



undulant fever

NO. 5

UNDULANT FEVER is published every-so-often by Bruce D. Arthurs, 3421 W. Poinsettia, Phoenix, AZ 85029 USA, phone (602) 942-0135. A Malacoda Press publication. First stencil begun 5/26/80. Above illo by Kurt Erichsen.

Time, and past, to get another issue out. In the last episode of our never-ending serial, brave gallant B.D. Arthurs and winsome delicate M.R. Hildebrand had finally sold their old home and were looking for a new one. They had found one, but with no time to do more than pub the address on the last page of UF#4.

Okay. The name we've given to the house is "Caer Ananda." "Caer" is the Welsh for "fortress" or "stronghold." "Ananda" is a Sanskrit word which I think Hilde found in one of Octavia Butler's books (and let me pause to pass along Hilde's high recommendation for Kindred, and also to pass along her correction that the word actually came from Sylvia Engdahl's A Swiftly Tilting Planet), meaning something along the lines of "that joy which cements together the universe." So the name of the house basically means House of Universal Joy. One might also translate it as Cosmic Whoopee Joint.

The house is a three-bedroom, block-construction home in a fairly good neighborhood. It's located about four miles from Bruce & Gigi Dane, who are the fans we visit most often these days, about two miles from Hilde's mother, and less than a mile from Metrocenter. (Eat your heart out, Bruce and Elayne.)

We managed to purchase the house through a real estate agent recommended to us by Paul Schauble. She earned her money keeping the deal going thru. The previous owner of the house had gone thru a recent marital breakup, her daughter did not want to move, and she kept changing her mind and dragging her feet until we weren't sure if we were going to have anyplace to move to after all. As it was, we spent a week living with Hilde's parents while waiting for the people to finish moving their stuff out "in just another day or two." (And they still haven't gotten the doghouse out of the backyard.)

There are a couple of extra-nice features about the house. The first is that about half the backyard is a fenced-in garden area, complete with built-in sprinkler system. The previous owners had let this lay fallow for several months, so it was fairly well overgrown with grass and weeds when we moved in. With a good deal of sweat, rototilling, and five stitches and eighty-seven dollars in the hospital emergency room, I managed to get it pretty well cleared out, although that lousy Bermuda grass keeps trying to work back in from the edges. I have my own nickname for that damned stuff: The Creeping Terror.

Oh, you want to hear more about those stitches, eh? You bloodthirsty pack of...anyway, I was trimming down the grass in the garden with a weedeater preparatory to rototilling, and the weedeater ran out of cutting line. Not wanting to go to the store for more, I decided to finish the job with some electric hedge clippers. I found this worked best if I bunched a clump of grass together with my left hand and brought the clippers to it with my right. Since bunching the grass only used the fingers, my left thumb stuck out at a weird angle.

So...I bring the clippers along, and I feel the clippers jerk as I hear a

strange *kwunk* noise. "Whuzzat?" I wondered to myself, at which point the nerve impulses from my left hand finally get up to beside my ear and shout "HEY, STUPID!" Look down, and there's this chunk of my thumb sticking out from the rest, with neat-colored red stuff coming out around the edges.

So...with a damp paper towel wrapped around my thumb, I drive over to nearby Baptist Hospital. (Which is, oddly enough, where I last came for emergency treatment, after falling onto broken glass while working as a dishwasher in 1968.)

When I got into one of the treatment rooms proper after a short stay in the waiting room, a very pretty young lady came in with me. She was an Emergency Medical Technician trainee, and the senior staff wanted her to observe emergency room treatments. This she did with an amusing string of "ooh, ick, yuck" noises as the wound was opened, cleaned, stitched and dressed. All of which distracted me enough that the only time I felt more than a dull ache in the thumb was when the injected the anesthetic...at which point I damn near kicked out the ceiling light. Burn-n-n-n! Pain-n-n-n! A-a-a-a-arghh! I honestly doubt it would have hurt much more if they'd just stitched the thumb up straight.

Moving back to the garden, however, once I finally got the ground ready, I planted corn, two types of lettuce, carrots, beets, zucchini, okra, bush beans, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and New Zealand spinach. (NZ spinach is a variety of spinach-like green which is supposed to be able to withstand hot weather.)

With the exception of the beets, none of which came up, everything is growing fairly well. The eggplant seedlings were a bit wilted the first few weeks, but have perked up and are starting to grow fruit, along with just about everything else. That's another reason to put my ish right now; wait too much longer, and I'll be too busy canning and preserving and freezing to do anything else.

I've done some additional planting since the first batch. I rototilled part of the front side yard where a defunct auto had sat for several years and made it into a watermelon patch. I also planted a second crop of corn around the zucchini plants.

