently following copies of my diet sheet, though perhaps not quite as seriously or as ruinously to the wardrobe as I did. So: if anyone does want to lose a few pounds, I can recommend one diet, anyway....

POSTSCRIPT: 6 February 1978. I'm down to 12 stone 4 lb. this morning. Whoo-pee! Think I'll have a fish supper to celebrate....



TYPIST'S NOTE: Today (March 1980) an exclusive phone call to Jim Barker revealed that our hero has since the glorious days of this article succeeded in regaining one (1) stone. The typist would make some pretty clever and malicious crack about this, were it not for a vague sense of guilt at weighing a few pounds more than Jim. The typist's only consolation is that he's quite a bit taller (see cover), so the bloat doesn't show too clearly. End of impolite interruption. (DRL)

~~~~~



Being the Miscellaneums. Here we go:

#### THE WOODWIND LYRE #1

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

Christopher Priest, in a finite void,  
Had an infinite hyperboloid,  
On which a peripatetic town  
Was somehow short of Lebensraum.

Alan Dean Foster  
Topped the best-selling roster  
Untainted by Creative Art  
(The film-men handle that part).



## GEORGE THE TORTOISE

...I suppose I really should tell you about the tortoise.

(GLOSSARY for colonials...  
TORTOISE (n.) a non-amphibious turtle)

This enterprising beast appeared one day when a friend of Hazel's was digging her garden. Suddenly the earth cracked open before her unbelieving gaze; the sun grew dark, a spate of two-headed calves were born, soufflés fell; and from the tortured soil there burst a mud-caked reptile, for all the world like a monster from a very-low-budget Tokyo-smashing film. This apparition sent the friend (it was a frightening 8" long, and one can only hope the lady never went to see *Alien*) into temporary hysterics. She'd only acquired the house recently and was as affronted as if she'd found a dozen sitting tenants and a family curse waiting for her in the cellar. Next day she accosted everyone she met with words of calculated subtlety like "I expect you've always wished you had a tortoise?"

Hazel drew the short straw, and a barely animated clod of earth (the Friend had hardly cared to touch it, let alone hose it down) was added to the Langford household. It was called George. Hazel explained carefully that all the tortoises in her life had been called George and at this late date she saw no extenuating circumstances which permitted any exception. Hazel is a strong-willed lady. I know that long ago when she collected snails, each of her fourteen identical thoroughbreds was called Fred. It simplified matters, since when you wished to summon one particular snail—"Here, Fred! Heel, Fred!"—there was no straining to recall its name.

George the tortoise sat around, giving impersonations of Peter Weston writing his TAFF report. Hazel took up tortoise-watching and would breathlessly report the creature's every move, which on the first day reached an astonishing crescendo as George yawned twice (high excitement to Hazel, who as an Egyptologist has

been trained in the still more ascetic discipline of pyramid-watching). At first I contented myself by giving George an austere smile whenever I tripped over him (or her), but presently we were forced to take action: two weeks since his emergence, and George had not eaten despite being surrounded with what to Peter Roberts would have seemed a veritable feast. I spent long minutes tickling under the chin, at which his little jaws would certainly move (possibly he was grinding his lack of teeth in hatred), yet not far enough to permit the insertion of lettuce, dandelion leaves/flowers, bananas, bread&milk, groundsel, vitamin pills, or even the tyre lever with which I hoped to ~~prying him~~ ~~out of his shell~~ open his mouth a little wider. From time to time he would snort in a disgusted Pickersgillian fashion, shoulder aside the proffered titbit and wander off to stand witlessly in the bowl of water Hazel had provided. Capillary action, that miracle of science, then drew the water through the wrinkles and crannies of his forelegs, leaving us with a dripping-wet reptile efficiently transferring water from bowl to carpet.

