SF³
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Whimsey

Thar she blows, me hearties! ...Yes, it's Whimsey #5 (Obsessive Press #74) swimming across the treacherous currents of the US Postal service, third class mainly (unless you happen to reside outside the US and sent a letter to me that I published inside this zine—in which case, your copy probably traveled at a dryer, higher altitude than most). Whimsey's skipper is Jeanne Gomoll (see above) and its home port is Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-1443 (phone 608/255-9909). Paying passengers are not solicited but fans may indenture themselves and arrange round-trip passage with letters of comment. Crew this issue are Kafryn Lieder (proofreading), Pam Wells (UK mailing list expansion), Spike (general encouragement, like "Are you fininished with Whimsey yet, Jeanne?"); and artists, Stu Shiffman, David Vereschagin, and Atom. Thank you all. Uncredited material is mine and is copyrighted © by Jeanne Gomoll, 1986. Rights revert to authors and artists upon publication. Typed June 1986 while consuming raw coconut and drinking apricot tea. No music playing at the time. One more thing, folks: take me off the chain-letter lists, OK? I don't send them on, anyway. Thanks.

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5

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Don't you believe me?

Several people have accused me of "rearranging" events in my anecdotes in order to create fictional beginnings, middles, and ends, plus various connecting digressions. My critics don't say that they suspect malicious intent, but the suggestion of cheating leaks between their words. Spike and my sister, Julie, for instance, witnessed some of the original, non-rearranged incidents, and now they smile knowingly at my stories. Brian Earl Brown expresses his incredulity by theorizing that the basic skill of anecdote writing is the ability to recognize good source material in the first place. ("I don't think I'd recognize a humorous anecdote if it stood up and bit me," he lamented.) But he still admires an ability to organize the stuff once found. A number of other LoCers openly questioned the truth of the quiche story. They asked, "Did it really happen like that?" My answer is, "Yes, as far as I can remember." But as I mentioned last time, the problem with rearranging anecdotes is that the revised story told many times over acquires sharper edges than the real thing. So my memory isn't the best testimony.

I won't deny that I rearrange events a little. It's an old habit.

My second grade teacher, Sister Mary Michelle introduced our class to a game for an art lesson. The exercise became my favorite schooltime activity. The object of the game was to take a black crayon and a sheet of Manile paper (you know, the heavy cream-colored paper with bits of wood pulp visible on its surface) and, then, WITH OUR EYES CLAMPED TIGHTLY SHUT, to scribble madly for a couple minutes. When we stopped we could look down upon the destruction we'd wrought and the fun part would start. We took out the other colors from our box of crayolas and colored in all the pictures we could find within the random black scribbles.

The classroom would quiet suddenly as all of us kids bent over our bird's nests of black waxy lines. Some of us squinted as we searched for hidden landscapes and creatures. Others would scan the page methodically from top to bottom, like auditors searching for bookkeeping errors. Then, once a recognizable picture was located in the mass of squiggles, the usual procedure was to darken the outlines of the found object and color it appropriately.

I loved doing this exercise. Sometimes I'd play the game at home, or versions of it with kids in the neighborhood. (One kid would draw a squiggle and the other would have to "complete" it, and turn it into a recognizable representation.) At school I would try to find more pictures in my scribbles than any of the other kids found in theirs.

Thus began a career of rearranging.

Sometimes there would be a part of the mess of scribbles that almost completed a picture. The rules were clear, though: we were only to color within outlines that we'd drawn while our eyes were shut. Once we could see again, we weren't supposed to draw any more black lines; we could only darken existing ones. I cheated.

Other times the scribble density was so thick that I could pretty much choose anything I wanted to draw and "coax" it from the tangle. This wasn't strictly against the rules, but it was certainly opposed to their spirit.

Soon, the rules I observed for the exercise were a different set than the ones my classmates followed. I used the scribbles to suggest the first hint of pictures that would emerge from the background and would regularly add an extra black line here, an errant black squiggle there, and extend a scratch there. *Voilá*, where there was once only a hint of a beak and a claw and a few feathers, now a comical parrot emerged!

One day I went too far. Sister Mary Michelle made the rounds while we toiled over Manille paper, grinding colored wax into our paper, hair, arms and clothing. That day, the number of "found" drawings on my paper crowded one another and multiplied into a rainbow of crayola. The first time Sister walked past my desk, she patted me affectionately on the shoulder and praised the parrot and elephant that I'd coaxed from my tangle. But later, looking at the dozen cartoon characters that I'd colored in on my paper, she was silent. For the first time since she'd introduced us to this game, my artwork failed to get pinned up on the bulletin board for display.

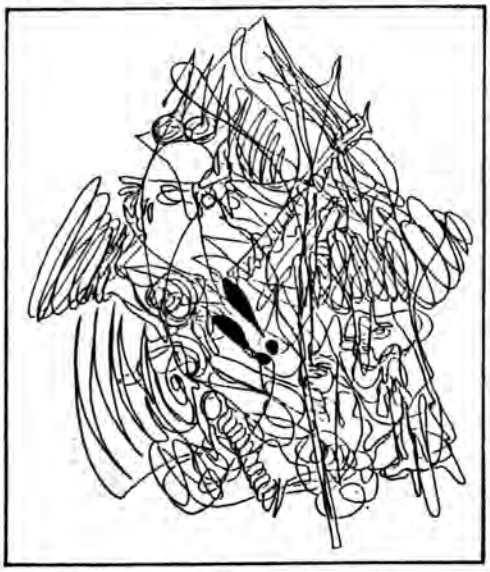
I learned a few lessons about subtlety in the second grade, but that didn't stop me from rearranging altogether.

Lately there have been other lessons to be learned.

ADDED EMPHASIS, MINE

Through devious sources, it has been discovered that Minneapolis fan, Luke McGuff, has programmed several keys on his word processor to produce exclamatory interjections, like "Wow!," "Yeah!", etc. He punches these buttons frequently while he writes, sprinkling interjections through his essays like salt on corn-on-the-cob. But then, after he's finished, he repents and instructs the computer to edit out the exclamations from the finished text.

I grinned and nodded when I learned about Luke's methods and fervently wished that my IBM selectric could do the same thing with underlining. I rely on underlining the way Luke uses those exclamations—to make the text I'm writing sound like the voice I'd use to say the same thing out loud. (With un-erased underlines, the words "sound" and "say" in the previous sentence would have been underscored, to make you read it in the same way I imagine that you'd have heard it from me.) I used to underline for emphasis much more than I do now. Rare was the sentence, and probably nowhere was the paragraph, without at least one word underlined or at least italicized for emphasis.



But I have decided that if I can't use the right word that contains the appropriate amount of emphasis in its meaning, that my writing is sloppy and my thinking lazy.

One revelation increased my determination in this area. In the first issue of *Whimsey*, I made use of a new type element called "Dual Gothic" to replace underscored or italicized emphasis. Dual Gothic is simply a lighter version of Letter Gothic which you are reading at this very moment, and I thought it would be appropriate because I'd noticed that my verbal habit of emphasis involves lowering my voice rather than raising it. Reading over what I'd written using Letter and Dual Gothic typefaces, it seemed to me that it "sounded" very close to my verbal style. Most LoCers didn't like it though. One thing I learned from those letters, was that my choice of typefaces wasn't producing the effect that I expected. And it was the same lesson I'd started to learn about my over-enthusiastic

of underlining. Not only was the practice sloppy, in it it meant that I hadn't used the proper word and was stead depending upon a pantomime to indicate a larger r louder) (or sarcastic) meaning, but the charade wasn't en working. People weren't catching my meaning.

The thing that amazes me about all of this is that nce I finish writing something and go back and exorcize all those underlinings or italics—sometimes not even changing the wording, just eliminating the added emphasis—that no meaning is lost. It just feels cleaner. And I wonder why, when I was writing in the first place, that the added emphasis seemed so essential. I imagine that that's what happens for Luke McGuff when he takes out all the "Wow's," and "Yeah's." The exclamations turn out to be only a temporary crutch to help him write in a natural tone of voice, and once having achieved the voice and written the piece, he can take down the scaffolding.

Maybe if people know you very well and they've heard you talk or read your writing frequently, you can get away with little shorthand tricks—exclamations, in-joke phrases, familiar emphasizing habits—because they're familiar with your verbal style and gestures. You might say that someone "is upwardly mobile," all the while raising your voice, grinning a patronizing grin, waving a limp wrist, and rolling your eyes—knowing that you've also communicated to your friend that this person is a materialist cretin. But obviously you can't just underline that phrase and hope to get that image across to a larger number of readers.

I still underline once in a while. Sometimes it's an almost impossible temptation to resist. My high school habit of enclosing in quotation marks every word I meant to be read with an ironic tone of voice has largely been outgrown, thank goodness. And I think my writing has improved because I more often go back to find a stronger or simply a better word, than to leave the inadequate underlined word to semaphore my meaning. It's a surprise, however, to find out that anyone noticed...

Jeanne Mealy
2633 Dupont Ave., S.
Minneapolis, MN 55408

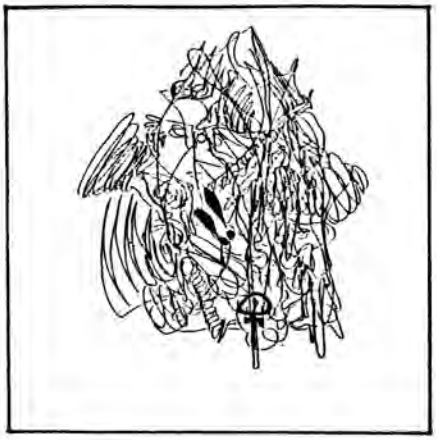
I loved the quiche story. Great illustrations, great descriptions—you should patent that sound effect of the quiche being run over!... I think you have a quieter style of writing than I'd use; I have to ride herd on the number of exclamation points I use, and underlinings...

The Patter of Little Serifs

Successful humor is as elusive as finding the right word. Most often, in fact, it exactly depends upon getting precisely the right word. If people aren't getting the joke, or aren't reading it the way you intended it to be read, it's not necessarily their fault. Jean Weber, for instance, says that she frequently receives outraged letters from readers of *Weberwoman's Wrevenge* confusing jokes with lectures. I'd bet that the cause of these misunderstandings is anchored in Jean's expectations that the humorous portions of her writing will be read in the ironic tone of voice she used while writing. Unfortunately that doesn't always translate itself without a very careful choice of words.

A fanzine in which the voices of the editors do come across loud and clear is *Flash Point*, which I reviewed in the last issue of *Whimsey*. Mike Glicksohn agreed with my enthusiastic appraisal, calling it a "sensational fanzine." Brian Earl Brown liked it too.

WHEN WE WERE YOUNG AND SERIOUS



Brian Earl Brown
11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, MI 48224

Until Patrick did *Flash Point* I had come to believe that these "ensmalled" fanzines were inherently trivial. *Crank, Instant Gratification, Parasite*, etc., all seemed so shallow and ephemerally topical. *Flash Point* 7 showed that it was possible to publish a 6-page fanzine that said something significant. And I hope Patrick and Theresa will continue to pub the occasional intellectual "ensmalled" fanzine.

There seems to be a growing undercurrent for the sort of science fiction convention that Patrick discusses, as well as longings for more serious and STFnally related material in fanzines. I don't see much of this being put into action, and I'm not sure how many fans these days could write a probing critical book review, but it's interesting to note this (conservative?) drift back to our roots.

Cy Chauvin and several others pointed at WisCon—the Madison convention—as an example of the sort of serious SF convention Patrick described in his *Flash Point* essay. I agree: WisCon has consistently cultivated an emphasis on serious discussion of literature (as well as a particular focus on feminism) throughout its 10, going-on-11-year existence. WisCon is certainly no paragon convention. We've experienced a certain amount of environmental pollution as a result of the media fan population explosion, and for a while in the last several years, it seemed as though the bureaucratic disease of concom smoffing would stifle the creative enthusiasm of active fans in the area. But a revolution was staged this year and an experiment begun in decentralizing the concom. That's meant, incidentally, that we've lowered the percentage of men in department head positions, and decreased the number of planning meetings.

(Next year, Connie Willis and Avedon Carol will be our guests of honor. WisCon 11 dates will be February 20-22, 1987.)

Cy Chauvin commented that he less often hears "small talk" at WisCon than he does at other conventions. WisCon, he adds, tends to encourage more serious conversations. This very atmosphere tends to turn off other fans, needless to say. But WisCon can't very well disguise the fact that it's not a relaxacon. Not with three or more tracks of programming it can't.

