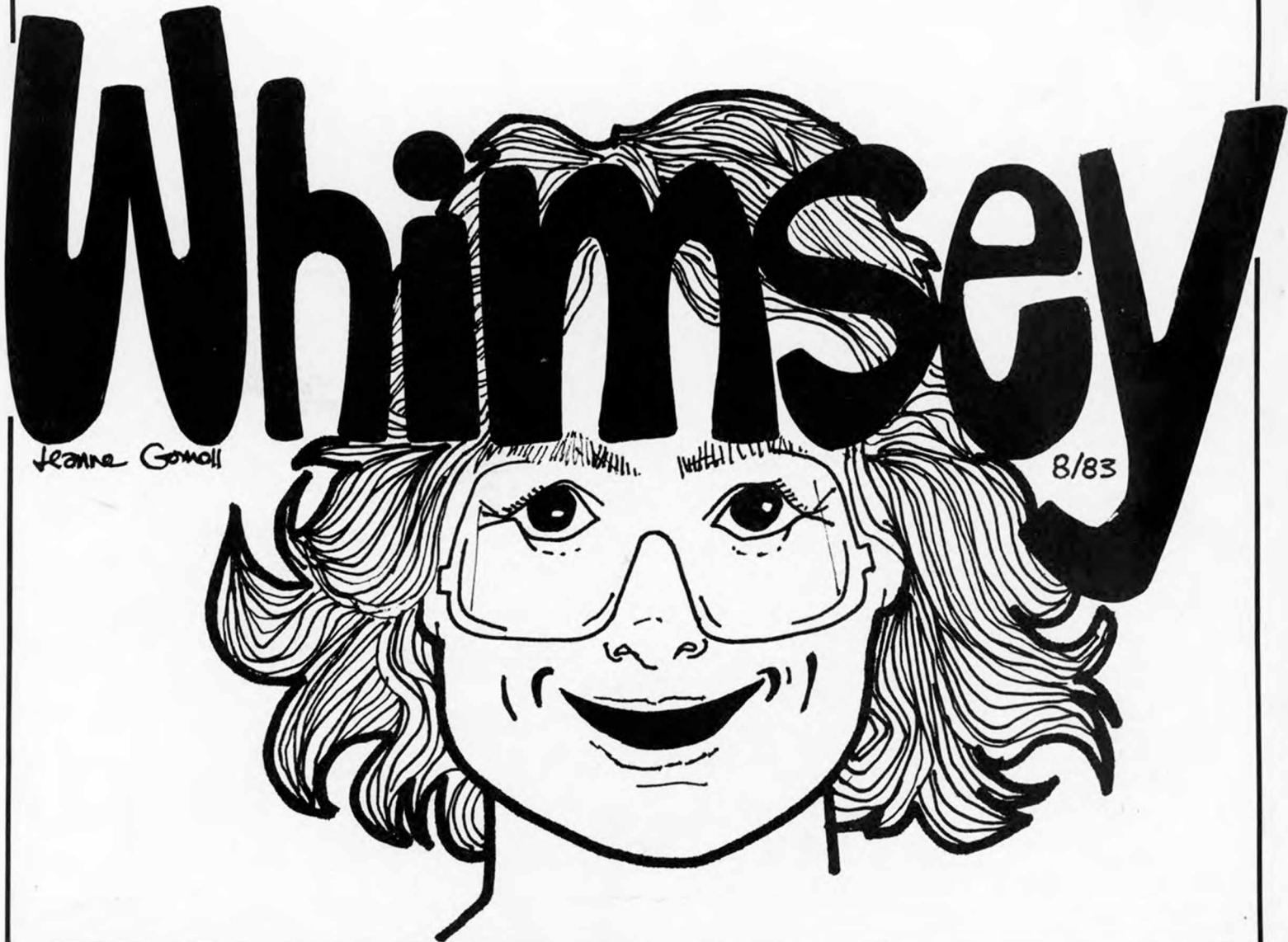


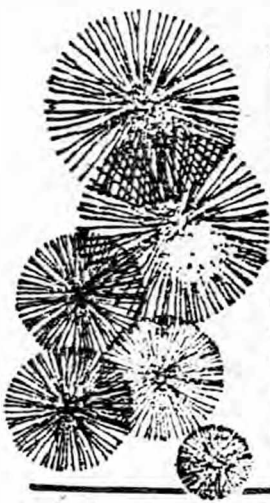
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WHIMSEY No 1

Comes to you from Jeanne Gomoll on a more or less whimsical basis. At the moment, Loc's can be addressed to me at 2018 Jenifer Street, Madison, WI 53704. But as of August 15, 1983, all correspondence should be sent to 409 S. Brooks Street, Madison, WI 53715. My current telephone number is 608+241-8445. After August 15, call the same number and a computer will tell you the new one. **Whimsey** is available for the usual and all material within is by me unless otherwise noted and is copyright © 1983 by Jeanne Gomoll, etc. To those friends and family members reading this right now who are wondering *what* you are reading and will no doubt be even more confused once you actually read further on (especially chapter 4), here is an explanation: This is a letter-substitute; it comes to you instead of the letters I have owed you for 8 months. This means you owe me a letter now.

Chapter 1: In which I introduce myself.

Earlier this year, I'd optimistically envisioned Whimsey as doing double-duty. It would be both the first issue of my own fanzine and it would be an apology/explanation letting friends on the West Coast know that I'd had to postpone my Springtime trip. Now, Spring having skipped the Midwest, and Summer being almost half over already, most of the people out there probably noticed that I didn't visit their side of the continent. We fans are not dumb. Late a lot, but not dumb.

Still, Whimsey will do double-duty anyway, even triple-duty. First it will let people know that I still survive, a fact that some of my correspondents must doubt nowadays. Secondly, it will still be the first issue of my own fanzine, a thing that gets more and more important to me as at least a partial remedy for that aforementioned correspondence problem. Thirdly, Whimsey is my change-of-address announcement. Check the coa notice in the colophon up there: I'm moving into a house with Peter Theron sometime in the middle of August.

* * *

The house I'm moving to is really nice: it's going to provide much more room than I've ever had before in apartments. The entire finished attic will function as my studio/office and we'll have a full basement beside the usual kitchen, dining room, living room and bedroom, plus Peter's office. Moving to such spacious accommodations, though, does spoil the little joke I was going to make about my personal style of fannishness.

I was, you see, going to confess to using non-twiltone paper, and then go on to admit both the obvious neglect of hand-cut stencil art and the conspicuous lack of mimeo ink. To my defense, I was going to point out that my xeroxed fannishness ad-

hered to the spirit if not the letter of fannish repro tradition, as an un-ostentatious, economic medium. It would have been a bit much, I would have asked you to admit, to have spent hundreds of dollars on a mimeograph machine (since I neither own nor have access to one in Madison), and then have compounded that extravagance with the necessary rental of office space for the operation. Obviously my present apartment would never provide adequate space...