Of course we were showered with wise advice from folk unprejudiced by actual contact with tortoises. We learnt, for example, that they eat when warmed up sufficiently to set their tiny metabolisms ticking. We therefore turned on the gas-fire. Impelled by who knows what atavistic urge, George grunted into action and made a kamikaze dash towards the fire, lumbering in so close that I had to don asbestos clothing before retrieving him. His final dynamic act on reaching the hottest possible spot was to go to sleep. (His or her, I meant to say; we never found out, though Martin Hoare offered to sex it with a pendulum. "If it swings back and forth over him, it's a male; if it swings back and forth over her it's a female.")

Yesterday there was something of a breakthrough. Plainly George's look of concentration over the weeks had been the mere outward expression of





momentous tricklings within, for quite suddenly he delivered himself of an enormous flood of urine. It may be that part of the strain had been due to uncharacteristic concern for our carpet, since this did not occur until we'd experimentally put him out in the sun. Having irrigated the back yard, George stalked purposefully onto the lawn—into would be more descriptive since it hadn't been cut for a year—and bogged down like a lonely wanderer who had strayed into the great Grimpen Mire or a BSFA meeting. Hazel put him in an outdoor pen she'd contrived from bits which had fallen off our house; he made several purposeful circuits of the walls. Then, satisfied of privacy, he flung himself upon a passing dandelion and devoured it utterly. A wide swathe of devastation was cut through clover, vetch and grass: George, flashing a tongue of amazing luminescent pink, was actually foaming at the mouth.

This taught me a deep moral lesson which I shall never forget; I was going to write it up for *Readers Digest* but couldn't think of a good punchline, so I thought you'd like to know instead.

[POSTSCRIPT: Shortly after this was written, George escaped via levitation or a secret tunnel. Somewhere in Northumberland Avenue, a rogue tortoise roams, and while this reign of terror lasts no cabbage is safe. Already furtive whispers are abroad, accusing me of having unleashed the

monster; already crowds of suburbanites with torches gather and mutter before the ruined gates of the Langford Hovel. Some night, beneath a gibbous moon, the Tortoise will confront them there... and of what will follow it is not well to think.]

+++++

## THE WOODWIND LYRE #2

*James Branch Cabell*  
Rhymed his name with rabble,  
And frequently consigned to hell  
The myriad fans who said Cabell.

*Theodore Sturgeon*  
Likes his emotions to burgeon:  
On sighting a friendly visage he  
Commits attempted syzygy.

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

*Larry van Cott Niven*  
To Knownspacesagacide\* was driven:  
The bloated corpus at last reappears  
Exhumed by 'Ringworld Engineers'.

*Anne McCaffrey*  
(Whose Dragonsequels are a laff) re-  
turns with a tale of Eldritch Fear:  
'Weredragons in the Dragonweyr'.

---

\* "The Known Space series is now complete" — Larry Niven, 1975

---






---

+ Or, as my pet word MORPHOLOGICAL  
 + often says, "Of course I can prove  
 + I'm a Dave Langford word... I've  
 + got 5 syllables, ain't I?"

---

All uncredited writing, like that non-sense above, by Dave Langford. All contents copyright (c) 1980 Dave Langford and Jim Barker... certain items appeared in different form previously, as follows:—

The TAFF platforms obviously appeared on the 1980 TAFF ballot, prepared by Peter Roberts and Terry Hughes.

'A Tale of the Jungle' appeared in CLOUD CHAMBER 2 (Dave Langford, 1977), an unknown apazine.

'The Incredible Shrinking Fan' was in THE FRIENDS OF KILGORE TROUT MAGAZINE #2 (Sandy Brown and Bob Shaw, 1978); the cartoons were redrawn.

'George the Tortoise' is expanded from a letter in MOTA 25 (Terry Hughes, 1978).

'The Elmer T Hack Christmas Card' (Jim Barker, 1979) had a select distribution as (surprise!) a Christmas card. From an idea by D.Langford...

TAFF-DDU print run is 300.