When I did those two plantings, I rototilled in a good deal of the material from the compost bin. I've since discovered that among the stuff the old owners put into the bin were their kitchen scraps. There is now a profusion of seedlings of various types growing amongst the watermelons and the new corn. Some I've been able to identify as tomatoes, and I think most of the rest are one type of squash or another.

Bugs haven't been much of a problem; the garden appears to attract a fair number of ladybugs to go about performing triage on any aphids. I did have some trouble with the lettuce for a while; I'd go out and find one, just one, of the plants with raggedy leaves. I didn't see any sign of aphids or grasshoppers or such around, and if so, howcum only the one plant on the end of the row was affected?

That mystery finally got cleared up a few weeks ago. Aric was poking around in the storage area by the compost bin. "Daddy! Daddy! Look!" I heard. So I went over and looked under the shelf where he was pointing...and there was this frigging tottoise.

I thot back and remembered a mention by the previosu owners that they'd had such an animal, but couldn't find it when they moved. Which explained how the thing got there.

It also explainted why the lettuce kept getting these odd-shaped nibbles upon it, and why the row of plants nearest the fence appeared to have had so few seeds come up. (And here I'd thought the sprinkler sytem hadn't been delivering enough water over that way.)

(Sorry, Mike, but the tortoise is already gone.)

The other neat feature about the house is that there's a bi g (16' x 18') extra room off the master bedroom, complete with a walk-in closet. The closet is where I've set up the mimeo and its supplies, and I'll also be setting up the stereo equipment in there rsn. The room proper will be the library. Moving in, I was really smart, and stacked all the boxes of books up against the wall.

Any day now, I'm gonna move those 40 or 50 boxes out to the center of the room so I can put the shelves up against the wall and actually get the damn books unpacked. (It's only been about four months, after all.) Even then the room won't be complete, tho'. I eventually plan to replace the present motley assortment of sizes, shapes and color with uniform, built-in, wall-to-ceiling (err, floor-to-ceiling) bookshelves.

Moving thru Hilde's and my bedroom and across the hall, we come to the spare bedroom, which is now officially "the study." We traded my old small desk and typing table for the big business desk that was formerly in the front office of the accounting service Hilde's mother owns. The big desk took up so much room in the small office that there was barely room for a chair for the clients to sit in. So now I've got a big new desk, and even have my fanzine collection unpacked and shelved. (Shows where my priorities lie, doesn't it?)

Moving quickly past Aric's bedroom, shielding your eyes and mind from the garish motif of the Spiderman bedspread and drapes, we come to the kitchen. The kithcen is smaller than the one in the Bowker house, but better arranged than most of the so-called "efficiency" kithcens that are in the majority of homes in the part of town. The previous owner's ex-husband was a carpenter, and I believe he was probably responsible for most of the modifications.

The living room is slightly sunken, with two small steps going down and up. These occasionally give Hilde trouble, and we may eventually take up the carpet and lay in extra concrete to make it level.

The front yard is where I'm going to have to do a lot of work. The whole front of the hosue is overrun with a thick layer of ivy, which has even worked its way under the eavesboards and into the attic. After I pull all the crap out, I'm not certain what we'll plant in their place. Hilde is pushing for climbing roses, of which I painfully found several already growing deep under the ivy. I have this odd disaffinity for plants with thorns, somehow. I was thinking more along the lines of runner beans or peas myself. (I wonder if it gets enough sun for grapevines?) (No, says Hilde.)

Out in one corner of the yard is a lousy goddamned palm tree. We've never been able to see what palm trees are good for. (Yes, I know about date palms, but they're a lot of trouble, messy, and most palms hereabouts are different varieties.) They don't give much shade, they look awful if they're not kept well-trimmed (which is expensive ~~of~~ if someone else does it, and Hard Work if you do it yourself), they provide nesting areas for rats, spiders and...ick!...pid-geons, and they're fire hazards. (You know what happens tp palm trees with their foliage burned off? The inside of the trunk rots, liquifies, and the whole tree sags over on itself like a limp prick. E-e-e-e-e-yuck!)

Along with the palm tree, I'm gonna yank out the arbor vitae flanking the driveway and blocking my view every time I back out. In their place, we're thinking of planting fruit trees. I figure if I get the standard-sized trees, eventually they'll be tall enough to foil casual fruit-snatchers. Hilde has also suggested a fence around the yard of berry brambles.

Sound like we're running a small farm here? (I won't mention the rabbits Hilde wanted us to raise.) There're several reasons we've gotten so into gardening. One is that the veggies taste better, not having had a couple of days between harvest and sale to lose moisture, flavor and nutrients. They may also tastes better because I grew them myself (sort of like getting more jollies out of reading my own zines than anyone else's -- with rare exeptions, for which I never forgive the editros of those fanzines), which is the second reason. I work, and sweat, and do a lot of drudgery (collating the corn, addressing the eggplants, applying postage to the peas), but it's a kick to watch the little fruits and roots form and grow and finally get ready for harvesting. And the final reason is that it saves money. When zucchini -- zucchini. of all the mind-croggling things! p- is being sold for ninety-nine cents a pund in most stores, well...!