Ah well, I will have the space now, but I still resist mimeography, and would, even if a mimeo fell into my hands. Of course, I'd probably have an extended hospital stay as an excuse in that case. Xerox is still convenient and economical for me, à la Steven Bieler's methods with On Company Time, and I like the kind of layout fiddling and artwork possible with this format.

409 S. Brooks Street is located in a pleasant, mixed student/family neighborhood, a 15-minute bike ride from my office, and within about four blocks north and south of two hospitals. (Though it seems to be a quiet area, I suppose we might hear an unusual number of ambulance sirens.) The listing was the last of several dozen apartments, townhouses, duplexes and houses that Peter and I had called through an exhausting few weeks, and it was by far the best of any of them. We had learned to squint past the student furniture and sometimes extraordinarily awful housekeeping of some of the apartments we looked at in order to imagine what they were really like. We had learned to compensate for the shabby conditions and imagine instead what could be done with the places. We had to reverse those lenses for the house at 409 S. Brooks though, as the present tenants' hobby of antique and fine furniture collection exaggerated the place's qualities. Even correcting for the fact that the Persian rug and fine maple furniture will go, however, it

was obvious that the house was gorgeous. Clean, polished oak floors, walnut trim in fine condition, unblemished walls and windows, new furnace, lots of insulation, finished attic, and more: the house has obviously been taken care of well. So, along with everyone else who saw the place, we told the landlord we were interested in renting it; he took down references and checked them, and a day later called and told Peter and I that we could have it if we wanted it. An hour later we signed the lease so as not to let him change his mind. I feel extraordinarily lucky to have gotten it...and so relieved that the search is over with now.

Now all I've got to do is to cope with the snide comments coming from some members of the Madison Science Fiction Group (or SF³) who remind me of my own complaints whenever they've moved. I'm the keeper-of-the-mailing-list, you see, and the reviser-of-the-SF³-directory. The last directory said: "There was entirely too much moving around this year. Let's try to keep it less transient next year. Think of my mailing list next time you get the urge to look for a new apartment. Have you considered the benefits of owning your own place?" Changes-of-Address in our local newsletter, Cube, have begun to be accompanied with references to the helpful services of "Movers Anonymous Hotline" and my phone number. About all I'll have to say in my defense is that I don't think I'll do it again very soon. And then after a couple months I can resume complaining about other people sabotaging my mailing list.

* * *

So. Welcome to my first, on-my-own fanzine. I've done a few apazines (Obsessions, Shoreline, Alcheringa) and I'm involved with Aurora (formerly Janus), but this is my first fanzine.

Some of you might like an introduction.

I've been a fan for nine years, an SF-reader for 20, and alive for almost 32 years. Other things are more difficult to measure in years. For instance, I don't think I can say how long I've been a feminist, though I might be able to calculate how long I've called myself one. (This fanzine, by the way, will be like Avedon Carol's Blatant in that—like she says about Blatant—it won't be so much a radical feminist zine per se, as one that just happens to be published by one.)

I was born in Milwaukee but my family moved out to its suburbs when I was 10 years old. There, I enjoyed the typical, introverted, obsessively reading type of fannish childhood. I graduated from high school planning to major in political science and work for the State Department. Once in college in Madison, I changed my major to geography and spent most of my time studying modern English and American lit and hanging out with lefties. I changed my mind again by the time I graduated and turned down a fellowship to study urban planning because statistical analysis intimidated me, and I started a feminist reading group, hoping to publish a magazine with them. When that didn't happen, I got involved with the local SF group and their magazine. A couple issues later, after I'd discovered what a fanzine was, I found myself the co-editor of Janus. Several years later still, the combination of my geography degree and graphic experience gained through Janus got me a job with Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Parks and Recreation as a graphic artist II. I still work there and enjoy it hugely. (Sometimes in the summer they actually pay me to go hiking and camping. All year 'round they pay me to play with technical pens, zip-a-tone, and other neat toys like that. How could I help but love it?)

Other identifying characteristics: I'm a recently (2 years) converted jock and pump iron and swim on alternate days of the week. I bicycle, weather permitting. Like many of us, I'm a fallen-away Catholic who substituted a stiffal sense-of-wonder for the colorful religious mythology they stop teaching early in grade school. (When you're 8 or 9 years old, you suddenly notice that no one mentions guardian angels or Santa Claus anymore.) And, like all of us, I never seem to have enough time to do all the things I want to do. Freelance art, writing book reviews for local papers, exercising, cooking interesting meals, one or two movies a week, work on Aurora and other SF³ projects, reading a couple books a week, and friends, not to mention my job, have completely edged out writing letters this last year. That's the main reason for Whimsey.

But there's another reason. Last year in conjunction with WisCon 6, and in honor of Terry Carr's being one of our Guests-of-Honor, I typeset and reprinted Terry's

fannish Salinger parody, called Cacher of the Rye (by Carl Brandon, Terry's famous pseudonym and hoax of the 1950's and early 60's). It contains a long introduction by Terry telling the whole history of the Brandon hoax and a complete Brandon bibliography as well as the parody. It was great fun to do and through its sale I came into contact with quite a few people I wanted to keep in touch with. And I started to talk then of a "post-Cacher zine". My zine didn't even acquire a name until this year, but I hope to publish Whimsey on a somewhat regular and, of course whimsical basis, from now on.

As for The Cacher of the Rye, there are still some copies left. As of this date, (pre-Constellation where I expect to sell quite a few), I've given away or sold 119 copies of the original 200, and earned \$496.20 out of the \$800 expenses. I'm still planning on donating profits to TAFF/DUFF, but so far there haven't been any. If anyone is interested in a copy yet, they cost \$7 (US) and \$7.50 (foreign) and I have a half dozen signed copies (signed by both Terry and Carl) still remaining.

Whimsey (or the post-Cacher zine) was originally going to contain mostly Cacher-oriented material, and you'll still catch a reference or two in the following pages and perhaps a couple letters besides on the topic. But the emphasis is less focused on Cacher now, influenced more, I think, by the "ensmalled" chatty zines which have come out this year.

* * *

Taral reviewed Cacher in Brian Earl Brown's May issue of Sticky Quarters (#4), and is the only reviewer that I've come across who found the typeset/offset format of Cacher a point to criticize. Taral says that Cacher "costs \$7 (US) as a result of what seems to me as unnecessary pretensions. The format suggests a small-press book." He then offers his explanation for these "pretensions", a statement that is nothing but pure speculation, though Taral offers it as proven data. "Cacher was not republished exclusively for a fan audience," he states. "Its appearance was aimed at academics and walk-ins at WisCon who might be unwilling to read anything apparently unprofessional. The gestures were made for their sake."