## TAFF-DDU CONTENTS

|                                                             |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| FRONT COVER (Jim) . . . . .                                 | 1  |
| TD OR NOT TD? (Dave) . . . . .                              | 3  |
| THE DAY I THINK I NEARLY<br>MET LARRY NIVEN (Jim) . . . . . | 5  |
| FALL OF THE MOUSE OF USHER (Dave) .                         | 7  |
| ABOUT TAFF (Dave) . . . . .                                 | 13 |
| NOT A NUMBER... A FREE FAN (Jim) .                          | 14 |
| THE CAPTIVE (Jim & Dave) . . . . .                          | 15 |
| A TALE OF THE JUNGLE (Dave) . . . .                         | 21 |
| THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING<br>FAN (Jim) . . . . .             | 22 |
| ODDS AND ENDS (Dave) . . . . .                              | 25 |
| MAC MALSENN RETURNS! (Dave) . . . .                         | 29 |
| THE ELMER T HACK FAREWELL<br>CHRISTMAS CARD (Jim) . . . . . | 30 |

Published by the Vast Twll-Ddu Empire at 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks. RG2 7PW, UK. A Jim Barker and Dave Langford production. All artwork by Jim except crossword and pp.5,6,29.

THANKS are due to vast numbers of people: when Barker and Langford do a fanzine, everybody has to get behind and push. Special praise goes to JOHN HARVEY (e-stencils and 'The Captive'), KEITH FREEMAN (provision and personal delivery of paper), PHILIPPA STEPHEN-SEN-PAYNE (collation) and HAZEL LANGFORD and EVE HARVEY for being generally wonderful. Thanks too to HARRY BELL, BRIAN EARL BROWN, MIKE GLYER, ROB JACKSON, LEROY KETTLE, BOB SHAW (the real one), TARAL and VICTORIA VAYNE, for reasons which are unsubtle..

Lastly, a couple of plugs:  
 The Best of Elmer T Hack, a collection of the super Jim Barker/Chris Evans strips from Vector (with an appreciation by Chris Priest) costs a mere £0.80 from Jim (address p.3).

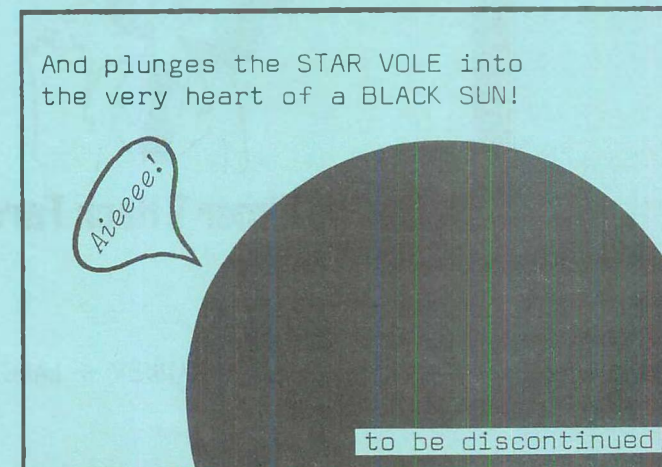
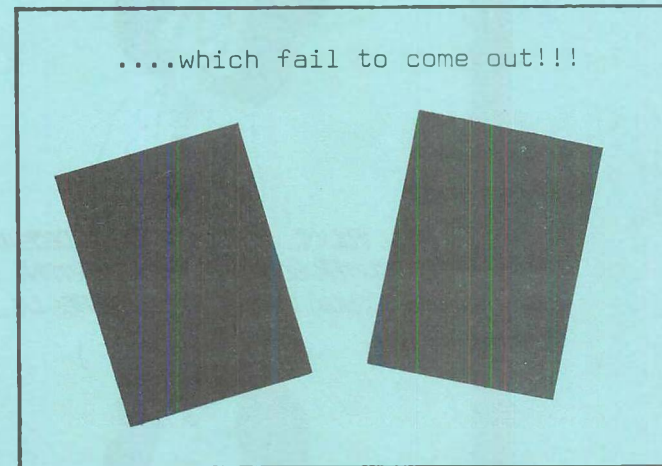
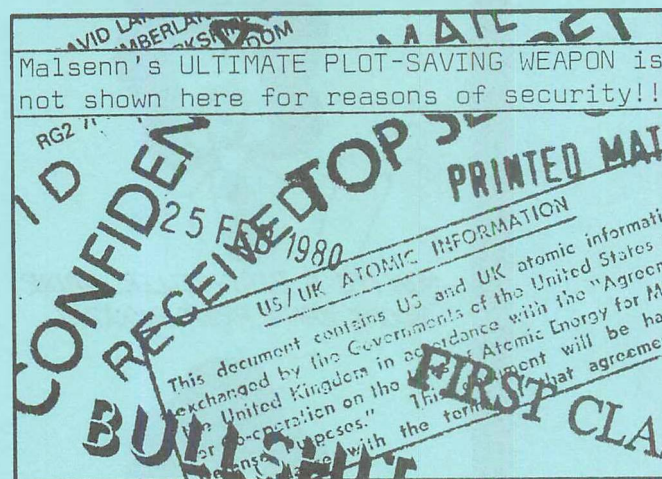
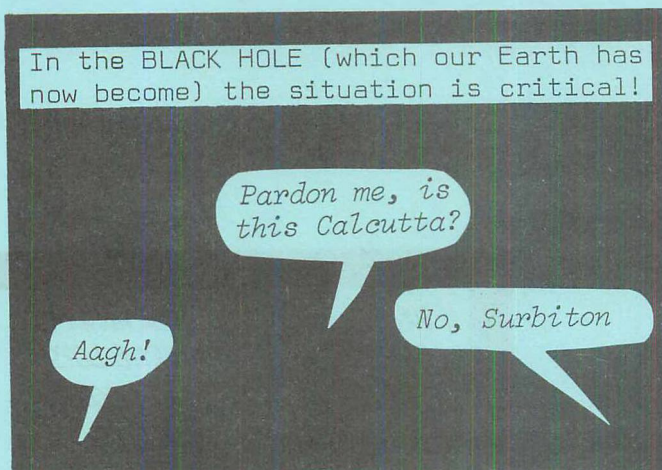
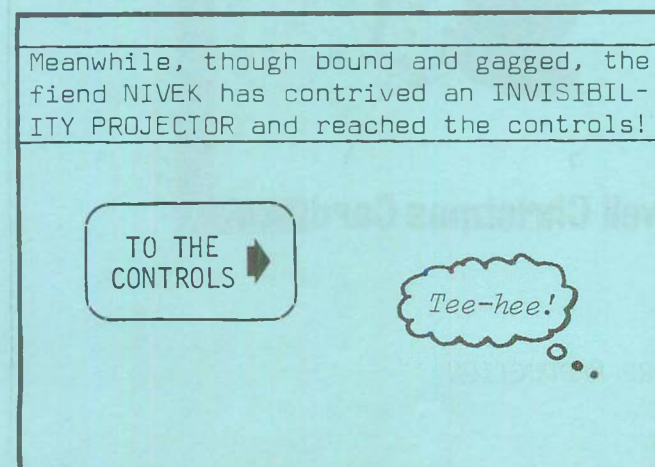
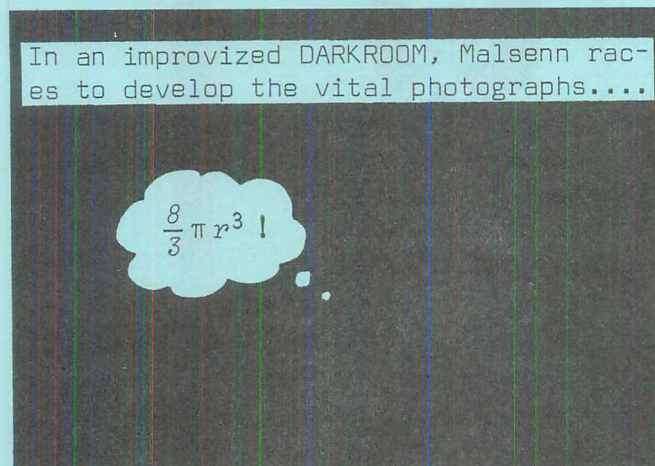
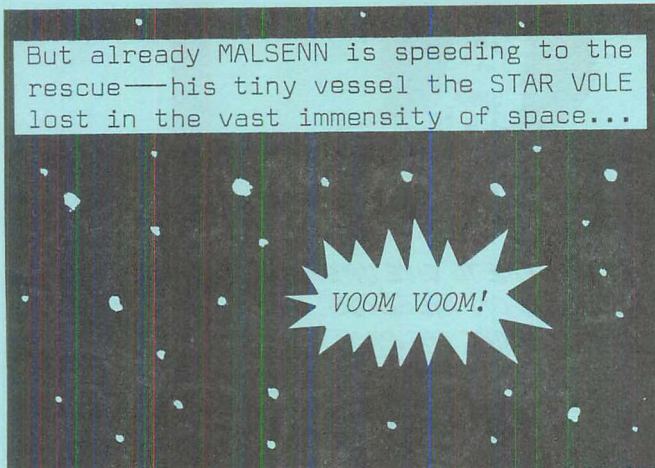
Ansible, the UK newszine of which it has often been said but never proved, is available from Dave Langford: send £1.20 for 8 issues (UK) or, abroad, £1.00 (no foreign currency) for 6 issues (Europe) or 5 (US, Africa, Australia). Contains True Facts, sometimes.