And one of the reasons that saving money is so important is that the payments on this whole shishkabob come to over \$520 a month. That makes things a little tight, even if ti isn't as bad as what a lot of people are paying

nowadays, and it won't last as long as most mortgages.

How's that again? Well, we took over the original mortgage from the old owner at \$211/mo. In addition, we're paying \$250/mo toward the old owner's equity in the house; this will increase to \$350/mo in 1983, after our car loan is paid off, and the total equity will be paid off in seven or eight years, leaving just the regular mortgage payments. In addition, we borrowed \$5,000 from Hilde's mother to add to the down payment, and are paying it back at \$66/mo for about the next nine years. In short, we'll be tight for a few years, but after the equity is paid off, we'll be in a damn fine position. And if we want to continue the large payments after that, we could own the house free and clear in as little as fifteen years.

Paying for the house is one of the major reasons why we've cut down seriously on our con attendance. We used to go to at least 3 or 4 cons a year. This is down to one or two. (On the other hand, pubbing a zine like this, even with rising postage and whatall, is a lot less expensive than a con, so I should, he said, be able to keep on pubbing UF fairly regularly, i.e. occasionally.

One of the cons we didn't go to this year was Leprecon, but not because we were broke. When I noted last issue that more and more cons were probably going to go into the red and/or be canceled, I had no idea that Leprecon was going to be one of them. What makes it a damn shame is that for once a Leprecon committee was working well together and actually getting things done more than three days before the convention.

Less than a month before the convention was due to start, the Leprecon chair, Randy Rau, was informed by the hotel, the Phoenix Hyatt Regency, that the convention would have to make a safety deposit, in cold hard cash, of seven thousand, nine hundred and eighty dollars (\$7,980!) before the convention would be allowed to take place.

The rationale the Hyatt gave for this demand was that Iguacon had caused over twenty thousand dollars in damages to the hotel, and that since Leprecon was also an sf convention and therefore an associate of Iguacon...that Leprecon would have to make this deposit or else.

Considering that most of the people on the Leprecon committee didn't work for Iggy at all...

...and considering that of those who did work at Iggy, none were in any position of top decision-making or financial responsibility...

...and considering that most of the people on the Lepreconcom aren't on speaking terms with most of the (final) group of people who bore responsibility for Iggy...

...and especially considering that the real claim for damages the Hyatt filed against Iggy was for less than three thousand dollars...

...then in all due consideration, I have to say that this "rationale" is one of the biggest crocks of shit I have ever heard.

In short, the Hyatt deliberately forced Leprecon out, and at such a late date that it was impossible to find suitable facilities elsewhere.

Why? I don't know for sure, but there are several likely possibilities. One is that some mundane group asked the Hyatt for those same dates, and the Hyatt decided to go where the money was, despite previous obligations.

And the Hyatt was also disgruntled with Leprecon's failure to make a long-term contract with the Hyatt. Over and over, they kept trying to get a five-year contract signed. Over and over again, it was explained to them that this was the first year Leprecon was pushing for a large attendance (600 or so planned for), that it was basically a test, and that there was no way a long-term contract was going to be signed until it was seen how successful this first large con was.

And -- and here's where it starts to get depressing to write about -- the Hyatt may also have been turned off by the attempts to sabotage Leprecon. At least once, several months before the con was supposed to take place, some unknown person called the Hyatt, identified themselves as Leprecon's chairman, and told the Hyatt that the committee had decided to cancel the convention.

The really depressing thing about this incident is that I can easily think of more than one person who might have done it. (Iggy's "Time of Troubles" lives on, and on, and on....)

There was an sf con in Phoenix that weekend. Terry Gish, along with Curt Stubbs, decided that there should be something held in Phoenix, and got a couple of small function rooms reserved at the Caravan Inn, whipped up some very informal programming (of which I'm not sure how much got held; the panel I was supposed to be on never did), crammed the huxter room and art show into some small rooms, and called it Altercon. Hilde and I didn't spend too much time there, from a combination of things to do at home and the fact that Hilde wasn't feeling well and all the facilities were upstairs with no elevators. I believe attendance was slightly less than 100, with a large portion of these being people from LA and Denver who'd already made arrangements for time off and transportation to Phoenix that weekend.

There was another reason we didn't spend too much time at Altercon: Friday afternoon we were busy picketing the Hyatt.

Yes, we really did. The picketing was organized by Randy Rau as a side-light to the lawsuit he's instigated against the Hyatt, asking for recovery of costs plus punitive damages. There weren't as many people as we would have liked to have (or as many as said they'd be there), but there were four people (including me) walking with picket signs, while Hilde was able to carry two signs as I pushed her wheelchair back and forth.