Here are some letters about the sercon/feminist elements of 1970's fandom:

Mike Glicksohn
508 Windermere Ave.
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I suppose it depends on your point of view but despite being aware of the impact that feminism had during the 70's I'd never look back at the fandom of that time and think of it as primarily political. I was surprised that you seem to see feminism and politics as the thrust of the era. I'd say it was one thrust but there were certainly others. Of course, I understood the difference in our viewpoints when, a bit further on in your comments, you described *Energumen* as a 60's fanzine. *Energumen* was published from 1970 to 1973. That's when *Granfalloon* and *Outworlds* were around. And it was the heyday of a certain wave of New York fannishness which has long since vanished from our collective ken. To me the 70's were a very fannish time and I'd venture to say that, at least numerically, feminist fanzines were a minor part of fandom in much of the decade. (Their impact was, of course, far larger than their numbers might have suggested so I'm not disagreeing with that part of your observations.) Like I say, it all depends on the individual really.

...As an aside, Rosemary's column was called "Kumquat May," not "Kumquat Wine." And I'd completely forgotten Joyce's project to issue a collection of them. I hope she someday sees it through. Rosemary is still in town, although I haven't seen her in ages, but I'm sure she'd be delighted if the volume actually appeared.

Terry Carr
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Oakland, CA 94611

Your contention that the 1970's are unnecessarily remembered in fan-history as dull and sercon, overladen with comments/arguments about feminism is of course quite correct; a lot of fans reacted to the feminism stuff as "unfannish," but ask any of them what "fannish" is and they'll all give you different answers. My reaction to that trend in fanwriting during the 1970's was that it was pretty sercon all right, but it struck to the core of fannish communication so wot the hell archie.

Jeff Frane
6133 SE Insley
Portland, OR 97206

I share your perceptions of 70's fannish writing. Feminism entered fandom like a hot poker, and the resultant fizzing and steaming added a lot of excitement for a lot of people who otherwise wouldn't have found fandom too interesting. Even fans who hated the very idea of "politicizing" fandom got lots of exercise complaining about it. Having so little recent contact with fandom, I had no idea that revisionists were downplaying the importance of the period. There may in fact have been a dearth of anecdotal writing, but I certainly didn't feel the lack at the time.

Steve Stiles
3003 Ellerslie Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21218

Being semi-gafia, it's a big revel to me that feminism in fandom is no longer fashionable and that political topics were unpopular in fandom of the 70's. Discussion zines were popular in the mid-sixties, with faanish writers contributing articles to fanzines like *Habakkuk* on a wide range of topics. It was an exciting time for me and boosted my interest in areas that were never covered in the exam mills. Unlike Patrick, however, I just couldn't escape a serious writing style that bordered on the pedantic; the soapbox was always firmly under my feet, and it embarrasses me to reread my material of that period. But at the same time there were many fine and earnest bull sessions at fan parties and conventions. That just doesn't seem to happen too often at the faanish parties around here—we just pass the pipe around and chuckle over *Roadrunner* reruns. I wonder if the apathy of conservative realities eventually ground down those fine enthusiasms.

Kris Sellgren
University of Hawaii
Institute for Astronomy
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Honolulu, HA 96822

I was uncomfortable with one of your points in *Whimsey* 4, brought up when you were discussing the history of *Janus/Aurora*. You were talking about the political and feminist rhetoric of the 70's, and how you (and fandom) have moved away from that. It came across as though politics and feminism were boring, and that we've all outgrown that phase and now fannish writers can turn to writing funny stories about how many times they got lost on the way to the con. I realize that wasn't what you meant—you were trying more to show how humor can communicate ideas better than dry academic essays—but it came across as though you thought political analysis wasn't necessary any more. The problem, I think, is more that it takes a much better writer to write engagingly about feminist theory, whether by the brilliance of her writing or by her drawing on personal experiences, than it does to write amusing anecdotes.

Judith Hanna
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Pimlico, London
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Read with interest about feminism as a 70's focus of fan activity in America. The trouble with trying to comment on anything related to feminism is that it is a subject so beset by pejorative or otherwise ideologically loaded labels that in order to write anything not subject to misinterpretation you need to embark on a several-page essay that explains your assumptions, the sense in which you're using almost every word, and acknowledging all the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the whole complicated history of the relationship between women and men and the rest of the world. Leave out any elaborate precaution, and several people will ignore what you have written in order to berate you for having ignored the most important point. Take all the wordy precautions you can think of, and you'll still get several people responding to what they think orthodox feminism prescribes, either telling you why they disagree with that position (you call yourself a feminist so this must be what you said), or else telling you off because they've noticed that you aren't toeing the party line. All of which is probably part of the reason why so little of the overtly political feminism of the 70's stands up to rereading today. Working feminist insights into an anecdotal context which explains the point of view as it describes it helps get around this problem of the indigestibility of theory by putting into practice the feminist credo "the personal is political." The danger is that the casual reader won't even recognise the perspective as feminist: after all, he knows that all feminists are...(insert pejorative of your choice). Writing that he enjoyed, even agreed with, therefore, cannot be feminist. Or, if you can't beat the buggers, try Terry's *Rocky Mountain Oysters* recipe. Cooking is an old-fashioned pastime....

For a wonderful example of blending personal anecdote with feminist analysis, I recommend Judith's article, "The Politics of Textile Conversion," in *Fuck the Tories* 2, in which a funny, at home conversation between Joseph Nicholas and Judith is exploited for both laughs and political insights. I'd like to see more articles like this one from politically conscious fan writers of the 70's armed with experience in the more personal writing styles of the 80's. I'm sorry if I gave the impression that I thought that the two approaches—political and anecdotal—were opposed to one another, and that my shift from academic to anecdotal styles mirrored a shift in my politics. I wrote in *Whimsey* 4 and I really do believe that feminism is even more important to some of us today, even if we've been writing fewer diatribes. I wrote and I really do believe that political (fannish) writing being done currently communicates more effectively and with greater sophistication when humor is incorporated. Witty writing, after all, isn't restricted to "how-I-got-to-the-convention" anecdotes.

There was nevertheless a problem with that section of *Whimsey* 4. I tried to say too much in too little space and ended up skimping on definitions and taking short-cuts in explanations. I realized later that referring to feminist interest in fandom as a decade phenomena distracted attention from the main issue. And gradually, I realized that I had much more to say. Briefly, this is what I eventually wrote down in essay form: I looked at the way in which feminist fannishness has been lumped in with words like "dull" and "sercon" and then lumped again into a category called the 70's. And I connected that lumping process with a similar process in SF criticism. I imagined an amendment to Joanna Russ' list in *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (University of Texas Press, 1983). Russ describes dozens of them (like, wrote it but she wrote only one of it," and "She wrote it but she had help," and "She wrote it but she's an anomaly.") The strategy to deal with the 70's renaissance of women SF writers may be, "They wrote it but it was a fad." As I said, this is an extremely brief hint of what I finally ended up writing. I'm sure that this synopsis sets off all the traps that Judith warned about and a few more pitfalls that she forgot to mention. So please don't bother responding to this. If you are interested, send SF³ a note and you will be sent a copy of the next, interim issue of *Aurora* which will contain this article. (*Aurora*, c/o SF³, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624.)

I've withdrawn from the publication committee of *Aurora*, but Diane Martin is continuing its publication and looking for new, enthusiastic people to help her. (If you're in the area and interested, by all means contact Diane through SF³ right away!) Anyway, *Aurora* will probably change to some degree with the turnover of staff, and Diane has decided to put out this interim issue, made up mostly of letters commenting upon the previous issue, plus a few controversial articles. I'm reasonably certain that mine will attract a few vociferous

responses. The goal of the publication of this special issue will be to stimulate interest in *Aurora* and thus, to stimulate the publishers, who like all fannish publishers, thrive on a diet of meaty letters of comment.

BIG TALK

Several letter-writers used bits of *Whimsey* 4 as an excuse to praise their own favorite modes of fannish communication.

Judith Hanna

Reading you count of Scott's moving day, following so close after discussion of Anne Hammill's *Bear*, a sudden insight attacks me. Anne's "fans are people who reject small talk" theory of fandom is entirely incompatible with Malcolm Edwards' "fandom is a village" theory. As your de neighborhood brings out, village life is all small talk. Having lived in various villages, both out in the country and as enclaves within the city, I can get along with their small talk. As long as I've been able to get away to the wider world every now and then to have the long and earnestly analytical conversations deep into the night that are the essence of fandom.

Jeff Frane

I think a lot of what we treasure in good anecdotal writing was taken for granted a generation ago, and the truly excellent writing of the professional (and some amateur) humorists, regionalists and journalists shines as an almost impossible goal today. I had occasion to read some letters my uncles wrote home in the 40's, and they are crisp, lucid and observant. I credit the downfall of newspapers; we no longer have the day-to-day examples of careful, thoughtful journalists, but only the flash card news of television and vapid newspaper writing.

I haven't much reading time these days, and what I do have I devote to good novels (historical, mysteries, little sf), history, and catching myself up on people like Twain, Mencken, Thurber and Anita Loos. I gave up on fannish writing because, for the most part, it seems breathless and directionless. Most of the best work is done by professional writers —Terry Carr, Bob Shaw, Suzette Elgin, Bill Gibson—and others who are disciplined in other fields—like Grant Canfield, who should never have stopped producing *Waste Paper*, curse him. Too much fan writing is empty cleverness, a self-conscious effort to be witty without any wit.

Cy Chauvin
14248 Wilfred
Detroit, MI 48213

I like your "Whimsical" writing too. The humorous material I like best is like Garrison Keillor's, which manages to be funny yet have accurate and real observations about people, too. This must be more difficult to write than Garrison makes it appear (he's so casual, of course), and I don't see it much in fanzines.

The more often I hear Keillor, the more impressed I am. The show on May 31, 1986 featured the whole two hours filled with Keillor monologue. It was a special compilation of two radio shows he recorded out East and was made up mostly of readings from his book, *Lake Wobegon Days*. It was so entertaining, I could have listened for another two hours. And afterward, it suddenly struck me how lucky I am to be able to hear his shows live. I think in the future, anyone who heard or attended Garrison Keillor's performances will be envied like someone in earlier years who could recall hearing Samuel Clemens speak.

If any of you haven't heard Keillor, call up the radio station in your town that carries National Public Radio shows and ask them when they broadcast "A Prairie Home Companion," and then sit back and listen to it. I understand that it can be picked up on some Australian stations, and maybe British radio too, though I don't know about that. But you can also read his books and buy tapes of his monologues.

Garrison Keillor has been broadcasting on public radio for more than 10 years now. The format of his show is variety: lots of music in all categories (folk, jazz, classical, gospel, country western, cajun, opera, barbershop quartet, big band, polka, anything that can be arranged), interspersed with fake commercials (like Bertha's Kitty Boutique ads) and funny bits put together by Keillor and his sound effects crew. The highlight of the show, however, is Keillor's 30-45 minute monologue, called "News from Lake Wobegon." He always starts out with an invocation, "It's been a quiet week in Lake Wobegone...." and goes on from there, filling us in on the week's events in this fictional, small, midwestern town. As Sinclair Lewis knew the citizens of Zenith, Keillor knows intimately all the residents of Lake Wobegon and is familiar with all their activities and thoughts.

Keillor doesn't read this monologue; neither is it a memorized performance. Although he may have prepared a general outline before the show, like a minister prepares some vague thoughts for a sermon (and that's a very appropriate, ironic comparison, by the way), Keillor spins out the stories spontaneously as he speaks. Sometimes he launches off into surprising digressions from which neither he nor the audience knows whether he will be able to safely return. Sometimes the form of the story curves perfectly back around to its beginning, as if every part had been meticulously crafted to fit smoothly into its setting, each contributing to a remarkable final insight. After one of these monologues, Keillor seems to hold the audience in his hands, for they will do anything he asks of them. With no warm-up, they launch themselves into the silliest song or the drippiest, corniest, romantic ballod, or even into an old-fashioned hymn. I have been moved to tears several times during one of his stories, but usually my reaction is a happy smile and frequent chuckles.

I envy Garrison Keillor his ability to weave stories as he does and to make me laugh and care.

Bob Webber
16 Oakburn
Pl. #5
Willowdale
Ontario
M2N 2T1
Canada

The problem with extending one's career as a stand-up comedian to the printed page is that one doesn't get the same sort of feedback. If one is funny before

a live audience, they laugh. If one is funny in an apazine before a similar (presumably) live audience, one gets comments saying, "Read and enjoyed, but no comment hooks." In my experience, if one is funny in a fanzine, the silence is so deafening you can't hear the absence of mail hitting the floor just inside your mailbox. The problem is in coming up with a response to humor that doesn't seem like an attempt to one-up the original author with another funny story, or sound wrong, like, "I really enjoyed the piece about how you made a complete fool of yourself," or "Wow, what a terrible calamity to occur to someone." (Afraid this will be interpreted as: "Only an idiot would let this happen.")

I think I'll let Harry and Terry comment on this conundrum...