Wrong, Taral.

My records show that I sold a mere 18 copies of Cacher at WisCon: 6 copies at a table in the hucksters' room which I didn't sell directly (and so which might have gone to "academics and walk-ins") and 12 to fans who attended the fan hoax panel at which Terry, Joyce Scriviner and I talked about the Brandon hoax and other fannish flimflams. Even at WisCon, the market for Cacher was made up of fans. And, even so, considering the admittedly unfannish reputation WisCon has earned, I was actually surprised that I sold that many copies. I'd planned, right from the start, that publishing Cacher would be a project in honor of WisCon's Guest-of-Honor, but never seriously thought I'd sell more than a dozen copies at the actual convention. My market, I had anticipated, would be made up of fans who I expected to contact in much the same way as Bergeron used to advertize Warhoon: a few flyers in fannish fanzines, word-of-mouth, hopefully some reviews (which were wonderfully helpful and ego-boosting and made the publishing worthwhile in themselves), plus carrying copies around with me to a few larger, fannish cons.

Had I wanted to publish something that would appeal to these stereotypically humorless academics that so many people imagine in deadening numbers at WisCon, I would not have reprinted Cacher at all, but gone for something considerably more mainstream. Its only audience, after all, are people who would be interested in the fannish jokes, the fannish vocabulary, and the fannish history that it covers. Its only audience, thus, are fans. Academics, no matter how unimaginative, and walk-in mundanes, no matter how dull, can't really be tempted in large numbers to read, much less buy a book simply because it "looks" like a professionally published small press chapbook. Ask any professional small press chapbook publisher.

I published Cacher in the way I did because I wanted to do it that way, because I thought the format appropriate. Cacher is, after all, a parody of a mainstream novel. I wanted its package to parody the package of a mainstream novel as well, complete with pretentious-looking title page, back-cover blurb, an "about-this-book postscript", etc. The cover drawing is a parody of the artwork on the first paperback edition of Salinger's The Catcher In the Rye. Had I produced this chapbook expecting

to promote non-fannish sales, I would by this point be sadly frustrated, for I don't know of any non-fannish buyers it's attracted.

Nor do I think my publishing of Cacher indicates my complicity in some dreadfully ominous trend in fan publishing. In fandom as in everything else, people use their spare time to do things that interest them. Taral says that individual projects like Bergeron's hardcover Warhoon 28 and my chapbook are not so much reflections of individuals' interests, but judgements on other peoples' work. Taral says that Warhoon 28 and Cacher's publications imply that "Brandon and Willis are really too good for the fanzine medium anymore, and should be R*E*A*L*L*Y published. But fanzines are good enough for the rest of us." All this, Taral maintains, threatens the fundamental "egalitarian character" of fandom. Perhaps we should all vote on the contents of the next fanthology and legislate the sole use of mimeography for fannish publications of any sort.

Taral's complaint that Warhoon and Cacher imply derogatory comments on all other fannish writing seems to me to be based on a paranoid assumption of motive, i.e., that fans do work of a certain quality in order to detract from the work of others. Taral worries about the threat to the egalitarian character of fannishness (as well as our pocketbooks) by publications like Cacher. I would worry more about the threat to individuality and creativeness if all fanac were to be limited to one method of reproduction. Luckily there's nothing to worry about, or we'd all be still using hectography.

And as shall be seen in the abbreviated letter column (Chapter 5, in which I want to print a couple of the letters I received commenting on Cacher), Taral needs to fear nothing with regard to a conspiracy between publishers like Bergeron and myself. We wouldn't agree often enough to form an acceptably conspiratorial alliance.

* * *

In the course of our various projects in the Madison SF group, we've converted several innocent phrases into vile expletives. "In my copious free time" is one of them (as in, "I'll get it done Real Soon Now, in My Copious Free Time."). Another favorite converted phrase is: "It's got more pages than we expected." Depending

on who says it—whether the exasperated layout workers trying to get articles to fit without reducing artwork to microfiches, or the stubborn treasurer writing out the check to pay the printers, or the sagging collators—the phrase gets adorned with a variety of auxilliary expletives. But that's the essence.

So, why am I surprised to find yet another opportunity to say, "this has more pages than I expected."? Certainly my input accounts for a good part of the blame for other page over-runs in SF³ projects. There was the time the WisCon program book got out of hand, for instance, with all the separate essays discussing each of the program items, or the times that Janus and Aurora ballooned over their projected page limits, or the meeting minutes that resemble pamphlets... Still, I am surprised. I'd been thinking all along that Whimsey would be short enough to xerox at my office. ...I even mentioned something in Chapter 1 about emulating Steve Bieler's methods for his fanzine, On Company Time. But it's clear to me now that, to do Whimsey on company time would probably require another change of address for this zine's second issue. I wonder if they let you do fanzines in prison. Maybe I wouldn't have access to a typewriter, much less to a xerox machine or a mimeo. Maybe I'd have to change the name of this fanzine to The State Pen.

So at this point, I'm planning on bringing Whimsey to a cheap-o copy center and having it run off at my expense there. This is just to soothe those of you who were muttering, "So this is how my tax money is spent!" I wouldn't want anyone to blame me for unemployment and recession or anything like that.

On the subject of editorial prerogatives...

I don't expect that I'll always write all the contents of Whimsey. At minimum, I hope to have a few letters to publish (hint, hint). Other than LoC's though, I don't know yet. The first person, personal perspective of Whimsey will stay; outside contributions will be chosen with extreme pickiness. But we'll see what happens. Developments will be...whimsical.

* * *

PROOFREADING THIS ISSUE IS COURTESY OF PETER THERON. RICHARD BRUNING'S CARTOON STRIP IS ON PAGES 7-8.

Chapter 2: *In Which it becomes clear that a West Coast trip is out of the Question; I practice being an adult.*

Everyone has heard of this disease: a supposedly women's disease, Fear of Mathematics. With me, however, it goes further. With me, it's Fear of Numbers. Fear, though, is the wrong word. Distrust of Numbers describes my feelings more accurately. I lose numbers.

In grade school I could have sympathized with Charlie Brown's friend, Peppermint Patty, who said once that "No one can be expected to answer a problem with a twelve in it." One September, we returned to school as newly-promoted fourth-graders. Having forgotten over the summer how to multiply two digit numbers together, I was terrified that I would be Discovered. They would expose me as a fraud and return me to the third grade. For three nightmarish weeks of arithmetic classes, I bluffed my way through and attempted to reconstruct the trick through inference. That's the first time I realized that if I didn't keep careful watch, that I lost arithmetic processes, even whole numbers (not to mention the irrational ones)...

