

warm champagne...bubblebubble... warm champagne...fizzlefizzle... warm

THIS IS WARM CHAMPAGNE # 8, typed on Sunday, July 17, 1977 (two months after the last issue) by Susan Wood; Lion's Gate Publication #19

I've noticed a strange condition in my life: the chaos never seems to end. "Soon, when I get my thesis done, I'll get caught up on the mail..." "Soon, when I move in and recover from Aussiecon, I'll..." Realsoon. Yes. Realsoon I may do mailing comments on Anzapa. Right now, my apologies, but I haven't even read the last mailing. I'm typing this only because the change in minac requires me to have 3 pages in the next mailing. It may not look as if I want to belong, at times, but I do... and I'll prove it, realsoon, when I get things tidied up. Yes.

The trip to California I mentioned last mailing went very well, thank you. I spent some time in Seattle; John Berry, a Seattle fan named Jeff Frane (publisher of an excellent fanzine, HEDGEHOG, free plug, P.O. Box 1923, Seattle, WA 98111, \$1. or trade, etc.) and I had a lovely picnic with Vonda McIntyre, heard all about the Workshop, Leigh and Val's move, and the idiocies of the Australian radio people who interviewed her. Vonda seemed bouncy and happy and inspired by her Australian trip, rather more ready to believe that not all fans are nerds, too. Some good news: she's sold her Snake novel, the one of which "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" is the opening, to Houghton Mifflin, for a reported \$10,000. That's a prestigious market, too.

John and I drove to Portland, then Eugene to visit Paul Novitski, and to pay calls on various of the Eugene sf writers: John Varley, whose work I admire tremendously, and his wife Anet McConel; and Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm. Kate, especially, impresses me more each time I see her: a delicate, beautiful woman who radiates warmth. At the Westercon, Allyn Cadogan interviewed her (Kate was our Special Guest, Damon was Pro GoH, and Frank Denton was Fan GoH-- a great combination of Good People.) A friend said to me afterwards: "Whenever I looked at the stage, there seemed to be light coming from Kate. But the stage lights were behind her. I think it was her eyes!"

By the way, I am currently urging people to read Wilhelm's FAULTLINES, a non-sf novel about a dynamic woman, reliving her life in flashbacks (rather like Laurence's THE STONE ANGEL, for those of you to whom I've been sending Canlit); and Vonda's short story, "Aztecs," in Ed Bryant's collection 2076: THE AMERICAN TRICENTENNIAL. The former is a Harper and Row hardback, the latter a Pyramid paperback. "Aztecs" should be remembered at Hugo time.

I arrived in California in late May; stayed with the amazing, witty Marta Randall (who was finishing her third novel) for a couple of days, and then moved into an apartment on the Oakland/Berkeley border with a young woman friend-of-a-friend. Settled in for a month of getting up early, doing research, visiting people in the evenings.

It didn't work that way.

Oh, I did a lot of nice things. Went hiking in a nature preserve just north of the Golden Gate Bridge, at the end of May before all the wild flowers had withered and parched in the drought, and just when

the wild strawberries were ripening. It was near sunset, and very quiet; the rolling green-gold hills were silent, except for some far-off cows lowing. A jackrabbit leaped across the path; and eagle watched for movements-- and suddenly, we saw a deer! The path twisted around a hillside, til we could see the ocean-- and two more deer. It grew darker; the sun turned the ocean red-gold; and then, against the pink of the sky, we saw, quite close, the silhouette of a stag.

I'm still not sure it was real.

I also went to Monterey for a couple of quite magic days-- saw windswept pines, and rocks, and tidepools complete with waves washing over one's feet... and herds of sea lions going "arf, arf" and "urk urk"... and, best of all, sea otters swimming on their backs, looking Cute. I fell in love with sea otters the first time I saw Jacques Cousteau's film about them, made near Monterey; and they are every bit as delightful as the film promised.