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21740

You had my palms sweaty and my breath (none too copious to begin with) coming short and fast by the time you reached the shattering climax of "Road Kill." One thing you didn't go into: what the individual driving the blue car felt when it happened. Is there somewhere a man or woman waking at 3 am several times a week, reliving that accident and wondering for the thousandth time if it were a plump child sitting on your bike who had fallen into the vehicle's path? On a dark street at midnight a driver might not have had time to see that a falling object was rectangular rather than human in shape. If I'd been that driver, I'm sure I would have stopped and had a nervous breakdown before looking closely at my victim.

Well, wonder no longer, Harry. *Whimsey* scoops the *National Enquirer* today!

QUICHE — KILLER CONFESSES !!

Terry Hughes
6205 Wilson Blvd., #102
Falls Church, VA 22044

This guilt is just too great to bear and *Whimsey* #4 has only made things worse. I honestly don't think I can take it any longer. Whenever I go to a restaurant I can sense the suspicious stares and whispered comments. That horrible sequence of events endlessly replays itself in my dreams at night. Make it all stop, Jeanne: tell me that you forgive me. I confess that I did it. Yes, it was me, Terry, "Quiche Killer" Hughes.

There's an old folk saying that goes: "The best intentions are frequently smeared on the tires of rental cars," and heaven knows my intentions were good. Last June I was in Milwaukee on business (addressing a quarterly meeting of the Capitalistic Oppressors of the Third World) and afterwards I decided to surprise you with a visit. At the airport I rented a blue, four-door Ford and headed out I-94. Finding Madison proved to be no problem, but finding Brooks Street was an altogether different matter. My search was not aided by the lack of a street map. Using fan-like ingenuity, I decided to drive randomly about in hopes of crossing Brooks Street at some point. I'm sure you will agree that was a resourceful strategy but it failed to take into consideration that fully one-half of the streets of Madison run parallel to Brooks Street. This is why midnight found me cruising along Monroe Street. I was beginning to have serious doubts about the existence of Brooks Street...or of Jenifer Street for that matter.

Then from out of nowhere I saw you walking your bicycle. Although you were more than a block away, I could tell you had a special glow that night. Now, of course, I realize that was due to your sunburn. You also looked a bit bedraggled. "Jeanne looks like she could use a laugh," I remember thinking. I decided to tell you that bicycles are less tiring if you peddle them. In my eagerness to share my sophisticated sense of humor with you, I depressed the accelerator and quickly reduced the distance between us. As I rapidly drew closer your bicycle seemed to explode. Objects were flying hither and thither, not to mention you. Honestly, Jeanne, I never even saw your quiche—I wasn't even watching the road. My eyes were on you trying to make sure you were okay. Then I heard that sound, "SPLEKCHSHPHTFSSSH!" I believe is how you put it. I also remember you screaming, "Stop that quiche-killing car!"

Needless to say that is when I decided to put off my visit until another time, a time when the streets of Madison weren't paved in quiche. I headed in what I thought was the direction of I-94 and found myself on Brooks Street.

What can I say, Jeanne? I am sorry. I wish tough luck didn't come so easy to me.

OK, Terry. You're forgiven. It was a long time ago, and now I live on a little dead end cul-de-sac that you'll never find.

I'll call the FBI and tell them to drop the case.

Arthur Thomson
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Liked your "Quiche" tale and, being a typical fan—i.e., with an avid interest in people—all the additional Gomoll background info. made me think there should be some pun somewhere in the Quiche story but I can't dig it out.

Spike came up with one too late to use in the story, but maybe this is what you were looking for... She suggested that rather than printing "R.I.P." lettered over the quiche drawing at the end of the piece, that I should have printed "R.I.Q.," as in "Rest in Quiche."

REVIEWING FANZINES REVIEWED

Skel's article ("LOC on Tommy") in *Crystal Ship* 10 might have been submitted to the *Fancyclopedia Britannica* as an entry for the term, "Letter of Comment." It is a lengthy overview, history and analysis of the LoC and was probably rejected by the *Britannica* people only because its attitude was too flippant, decidedly un-*Brittanican*. Very British though. Skel begins with a history recounting the revolution which replaced a cumbersome barter system with the clearly superior LoC used as the basic fannish medium of exchange. Nowadays, instead of digging cabbage patches for one another or repairing one another's refrigerators, Skel says we simply send letters of comment to fanzine editors to receive the next issue free. Perhaps this explains why no one I know has a cabbage patch and why most refrigerators tend to malfunction.

The bulk of Skel's article, however, deals with four different categories of people who influence LoC production (contributors, readers, editors and LoCers), and the way in which their often conflicting priorities and values determine which letters see print. As he shows with entertaining examples, the various interest groups don't usually agree on the best sort (or parts) of letters of comment to publish.

For instance, the editor's concerns ("Not only does he want you to say something which will interest him, he wants you to talk about things which will interest the other readers, and furthermore, he wants you to talk about it with wit, style and flair.") conflict in a serious way with the contributors' desires which include (approving) feedback on their writing or artwork. But it's true that "comments like 'Skel's piece was so good it made me laugh all the way through' are terrific for the contributor, but don't make for scintillating letter columns."

As both the editor of and major contributor to *Whimsey*, I can identify with this tug of war about all those complimentary bits of non-publishable praise included in letters of comment. Recently I've considered using some of them like

paperback publishers do and artfully excerpt them as back-cover "blurbs."

Cohesive -- *Avedon Carol*

Improved considerably -- *Jeff Frane*

Who put Whimsey out this time? Charles and Diana? Rocky and Bullwinkle? -- *Terry Gary*

Mythic quality -- *Steve Stiles*

More polite than I -- *Luke McGuff*

Page 6 was completely blank. -- *Carrie Root*

A worthy successor to Pong -- *Richard Bergeron*

I always liked pink. -- *D. M. Sherwood*

Spelling innovations in Whimsey are part of its charm. -- *David M. Vereschagin*

I feel like I died and went to egoboo heaven. -- *Patrick Nielsen Hayden*

Très funny -- Joan Rogers

I laughed till I stopped -- Tom Weber

The fanzine with the untypable title -- Marc Ortlieb

Probably put out by Joseph Nicholas or Jodie Offutt or someone else -- Harry Warner, Jr.

But I couldn't do that. That would be tacky.

The thing Skel skims past in his run-down of What-LoCs-Mean-to-Fans is the thinking that an editor goes through, trying to understand what will provoke LoCs in the first place. Which is yet another factor in deciding what LoCs to print because the published ones will partially determine what kind and how many LoC's will get sent in response to the issue.

I'm quite confident that if I ran some of the inevitable commentary I receive about computer technology that I would attract a deluge of LoCs on that subject. My impulse, has been to head that lot off at the pass, ignoring all their explanations of what kind of printer and what kind of memory capacity produced their latest letter, and to pretend that all my contributors type their letters on Smith Corona manuals. And there are other topics I ignore. I've politely filed a ten-page treatise written to me about why my use of the plural pronoun to replace the oppressive singular male generic pronoun horrifies the logical mind of one *Whimsey* reader. I choose simply to do it. That's the point. And I suppose that should I have received inflamatory letters having to do with one of the fueds (A or B) now sputtered out in fandom that I could have printed them in order to fill my post office box to more satisfying depths.

Indeed some fan editors seem to print everything—and the whole of every letter—that they receive, in the pursuit of still more mail, or perhaps in the belief that selective editing is the equivalent of immoral censorship. That's half right. It is censorship to pick and choose among LoCs for publishable material; but it's not immoral. In fact, it's an essential practice if one is to keep one's zine alive and interesting. And I don't particularly mean interesting to the fanzine readers: I mean interesting to the fanzine editor.

Readers can (and do) skim through the zillions and zillions of pages of the usual *Holier Than Thou* lettercol (although #23 was a surprising exception) and stop and read only the bits that attract their interest. But the editor is forced not only to read but to type every bit of the stuff and then has to pay for the printing as well. By publishing nearly the whole of every LoC received, the topics of conversation extend to a random and ever-increasing range of topics—far overwhelming the areas that are of special interest to the faned, who—if they allow the situation to persist—will soon find themself editing a fanzine in which people converse with one another, oblivious to the editor. That reminds me of an ambitious party at which people all have a great time but at which the host is trapped in the kitchen preparing elaborate hors d'ouvres. Or a too-large convention which prevents its over-extended concom from enjoying themselves.

Well, maybe Mary and Robbie Cantor were interested in the myriad of topics that occupy their LoCers in *Holier Than Thou* I don't mean to do a critique of their fanzine here; I merely picked *HTT* as a handy example of a LoColumn editing style that seems pretty common in fanzine publishing for which I don't particularly care. I prefer the style of editors such as Rob Hansen (*Epsilon*) for the entertaining manner in which short letter excerpts were juxtaposed so that they seemed to respond to one another, even when—obviously—they were written without conspiracy. *Epsilon*'s resulting LoColumns almost read as cohesive articles whose carefully edited length precluded any meanders into dullness. Another letter column editor whose style I've admired and partially mimicked is Darroll Pardoe (*Pig on the Wall*). His zines are actually all lettercol—with comments interspersed between the LoCs so that the effect is that of a running conversation between editor and letter-writers.

In any case, a lot more goes into the choice of letters than giving contributors and editors the kind of egoboo they require, or simply interesting comment hooks to the readers. As Skel knows very well, the ability to gain published entrance into any fanzine's conversation is the business of anticipating the interests (and attention span) of the fanzine editor and to understand and join in with the topics and style of the zine.

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You know those fiendish knots that shoelaces sometimes get tied in, or rather mis-tied in? You know, the ones that are so tight you think you'll never get them unfastened, you'll have to cut them away? Then you discover that you've no spare laces so you just have to keep trying to unfasten it anyway. So you keep picking away at it, even though it doesn't seem to be loosening at all. You keep at it partly because you certainly don't want to hop to work in the morning, or wherever you're going with that particular pair of shoes, and anyway, you are supported in your efforts by the memory of previous occasions such as this when you seemed to be getting nowhere, but where you eventually got the better of that damned knot. And then...does it seem to be looser? Nothing definite, but it does feel different somehow. More like a tightly-knotted shoelace, and less like a carving of same. That's when you know you're getting there. And of course you persevere and finally get the fucker unknotted. Do you know the feeling? Do you know those sort of occasions? Odd that, so do I.

Pardon? Connection? No, no connection.

No, the thing is I don't seem to be involved in *Whimsey*, don't feel a part of it. I'm not part of the crowd. No zine to be reviewed. No LoC written, so no involvement through the letters either. As far as *Whimsey* is concerned I am a watcher from the sidelines. Why? It's a good fanzine, and of the type that I prefer, interacting lots with letter writers and other faneds. I think it is a chicken and egg situation. The zines that arrive and send you dashing to the typer are those that you feel involved with, a part of. You feel this because you already are involved with them. It's self-reinforcing. How to get started? How to cut the knot (with the help of a Gordian angel?)? I mean it's down to me isn't it? Nobody is going to involve me if I don't do it myself. Well OK, but there are no blazing insights to cut the knot, so I guess I am just going to have to work at it until it comes loose.

Anyway you threw me a lifeline in this issue and I must grasp it, for I might never get another. You mentioned me. Specifically you stated that my article in *Sometimes You Eat the Bear* 2 should generate lots of comment. Ha! Double Ha! I'll have you know that no article I've ever written has generated lots of comment. I think I can honestly claim to write the least commented-on articles of all time. I sometimes think that I must be writing candyfloss, because all I end up with is the shaft. Actually some of it is candyfloss, and intentionally so, but some of what I write does have more substance, and yet you'd never guess it from the general level of (non)reaction. . .It's a pound to a pinch of shit that Anne ends up thinking that 90% of the copies she mailed out were unaccountably blank on those particular pages.

...I enjoyed "Road Kill," although I didn't think you were the sort of woman who would "quiche and tell." Why is it that bikes, which are really some of the most superbly

efficient machines we've ever invented, as well as helping with fitness, leisure opportunities, and general urban mobility, always seem to figure in incidents such as this? Is it the bike's fault that your stays snapped? Can the bike be blamed because you baked a peripatetic cheese flan with a death wish? Is it the bike's fault that your cooking is a load of cobblers? Of course not...and yet the bike is irrevocably linked with the incident in your memories. It is clear from your narrative that you really attach a significant part of the responsibility to the bike. This is demonstrably unfair and I must stick up for your bike in this instance. Partly because I hate to see injustice, but mainly because my bike is sitting out in the hallway, and I don't want it to think that I didn't rally to the cause of one of its mates. I will soon be relying on my bike to get me to and from work again after its winter rest, and I don't want it sulking and getting punctures just to spite me. So, GET OUT THERE AND APOLOGISE TO YOUR BIKE, YOU UNGRATEFUL WRETCH! Do you think it heard? I hope so.

I belong to the "tough love" school of bicycle maintenance myself. My ten-speed stays in the basement and I regularly curse it out, even when it's not doing anything wrong, just carrying me through a drenching downpour, for instance.