Numbers escape my brain cells the way names seem to leap from other people's memories. I employed elaborate word games to remember the names of African heads-of-state for high school geography exams, but no manner of elaborate games or associations will help me recall more than a few telephone numbers at a time. Once, the contents of my gym locker were lost to me for a week while I searched for the combination number that had vanished from my memory. Inflation has never been anything but an abstract problem to me, since one price never remains with me long enough to make me aware that things are getting more expensive.

It wasn't always like this. But with a brief hiatus of retention during my high school years, numbers have betrayed me, frustrated me, and escaped me all my life. The fact that St. Luke's grade school curriculum had included the "new math" gave me a temporary advantage over the public grade school graduates, and I enjoyed a strange, new identity as the "smart kid" in algebra class. Not that I was insensitive to the fact that my

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know-it-all attitude and persistent hand waving was exasperating to my classmates, I was simply delighted with the novel situation. As sophomores, we were introduced to geometry which I loved and still do love, even in one of its disguises as logic. To this day I maintain that geometry must be something other than mathematics. (In fact, I've got this theory that there are two kinds of people in the world: geometry people and algebra people. Everyone is good at one and is blocked in the other.) But I hit a brick wall in advanced algebra class, and was punished for those two years of unbearable smugness: I discovered that I could no longer visualize the whole problem at once. I started losing algebra, starting with the rudiments of trigonometry. A statistics course in college erased some more algebra from my memory, and a senior thesis did so much damage that I dropped plans to go on beyond a BA in geography because of the field's growing emphasis on math and statistics. I graduated with a profound sense of relief, temporarily convinced that I'd finally escaped the struggle with numbers.

No longer in school, and working as a graphic artist—a field tenuously dependant on mathematical acuity only in the imaginations of high school guidance counselors—I imagined that I was home free. But like a sin committed a lifetime before, that inevitably is revealed in some traumatic circumstance to the heros of picaresque novels, last year I noticed an ominously familiar pattern of guilt and frustration in my life. Unopened bank statements had begun to accumulate in dusty stacks on the bookshelf above my desk. I would be too busy one month, and two months later, the prospect of catching up with three-months worth of checks was too daunting and I'd avoid the project. Five or six months later and I would consider simply closing out my account and starting over again. Once, I confessed my embarrassing secret to my friend Peter, and was temporarily rescued when he gave up an afternoon and balanced my checkbook for me.

But that was only a temporary respite, and before long, the bank statements started to accumulate again, unopened after a couple frustrated attempts at continuing to balance my checking account. One day, I lost the record-keeping ledger and neglected to replace it. Before long I was

floundering, totally unaware of how much money was left in my account.

Don't jump to conclusions. The reason for my not traveling out to the West Coast this year has nothing to do with my being in Debtor's Prison. I'll explain; just hold on.

The final blow came when it was pointed out to me that 1982 would be the last year I could use the short income tax form; that next year I would have to report income and claim deductions on free lance art work. It would be necessary, in short, to Keep Complete Records. This is like telling a person who doubts their ability to heat a TV dinner that the next day they will have to prepare Sushi. Such people are likely to ask "What is Sushi?"

Drastic measures were necessary. My difficulties with the checkbook balance had involved merely the simplest of adding and subtracting processes. It was clear that my condition had degraded to the point of losing arithmetic. If I didn't do something soon, the multiplication of two-digit numbers would soon pass beyond me. Again.

Two months passed and I Changed My Ways in much the same way that the Ways of picaresque novel heros Change, though not as dramatically. I didn't, for instance, need to take religious vows or locate a long-lost twin sister in degraded conditions. In fact, the story of my rehabilitation is not at all dramatically inspiring, so here is the metaphorical, and generally more piquant version:

Two months ago I attended my first NA (Numeraphobes Anonymous) meeting. All sorts of apparently normal people stood up and admitted that they were afraid of, or daunted by, or confused by, or made impotent by, or had contracted fevers and itchy rashes from numbers and/or mathematics. Most of these testimonials ended with inspiring and touching accounts of how these fears and various allergic reactions had been conquered, and how the numeraphobe was now able to cope with numbers in non-violent and less procrastinating manners. By the next week's meeting, I too was ready to stand up and confess my distrust of numbers, and with the support of this wonderful group of people, I've been able to develop other strategies (than retreat) to deal with numbers.

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Every so often I call up a fellow NA member for reassurance. She answers her phone with the greeting, "Women can do math! Hello?" I say, "It's just me," and clench my teeth and go back to the work of reclaiming arithmetic and balancing my checkbook.

Nowadays, I save all my receipts. I balance my checkbook on the same day I receive the statement. And even though my account hasn't balanced exactly yet, it's been close a couple times, and I'm not going to give up this time.

I'm even preparing basic Sushi. With the help of friends (Peter, again, and Betty Les—a coworker who has plenty of experience setting up tax records for her free lance writing business), I've worked out an actual budget and am determined to restrict my spending to an amount somewhere below my income, be ready for taxes next year, and start saving for a house.

At no time during these tumultuous economic travails has a revelation been delivered to me as to why I have this problem with numbers. The change follows mainly from a stubborn decision that I can do math and some new habits. One of the upshots is that I've had to admit that a West Coast trip is simply too expensive for me this year. Maybe next year.

Chapter 3: Which *will* discuss the Berkeleyan expectations of convention attendees and which *will* provide an opportunity for the author to announce her retirement.

At conventions, as in life, people tend to believe what they have always believed. They tend to find what they are looking for. And they tend to produce the events they expect will take place. Convention attendees are sometimes more Berkeleyan than cosmic in their conventional behaviors.

Some background. WisCon—the annual Wisconsin science fiction convention held in mid-winter Madison—is known to be a feminist-oriented con, and this year that reputation was further elaborated upon by GoH's Marta Randall and Lee Killough, and GoH-Emeritus, Suzette Haden Elgin, together with a programming line-up that was identified with frequent "♀" symbols in the program book. "Warning!" explained the key following the programming section. "This symbol indicates feminist content. Attendance of this program may be beneficial to

your mental health".

But contrary to the myth popular in some quarters, that WisCon programming is limited to feminist panels, (attended by mobs of men-hating, stern, strident academics), the truth is that WisCon probably has more non-political panels than other conventions of its size. (On the average, about 500 people attend.) Genre panels like "The Versatile Frederic Brown", "Mythic Origins of Heroic Fantasy", "The Life and Works of Stanley G. Weinbaum", and "Thornton Wilder as Fantasist" were scheduled at the seventh and most recent WisCon. Also on the timetable were fannish and less than serious panels like "Pubbing Your Ish", "Brass Brassieres and Fur Bikinis", "Return of the Jedi", "Lessons in Fannish Etiquette", "How to Read", "Parapsychological Phenomena (or, Nut Books)", and a "Beach Party" held at the nearby YWCA. In fact, the non-feminist program items far outnumbered the consciously feminist ones like "Why Women Don't Read Comics", "More Women Writers You've Never Heard Of", "Uppity Women", "Women in Technological Careers", and "What Is a Feminist SF Language?"