I also spent a lot of time in The Magic Cellar, the nightclub/hangout of most of the Bay Area writers, watching magicians and The Flying Karamozov Brothers. But if you've been to the Cellar (underneath Earthquake McGoon's) you know what I'm talking about; if you haven't, I can't describe it. I also saw STAR WARS with Dena Brown, and promptly decided to be an intergalactic Princess when I grow up. A lot of reviewers have been terribly snobbish about STAR WARS, calling it naive, dumb and simplistic. Well, all I can say is, it grabbed onto the 8-year-old in me; I loved it, and enjoyed it the second time around too. (The audience, when I first saw it, was mostly adults and teen-agers; everyone clapped and booed and generally Got Enthusiastic, and it made the whole show enjoyable. The second time, the audience was full of young kids, over-shushed by their parents, I think; they were much too solemn and inhibited!)

Mostly, though, I seemed to spend a lot of time running errands. As some of you know, Dena Brown, LOCUS collator, would-be medical student, and hostess to travelling fen by the score, had a serious intestinal operation in November. When she visited here in March, she was still very weak-- in part because she still couldn't eat solid food, except for really balnd things like instant mashed potatoes. (Urk.) Well, she got worse, not better, and in the spring had yet another operation; she was just released from hospital the weekend I arrived and, in fact, Marta and I went to collect her. Charlie in the meantime is trying to do enough writing to pay the bills (he has a couple of anthologies out, columns in COSMOS and ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, and so on), take care of Dena, put out LOCUS and keep the household running, all this hampered by the fact that he doesn't drive, and the house is rather isolated in the Oakland hills. But I had a car... Actually, helping collect the LOCUS mail from the post office in San Francisco is quite interesting. All those books! "Why don't you review this for me?" Charlie kept saying, but I somehow never seemed to have the time.

Anyway: if you're one of the Anzapa people who's enjoyed the Browns' hospitality, you might drop them a note. Dena is still semi-bedridden and very despondent, since it seems as if she'll be unable to enter medical school after all. (And I'm sure she'd have a very sympathetic bedside manner, after all the pain she's been through.) Charlie is Coping, but looking Harried. I think they'd welcome a hello.

As to my "research"-- well, the trip was really an excuse to see all my friends in the Bay Area and gain 10 pounds in various restaurants, wasn't it? (And perhaps Get Some Writing Started, but that didn't really work out.) No, really... I've started doing some work on social stereotyping in sf, particularly as it related to images of women in sf. The immediate goal is a paper to be given at an academic conference on sf, fantasy and mystery at University of California, Berkeley, over the first weekend in August. Terry Carr, Ursula Le Guin and I are to be the sf people, with Quinn Yarbrow as one of the mystery people overlapping into sf, I guess. I think it's going to be fun (especially when I remember the last time Ursula and I did a speaking gig together--Aussiecon.) I'm doing an outline of "Images of Women in SF": the Princess who gets rescued, the Priestess who tries to seduce and/or bewitch The Hero, the Amazon (who learns to love him in the end), the Galactic Housewife and Mum, and so on. I've collected enough material for a book, though.... mostly bad examples.

"Woman has her great and proper place... even in a man's universe!" (from Swell Peaslee Wright's "The Priestess of the Flame," 1932.)

"Women, when handled decently and with extreme moderation, fit nicely into scientifiction at times." Isaac Asimov, 1939.

Dialogue in a Frank Belknap Long story, 1941-- He: "The urge to reach out, to cross new frontiers, is a biological constant."
She: "It isn't in me. A woman seeks new frontiers in a man's arms."

Letter by the hero in Heinlein's "Space Jockey", 1947: "'I have to work to support us. You've got a job too. It's an old, old job that women have been doing a long time-- crossing the plains in covered wagons, waiting for ships to come back from China, or waiting round a mine head after an explosion-- kiss him goodbye with a smile, take care of him at home.

"' You married a spaceman, so part of your job is to accept my job cheerfully.'"

"Lorna made a futile attempt to hide her slim nudity; she crouched down, trembling, in a huddled heap, the cords digging painfully into her flesh. One of the snake-men leaped forward, dragging the girl erect. His icy hand touched her naked breast in a lascivious caress. Lorna screamed..." No, it's not John Norman; it's Henry Kuttner, spicing up "Avengers of Space" for the short-lived MARVEL STORIES, 1938-- the first magazine to use sex and sadism in sf. It didn't sell... then.