That chair had great psychological impact. The photographer from the Arizona Republic loved us, and took about twice as many photos of Hilde and me as of the rest of the group.

And it was lovely watching the expression on the Hyatt manager's face when the KOOL news helicopter hove into view and spent about ten minutes circling around and getting various shots of us. Unfortunately, neither media used the story, but at least the Hyatt was shaken up a little.

Randy has also been chosen to chair the Phoenix bid for the 1982 Westercon. I think he is more capable of pulling it off well than anyone else in the Phoenix area that I know of. During his time as Leprecon chair, he showed more managerial ability and knowledge of what to do and -- more importantly -- how to get people to do it than anyone else has ever displayed in the job. The man is *gasp* businesslike. So I think that with Randy as chairman, and with the input of various high-energy types like the Danes, a Phoenix Westercon could be pulled off successfully.

Does this mean I support the Phoenix bid? No, it doesn't.

You see, I'm a sucker. It doesn't matter whether I'm on the committee or not, or even whether I volunteer or not; I'm always going to end up doing some sort of work for the con before and/or during it, either be being asked or by being volunteered.

There are, apparently, people who get their jollies in fandom by means of working on conventions. This has always seemed really bizarre to me. I don't know where this enjoyment comes from. You certainly get little, if any, egoboo from the people you do the work for; in fact, you usually just get blamed for all the things that go wrong.

Maybe the fun is supposed to come from working with a group of people all of whom have a common goal and who are all supportive of one another? What convention is this? I don't know of any with a committee like that.

Or maybe you're supposed to get your jollies simply by taking pride in a job well done? Well, that's nice, but what have you done for me lately? Once a convention is over, it's gone.

Any time I want to, I can go to the shelf, pull down whatever fanzine I want, and relive the enjoyment I had on first reading it. I marvel at the stunning wit, croggle at the seriously intelligent discussions, gasp with astonishment at the sheer awesome command of language. (Need I add that the fanzines I re-read most often are my own?)

Well, maybe re-reading a fanzine isn't quite as enjoyable as the first

time thru. What you're actually enjoying is the memory of the enjoyment you had reading it the first time. Which is something you can also do with conventions you attend.

But the big difference is that a fanzine is more than some scattered grey cells in your head, waiting for an electric current to turn them on. It's an object, an artifact, an archeological find, even.

You say that was a damn fine convention you went to last month, that it's too bad I miss so many good conventions? Well, sit down and let me tell you a few things:

I shared a room with Bob Vardeman at the 1970 Worldcon. I went to Toronto in 1973 with Mike Glycer. Mike Glicksohn, Don Thompson, and Bob Tucker took me with them to Australia in 1975.

You want more? I was at the Westercon where Poul Anderson wrote "Bouncing Potatoes." I was six years old in 1958, when the Irish John Berry took me to Chicon. I've even been to the very first Worldcon of all, 15 years before I was even born!

What's really neat about all this is that I missed all the boring or unpleasant experiences. I got to good parties, listened to neat conversations, and in general experienced all the good parts except getting laid. And I was removed from the scene enough that I could observe any political backstabbing or chicanery with a dispassionate attitude. (Which I have great trouble coping with in real life. I still grow green with chagrin remembering the time I almost punched someone out during a Leprecon meeting at Curt Stubb's home.) (And the really embarrassing thing about that is that the person I almost punched out was trying to disrupt the meeting, and I fell for it hook, line & sinker.) (Need I add that this person is one of the ones I suspect of placing that phone call to the Hyatt?)

Having thoroughly sidetracked myself onto the subject of attending cons, rather than working on them, with a mighty effort I derail myself, dragging engine, cars and caboose down the long low slope of my forehead and settling back onto the correct set of tracks in the forebrain (located just above the eyetracks), with only a badly crushed and twisted metaphor to show for damage.

Nope, I don't like working on cons. It's for that selfish reason that I have to say I hope Phoenix doesn't win the Westercon.

It is a matter of priorities. I don't have as much free time as I would like to have. The free time I do have, I have to try to use as usefully as possible. For me, that means that given a free choice, my top priority will be either (a) reading a book or fanzine, or (b) working on a fanzine or, more recently, a story. Conventions, club meetings, or other social interactions with live people fall fairly far behind those first two.

Following thru on such a resolution, tho', isn't quite so simple. Hilde is almost 180° away from me regarding cons and fanzines. Sitting in front of a typer or a pad and pencil is hseer torture for her, sweating over every word and sentence and paragraph, wondering whether people will find it enjoyable or readable or even coherent. And then deciding that no they won't, so why keep trying? (I, of course, get around this sort of mental block by not giving a damn if it's enjoyable or readable or coherent to anyone but me, and just bullshitting away.)

Where Hilde shines is where I don't, in interacting with other people on a face to face basis. She's one of those people who get some sort of warped jollies out of attending and working on cons. She can converse with people, or talk at them when need be, or in general just bullshit away.