One explanation for this mistaken criticism WisCon gets for supposedly catering exclusively to angry, humorless, men-hating women, is that WisCon simply has more programming than other conventions of its size, as evidenced by the triple-decker scheduling. As a result, WisCon has more feminist panels than other conventions have total panels.

Studies have been conducted showing that people's ability to accurately guess the percentage of women or men in a group is distorted when the setting is one previously associated with a nearly total male or female presence. Thus, at a dental professionals' conference, for example, a small percentage of professional women (10-20%) might be perceived as being close to half the total percentage in the reports of various male and female attendees.

Apply this to WisCon. WisCon 1 in 1977 was perhaps the first con to schedule more than a single "Women in SF" panel, and to devote more than a mere one hour's programming to feminist fans' interests. The 1974 worldcon (DisCon II) had its "Women in SF: Image and Reality" panel and MidAmeriCon in 1975 had its "Women in Science Fiction"

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panel. Both were fought for and organized by Susan Wood. But feminists with programming ideas didn't have to fight for them on the WisCon committee: We were the committee. And it made a difference. We didn't limit ourselves to one program item, but were full of energy and ideas for a wide variety of events, from those spotlighting the increasing activity by women in fandom and the professions, to those concentrating more on the themes and content in stories by the new authors. To fans for whom the single "Women in SF" panel of previous worldcons had seemed outrageous or boring, but certainly unnecessary and "un-fannish", this plethora of feminist panels at WisCon must have burgeoned in their perceptions like 50/50 representation at a dental conference: WisCon became known to some as a women-only (even a lesbian-only) convention. We published a cartoon strip by Richard Bruning in the WisCon 3 program book, poking fun at ourselves and our detractors. It featured a man trying to sneak into WisCon by disguising himself as a woman.



(Continued)



Regardless of the fact that more than half of our programming could easily be found at any small, overly-programmed con, or at your typical worldcon, our "exclusive" reputation lives on. This year, for instance, one WisCon attendee filled out a questionnaire and complained in it about our chauvinistic attitude with regard to guest of honor choices. In the last four years, he wrote, we had chosen exclusively female guests of honor. Our reputation must either have fogged his memory or destroyed his ability to distinguish the sex of WisCon guests of the previous four years, guests of honor like Terry Carr, Buck Coulson, Don Wolheim, Gene DeWeese, and David Hartwell (who all shared their honors with admittedly female guests Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Juanita Coulson, Elsie Wollheim, and Suzette Haden Elgin).

In the long run, however, many of us on the WisCon committee have been more amused and even grateful for our exaggerated reputation for radical, exclusive feminism. WisCon attracts more fans interested in feminist issues and the discussion of other serious topics than it would if WisCon did not excite such biased reportage. It's a reputation that probably discourages a certain number of media fans as well. And the fans who attend WisCon hoping to find events and conversations slanted toward a feminist viewpoint tend to make that bias more pronounced than even the programmers might have originally expected.

This year's "Uppity Women" panel with Marta Randall, Lee Killough, Diane Martin, and Perri Corrick-West, is a case in point. "Uppity Women" was originally planned as a tongue-in-cheek discussion of women in fandom and professional SF who have excelled in their assertiveness lessons. A sort of high-toned gossip session. The program description hinted at the general direction of planning: "Power: Do women want it?

How do they get it? What do they do when they get it? Find out if it's true that feminists have no sense of humor." What happened at that panel was quite different than what the panelists had expected.

The actual turn of events traces its roots to previous WisCons which have programmed lots of feminist-oriented events for seven years now. Not unexpectedly, many of the original planners and panel organizers have gotten somewhat tired of the panel that I think of as the Obligatory-Consciousness-Raising-Women-&SF-101 panel. Under different titles, it's been scheduled every year, and every year a lot of women new to fandom, or new to feminism, or simply new to the opportunity of talking with a large number of similarly interested people have brought personal experiences, realizations, and questions to this panel. We didn't delete this panel on purpose this year, it's just that no one suggested it, and interest is the only criterion for any panel according to the unwritten laws of WisCon. So, it didn't appear in the pocket program. What happened was that on Sunday, with all these things still left to say, the audience made the "Uppity Women" panel into the "Women-&SF-101" panel. They expected the panel to take place and within moments of the beginning of the hour, the audience seemed to have exchanged places with the panelists, and the panel was taking place.

In one way, I found the spectacle of the audience forcing that panel to take place an exciting experience. Every year I've enjoyed meeting the con attendees who travel to WisCon looking for—and thereby creating—the intense, intelligent and human conversations that regularly occur at WisCon. I've been especially pleased by the large number of women who chose WisCon as their first con sometimes because of our reputation.

On the other hand, I remember sitting on a WisCon 4 stage as one of the panelists discussing the creation of a feminist mythology, and though the audience take-over in that case wasn't as complete as this year's at "Uppity Women", I did experience the other side, the less enjoyable side of the process of con attendees transforming programming into the image of their expectations. As with the "Uppity Women" panel, the mythology panel got partially sidetracked from a discussion on the essential science fiction nature of pre-historic anthropology, by an audience that was primarily interested in discussing the more basic idea that SF was ideally suited for the planning of future non-sexist societies.

I've enjoyed and learned a great deal through my participation on such panels at WisCon and at other cons. But gradually my participation on feminist panels, especially those at other cons where there was only one panel, grew synonymous with the "Feminism-&SF-101" panel. I lost interest in the repetition of a panel that no matter what its title ("Future Sex Roles", "Alternatives to the Patriarchy", etc.) so often was transformed by its audience into the same panel. I started to decline invitations to join that panel at other cons and I stepped down from an active role in the planning of programming at WisCon.

The process recurs in other programming areas too. Carrie Root, a member of the Madison SF group and an engineer, has moderated the "Women in Technological Careers" for the last two years. She too is finding it draining to repeat the same panel and has decided to hand over the microphone to another panelist next year whose awakening enthusiasm and newly realized experiences as a female scientist or engineer will better match the enthusiasm and concerns of the audience. It's clear to me now that the best panels happen when the "match" of audience and panelists' enthusiasm occurs, and that to keep a convention's programming vital and exciting, the con must continually attract and encourage newly involved members to become active in programming. This is not to say that panels beyond the "Feminism-&SF-101" panel are not worthwhile, or for that matter, that panels beyond the "Science-Fiction-&Fantasy-101" panel are not desirable. (For instance, linguist Suzette

Haden Elgin's various discussions of her theories for and actual construction of a women's language at WisCon have certainly been "600-level" panels of enormous interest to many attendees.) There will, however, be an audience for the basic panels as long as there are first-time convention attendees at the cons. There will always be an audience that, if not provided for, will transform other programming to satisfy their expectations.