...Like M*A*S*H reruns, Skel seems to be turning up on all the channels at all times of the day and night lately. Everytime I pick up a fanzine at the post office, there he is. Mike Glicksohn's *Xenium* had an article by Skel and several fannish articles of the descriptive sort have appeared recently under Skel's byline, one in *Sometime You Eat the Bear* about fannish vocabularies and another in *Gallimaufry* 2 about the variety of fanzine reviewing known as the "Kill the Fucker" (KTF) school.

Skel says he's uncomfortable with KTF reviewing on the grounds that putting someone down is the easy, entertaining thing to do, but that "KTF comes across best as uncaring, and at its worst, positively vicious and hurtful." Skel writes in the *Gallimaufry* article ("Waiting for the Golden Age") that he believes it's possible "to be critical of someone's fanzine without being unnecessarily wounding." And he tries very hard to review with kindness in his critique of a mediocre fanzine —chosen as an example of a zine which might easily be attacked by a reviewer of the KTF persuasion: *Sic Bvisvit Disintegraf* (edited by Joy Hibbert and Dave Rowley). On the whole, Skel does manage to avoid ad hominem attacks and scorching put-downs as he promised he would, but he doesn't quite prove his point that a gentle, negative critique can be as entertaining to read as a KTF review. The resulting article is interesting not primarily as a kind-but-honest review of SBD, but as a discussion of Skel's reviewing philosophy. Without the framework of self-examination and ruminations on the art of fanzine criticism, this would have been a dull review, I'm afraid—not one to make me look forward to future reviews of the same sort without the thoughtful framework.

But I share Skel's lack of enthusiasm for KTF reviewing—not, however, because such reviews are "unkind" to my fellow fans. Well, they are unkind, and I suppose it might restrain my pen to know I was shattering a fanzine editor's ego if I were tempted to write one. But I don't worry too much about having to fight that sort of repressive self-censorship in my reviews, because I've got other reasons for not writing KTF reviews of poor fanzines. And I'll get fully into that in the next section, in which I'll be reviewing *Fuck the Tories* 1.

It's a myth that hostile, no holds barred criticisms of fanzines is the only interesting way to write a fanzine review. It's just silly to maintain that "sickening blandness" is the only alternative. What's at issue here is the question of what makes for an interesting article. I'd agree that disagreement makes for more fascinating commentary than the sort of agreement which offers nothing but nodding approval. Readers are greedy: they want to learn something about the reviewer in a fanzine review, and in the process of disagreeing, the writer does reveal themself to readers to some degree. Skel demonstrates another way of putting himself and his ideas into a review without pummeling a victim zine to ego-death.

But there's another way too. It's quite possible to ignore the poorly done fanzines altogether and to express one's liking of a good fanzine by disagreeing with its editor or

contributing writer on one point or another. It's quite possible, as well, to continue a conversation started in the fanzine one is reviewing in a positive light, without stooping to bland, boring ego-patting.

To me the key to this whole controversy is found in Skel's statement: "What the editors must realize is that they are producing the fanzine for the readers. OK, for themselves first, but the readers come next. You are not producing it for your writers." (added emphasis, mine) This quotation is snatched quite out of context (Skel was talking here about the necessity of editing contributors' writing and working with them to produce the best work they're capable of.) But the principle is a valuable one to keep in mind in its general sense. We do fanac for ourselves first.

To demonstrate what I mean, I'm going to talk about the first issue of *Fuck the Tories*, and especially about the last article in it by Leigh Edmonds.

Leigh Edmonds scorns the practice of reviewing only "the best" fanzines in the introductory essay for his promised series of reviews in *Fuck the Tories* (*FTT*)—titled "Fanzines of the Leaden Age." His reasons are that (1) pointing out "the best" is an intrinsically boring exercise and that, (2) the educational role of the reviewer is better served by pointing out deviations from high standards, than by the celebration of a successful demonstration of the standards themselves.

As might be evident to you from my own exuberant praise of a few fanzines in the last issue of *Whimsy*, I don't agree with Leigh. He says one thing though, that I definitely do agree with: "Most important of all, [fanzine reviews] should not be boring."

In the next issue of *FTT* he plans to "put the first victims up against the wall. They will include *Holier Than Thou* and *The Mentor*." And I must admit that I looked forward to the spectacle and in fact enjoyed his review when it was published. I like Leigh's writing style and I share many of his avowed standards for fanzine production, but I disagree with his reviewing priorities.

He reminds me of a friend of mine here in Madison by the name of Richard Russell. The way they resemble each other has to do with Dick's movie reviewing methods. Dick produces a highly entertaining annual program for our convention, WisCon, in which he reviews all of the past year's SF/F films. To prepare for the event, he takes notes at every SF/F film that opens in Madison. If you accompanied him to a theater you would see his high tech clipboard with a built-in flashlight that illuminates his pad of paper. After the movie, people approach him assuming from his equipment that he is a big-time reviewer, and ask respectfully for his opinion of the movie. The thing that Dick does that reminds me of Leigh's reviewing bias is this: Dick insists on going to see all the films that could even vaguely be called SF/F that open in Madison. He sees all the big blockbusters, all the B films, all the drive-in movies that stay in town only a few days and all the foreign films. Every one. He wants his year-end review to be all-inclusive. Of course, as a result he misses a lot of other films, not to mention non-film activities for this obsession.

We've talked about it.

"Dick, why are you going to see *The Drunken, Teenage, Dribbling Drek from Outer Space*? You know it's going to be bad. They're only bothering to show it one night at the outdoor sleaze drive-in. For the third feature. The ads for the movies have typos. It's going to be trash! You know it!"

"I know, I know," he admits. "But somebody's got to see it."

Why? I wonder. But I say, "You mean somebody's got to warn the rest of us?"

"Right..."

"You think I might. . .do you think anybody might go to see this garbage and feel cheated because it wasn't a good movie?!"

Dick's never called himself an afficionado of bad movies. It's not that at all. In fact I think I remember talking with him and agreeing that such fans of Bad-with-a-capital-B movies were peculiar sorts of snobs. No, what Dick claims is that the experience of seeing the worst movies is the only way to give him a balanced perspective of all movies. When someone says that such-and-such a movie—say, *Dune*—was a horrendous waste of money, he can respond with, "No, a really bad movie is *The Drunken, Teenage, Dribbling Drek from Outer Space*." It gives him, he says, something with which to compare the really good films, a "critical base," so to speak.

I'm aghast at this point of view. (That may explain all the extra underlining.)

I imagine an elderly person, a person who has spent their whole life making sure they see all—and especially the least worthwhile—products of a minor artform. Now, they look back after years of such impartial viewing only to realize that they've spent only a fraction of their too short lifespans appreciating really good things. Through the time-consuming demands of completist aspirations, they've missed too much from a whole range of artforms and experience.

I see no point in wasting any more time on junk than it takes me to realize that it is indeed junk. I admit that I've enjoyed witty exposés of failed films, novels and fanzines, and have at times been grateful for the advice to avoid some of them. But I'm strongly averse to the practice of spending still more of my time analyzing junk.

There is a stack of fanzines on my desk well over six inches high that I mean to get to eventually and read and perhaps write LoCs to or review. I expect to at least skim all of them, but will carefully read some of them. The ones I spend more time on, the ones that I write to or about will be an even tinier proportion—but you can be sure they will be ones that I like.

Reading or writing anything because one feels somehow obliged to do so seems sort of unfannish, anyway. That's what we frequently end up doing to pay the rent. It is my impression that we do what we do in fandom because we enjoy doing it.

There's a logical inconsistency in Leigh's argument. He admits that the ultimate point of reviewing the bad fanzines is the same as reviewing the good ones, that is, he wants to examine and encourage quality fanzine publishing. He says, "errors which lead to poor fanzines are, in essence, the converse of those attributes which would appear in a good fanzine." And yet, as he stated earlier, he believes that "good" reviews can "only be done by pointing out errors, not by praising so-called and possibly illusory excellence."

I disagree, Leigh: I don't appreciate the necessity.

With the goal the same—to promote high standards—why is criticism only interesting if pursued from a negative point of view?

To me, this is a waste of time. I'd rather concentrate on the good stuff. Writing criticism offers a "perk" to the critic in that reviewing requires that we take the time to examine a fanzine in detail. If it is really good, the closer examination will reward us with further enjoyment of meaning and nuance that we perhaps missed on first reading. A rereading and the close examination of a poor fanzine will only compound dissatisfaction and our impression that the faned was inept, too hurried, or uninspired. Ironically, it's possible that the critic who examines enough bad fanzines will end up spending more intellectual energy examining those fanzines than the editors expended during their production...

No one deserves this.

The faned who produced the crudzine doesn't deserve the attention, not even the scorn.

The editors of good fanzines deserve to get more attention than they do now, and when a skilled fanzine reviewer decides to concentrate on the bad fanzines, the good ones lose out. Good fanzine editors don't deserve the neglect.

The fanzine reviewer doesn't deserve the onerous responsibility of spending their valuable time examining bad fanzines. There is good stuff, and the probability is that our fanzine reviewers will enjoy their tasks more and produce more good reviews if they don't inevitably burn out from too much exposure to crap.

And finally, we fanzine readers lose out when the good fanzine editors gafiate because they got ignored too often, their finest productions taken for granted because a review of "the so-called 'best' fanzines...is boring." Or, we lose out when the best reviewers burn out early from too many crudzines. We fanzine readers don't deserve this.

The flaw in Leigh's reasoning is found in the crux of his argument, i.e., that reviews of the best fanzines make for boring reading. Leigh says: "The reviewer who wishes to educate and entertain will recoil in horror from an item which is perfect and about which nothing more could be said than 'page 94 is an example of perfect layout' or 'note the peerless pun on the penultimate page.'"

The problem, I think, is that it's harder to write an interesting review of a good fanzine because you have to write at least as well, and make points just as interesting as the stuff you're praising.

This, for instance, is a review of *FTT*. A poor review of *FTT* would be composed solely of such thin compliments as, "...fascinating discussion on fanzine review aesthetics and politics by Leigh Edmonds." That would be boring. I wouldn't say that *FTT* is perfect and that nothing more can be said about it (sorry, guys). But that isn't the way I usually feel about "the best" fanzines anyway. I'm usually tempted to argue or compelled to talk about the ideas presented. I want to connect them with other ideas I've read in other fanzines. I want to write a letter of comment. I want to review the fanzine.

There is no fatal curse which forces reviewers of any kind of fanzine to write boring reviews. Only the writer's skills will determine how interesting the review will be. (In other words, don't blame a boring review on the fanzine that's being reviewed!)

I expect Leigh's review of "Fanzines of the Leaden Age" to be fun to read, as well as interesting for his insights into the standards of fanzine publishing. I expect this because he's an intelligent, skilled writer, not because he plans to lambaste bad fanzines. I think he's playacting a bit—for the purpose, perhaps, of rationalizing his decision to write reviews in an entertaining, lambasting mode. I think he's quite capable of writing good, interesting reviews of well-done fanzines too.

And I tend to wish he would do so. I sympathize with his introductory sentiments about how there are too few fanzine reviews these days, that we need to talk to one another and about one another to create a cohesive community. I'd really like to see more of the good fanzines rewarded in the most effective way we can reward one another—by giving each other hearty chunks of egoboo in the form of thoughtful, imaginative critiques.

I agree with Leigh, too, that we don't need more, mere listings of fanzines with their editorial addresses, which only "...tell the original editor that her fanzine was indeed received, but not necessarily read and appreciated." But, hey, that's not the only alternative to lambasting bad fanzines!

I bet that Leigh is hoping (along with his comrade eds.) that fanzine reviewers don't take him at his word and ignore *FTT* because it's well done. It is a good fanzine and not only for Leigh's contribution, though I confess that his article is what compelled me to write in the first place.

Along with an article by Judith Hanna on creating our own fannish Golden Age, there is a series of articles reflecting upon Aussicon—by three other persons of the five-person *FTT* editorial team: Leanne Frahm, Leigh Edmonds again, and Valma Brown. (Other editors are Joseph Nicholas, Terry Hughes and Judith Hanna. They will all be exchanging production and editorial duties, rotating responsibility from continent to continent.) The Aussicon 2 reactions portray the Australian worldcon as being less efficiently run than even Constellation (albeit less obviously plagued by budgetary disasters). Aussicon was apparently a sometimes horrendous experience for the overworked volunteers who never got to enjoy their own convention. The articles about a concom that overreached itself inspired discussion by Spike Parsons in our own group's newszine, *Cube*, about similar potential for our group's convention (WisCon). And in fact that is why *FTT* works so well and is such a good fanzine: because it goes right to the heart of topics of conversation that most concern us as fans.

It provokes more conversation and more fanzines. It's well worth the time it takes to read and consider and review.