---



# Mac Malsenn Returns!

or... *WHO NEEDS AN ARTIST ANYWAY* by Dave Langford—continuing the saga last seen in *Drilkj's 3* when little artist brother Jon still had time to illustrate, mutter, mutter, bloody pop star, thinks he's too good for fanzines now... Ahem. *THE STORY SO FAR*: Archfiend NIVEK has reduced this Earth to a smallish BLACK HOLE—but has been captured by heroic COSMIC AGENT MAC MALSENN, who... what a load of cobblers. NOW READ ON IF YOU DARE! Me for the pub.





TAFF-DDU: 60p

IN AID OF TAFF

WHEN I WAS JUST STARTING MY  
CAREER, I HAD TO WRITE LOTS  
OF CRUD TO SUPPORT MYSELF



NOW IT'S A BEST-SELLER...NADIR  
BOOKS CAN'T PRINT ENOUGH!!



WELL FOLKS... IT WAS A TOUGH DECISION,  
BUT AFTER SO MANY YEARS WRITING  
SF, I KNOW WHERE MY LOYALTIES LIE...



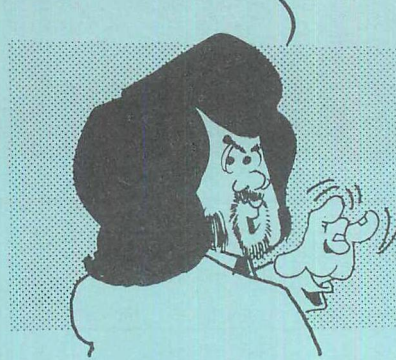
I WROTE THIS SERIES UNDER A  
PEN-NAME SO PEOPLE WOULDN'T  
CONNECT IT WITH MY SERIOUS SF



THEY WANT ME TO GIVE UP SF AND  
CONCENTRATE ON THE SERIES. THEY  
SAY IT'LL MAKE ME RICH!!



GOODBYE, SF!!



VIM BARKER

The Elmer T. Hack Farewell Christmas Card

A BARKER & LANGFORD PRODUCTION