So the tradeoff becomes a choice between burnout of the concon or turnover and involvement of new members. For a convention like WisCon whose reputation is largely based upon the quality and focus of its programming, it's important to continue to provide the forums for the discussions for which people travel to WisCon. At the same time, to hold the interest of the concon, it's important to continue to encourage individual members to develop and communicate their own evolving ideas and interests, and not ever tie them down to repeating the same panel over and over again.

Fans are not alone in finding what they expect at SF cons. WisCon 7 was covered by two of the three Madison television stations and got an enormous photo and article on the front page of the Sunday Wisconsin State Journal, plus a few other articles in some of the other Madison periodicals. The press corps, however, are no different than the fans attending the cons: One way or the other, they find what they are looking for. The press nowadays is looking for Trexies, movie fans, game players, and of course any sci-fi weirdo wearing a freaky costume. And knowing what they wanted, they of course were able to film or interview, eventually, everyone and everything they were looking for. The word feminism was never once mentioned in any media account of WisCon.

Without too much difficulty, WisCon could develop two different reputations: one outside of Madison as a somewhat academic, sercon, feminist con; and one inside Madison as a MediaCon. Obviously next year's publicity department is going to have to do a lot of work overcoming the in-town image, dissuading the media fans that could potentially flood WisCon next year and produce the events that the press will have led them to expect. Ideally, we should enlist the press's aid in spreading a reputation that attracts the kind of folk who will create

the kind of convention the Madison SF group wants to host. That will be difficult to sell, though. The problem will be (on a smaller scale), the same one that now plagues so many large American conventions. Some fans blame the hordes of media fans at their formerly small, fannish cons on concons who program for and cater to the desires of media fans and thus transform the conventions into something other than they used to be.

But it takes involvement to keep your convention your's, and I certainly sympathize with those who choose not to donate their life's blood to the Great Task. The job keeping WisCon from turning into a MediaCon won't be mine next year. I'm retiring.

It seems that I'm one of the burnout victims of WisCon. I've been involved in this con for seven years now, and maybe it's not fannish to say so, but seven years is too many. I've worked on programming most years, on the art show for three years, scheduling for a couple more years, and have always been centrally involved with the program book and other printed materials. This year, for WisCon 7, I headed the publicity department and though I had originally intended that I would be winding down from previous years' involvement, this year has probably taken more time and energy from me than any other WisCon. The scope of the publicity department grew larger than I'd expected and larger than the rest of the committee, I'm sure, would have demanded. In the two or three intense months of pre-convention planning and work, this fanzine, for one thing, was continually put onto the back burner. And if whimsy was on the back burner, then correspondence was in the refrigerator for all the time I had for letter-writing during that period. I've probably convinced Jerry Kaufman and Suzle Tompkins that I'm entirely untrustworthy for my continued procrastination on an article I promised them much too long ago. Finally, I've decided to retire from the WisCon committee for my own sanity: Small puddle politics looms too large if you stay immersed in the puddle for too long.

So now, I'm planning on applying a little obsessive thoroughness to a few other projects—whimsy, for one. I hope you find what you want here.



Chapter 4: *In which the new fannish musical, "A Filker On The Roof" is reviewed.*

Carl Brandon's delightful new play, *A Filker on the Roof* is both an exuberant fannish musical parody and an insightful comment on the controversy currently simmering in American and British fanzines this past year on the subject of tradition vs. relevance.

In the production I saw last month at RocklandCon, Filthy Pierre was hilariously typecast in the role of a filker who perches uncomfortably upon the 28th floor ledge of a hotel playing his mouth organ, providing musical accompaniment for the company's singers. Tevye (Larry Propp), chairman of AnatefCon's concom, shades his eyes as he looks up at the possibly suicidal filker. But, with the calm essential to any con chair's sanity, Tevye laughs it off and chases off some fans who are calling "Jump! Jump!" to the filker. Tevye philosophizes upon the situation:

"A filker on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But in our little convention of AnatefCon, you might say every one of us is a filker on the roof, trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune without breaking their neck. It isn't easy. You might ask, why do we stay up if it's so dangerous? We

stay because fandom is a way of life.
And how do we keep our balance? That
I can tell you in one word—Tradition!"

On this cue, the whole cast marches from the wings of the stage through the front door of the hotel on their way to the registration desk, carrying suitcases, boxes of books, cases of beer and soda, sleeping bags and backpacks. Some are in costume; others are dressed simply in jeans and T-Shirts, but all are singing:

"Tradition, tradition—Tradition!
Tradition, tradition—Tradition!"

Tevye follows them into the hotel and wanders through the hallways in the next scenes opening program rooms, stocking the con suite, dusting the fanzine collection, checking on registration, etc.

"Because of our traditions, we've kept our balance for many many years. Here at AnatefCon we have our traditions for everything—where to eat, when to sleep, how to wear clothes. For instance, we always wear these little beanies and lots of obscure t-shirt designs. This shows our constant devotion to Ghu. You may ask, how did this tradition start? I'll tell you—I don't know! But it's a tradition..."

Characters and fannish types are introduced in the song, "Tradition": the con chair, the treasurer, the concom, the gophers:

"And who does all the work?
Who types and runs and tends
Available to go for
Whenever con chair sends?
The gophers—the gophers
Tradition!"

Yente the bureaucrat, Reb Nahum the free-loader, Richard—our beloved Big Name Fan (played in a surprise appearance by Bergeron himself), the fanzine editor, the computer nerd, the fan artist; all are introduced with their own stanzas. Tevye and the cast join arms, one happy family, and dance together. Tevye brags:

"...among ourselves we get along perfectly well. Of course, there was the time [pointing at a fan] when he published a prozine and called it a fanzine, but that's all settled now, now we live in simple peace and harmony and—"

Two fans—in cameo roles played by Richard E. Geis and Andy Porter—begin an argument, which is taken up with enthusiasm by the entire group (and a large part of the audience as well).

"It was a fanzine!"
"It was a prozine!"
"fanzine!"
"prozine!"

Tevye calms that disagreement with pinache, but loses patience a little later when he is called upon to wait upon a safari-suited pro who angrily demands that a drink be delivered to him. Tevye watches a BNF relaxing in the hotel bar surrounded by admirers and then briefly retreats into his hotel room and fantasizes about being a Big Name Fan himself.

If I were a BNF...If I were a Well Known Fan...Wouldn't have to work cons...If I were a Well Known Fan."