REFERENCES EXPLAINED

Several people sent me details about proto-fandoms—like my first fanzine, *Foma*, in that they developed without conscious knowledge of SF fandom or fanzines. Jeff Frane filled me in on beer fandom, though I was already aware of it through Spike who lives with a brewer who is president of a local brewers fan club. Judith Hanna used to produce a zine for a university choral society called *Brato* and attended choral cons, too. Mark Ortlieb found a strange little fanzine called *Fiddle Stix* ("like a Trekzine, except that the icons are Richard Thompson and Sandy Denny," band members of the Fairport Convention.) And both he and Laura Haney used to work on (different) school newspapers.

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The first time I heard the word "fanzine" I was a doddering 21. Lisa Tuttle had brought one of her early efforts to Clarion/Tulane, and it was there I discovered the fundamental difference between fanzines and school newspapers. Fanzines are uninhibited, introspective, self-indulgent, intentionally funny, and LACK A FACULTY ADVISOR. Also, the circulation is limited to those people you want to read your thoughts.

And lots of helpful folks corrected me on my fannish current affairs. Avedon and Darroll Pardoe both noted that my information about the state of British apazines was no longer accurate.

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The APA debate has quieted down here of late. *Frank*'s lost a lot of members last summer (likened by Dave Langford to a horde of lemmings diving into the sea) and has ceased to be a major force in fandom. There are in fact only two APA's in Britain at present enjoying a high degree of success, output and influence: *TWP* and *Get Stuffed* [*The Women's Periodical* and the stuffed toy animals apa]. There are others, but APA's like *The Organization* or *Papa* don't seem to impress themselves on the consciousness of fandom to the same extent. *Get Stuffed*'s high profile may be a result of its practice of having meetings in prominent places at conventions—not many people can fail to notice a bunch of teddies and other cuddly toys sitting around, even if they choose to deliberately ignore it. It has been an APA far more successful than any of us could have hoped when it started two years ago.

Controversy may have died out in the UK, but debate continues to provoke comment in the US concerning the merits of apa production as compared to genzine publication.

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Regarding the discussion of apazines *vs.* genzines: what's the problem with using apazines as distribution systems? When last I had grandiose plans for publishing a fanzine, I started publishing drafts of articles in apas with the intention of ultimately putting the results of the tests together into a fanzine. If the apa is small enough the rest of fandom will not have seen the material, and it will still seem fresh.

I also don't see that an apazine has to be full of unexplained references in order to be a good apazine. Aren't apas full of apazines full of unexplained references (notably mailing comments) the sign of a deteriorating apa? An indication that nobody in the apa can think of anything interesting to write about? I'm not sure what you mean by "unexplained references" if the term doesn't boil down to the "small talk...apa hack, minac writing..." you refer to later in the same article.

I think there must be several definitions of what good apa writing means, which is something that didn't occur to me when I wrote about it. Harry Warner, Jr. essentially agrees with you in his letter pointing out that the two apas he's familiar with (FAPA and SAPS) contain relatively few mailing comments and are heavy on "formal articles, poetry, stories, and other non-chatter material," and I can see that both of you would call that a successful apa. My experience has been with apazines heavily oriented towards personal discussions among its members (*A Women's Apa* and *Crapa*). The whole reason for these apas is that the subjects under discussion aren't ones that any of the members would feel very comfortable about sharing with a wider, more anonymous audience. They choose to get to know this smaller, selected group, and desire first and foremost, feedback from the other members on the subjects that are brought up within the apa. In an apa like I'm familiar with, mailing comments are the lifeblood. A member who consistently ignores the writing of other members and merely submits an essay or story each time may as well not be part of the apa: she would be perceived as a masked individual crashing a private party—listening in to everyone else's conversations and private admissions, but never offering her own.

Often, very good writing is to be found in these apas, but it is usually couched in mailing comment form which are essentially, as I said, one side of an on-going conversation. That's what I meant when I used the term "unexplained references." The writer may be a good one, the subject may be a fascinating one, but the format from which it is lifted is a many-sided conversation. To my way of thinking, the use of an apa to distribute one's writing—because it is more economical than sending it out as your own zine to a larger mailing list—ignores the primary virtue of an apa: conversation.

Here are some comments from someone who still contributes to *AWA*, and I think her opinions clearly show this other definition of "good" apa writing.

Kris Sellgren

You made some good points about the hasty, unfinished quality of apazine writing, and the difficulty of reading any of it out of context. I've received genzines from many of the women in *A Women's Apa*, however, and I find I generally prefer their apazines. More care and thought goes into genzines, but I miss the personal and intense nature of apazine writing. Also—and this is specific to *AWA*, I suppose—I like the emphasis on women's experiences and on feminist politics that pervades *AWA* apazines, which is missing from many of the genzines produced by the same writers. Not having been in any mixed apas, I don't know whether the change in tone from apazine to genzine comes from writing for both men and women, or from writing for a larger audience, but often it seems the writer is subdued in a genzine, veering towards the light and amusing and away from the serious and honest.

Other writers said they liked apas better because they got more feedback for their work for less effort. I certainly don't find this to be the case. In fact, one of the reasons I gave up writing for apazines was that my fanzine, *Whimsey* was attracting so very much more feedback than any comparable effort in *AWA* ever generated. The amount of effort I gave to each zine was similar; but the stack of letters I receive from each issue of *Whimsey* outweighs a whole issue of *AWA*. (Thank you!)

For instance, most everyone made some attempt to respond to my question about what they wanted to be when they grew up. Darroll Pardoe and Terry Huges even sent copies of essays they'd written previously on the subject for other fanzines.

THE THINGS I THOUGHT I WANTED TO BE WHEN I SUPPOSEDLY GREW UP, AT A TIME WHEN I WASN'T GROWN UP BUT SECRETLY BELIEVED THAT I WAS ALREADY, AS COMPARED TO THE THINGS I AM—NOW THAT I'M SUPPOSEDLY GROWN UP BUT SECRETLY DON'T BELIEVE IT. IT'S SO COMPLICATED, YOU KNOW?

The choices used to seem fewer, clearer and more glamorous. Firefighter, police, lawyer, doctor, scientist, explorer, writer, artist, astronaut, wife and mother. Most of the people I know have jobs with names that I hadn't even heard of, or at least didn't dream about when I was young.

If you're lucky your dreams give you an idea of the kind of work you'd like to do (being the boss or working for somebody else; making things or doing things; high pressure or low pressure), and then when you think about it later on, the dream turns out to have predicted the job, in general, although the title may not be as clear or glamorous.

Terry Carr

...I never had any definite aspirations...In truth I wanted to be a science fiction writer and/or editor, but even when I was in my teens I knew it was awfully unlikely that I'd be able to make a living in this field, so I sort of drifted from year to year trying on various fantasy professions: archeology seemed awfully interesting to me until I realized it mostly meant going through many square yards of dirt with a sieve to find nothing of much interest, etc. Eventually I found myself in New York City without a job, and I took a fantasy story I'd written and published in a fanzine a couple of years before, rewrote it for submission somewhere, and just then Avram Davidson walked into Towner Hall, where I was hanging out every day, and told us he'd just been hired as the new editor of *F&SF*; I brought out the manuscript and handed it to Avram as a submission, he sat down and read it on the spot, then said, "I like it; I'll buy it." I continued writing short stories for *F&SF* for a year or so but I couldn't write fast enough at the then-current rate of 2¢ a word and not even selling a short novel to Don Wollheim as half an Ace Double improved my income sufficiently, so I took a job at the Scott Meredith Literary Agency for a year and a half till Don phoned me at home and offered to hire me as an assistant editor at Ace Books; I took that job, of course, and worked my way upwards. The rest is history, thank God. Eventually you'll no doubt be able to read all about it in my to-be-written autobiography, *In Memory Yet Fuzzy, or, An Unplanned Life.*

Julia Richards
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There were a few specific signposts along the way, like the ninth grade report I wrote on "Why I want to be a doctor." I wouldn't be surprised if 50% of my classmates had picked "doctor." I wouldn't be surprised if their reasoning was just as lacking in insight as mine. Their image of Dr. Kildare was probably as relevant as my image drawn from an extended family full of doctors, dentists and nurses. The child evaluating a career over dinner table conversation hears the tales of life or death, with great emotional impact, but with more victory than defeat. But as a ninth grader I had no appreciation for what really goes into saving a life or improving its quality. Years of tedious memorization. Science by rote. (I never knew how fun and exciting science could be until I quit taking courses in it.) Or self-sacrifice, especially lack of sleep. (Alright, so I lost some sleep in graduate school, but a sleep-deprived judgement error that blows an experiment can't compare to a similar error during surgery. Alright, alright, I'm losing lots of sleep raising babies, but, but, but...). Or more tedium ("Was that the last flu case today Nurse Brown? Good. Keep the two sprains and the pinkeye busy with some paperwork and send in the pregnancies. I don't suppose I could just see all five of them as a group? Well, fine, send them one at a time...sigh."). Reading this youmight think that I simply revised that ninth grade goal of mine, a dexterous slide step, and *voilá*, a research scientist. No. In fact, I managed to bypass much of the science offered in Jr. and Sr. High and started college with visions of Liberal Arts in my eyes. The next clear signpost is my Freshman year course list. Sociology, Spanish conversation, Russian and Chinese history, Linguistics. How did that person become this person? Certainly, I did not hit my Sophomore year and decide, "I think I'll go tackle the forefront of biology research, dabble in recombinant DNA, clone a few genes, etc." Nor did I set off for graduate school in Madison saying, "I think I'll just go pick up a Ph.D., a professor husband and two small children so I can try out as the model for the inexhaustible Woman of the 80's." (I already mentioned the effects of sleep deprivation didn't I? Fortunately, I'm married to the husband of the 80's, who also cooks and cleans and rocks babies at 3 am. Just think how tired I'd be if I had to do it all myself!)...

Several times recently, while interviewing for jobs and then starting work, I have found myself in the same emotional spot you were in when you glimpsed your image in the window. The scene which comes to mind, replayed many times with different supporting actors, involves being greeted or introduced. Some part of me sits back and watches, detached, interested, over and over seeing my arm (in a suit jacket sleeve) and hand come up and forward to join in a firm professional handshake as someone's deep voice says "I'd like you to meet Dr. Richards who has recently arrived from Stanford," or "Dr. Richards, I'm pleased to meet you," etc. And the part of me watching is always a little surprised (and self-satisfied?) at participating in a ritual which my childhood self always witnessed passing only between adult men.

Carl Marrs
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...Julia's description of dinner table conversation as a youngster has triggered my own memory. My father used dinnertime to hold court and to recount his days as he could with no other people. WHAT IS SAID HERE DOES NOT GO BEYOND THIS TABLE! With that ingrained into us, we became his confidants to the inner workings of the Mercer Island School District. I never desired a job like my father's. As head of Special Education he constantly dealt with individuals who had gotten a bad hand from the deck of life. There was rarely a tale of success and victory; nothing currently exists to "cure" most truly handicapped individuals. Most of his personal victories involved manipulating people to respond as he desired that they respond. When he moved up to be the head of Pupil Personnel, it just seemed to add the kids that got in trouble without being mentally deficient to his case load. I remember the time that a bomb went off at the high school in a kid's locker five minutes before class break. Ten minutes later, with the hall filled, it would have killed many students. As usual, my father was immediately summoned, since he was the final step in all discipline cases...It seemed that my father was constantly reading in the paper that some problem kid with whom he had dealt constantly some years earlier had killed himself or someone else.

My father purposely exposed me to SF early (*Space Cat of Mars*, etc.) because he favored his kids thinking about the future (and possible futures). In Junior High I read

a Heinlein story in which the society was based on genetically engineered people who had all the bad traits removed before birth. I was fascinated. It seemed like the solution to the problems that my father constantly faced, but could never cure. I decided to become a genetic engineer. Of course, now that I have arrived at the position of Assistant Professor and Research Scientist at a major university, instead of trying to cure birth-defects in children I am trying to help keep cows from going blind! Still, I imagine that my destination turned out to be much closer to my goal than most people's.

Actually, judging from the letters I got on this topic, no, you're not all that unusual, at least among SF fans. I found an unusually high correlation between many fans' actual careers and their dreams as kids. I can't think of many letters from any of you whose present selves weren't strongly influenced by youthful fantasies. Well, maybe this one:

Terry A. Gary
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On the subject of influences, I confess I have never looked into a mirror to find myself dressed like Danny Kaye, Andre Norton, John Lennon, or James Thurber, but the world is probably better off.

One of my own "signposts," as Julia phrased it, that might have pointed the way for me to an eventual career, but didn't, was a visit to my father's workplace when I was about 12 years old. Dad was a Container Designer in those days for Mead Containers, which meant that he designed corrugated boxes. (Currently, he's in sales for the same company.) He took me on a Saturday tour of the plant, showing me the design room where he worked, and the huge machines that created corrugated cardboard out of enormous, house-sized rolls of paper, and then cut and folded the pieces so that boxes could be constructed from them. But the highlight of the tour for me was the detour into the artist's studio. Mead's artist designs the graphics that get printed on the boxes. He wasn't there that day, but I admired his drafting table and coveted his felt tips, pens, inks, drawing paper, T-square, french curves, and marveled at the beautiful posters and drawings attached to the wall. This would be a dream job, I thought. I could hardly imagine a more exciting or fulfilling occupation than to work with these tools all day. But that thought was followed immediatly by the realization that, of course, everyone would like to be an artist and that meant it was unrealistic of me to hope that I could win such a popular job.