Which means it's compromisetime in marriageland. (Actually, it's always compromisetime in marriageland.) We have to strike a balance between time for all the social interactions she needs for her peace of mind and time for me to pursue my own mostly solitary amusements. Plus, of course, time for the both of us together, and time to spend with Aric. It's when one partner or the other feels an imbalance that it's time to recommit.

Speaking of working on fanzines, it is my present intention to follow thru on the idea I presented in UF#3 of making every fourth issue a larger, genzine-style zine. I don't know just how large UF#6 will be, or how soon it will be out (let me get this gd zine out of the way first), but it will be out eventually. I hope to get a fair amount of work done on it this summer. I've already got a fair amount of material, some of it leftover from my GODLESS days.

I had had some hope that with the elimination of Saturday deliveries, I would be having normal weekends off ("living like white folks," as another letter carrier put it and be able to squeeze a bit more free time out of those days than I can from the rotating-days-off schedule I work now. But now I hear that Congress has reappropriated the money needed to continue Saturday deliveries for at least another year.

Actually, that bit of news is rather a relief. Along with the rumours of no more Saturdays was the rumour that a lot of carriers would be laid off. And that would have been done by seniority, and it would be quite likely that I'd be one of the ones to get the axe. At least, it's rather a relief if I take for granted that this latest rumour is true; I haven't seen it in writing yet.

I have, incidentally, transferred from the Northeast branch of the Phoenix PO, and am now carrying out of the Deer Valley substation. This is less than 3 miles from the Cosmic Whoopee Joint. I figure that what with moving closer to friends, family and work, I've cut the mileage being put onto the car by more than half.

There are a few differences at the new station. The Northeast office was in an old, established and fairly ritzy part of town (one step below Paradise Valley, for the most part). Deer Valley (in which all you see nowadays is an occasional lizard) goes all the way out to the city limits, and is slowly filling up with more and more clumps of suburban-style houses and shopping centers. Since a lot of the houses are new, so are a lot of the families moving in. (So are a lot of the families moving out. I know we're in a recession when one development I deliver has nearly 10% of its buildings up for sale or rent because the families can't afford the payments anymore.) I see a lot more young children here than I did across town.

I've noticed a disturbing trend in these young children. I come walking or bicycling down the sidewalk, my shoulder-length hair either flapping around or tied back with a rubber band, and hardly a day goes by without some snott-nosed little creep taking a look, totally ignoring my full beard and moustache, and saying:

"Are you trying to be a girl?"

Ladies and gentlemen, an entire new generation is growing up that not only has never heard of "hippies" but appears to be retrogressing to the sexual stereotypes of the pre-1960's.

Ghod, I feel old.

KICKBACKS

MIKE GUIDERLOY, Beyond the Leading Edge, 930 N. Bushnell Ave., Alhambra, CA 91801

Haloo! What's this? Another fanzine gracing my mailbox and ultimately my files, unless I lose it. I'm a bit baffled as to where I know you from or what I did to deserve this, but I think I know what to do to get more: write a loc, right? ((Close enough. What you did to deserve this was to publish an interesting zine in FREFANZINE. I am trying to do my bit to slow the collapse of fanzine fandom into the apas by sending UF to various interesting people I encounter in the pages of the apas I have opportunity to peruse.))

As far as I'm concerned, all the cons I've ever been to have had the drawback of not being able to find the people you want to talk to, or not being able to stop and talk to them when you find them. Maybe the small relaxicons are different, but not being much of a con-fan I

haven't been to any. Anyhow, at the last Loscon I developed a new strategy for dealing with this old problem: I found a ready source of free beer and tried to demolish it, letting other fen come to me rather than seeking them out myself. It may have worked (the memory is a bit hazy); I'm sure I was at least talked about if not talked to. ((I recall Bill Bowers and various others recommending that the best way to meet the people you want to at a con is to get a nice large drink, take a seat in either the bar or the lobby, and wait for them to find you. I've always had this horrible fear that if I tried it myself, I would be utterly ignored.))

As far as I'm concerned, fanzine fandom (or, more precisely, apa fandom) is already where the action is. Cons are fun, sure, and it's nice to meet these people after you've known them for a while, but is it really worth the expense? Not to me; it's not. I have this aversion to spending, say, \$50 or more on one bit of entertainment, even though I know written fanac is costing me that much every two months or so. A convention is just a large party to me, and I dislike parties that want to charge me for admission.

BRETT COX, Box 542, Tabor City, NC 28463

I'm glad you're evidently going to stick with UF for the very selfish reason that it's nice to get zines from Old Familiar Friends. The few zines that make their way into my mailbox these days are mostly from people I've never heard of. Which is ok, but it's a trifle disconcerting to realize that, at the ripe old age of 21, I'm part of a Past Generation. As it was, reading through your mailing list in UF#3 was quite literally reading a list of old friends & acquaintances. The old order passeth, etc.