Propp, a superb method actor, shines here in his wistful soliloquy.

"The most important fans in town would come and fawn on me.
They would ask me to advise them like Solomon the Wise,
Posing questions that would cross Willis' eyes.
And it won't make one bit of difference If I answer right or wrong.
When you're known they think you really know!
...If I were known I'd have the time that I lack
To sit in the library and read
...Would it spoil some vast eternal plan—
If I were a Well Known Fan?"

A knock on the door interrupts Tevye's soliloquy. It is a gopher with a message and Tevye is called from his retreat to officiate at the con's opening ceremonies. At the podium the concom sings the "Convention Prayer"—an especially effective scene because of the lighting used which plunged the audience into darkness leaving only individual spots over the singing concom.

"...May you come to be
On the famous Pong list of Trufans
May you be like Lee and like Willis
May you deserve much egoboo.
Strengthen them, O Ghu
And keep them from the Trekkie way.

*May Ghu bless you
And grant you much fanac."*

These early songs of A Filker on the Roof set the comfortable and familiar, allegorical stage of fannish tradition for the series of shocks that will wreck havoc at AnatefCon, and—in real life—that now disturb fandom.

One convention emergency occurs early on with the loss of crew on the con newspaper. Tevye arranges for his eldest daughter, Tzeitel (ably played by Jane Hawkins) to help his long-time friend, Lazar Wolf (Ross Pavlac) to publish the convention newszine. Tevye and Lazar celebrate the arrangement over a drink of blog in the hospitality suite and soon are drunk and singing their celebration at the top of their lungs. In an amazingly choreographed scene of communion and happiness, all the types of fans in the room join Tevye and Lazar—fanzine fans, British fans (led by a twirling Joseph Nicholas), costume drobes (performing the "pelvic thrust" in precision march), academics, and even a group of Trekkies who wear tunics with Federation insignia and boots and leap into the frenzied, joyful dance. Tevye is hesitant about welcoming this last group, because, ordinarily, as a Trufan, he would have nothing to do with media fans, but he is so relieved at having solved this particular organizational problem that he forgets his prejudices and promenades somewhat uneasily with a Mr. Spock clone. All sing "To Fanac!"

*"Drink, Fiawol, to fans
We'll raise a glass and sip a drop
of blog
In honor of the great good luck
That favored you!"*

Later, after an ominous scene in which Tevye is approached in a dark hallway by a Lucas-film representative for information about Hugo voting procedures, Tevye's daughter, Tzeitel, tells him that she won't have time to run the mimeograph for Lazar—that she's going to spend the convention with a techie she's just met, Motel Kamzoil (played by Jon Singer whose acting overly exaggerates the stereotype, but is quite amusing nonetheless). Tevye protests that Motel "reads nothing but computer readouts", but bows to the inevitable, all the while muttering that he would have more power as a DM than he seems to have as a con chair. Tevye promises to convey an invitation to Golde,

his wife (Avedon Carol) to the party that Tzeitel and Motel are giving that night. Motel sings (backed by a sacred harp chorus), "Miracle of Miracles"—so surprised is he that the con chair has accepted Tzeitel's and his liaison.

*"...When Ghu made Tucker's towel fall
down
That was a miracle too.
But of all ghu's miracles large and
small
The most miraculous one of all
Is that out of a worthless lump of
clay
Ghu has made a fan today...
Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles
Ghu took a techie by the hand
Turned him around, and miracle of
miracles
Led him to the Golden Age."*

And so it goes too with Tevye's second daughter, Hodel (Terry Garey, who plays the role with fervid conviction and enthusiasm). Hodel kicks up a storm about politically incorrect programming, much of which sounded like ad libbed criticism of RocklandCon's programming. She deserts the convention to join a feminist publishing cooperative in Madison, Wisconsin. At the airport, where she gets a ride to from Tevye, Hodel tells him the details of her plan.

*(Tevye:) "Madison! And they ask
you to
Leave your father and mother and
Join them in that frozen wasteland,
And work with them there?"*
*(Hodel:) "No, papa, they did not ask
me to go.
I want to help them in their work.
It is the greatest work a woman can
do."*

Hodel sings the hauntingly beautiful "Far from the Con I Pub."

After that, calamities follow on the heels of disasters for Tevye and the convention, and Tevye finds it more and more difficult to maintain control. A group of media fans crash Tzeitel's and Motel's party and cause it to be closed down when they play their Star Wars videotape so loud that the hotel security responds to noise complaints. All convention parties are closely watched after that and sometimes harassed. Most parties close early that night.

The all-night coffee shop closes at mid-

night.

The next morning in the coffee shop, Tevye and Golde talk about the tumultuous convention thus far. First Tzeitel taking up with a techie and then Hodel going off to join those radical fakefans in Madison—all but gafiating, making choices for other reasons than the purely fannish ones which have governed Tevye's and Golde's lives. "Maybe we should accept the fact that fandom is changing," says Tevye and then goes on to tell her about his nightmare of the previous night in which famous fans of sixth fandom returned from gafia to warn him that AnatefCon's programming has too many "nostalgia panels." "Spend too much time looking behind you," said one of the ghostly former BNF's in Tevye's dream, "and you'll find you've trapped yourself in a deadend alleyway." Golde agrees that they should take this good advice and should add a couple panels featuring some of the younger fans to replace the Sixth Fandom Trivia Contest. Tevye unhappily agrees and they regard one another sadly and reach out in this poignant scene. Their duet, "Do You Love Me?", punctuated by the insistent notes from Tevye's beeper, provides a romantic interlude.

(Tevye:) "But do you love me?"

(Golde:) "Do I love him?"

For twenty-five years I've fanned
with him

pubbed with him, conned with him
twenty-five years my corflu's his—
If that's not love, what is?"

(Tevye:) "Then you love me?"

(Golde:) "I suppose I do."

(Tevye:) "Then I suppose I love you
too."

But then tragedy strikes. Outside a function room in which Motel is demonstrating his new Apple computer, Tevye is confronted with another daughter, Chava (Sue Rae Rosenfeld) walking hand-in-hand with a conventioneer dressed as Captain Kirk. Though the couple tries to convince Tevye that "it's a new world," and that fandom is changing, Tevye will have none of it and tears the concom ribbon from his daughter's nametag. "Are you out of your mind?" he yells. "Don't you know what this means, dating outside the faith?" Chava's tears do not change Tevye's mind, and in the next scene, this personal tragedy is

matched by a larger one affecting the whole con.

The hotel manager summons Tevye to his office and informs him that a loophole in AnatefCon's agreement with the hotel allows the management to evict the con from the hotel at any time to make room for another convention. He intends to do so to accommodate a Star Wars convention.