Even in high school, where I did pretty well in art classes, I compared myself to classmates—especially to the Pozorski sisters—and decided that they were such obviously superior artists, that I shouldn't even consider planning a career in the field. "I'll always be interested in it as a hobby," I would say, feeling quite virtuous about my realistic attitude. At the base of my resignation, I think, was the assumption that one's chosen career wasn't supposed to be fun. Luckily I discovered that you can indeed have fun in your chosen profession and that in fact, the anticipation of fun in a job is probably a good signal to follow if you are wondering what to do with your life.

Several years after I'd graduated from high school while I was going to college, majoring in Geography, I ran into Nina Pozorski, whose work had so impressed me in Mr. Sauer's art class. In fact it had been this woman's excellence specifically, that had finally convinced me that my work was not good enough to justify studying art in college. We met again in a grocery store near my parents' home, and I asked her what she was doing.

"I'm studying landscape architecture," she said.

"I thought for sure you'd have chosen the fine arts," I blurted out, amazed and rude. "You were always the best artist in class; I could never compete with you."

This time it was her turn to look amazed.

"Oh no. You were the best artist in class. I decided not to continue because you were so good—!"

We stood looking at each other helplessly, stupidly, and then talked a bit more and parted at the automatic doors. Of course, landscape architecture does involve graphics, and my concentration on Geography included cartography work which related tenuously to the field of art. But neither of us felt that we'd "earned" the right to go on in a field we loved.

Many years passed before I realized that I had the skill and the right to pursue a job that made me happy.

Steve Stiles
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When I was twelve I decided I wanted to be a cartoonist. I thought to draw a panel well, to tell a good story or gag was the most wonderful thing to do. It had a nobility about it, I thought, and to draw as well as one particular favorite of mine was to be, no doubt, lofted into a state of grace beyond ordinary cares. It would be enough to draw that well and everything else would follow. If not, it really didn't matter. Well, as I grew older (and into a much less successful cartoonist) I came to discover that my idol was an alcoholic, an introverted workaholic who was vastly (and for good reason) dissatisfied with the field. His economic scene declined, his art style and health fell apart, and he eventually committed suicide. I still feel that to draw well is to achieve a state of grace but I'm too aware of the several dangers a solitary freelance worker can fall into.

Buck Coulson
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I did a lot of reading and being read to as a child; at age 8 I was told I only had "15% vision" and I must not read anything except schoolwork. So my parents read to me when they had the time for a couple of years until I was again allowed some outside reading. I developed a liking for history when Dad read Kenneth Roberts' *Northwest Passage* to me as it was serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*. (It was not only wild adventure, but it was true. Wow!) And somewhere along the line, I decided that writing stories would be the ideal way to spend my life. I was already making them up for myself at age 8 or 9 or 10; once I got the history bug I had an entire alternate Europe worked out, though it drew more on the series of novels by George Barr McCutcheon about the principality of Graustark than it did on real history. Anyway, this lasted only until I was in my early teens; I'm not sure just when. At a family gathering I met some distant relative of Dad's who had written a batch of hunting stories for the sports magazines of the day; he later made a book out of them. His advice was that if I wanted to be a writer, I should sit down and write a thousand words a day. Every day. About anything; that didn't matter. What I did with the results didn't matter, either, as long as the words were written. It was quite good advice, actually, but it made writing sound like work, and at that age, I wasn't interested in work. Come to think of it, it must have been before my teens, because at 13 I was working (I was a cemetery caretaker) and the advice wouldn't have sounded any harder than what I was doing. Anyway, I lost my ambition almost entirely. Maybe not quite, because when I tried for a college scholarship it was in journalism. Only the one I got wasn't big enough to do me any good, so I didn't go. And the ambition didn't come back until I discovered science fiction, and then I discovered fandom and found out I could actually write anything at all and get it published. Eventually I even found out how to get paid for it, now and then. (I haven't yet found out how to make a living at it, though I may try it this coming year, now that the place I'm working is closing).

The definite plans I made as a kid, the grand scheme of my life as I saw it at the age of 16, included more negative than positive choices. There were lots of vague aspirations, seductive daydreams of myself as an historian, as a world-famous writer or artist, as a mathematician, and as a Martian homesteader, but they weren't nearly as real to me as the very definite decisions I'd made by that point of what not to become.

At St. Luke's Catholic grade school, the nuns showed a recruitment film to all the seventh and eighth grade

girls. They'd bring in veteran nuns from the Notre Dame Monastery on Lake Michigan, and let them hit us with their pitch. The film guided us through the peaceful, beautiful campus we would attend as novices should we accept our vocations. The film tempted us with stories of the safe, male-free high school—our chance to escape the frightening world of undressing in gym locker rooms, dating, and growing up—in other words, the looming threat of public high school. With much the same effect as Air Force propaganda films of solitary jets zooming through the skies, the nun recruitment film dwelt on such exciting images as nuns teaching native children in Africa, nuns discovering cures for cancer, nuns singing joyfully in enormous choruses, and candle-lit nuns at prayer. The trick was that you had to have heard from God about whether this was the life for you. He apparently telephoned a direct psychic call down to every girl he wanted, which tipped you off that you had gotten a vocation.

I hadn't received any message like that, and in fact was hopeful that I could ignore one if it didn't come in real clear. Sorry, God, I think we've got a bad connection.

A nun's life was not for me.

I discarded marriage and children early on as a choice too. When I told my mother about my decision, she just smiled and made a reference to this "phase," and confidently predicted that I would eventually change my mind. But I knew that I wouldn't. Basically, this choice seemed to preclude all the other choices, and though I've elaborated on my reasons for rejecting the role of mother/wife since then, that reason is still valid for me.

Having eliminated two futures in which I imagined that I could have continued being cared for instead of having to take responsibility for myself, it became a serious matter to choose a career that could support me financially and interest me for a whole lifetime. School classes became testing grounds, chances to imagine myself doing this or that for fifty years. In my junior year, Advanced Algebra eliminated mathematics from my list: I'd loved geometry, but Mr. Ortner's Advanced Algebra class convinced me that I loved math—only without numbers. That disqualified most of the sciences from future consideration, too, which I'd already begun to suspect was for the best from the physics course I was muddling through. (There were 28 short-wave radio operators and budding computer hackers, all boys. And there was me.) The culling process was sometimes depressing, but it was a useful exercise: at least the field narrowed.

All of my interests and fantasizing about what to be when-I-grew-up led to some continuing interest, if not to an actual career. And I suspect that's the case for all of us. We could all have turned to a number of occupations and still find the roots of the interest that led us in that direction somewhere in our youth. I loved science fiction from age 8; now I am hopelessly mired in SF fandom. A heavy emphasis on history in high school cultivated a continuing interest in current affairs and probably influenced an early enthusiasm for feminist ideas. From the age of 14 on, I tended to keep journals, explaining me to myself with an introspective, egotistic focus; now I write this sort of fanzine. And I always loved to draw and make things with my hands. When I was very little, no surface was safe from my crayons; even now, I doodle compulsively whenever I'm nervous. (A never attained ambition in high school was to have a neat notebook with no doodles in the margins or on the cover like the ones my friends kept.) Mostly I drew people. And now I draw for a living.

I don't know where the implulse to become a jock came from.

Those pathways that we turn out backs upon when we are young are perhaps more important decisions than the dreams we retain, in terms of how our future lives are affected. I still own the potter's wheel on which I worked many hours a day when I was 17 years old, and it will be no surprise if I go back to potting again when I have the house in which to install the wheel and can build a kiln there. But it grows more and more improbable that I will conquer my fear of math, take the remedial courses, and discover a yen to be an engineer. The things we reject often are lost to us forever. The things we dream about, even if we only dabble in them afterwards, can always represent another open door.

Many of you mention family members who you feel influenced your career choices. But I was disappointed that none of you mentioned sisters and brothers, because I wanted to compare your experiences with mine. In our family, ambition to be the best in something was a significant pressure, and I think it influenced all of my brothers and sister to reject areas of interest which the others were clearly mastering. My brother Rick was obviously going to be the best at whatever he chose; he was the smartest of us. And so Steve and I tended, I think, to watch him out of the corners of our eyes and choose to do something that Rick was not doing. Rick's early goals were in the fields of chemistry and math. So I tended more and more towards the arts and literature; Steve became a jock. Our younger sister, Julie, seemed headed towards a music career. Now that we're no longer living under the same roof, those clear categories have blurred and Rick has moved from the sciences to cabinetry, Steve is still a jock but an engineer by trade, and Julie works in my field. But while we were growing up together, we guarded our territory against one another and avoided competing with one another in areas we felt we'd be bested.

Steve Miller
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My grandmother is Dorethea Neale, a poet, head of the New York Poetry Forum. She always encouraged me to be creative; when I began writing as a child she sent me fancy stationery and books on writing. I might say that I always wanted to be a writer then: and with a few short stories, a book of poems, several books edited, and numerous newspaper articles, reviews, etc. (not to mention fannish things like a couple of small fanzines and articles) I am a writer. I'm not sure I'm currently a poet, but I've been one and aspire to be again; I also intend to sell more of the stuff I put into the word processor before going to work in the afternoon. On the other hand I never did get brave enough to be the first astronaut on the moon. More seriously I never got brave enough to fly at all and I did want to be brave. I wanted to be stronger than my older brother, and I'm not. I wanted to be like my grandmother in some ways, because she was important: she won gold medals and got published and people she never met wrote to her to ask her opinion...and, gold medal aside, some of those things have happened. Now when I grow up I want to have a house to share with Sharon and the cats, and maybe go to a few SF cons again and stuff like that. I want to keep the writing part, and add the poetry part back in, and maybe, on the side, own my own modest business...

Jean Weber
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AUSTRALIA

When I was about 8 years old I spent most of the summer at my maternal grandparents' house, where I was most impressed with their bohemian lifestyle. They seemed to have perfected the art of living the good life with a minimum of necessity to "work" at a "real job," and wouldn't have accepted welfare or unemployment benefits even if they had been available. They didn't care about status, or appearances, either. Over the years I refined my distorted view of them into a vision of people who do what they damn well please, dipping into "the system" when it suits (or in times of dire necessity) but otherwise not letting "them" tell

"us" how to live. (My parents tell me my first word was "no" and my first sentence was "you can't make me," two sentiments which have been my credo most of my life.)

Well, in many ways I think I've done nicely by those expectations and aspirations. For one thing, I've carefully avoided the sorts of responsibilities (i.e., children) that make many people feel "tied down." I've never let financial necessity stop me from doing what I felt was right, though occasionally I've let it delay me a bit.

Don D'Ammassa
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What did I want to be when I grew up and did I make it? Well, in all the superficial things that I once thought were important, I didn't make it. I wanted to be a high school English teacher who made ends meet by writing a little SF on the side. Instead, I ended up an upper level management person making beer and pretzel money writing ABOUT science fiction. I did get married and have a home of my own with a reasonable number of amenities, and I do still have one of the biggest SF collections in the world, but I haven't even won a Hugo for fan writing.

But I did better, I think, in the things that seemed minor at the time but which now loom large. I am reasonably happy with the way my life has turned out. I think that in general I turned out to be the kind of human being I wanted to be, reasonably self-confident, competent on my job, valuable to my employer but supportive of my subordinates, companionable to my friends, trustworthy, still loyal to the ideals of my youth (although a bit more practical about putting them to work). That last sounds like a copout, but I don't think it is. When I was in college, I was determined to fight every issue through to the bitter end at each and every opportunity. Nowadays, I evaluate each situation and try to decide when I have a reasonable chance of improving the situation without risking damage to those I am supposedly helping and when I am going to just screw things up for them while salving my own sense of liberal righteousness. I don't fight every battle like I used to, but I win most of the ones I do fight.

Practically all of you made some comment or a joke to the effect that you didn't consider the issue of what to be when you grew up to be a completely answered question. We all identify with Peter Pan a little bit, and none of us are willing to say, OK, this is it, this is what I am; I expect no more changes. But it's harder to see the beginnings of important changes now that will affect our later lives, than it is—with hindsight—to pick out the interests then that led to our current lives. We don't decide at 10 what we will be at 30, any more than we can project with complete accuracy our lives at 50.

Thank goodness.

Mike Glicksohn
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When I was a child I wanted to be a jockey but by the time I was 8 or nine it was obvious I'd have to find something more in keeping with my awesome stature. (It is more than a little ironic that a fan who has been the butt of short jokes for almost two decades grew too big to fulfill his earliest dreams!) After that I decided to be a scientist, a goal I managed to carry all through my university days before it shattered on the reality of my abilities and personality. At that point I decided to be comfortable and happy doing something I liked doing and while it took a few years to reach the "happy" stage I've been pretty successful in the rest of it.