At any rate, I'm glad that things are going ok for you & that you've apparently settled into the domestic life pretty comfortably. As for me, I'm just about 100% gaffiated, partly due to lack of time but mostly due to lack of inclination. I once wrote Don Thompson that, given the choice between staying home writing locs to fanzines & going out with & generally associating with friends, I'd choose the latter over the former nine times out of nine. Well, since I've been in college the choice has become real as opposed to hypothetical, & that's exactly what I'm doing -- choosing the latter.

Changing the subject a bit, I was interested in your comments on Dhalgren. I got about 350pp. in it before inertia overcame me. I promised myself that I'd reread it five years later, so this summer I guess I'll see how my perspective has changed. I tend to think I'll appreciate it more.

That's about all for now -- time to get back on Francis Bacon's essays & the research for my term paper on Aristotle's Poetics. (These are the kind of things you wind up doing when you major in English & minor in Philosophy.) I said earlier that I was gaffiated, but there are still a couple or three zines I want to keep getting, & yours is one of them.

FRANK DENTON, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166

I was pleased to see that you weren't afraid to review, in a casual way, a couple of books that have been around for a while. It gives me faith. I haven't read Shardik, the one who was one of the first to espouse the cause of Richard Adams in this country. Nor have I read The Plague Dogs. And he's due out with a new novel sometime in the next few months. I'd better get with it.

I was also pleased with your remarks about Dhalgren. I, like you, didn't finish it. My son, Tim, did. He's now in the hospital awaiting back surgery for the removal of a disc, and expects to be there for seven days. He took one book with him, Dhalgren. He thinks it's a great book and is looking forward to rereading it. So there you are. ((Where?))

TIM MARION, c/o Leibowitz, 2032 Cross Bx Expwy, Apt 3D, Bronx, NY 10472

Just a short note to thank you for UF #4 and to tell you how much I disagreed with your opinion of Shardik. You say, "...quite a few of the reviewers seemed to feel it was slow-moving...Where they get this impression from, I don't

know...Adams can use a good number of pages to advance the action just a bit. But nothing in those pages is wasted. Each action or thought or feeling of a character builds his or her persona more thoroughly and clearly. Each bit of background information makes a more complete picture of the world Adams has created. And every word fits together smoothly and progresses logically."

I'm not going to argue with you that Richard Adams is not a good writer, because if I felt he wasn't, I would not have bothered to read the book. However, I became incredibly annoyed with the book whenever tense, dangerous scenes between the characters were interrupted by page-long similes (sometimes longer than a page, sometimes as long as FOUR PAGES!), that begin with, "As the grasshopper would jump off the leaf in the latter months of the year, as...blah blah blah, blah blah blah," ad infinitum (seemingly), that ultimately (prepare yourself for a shock) come to an end (*gasp*) with something like, "...so did the young man greet the bear as it came lumbering dangerously toward him," or something equally corny. Now maybe these long passages of simile help to develop the world that the book takes place in, but I really find it very annoying and think it is very bad writing to have the action broken up by these long passages, charming though they may seem to you. I think the problem with this book is that it could have used much tighter editing. Maybe the editors (ha!) of the book figured that since Adams was already a best-seller, he could really do no wrong. ((I don't think we have any argument; you just don't find Adams' style to your taste. If you think Adams is bad, maybe I'd better take this opportunity to irrecommend you from ever reading anything by Victor Hugo.))

MIKE IRING, Apt. 11-G, 8401 Spain NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111

You know, I hate to say this (and don't you dare print it, either!), but I haven't read anything by Orson Scott Card, and he was our GON last year at Bubonicon. From what I can gather, he's a pretty lousy novelist, but an okay short-story writer. (Oh, by the way, in case you're interested, our GON this year is going to be C.J. Cherryh. C'mon up. It's been quite a while since you did.) ((Hey, last year's Bubonicon was the first I'd missed in six years! How soon they forget.... Unfortunately, it appears that transferring to the new station cancelled out the request for leavetime I'd put in at the old station, so in all probability I won't be able to make it this year either. Drat. I may make a long-distance call to one of the parties, though. I like Bubonicon, whatever I may gripe about cons in general.))

The neatest writer I've discovered (though a lot of other people discovered him quite a number of years ago) is Thomas Pynchon. Man, that guy can write! I absolutely went APE over Gravity's Rainbow. V, his first novel, was okay, and The Crying of Lot 49 was funny, but GR just (as a friend of mine put it) "opened the top of my skull and fucked around with my brain". I don't recommend it for most persons (Delany seemed to have borrowed quite a lot of the stylisitic tricks from it for Dhalgren, though it's not as excessive as the last section of Dhalgren), but if you like a really weird, strange, delightful, hilarious (at times), thick book, it's for you. The opening section is VERY strange, but if you can get past it, and it is very important for the rest of the novel, you'll have a ball.