Sadly the convention breaks up early and the fannish family sorrowfully leaves, singing the dirge, "AnatefCon" and carrying away their luggage. As the cast files single file off the stage, they pick up and carry away all stage props and portable scenery.

"What do we leave?"

Nothing much—

Only AnatefCon.

AnatefCon—AnatefCon

Underslept, overworked AnatefCon

Where else could parties be so neat?

AnatefCon—AnatefCon

Intimate, boisterous AnatefCon

Where I know everyone I meet.

*Soon I'll be a stranger in a strange
new place*

*Searching for an old familiar face
From AnatefCon.*

AnatefCon—AnatefCon

I belong in AnatefCon

Fannish con, weekend con, AnatefCon

*Dear little family, little con of
mine."*

...the strains of the accompanying mouth organ increase in volume and the somewhat weather-worn filker, carrying the building ledge, brings up the rear of the sad procession of weary conventioners leaving the hotel.

Not a dry eye was left in the audience at this point, certainly neither of my own. Memorable performances were turned in by all members of the cast, but Carl Brandon's script—a delicious parody of Sheldon Harnick's *Fiddler on the Roof*—was the real star of the production. It could have been improved, however, with a bit more awareness shown toward Jewish customs and culture which, of course, is the fannish equivalent in the original play. Perhaps Brandon could consult with Moshe Feder who is rumored to have been interested once in working on a fannish parody of *Fiddler*.

In fact, I would strongly urge Brandon

to do some fine tuning on Filker whether in collaboration or alone. The names of the characters, for instance, should not remain the same as in Fiddler: the opportunities for word play and fannish reference should be pursued. Another criticism has to do with his omission of the matchmaker, Yenta, and a parody of the song, "Matchmaker, Matchmaker". Obviously, the author could not come up with a plausible fannish equivalent to the Jewish marriage broker custom, and so simply skipped that plot element and song. But surely there is some way to use the idea of three young girls longing for romance to dramatize the parallel fannish idea of neos' longing for the excitement and notoriety of fannish involvement. Both the young girls and the neos are naive of the not always pleasant results of such strivings.

Nonetheless, I heartily recommend Filker on the Roof to you. Make sure that you see it if you can. It's a fannish must!

Chapter 5: Letters about Cacher.

The very first letter of comment I received on Cacher arrived in the mail the very morning that I picked up the finished copies of Cacher from the printers. I'm afraid I reacted rather badly to the news that a mistake had already been found in what I was hoping would be a typo-free, perfect publication. That was of course before I discovered the paragraphs I'd juxtaposed in the process of laying out the manuscript that required an additional printing and replacement of the faulty pages in every copy.

Dave Rike
P.O. Box 11
Crockett, CA 94525

While I was visiting Terry Carr today he showed me the "galleys" you sent him of the forthcoming reprint of Carl Brandon's Cacher of the Rye. In his introduction Terry made one minor error. The "voice" of Carl Brandon on the tape... was not James Howard Barclay, or "Jimmy Burn'em" as some of his former friends like to call him, but Duran Bell. Duran at the time was a student of International Relations at UC Berkeley. In the mid-60's he was on the faculty of the Social Sciences Department of the University of California, Irvine. I don't know what's happened to him since. He might still be there.

Terry confused him with Barclay probably because it was Barclay who came with Jack Newcomb and myself down to the 1958 WorldCon in LA. Barclay brought along his con go drum while Newcomb had his bongos, tho they swapped off from time to time. Barclay has paid visits to some local penal institutions since that time for armed robbery, heroin for sale and possession of marijuana. About ten years ago I ran into Ellsworth Valentine Johnson on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. Barclay was in San Quentin at the time. Barclay wrote and asked me if I could visit him in prison. I wasn't able to because I was already visiting a close friend of the family who was also at Q and you can only visit one person at a time there. I haven't seen or heard from Barclay since that time.

As I recall it, SLATE, the campus political party (which led to the free Speech Movement and the student activism in Berkeley in the 60's) had a fund-raising party a block or two away and afterwards Terry, Duran

and myself found ourselves staggering together down Dwight Way and we suddenly decided that it would be a good time to make a tape so we went to my room at 2431. Duran comes along with us and one of us says, "Hey, Duran, how'd you like to be Carl Brandon?" "Carl who?" "Oh, don't worry, we'll write some lines for you to say, ok?" "Ok." It was a recording of three people who had obviously been out partying/drinking all night and who were full of fine fannish glee. Duran's deep resonant laugh came thru loud and clear as did the measured, cultured tones of his voice, slurred a bit by too much to drink. Terry and I were babbling away as is our wont on tape while Duran was more restrained, but he spoke his lines perfectly.

[from a later letter:] Enclosed is a print of a cache of bheer cans that we had planned to build our Tower to the Moon with. However, those being the days before epoxies and "instant glue" we were never able to keep the Tower together longer than 15-20 minutes before someone would stumble and topple it over. Bob Stewart (who believed himself to be the only teen-age alcoholic in town) generally did it unless Pet Graham (at the time a teetotaler) beat him to it. Poul Anderson subverted the project when he extolled the lofty virtues of imported beers and we discovered Champale, all of which came in bottles. The photograph was taken by Bob Stewart and was printed up originally for a Cult FR sometime during 1954 or 55 when I had access to the photo-lab of East Contra Costa J.C.



Richard Bergeron
Box 5989
Old San Juan, PR 00905

The Cacher Book is lovely, of course. I especially liked the typesetting (I'm a great fan of slightly oversized text, Times Roman is a great face, and I've indulged my affection for larger type in the new Wrhn as you will see) and the whole ambience. Picking up the fan art from the mimeo was especially neat (so simple a device that most fans would have overlooked it —yet it retains the graphic message of the tale's early roots. The artwork is slightly enlarged, too, isn't it? [yes.] Another touch I like—that being one of my favorite devices. Terry's intro was splendid, of course. A fine writer he is. Fascinating reading which once I started I never got back to the house from the PO before I had finished it in a little park overlooking the bay just down the street from my house. A great place to read great fannish mail.

Unfortunately, I was never a fan of Carl Brandon, however. I've never liked fannish fiction based on parody (even in the best examples) and when the parallels are forced and slightly torturous I lose patience and interest completely. For instance, I couldn't read this story after the first chapter and it was a struggle to get through that. I just couldn't swallow the notion that the FAPA OE... would warn a crud producer that he was going to be tossed out of FAPA. My experience with FAPA officialdom was that they were only too glad to let the crud producer depart quietly with no undue warning. So you see the parallel doesn't work and of a consequence the scene is labored, tiresome, not at all funny. The whole Brandon phenomenon passed me by for this very reason—I never could figure out the logic of writing something about something else (i.e., parody) in terms that made no sense.