The basic truth of things was that I recognized early on that I was too damn lazy to ever be <u>really</u> successful but that I'd be happy with a moderate level of comfort and the knowledge that I spent my days without hurting anyone. I've achieved most of my goals because I set them at realistic levels, acknowledging my abilities and limitations. The same holds true of fandom. I've done most of the things I wanted to do in terms of actual goals or milestones. Since I don't feel pressured to achieve anything specific I can relax and enjoy whatever opportunities arise, making the best use of what talents I have. Maybe that's why I'm still enjoying fandom as much as I ever did. (Of course, there is <u>one</u> fannish goal I've missed so far: I've never been a fan fund winner. That plus several extenuating circumstances is why we'll be running against one another for TAFF next year. Good Luck!)

Thanks Mike!

Oh, haven't I mentioned this to the rest of you? Well, now you know. I'm going to be a candidate in the next (1987) TAFF race. It's going to be a crowded slate, but I figure it will be fun—win or lose. I'm certainly looking forward to the British worldcon and especially to my first trip outside of North America. I will probably insert some TAFF ballots in the next issue of *Whimsy* and urging you to vote.

Now, the hard part: to figure out a bridge between <u>this</u> topic and the next more or less miscellaneous chapter.

...I've got it.

Considering all the raging controversies that have been associated with the fan funds, it may be a project about which I will have to <u>be careful</u>...

CANNED SWEAT

<u>Harry Warner, Jr.</u>

Amen to your jeremiad about people who behave like slobs in public parks. And I'm convinced that a sign announcing a restriction or a no-no puts ideas into people's heads, particularly those signs that consist of a picture with a diagonal bar through it. I'm positive that there are five times as many U turns at one point a couple of miles from Hagerstown than there were before the state put up a sign with a big U on it bisected by the diagonal bar. Just a block and a half from my home there is a pay telephone. It got next to no patronage for many years until one day city workmen marked off two parking stalls alongside it and erected a sign showing those stalls were for the handicapped. Immediately I found at least one of those stalls occupied by a vehicle without a handicap symbol on its license plate every time I drove past and someone seemed to be occupying the pay booth at least half the time. This past summer, the street was resurfaced in that block, obliterating the stall markings, and the sign was removed for the construction of new curbing. Neither sign nor markings has been put back and once again, there's never a vehicle parked there or anyone in the booth when I drive past. People just like to be ornery except, of course, in fandom.

<u>Darroll Pardoe</u>

It amazes me too, that people get so used to civilized comforts that when confronted with nature in the wild they are unable to realize that it can be dangerous. Even in England, each winter there is news of motorists trapped on some remote road by a sudden fall of snow, who instead of staying with their car head off into the blizzard presumably on the assumption

that a two-mile walk through the storm is not much worse than walking to the shops on a sunny afternoon. Some of them never make it.

People treat the sea with complacency, too. Last year there was a big fuss when a party of schoolchildren visited Land's End, and some of them climbed down the cliffs, without their teachers who were there apparently worrying about it not at all, and two of them were swept off the rocks and drowned. I know those rocks at Land's End and it's not a place I'd care to linger in anything other than the calmest sea. The waves can sweep right up over the rocks and easily knock off someone standing on them. Now you can forgive children for misjudging the danger of the situation, but the teachers should have known. But of course they didn't—the sea and its hazards, the pounding of wave on rock and the tidal race at that point, were a closed book to them.

Brad Foster
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Loved "Be Careful!"—I always wait for that spine-tingling moment in all good B and C-grade adventure flicks (and, unfortunately, in many A-grade flicks) where, as our steely-jawed hero is about to walk out the door to face whatever slavering horde of disgusting lower lifeform happens to be "in" that year (jungle natives, alien monsters, godless communists), the beautiful heroine utters those immortal words (all together now), "Be careful." What would life be without such simple pleasures?

Everytime I embark on one of these issues, dictionary at hand, Spike on the watch—slavering hordes of dangerous spelling mistakes lurk behind every thought and concealed within even the simplest one-syllable word. "Be careful," I tell myself. But Walt Willis has a theory to explain my problem...

Walter A. Willis
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Your Law of Conservation of Spelling Errors is, I suggest, a special case of the Law of Conservation of Fenergy. The amount of fanac introduced to the field between a fan and hiser typewriter remains constant, so that any not absorbed in creative work (fusion), is dissipated in Friction (feuding) or Noise (typoes). I have for some time been considering the possibliity that there is a Law of Conservation of Egoboo, but am not yet in a positition to announce my findings. (Experimental materials welcome.)

Lucy Huntzinger
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Last night I read through the letter column again and was struck (pow) by D. Langford's contact with the aliens running Silicon Valley. In fact, I think Dave should know that the very computer who provided his "spelling checker" is probably part of the long arm of Marcos, [Ex] dictator of the Philippines. It has been discovered recently that Marcos and his wife have vast holdings and financial interests in the US including (ominous music here) the Silicon Valley hitech corporations. I leave it to Joseph Nicholas to determine the exact consequences of interfacing with foreign brainwashing material such as the so-called speeling cheker which Dave has so unwisely purchased.

David Langford
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RG1 5AU ENGLAND

Following on from Bill Gibson's insight into "bizarre translations:" what's really funny is when someone who should know better cocks it up utterly in English. We will give an example.

A few years back, Wang (a back-street computer shop of which you may have heard) had an attack of insane arrogance at its US head office. "Henceforth," the diktat went out, "this office will prepare all publicity material, because we know how to do it better than any slimy little underdeveloped country such as for example Britain."

The result was that one day Wang's British office woke up to universal sniggers at the full-page adverts studding the UK computer press. Two words:

W A N G

C A R E S

Now there is this local idiom, and Jack Vance was terribly upset when he found out why Britfans had made a catchphrase of his title *Servants of the Wankh*, and it is surely apocryphal that the words which sprang to the lips of the Wang UK (as they anguishedly phoned America) were, "You stupid wankers, what have you landed us in now...?"

Businesses do hate it when we misinterpret their messages. This is a photograph of a billboard in Madison, on which the Air Force quite persistantly replaced, over and over again, the same advertisement. And every time the same grafittoed message was "added" to the ad, to complete the thought. Finally, the Air Force gave up. (The mushroom cloud is the added bit of grafitti.)

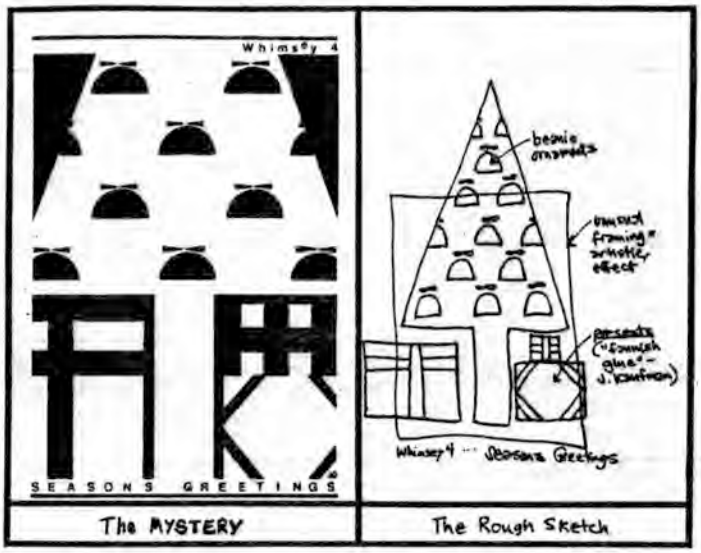
Jessica Amanda Salmonson
PO Box 20610
Seattle, WA 98102

That sticker has been on my refrigerator for over a year but I figured I'd give it to you. It is from a package of fern-break packaged in Japan...There was a classic one, but it was printed on a tin can, so it couldn't have been saved very well, anyway, a soda pop made in Taiwan that called itself CANNED SWEAT. Yummy. I heard once about Campbell's "Big John Beans" packaged in Quebec as "Gross Josh" which means Big Tits and it actually got as far as the shelves before anyone told them about that particular French-Canadian colloquialism. Wasn't Vega a bad selling car in Spain because its name meant "Won't Go"?

Brian Earl Brown
11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, MI 48224

I still can't make out the cover to *Whimsey* 4. It looks like some kind of lettering below the propellor Beanies but I just can't decypher the letters. What does it say? ("Seasons Greetings" I can read.)

Well, I'm going to have to take back some innate superiority points, Brian. But you weren't alone in being stumped by the cover. Funny, though, I didn't design it to be the puzzle-of-the-issue; I thought I was being artistic. So, as a public service, at the top of the next column, you will find the "answer" to last issue's puzzler.



SPIKED

Spike's name still intrigues you gentle readers. Arthur Thomson has "this dastardly word play roaming round in the back of [his] mind about all [the *Whoopsey* perpetrators] making their 'point,' including Spike." Brad Foster demands a recount and defends his explanation of Spike's name, and Lucy Huntzinger has a question.

Lucy Huntzinger

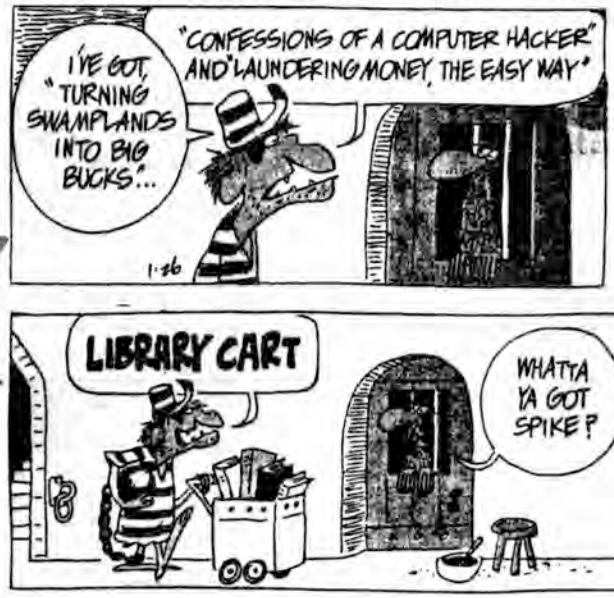
I have a question about the response Spike made to her nickname origins contest. How could "Spike" possibly be short for Storm Over the Open Prairie? In that case we should be calling her "Soop." But then; everytime anyone called her name everyone else would think it was lunchtime. Oh, I give up.

And there was a late entry submitted to the contest too. I would normally have ignored an entry that arrived so long after the deadline, but considering the source—an actual blood relative of Spike's, who has known her since she was a child—you deserve to hear what may be the Ultimate Truth.

Scott Custis
PO Box 429
McGregor, IA 52157

I have only one critical comment to make on *Whimsey* 4. I feel you should stop toying with your readers about Spike's name. You know perfectly well that no one will guess the REAL reason she's called "Spike." Sometimes I'm not sure you believe me, even though I'm Spike's cousin and should know such family secrets.

The plain truth is that Spike got her name while serving time in the Iowa Women's Correctional Facility. She was an inmate librarian. She intended to settle on just being called Pat, but she earned the title "Spike" from her fellow inmates after she dealt with a couple, mouthy, overdue book borrowers in a truly unique fashion. Details are sketchy, but if the story still seems far-fetched, I've included positive photographic evidence, gained through my connections as an employee of the Iowa Department of Corrections



"I'm Over Heeeere, Gerhardt!"

My Grandfather, Donald Bohn, had been gravely ill for three months, but was still living in his own home when he died in late February this year. A week before his death, he began counting down the days left until his birthday, saying that he was determined to make it until he turned 86 years ol that Saturday. He died on his birthday, just as he predicted

Actually, it was probably a tribute to the diligence wit which he followed doctors' orders that he lived as long as he did. He'd survived a heart attack and bypass surgery during previous years, but he was a careful man, eating no more and nothing other than what his diet allowed. He always took his medication as prescribed.

My Grandfather was a careful man. When he was still wel and would drive to my parents' home for Sunday visits, he always left early because Sunday was his laundry day and no matter what the occasion, he kept to his schedule. Another day was for cleaning and another for grocery shopping. He wasn't entirely inflexible, though: his general exception was that fishing superseded any other activity. However, when he wasn't in his boat out on Lake Nagawaukee, he was on schedule After Grandma died, he had become a dynamo of housekeeping perfection and an accomplished cook. The rooms of his house always smelled of cleaning fluids; everything had its place. As with all other aspects of his life, Grandpa settled on very definite ways of doing housework and would advise others on the "right" way to clean. Later, when he was too ill to maneuver a vacuum cleaner or drive a car, and my mother and her sisters and brother had begun to take turns caring for him there, he would keep tabs on the way they did the chores. He'd correct and chastise

them if they deviated from his methods.