Another weird book is Carlos Fuentes' Terra Nostra. The style is bizarre, almost Baroque in its twistings and turnings, but very appropriate for the subject matter. He deftly describes the minds of people really sick, some poisoned by obsessing with religion, others by despair, and others are just mad. It's even more difficult to get into that GR.

Oh, I sold an sf novel to Tower Publications (out in July; look for the title The Space Mavericks; lots of Tuckerisms).

D. GARY GRADY, 817-D N. Buchanan Blvd., Durham, NC 27701

I saw a computer program the other day you'd probably enjoy...called "Dog-bite," it was an accurate simulation of what happens to mailmen when they encounter a dog. The type of dog encountered, and its location, was dependent

upon whether upon whether you (the player) were delivering letters or something that would require personal contact with the recipient. Also taken into account was the economic status of the neighborhood, whether or not you were the substitute or regular mailman, etc. The dog's size and reaction are described, as is the result of any action you attempt. For example, refusing to make a delivery or using a chemical spray in the pet-owners presence tends to annoy them. (The pet owner and possibly the dog too.) Running encourages getting bitten. The program was published in PERSONAL COMPUTING, I believe, and was written, appropriately enough, in Pet BASIC (for the Commodore Pet computer). ((I've encountered lots of barking dogs, but I find that maintaining eye-to-eye contact and never turning your back on them will keep them from getting close enough to bite. The closest I ever came to getting bitten was when a customer came out of his house to meet me as I delivered his mail, bringing his German Shepherd along with him. As I warily handed him his mail, he said of the dog, which was standing directly between us, that very familiar phrase, "Don't worry; he doesn't bite." At which point the dog turned his head and ripped a chunk out of my shorts. Would you believe that in over two years, I have met one dog-owner who will admit his dog would rip my lungs out given half a chance?))

GARY S. MATTINGLY, PO Box 6907, San Francisco, CA 94101

Did I see you at the '79 Westarcon? My memory is pretty bad these days, with people at least. Can't seem to remember who I eat with, who told me an interesting story, etc. Course, I don't think it's new. I spent most of one con wandering around with one guy & didn't even remember him at the next con I saw him at. He was amazed that I didn't remember him. I wonder who that was?

HARRY HARRIER JR., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740

I react disappointingly to most excerpts published in reviews and criticisms. Usually these excerpts strike me as dull and uninspired, no matter how much the writer praises them. As a rule, when I eventually get around to reading whatever the quotations were extracted from, I find them to be just as good as they were alleged to be, now that I'm encountering them in context. This is the thing that caused me to read th- Tolkien fiction several years after everyone else in fandom discovered it. All those enthusiastic articles about Tolkien had included a half-dozen or so quotations and the more quotations I saw, the more I felt that this was a clumsy writer who had no idea how to put words together in a flowing manner or with any originality of expression. As it turned out, I never did feel for Tolkien the complete admiration most fans possess, but I grant that his fiction is much better than the quotes led me to believe. All of which should show why I don't feel any great urge to read Delilah on the basis of your long quote from it, and why I'll probably like the book as much as you do when I someday run across a copy at a garage sale.

ERIC MAYER, 654 Boulevard East, Weehawken, NJ 07087

I was distressed by your house selling woes. Right now I'm in a two family, which is bad enough, but hardly comparable to the hellhole of an apartment we had in Brooklyn. God knows, the way things are going, if Kathy and I will ever be able to get hold of a house.

Things are truly in a mess. I just did our income taxes. The first thing I discovered was that the government hates students. If you choose to lie around and do nothing the government will gladly pay you welfare. When you live in New York that's a sorry fact you can't ignore. But if you choose to learn some skill...well forget it. There are all sorts of loopholes in the taxes, but they are all specifically closed to students. Refurbishing an otherwise outmoded and useless factory in order to put it into productive work is a legitimate expense, but an otherwise unemployable person who seeks to make himself employable through schooling rather than going on welfare is out of luck. I'm feeling sour because I've just determined that, considering the

doubled taxes we'll have to pay, not to mention the cut-off of financial aid, thanks to my taking a full time job last September, we would've been better off had I just sat on my rear end, getting up only often enough to attend the odd class.

Do you really want to hear this? Your house story set me off because the housing market, closed as it is becoming, is one of my major gripes. I'm not in favor of endless government programs but to me, housing (or more correctly houses) is basic. Something ought to be done to assure that the average person, the average couple at least, who work hard, can own a place of their own, however modest. When such a basic need isn't met human dignity suffers and I think it indicates a grave failing in the society. Surely there must have been many, many people who would've loved to purchase your house. More than two surely. And of course it isn't healthy when people like you and Wilde find themselves frozen into place.

Well, anything to avoid talking about Dhalgren....