((Parenthetically, Charlie Brown talked with Don Wollheim about the Gor books, which sell 100,000 copies, as opposed to 30,000 for most sf, and thus keep the DAW line afloat... something like living off the avails of prostitution, I would think. Anyway, Wollheim says that as far as he can tell, from response received and so on, the majority of the people who read the Gor books are women. Frightening.))

Then there's the conclusion to Anne McCaffrey's story "A Meeting of Minds" (F&SF, Jan. 1969): "How could she have blundered around so, looking for a mind that was superior to hers, completely overlooking the fact that a woman's primary function in life begins with physical domination?"

How could she, indeed. Urk.

After a month or so of reading this, er, Stuff, I drove straight home up 1-5 with a cold, some 1,000 miles. Stopped in Seattle, where the Dentons had several of us over for a dinner party, the Monday before Westercon-- the start of the con. Got home Tuesday. Spent two days at school, coping with Crises, and sorting huge piles of mail, most of which (like the fanzines) won't get response. Thursday, I did shopping for 3 parties, since Friday was a holiday-- Jerry Jacks had given me \$150, and said "Buy Beer" for the San Francisco Westercon open bidding party. And the Westercon began...

Eventually, I will write a Westercon report of sorts, for JANUS, and excellent feminist fanzine edited by Jan Bogstad and Jeanne Gomoll ((plug: \$1 or the usual, c/o SF³, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701)). I was in charge of the Alternate Programming, which started out as a room for people who wanted to discuss feminism, sexism and related topics in sf, and grew into 2½ days of programming, an official Women's Apa party, a couple of non-official WAPA and friends parties, and a whole lot of shared warmth and ideas. It's really impossible to describe the energy being generated and shared by those of us who found ourselves involved-- especially on Sunday, when 6 hours' of discussions and programming led into more discussions, into the masquerade, even, and then into more parties and discussions-- during which the programming people for the Iguanacon, the Phoenix worldcon, came up to me and said: "This was wonderful... How do we do it for Phoenix?" I have to sit down and make sense of it, sometime, so that I can talk about what went wrotnng, what went right, and how to keep it going. For now, the feeling I took away from the Vancouver Westercon was that it was one of the three best conventions I've ever attended. And the other two were St. Louiscon, my first worldcon, and special; and Aussiecon, which was special for us all.

The Westercon continued at my house Monday night, with the Live Kitten Party, the official alternate to the Dead Dog Party (including also a cider run for Denny Lien-- hiya!) Jeff Frane, Loren MacGregor, Lesleigh Luttrell and Jeanne Gomoll stayed over at my house, and Clifford Wind and John Carl arrived for breakfast the next morning, so I played Mother and Short-order cook. Then I got everyone organized, piled all the food I could find into the trunk of my car, we took Cliff's car too, and went off to Shannon Falls, taking those curves on the coast road in a post-con stupor. Various people left that evening, and I drove John, Jeanne and Eli to Seattle the next day (which is one way of clearing out the house) for a huge, huge all-day party at Vonda's. The next day, Eli and I saw STAR WARS, went record shopping (I actually found a record by Michael Moorcock and Deep Fix, with Graham Charnock on guitar and vocals) and drove home. I intended to get some sleep after that, but the university called, and... well... I've been doing administration ever since. And writing my paper for UC Berkeley, which is 27 pages long at the moment, and needs cutting. And getting up at 6 bloody 30 every bloody morning to go bloody swimming, which may do wonders for my body eventually, but is playing hell with my temper at the moment, since I'm a night person and am NOT getting enough sleep.

And Eli got a little kitten named Harlequin. And I got a little kitten named Samantha, who looks rather like Dylan Bangsund. They are Cute, Adorable, and a nuisance; all my plants have lacy designs from little teeth! At least, now we have two, they chase each other and not our toes...

And I'm leaving for California again in a week... *Breathlessly yours, Susan*