((I have this odd suspicion that the anti-student provisions in the tax laws are a holdover from the days of the draft, when the more intelligent people the government could keep out of college, the more they could draft to raise the quality of the military. The very idea of having a volunteer military is in such opposition to the cardinal rule of military survival ("Never volunteer") that they deserve everything they get.

((We finally ended up selling our house for \$5,000 under valuation. However, we still managed to come out of the deal with more money to put into a new house than if we'd sold it at the full price. This was because it was purchased by a realtor as an investment. Because of this, we only had to pay 3½% commission, rather than 7%, and we also avoided having to pay about \$2,500 worth of "points." The realtor also bought the house "as is", which saved us several hundred dollars more in minor repairs and touch-ups we would otherwise have had to do on the house.))

GEORGE BEAHM, 13 Gainsborough Pl., Newport News, VA 23602

THE COMMENTS ((oops)) you made about house-hunting struck a responsive chord in me. Interest rates are absurdly high, along with property taxes, heating bills, maintenance, etc. Even still, one cannot afford not to buy a house, if one can afford it in the first place. (My taxes last year were incredibly high: single, standard deductions, and claiming one exemption put me in the uncomfortable position of a \$36 refund -- after paying \$130 a month in federal taxes. Would have been nice to be able to deduct that from taxes!) Worse, there are few homes I've seen in any price range that appeal to me. Considering the advances in solar energy heating, wood heat, passive energy designs, and other progressive leaps in the home-building industry, conservatism is firmly entrenched, and stick-building homes is still prevalent. The housing industry is hopelessly behind the times. (Consider your version of a dream house -- do you see anything on the market that comes close?)

((Sure, but I don't have five million dollars to spare, and the power bill just to keep the ice-skating rink frozen would probably be out of my league.

((I think it is more the conservatism of the buying public that keeps the building industry behind the times. Most people don't trust a heating system where the heating element travels to the other side of the world every night. So they'd rather continue to depend on an energy source mined or pumped from hundreds or thousands of miles away, that has to be processed thru a series of steps each of which raises the price, the supply of which can be interrupted by any number of natural or deliberate causes, that will probably be exhausted in their lifetime, and that they figure must be the best available or else it wouldn't cost so much.))

DAVE SZUREK, 4417 Second, Apt. B-15, Detroit, MI 48201

Played hero in a fire situation too, not long ago. Was coming home from

buying a newspaper, when I caught sight of smoke drifting from an apartment window. Summoned the fire department immediately. That was the extent of my involvement. Yet, I have been criticized by friends and acquaintances as an "alarmist."

And with that, we'll go to the WAHFs: In no particular order -- Mike Glicksohn, Paula Lieberman, Jan Howard Finder, Harry Andruschak. I also have a postcard from Liegh Edmonds leighing around someplace, and I'm fairly certain I heard from Ned Brooks. There may be yet more cards and letters laying about, forgotten and starving for egoboo. Ah well.

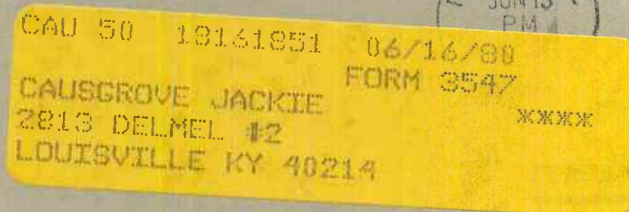
And thus we approach the end of yet another issue of UNDULANT FEVER. It was my intention to include a section commenting on the reading I've done since last issue, but: 1) I haven't done much reading, outside of some mysteries and Michael Moorcock's Elric books (oddly uneven, ranging from brilliant to abysmal. I may have more to say about them next issue). I might recommend Edith Pargett whose historical novels Hilde says are very well done; she also writes mysteries under the name Ellis Peters, and I can give my own recommendation for A Morbi Taste For Bones. I also recommend Peter DeVries' works, but with the warning that a lot of people find his macabre lunacy very depressing; I think this is because he's one of the few writers who knows what pathos really is and can write about it. Also recommended: Nevil Shute's Most Secret, and M.F.K. Fisher's How To Cook A Wolf, a marvelous coupling of anecdotal autobiography and cookbook.

One of my other activities in my free time has been the establishment of a science fiction writer's workshop in the Phoenix area. Meeting once a month, so far we've got a track record of one rejection from Asimov's. As seems to be usual with this sort of thing, the biggest problem is getting people to finish the stories they start. (I will have mine finished for the next meeting; I will, I will, I will....)

And I believe that at this point, the issue is finished. (Whoops!: 2) The regular material and the letter column seem to have crowded out talking about books for this issue.

[] If there is an "X" in this square, this means I haven't heard from youm for the last few issues, and your mailman will refuse to deliver any more issues of UNDULANT-FEVER to such an undeserving cad unless you respond.

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