Mom said that after Grandpa died that she and her sisters and brother had half jokingly proposed an appropriate epitaph for Grandpa's tombstone:

*He did it **his** way.*

Anyone who knew him laughed appreciatively when they heard that suggestion.

Grandpa had been a domineering parent. There are stories told about Grandpa's intractable disapproval of one or the other of his kids for acting against his wishes. Though there was an obviously close and loving bond between Grandpa and his children, there were also tense scenes enacted occasionally, reminders of past disagreements or still simmering misunderstandings. Grandpa could be called careful; he could also be called stubborn, dogmatic and prejudiced.

My mother sometimes commented on the irony of Grandpa's and my relationship. She thought the situation was especially strange considering my sometimes dramatic rebellion against her own expectations, which—she would point out—were far less constraining than Grandpa's had been on his own family.

I did like him very much. I loved to hear him talk about his growing-up years in Milwaukee and to his explanations of how things worked. His constant interest in the world around him sparked many pleasant conversations between the two of us, and also made me feel curiously comfortable about the idea of getting older myself. We didn't always agree, however. Mom was quite right when she observed fundamental differences between Grandpa and me. He was a man of many biases, and we had grown up in very different worlds. Still, my disagreements with Grandpa were untainted with the jaw-tightening anger that sometimes gripped me when I agured with my parents.

Grandpa would make a statement about young women looking undignified in slacks, or how ridiculous it was for me—a woman—to be interested in some idea. Or he would make a patronizing comment about the "colored" woman who came in once a week to help him with the heavy cleaning jobs. Sometimes I'd chide him for the comments. But it never seemed necessary to defend myself against his beliefs as I did when confronting parental disagreement. And neither did he seem to feel threatened by my beliefs or activities, though they were far more radically opposed to his morals and habits than his own children's had ever been. We were lovingly tolerant of one another.

The last time I visited him, Grandpa was sitting up in his easy chair where he spent most of his time during the last months of his life. He was fighting too much pain to summon up the additional energy to talk to anyone for very long. As I sat with him on the footstool by his feet, he held my hand tightly in his, breathing noisily through oxygen tubes, and gathered strength. We talked about everyday things, as if this were an everyday visit. He asked how Madison was. We commented on the bitterly cold weather.

Then he asked, "So...when are you going to get married?"

I was silent, just smiling at him. And he shook his head, amused and resigned, and replied for me, maybe with the answer he wanted to hear.

"I know...I know...You don't want to rush it. It's good for you to wait till you're sure. Catherine and I went out together for four years before I married her." And then he told the story he'd told me several times before, of how he'd met and married my Grandmother.

A little later I tried to tell him something about how Scott and I felt about one another. But then Grandpa's body convulsed in a painful attack. He grasped my hand with a fierce grip as he gasped for breath, and then my uncle came in to help him through the episode. Uncle Ronnie took Grandpa's hand from mine and held his father in his arms.

That was an ordeal that Grandpa—and whichever one of his children was with him—endured many times a day during the last month of his life. There was nothing to do but hold him and help him catch his breath and breathe calmly, and to hold his hand while he fought against the pain. Grandpa slept a lot, but woke frequently during the night, needing assistance. He drowsed on and off throughout the day, rousing for short periods of conversation or longer stretches for a game of cribbage. Whoever was staying with him would spend the day helping him to dress, making food for him, keeping track of his medication schedule, talking with him, but mostly just sitting with him, waiting with him. They would read, play cards with Grandpa, piece together jigsaw puzzles, and watch TV. Aunt Charlotte drew exotic winter scenes in her sketchbook and Aunt Donna tried to paint. But mostly they waited.

There was never a question about whether or not to send Grandpa to a nursing home; in fact, it was never even considered an option. The doctors had predicted his imminent death and so he stayed in his own house--with my other, her sisters and brother taking turns staying with him. At times it must have seemed like a very special time for them. At others it must have been terrible. Since my other lived only six miles away, she had been "on call" for a very long time, long before my Grandfather's health had become critical. She'd been looking in on him on a daily basis for a good part of the preceding year. Later, she was relieved by my Aunt Donna and Aunt Charlotte, both from California, and by my Uncle Ronnie from Washington State. They lived with Grandpa for weeks at a time and their lives were interrupted; they were separated from their own families and witnessed Grandpa's endurance of more and more pain. But parts of the experience seem to have meant a great deal to them. My Aunt Charlotte, for instance, made peace with Grandpa over a disagreement of many years' standing. They were all able to say good-by to this much loved parent in a way that fate seldom allows. And when Grandpa died, and relatives and friends consoled one another at the funeral, there was no cloud of guilt of the kind that so often overshadows this ceremony. I think they all felt as though they had been able to say what they needed to say to their father before he died. Also, there were no regrets that they'd been forced to move him into a nursing home before he died; they'd been there for him when he needed them. Even the remembrance of his pain gave them some comfort: they understood better than anyone that Grandpa's death had been a huge relief to him.

The week after—during the time of the funeral and burial—all of Mom's sisters and brother stayed in town. My brothers flew in from San Francisco and Denver; my sister Julie had arrived the week before from Austin. And mixed in with the reminiscing about their childhood, we listened to our mother and our aunts and uncle tell the story of living the last months with Grandpa. And that's what <u>this</u> story is really about...

They talked about the escalating pain of Grandpa's last weeks, of course, and about the long days and long nights. But the stories they told to us and the moments they remembered most vividly, were about the times of laughter which released them from the tedium of the painful, daily routine. Aunt Donna made us laugh with her telling of being woken at 4 o'clock in the morning by Grandpa beating a pot with a wooden spoon just outside her bedroom. He was feeling good and wanted to eat breakfast. Uncle Ronnie told about how, one night as he sat up with Grandpa, he unconsciously began to mimic Grandpa's motions. Grandpa was rocking back and forth, enduring a bad bout of pain, and Uncle Ronnie—sitting on the bed facing Grandpa's—began to rock back and forth with his father, empathizing with his discomfort. When Grandpa noticed Ronnie doing this, he stopped and then began to rock from side to side in counterpoint to Ronnie's motion. Even on some of the worst nights, as this one had been, when Grandpa was feeling too much pain to sleep, they could laugh with one another.

But some of the most hilarious stories were told about times when the outside world gave them reason to laugh and release pent-up emotions.

Aunt Donna told this particular story the first time I heard it. But as more family members arrived for the funeral, the story was retold again and again to newcomers, and Aunt Charlotte sometimes helped in the telling. Uncle Ronnie's cue was precisely scheduled.

Aunt Donna recalled a bitterly cold day when the roads were icy and the wind chill produced horrendously low temperatures. She happened to look outside through the window in the breezeway (the room between the kitchen and the garage), and noticed a strange car parked in the driveway. Although the driver's door was wide open, there was a man still seated behind the steering wheel—and he appeared to be struggling.

Donna called Charlotte out into the breezeway to look, and the two of them peeked through the little window set in the outside door. They watched, mesmerized, as an old man finally pulled himself out of the car and slowly, slowly made his way up the icy driveway, leaning heavily on his cane.

Later, my Uncle Ronnie would be staying with Grandpa when this same visitor arrived again. Ronnie explained that for the second visit, he had gone out to help the old man walk up the icy driveway to the house. It turned out, said Ronnie, for his part of the story, that the man—the parish priest—had terrible gout in one leg so that it was almost completely paralyzed. The way that he managed to climb out of the car was to maneuver a noosed rope around one foot and then to haul the foot up and out of the car. Then, with both feet on the ground, he would lever himself out of the driver's seat with his cane and hobble forward.

But let's return to the very first visit, with Donna and Charlotte peering through the little window at this strange man hobbling inch by inch up the treacherous driveway... Already recalling the end to the story, Donna began to laugh as she described the scene, wiping tears from her eyes as she continued. Finally the old priest had entered the house and told them he'd come to administer the Sacrament of Extreme Unction to Grandpa. They welcomed him, and Charlotte went into the living room to tell Grandpa that the priest had arrived. Grandpa spent most of his time sitting in an easy chair there in the living room—talking with his children, watching TV, but mostly sleeping. He breathed more easily sitting up than he could lying down and he was sleeping when Charlotte went in. He could not be awakened. Undaunted, the priest asked that a card table be set up by Grandpa's chair and he set out the sacramental instruments on it—the linen altar cloth, the chalice, the annointing oils and salts, etc. After everything was arranged, Charlotte and Donna again tried to wake Grandpa. Oblivious, Grandpa slept on.

Finally, the priest admitted defeat and abandoned the ceremony for the day. He painstakingly packed up his valise with the chalice, hosts, salts, oils and all the rest, and slowly, slowly made his way back through the living room, dining room, kitchen, and breezeway. Donna was saying goodbye to the priest at the door when Charlotte shouted from the living room, "He's awake now!"

And slowly, slowly, the priest returned to administer Extreme Unction to Grandpa.

By now Donna was hardly able to finish a sentence without doubling over in laughter and was blotting tears from her eyes. Ronnie, Charlotte and Mom were all laughing with her, and the rest of us were holding our sides, watching this story-telling that had already been repeated several times in our presence, and would be replayed many more times (we supposed) when spouses, friends and other relatives were entertained with the telling. Still, they enthusiastically told it again and again, each time using the same phrases and gestures, as they re-enacted the memory as if it were a play.

The main feature, however, was the story that my other told. Usually she told this story back-to-back with Aunt Donna's story of the visiting priest, and in fact, one story led easily into the next, feeding upon the laughter the first had generated. Both the priest story and Mom's story starred an elderly gentleman visitor who had great difficulty in getting around.

The first time I heard Mom's story, and probably the fifth or sixth time that she'd already playacted the story, we were all sitting around Grandpa's living room two days before the funeral. My brother Rick had just arrived the day before, and my friend Scott had driven me in to town from Madison. Aunt Donna started to urge mom to tell "the-I'm-Over-Here,-Gerhardt story."

"Come on, Inez, tell Jeanne and Scott the Gerhardt story!" she urged.

Rick had already heard it at least one time, but he was leaning forward, grinning and nodding encouragingly.

"Yeah, Inez," said my dad, "tell it again."

And so Mom stood up smiling, and walked to the scene of the story—a spot on the rug in the hallway between the living room and the dining room. Watching her assume her position was like watching an actor assume a character, and already the audience who'd seen the previous performances began to laugh in anticipation.

Gerhardt Deiner was (and still is) an old man, older than my Grandfather, in fact. Gerhardt was once a giant of a man, well over 6'4", broad of chest and very strong. He used to work with my Grandfather when they were employed by the telephone company; their friendship went back a long way. These days, however, Gerhardt Deiner is severely bent over at the waist as a result of arthritis. He walks with a cane—like the priest (slowly, slowly), and can see ahead of him only if he cranes his head and neck way back. Normally, as he walks he sweeps his horizon with the tips of his shoes.

Well, it seems that one day Gerhardt's car sort of rolled into Grandpa's driveway. In fact it was amazing that he'd managed to drive over at all. Grandpa said later, "Gerhardt shouldn't be allowed to drive." And indeed, it turned out that Gerhardt must have been having some serious problems. When his car had to be moved during his visit to allow Grandpa's therapist to leave, Gerhardt cautioned Aunt Donna about his car before she went out to move it.

"Don't touch the accelerator," he warned her.

Donna and my other surmised that Gerhardt must have shifted the transmission into "drive" and simply coasted over to Grandpa's house. Luckily Gerhardt lived in the same neighborhood. Anyway, one day Gerhardt's car rolled into Grandpa's driveway and Gerhardt slowly, slowly inched his way up the icy driveway and sidewalk. Donna and Mom had plenty of time to tell Grandpa (who was awake for this visit) that Gerhardt was on his way. When they got back to the breezeway, Gerhardt still hadn't reached the door.

But finally, they greeted him and escorted Gerhardt to the entrance to the living room and told him that Grandpa was waiting there for him.

At this point, Mom playacted Gerhardt's moves, bending over at the waist, and moving with his blind, shuffling motion. Donna eagerly took her place in Grandpa's chair to play out her role in the comedy.

Donna/Grandpa shouted to Gerhardt. "Hellooo, Gerhardt!"

At this, Gerhardt stopped cold. Contorted as his posture was, he must have found it difficult to identify the direction from which sounds originated. And when Grandpa said hello, Gerhardt—still looking at the rug at his feet—began to shuffle slowly around so that he was facing in the direction opposite from the chair on which Grandpa sat.

There was my mother, hunched over at the waist, holding an imaginary cane, affecting an utterly confused expression, and doing a geriatric, slow-motion pirouette. Aunt Donna/Grandpa then leaned forward in the chair and shouted in a deep voice, "I'm over heeeeere, Gerhardt!"

Gerhardt swiveled slowly back around with the help of his cane, and peered upward—finally in the direction of Grandpa.

And we all held our stomachs as we laughed at this comedy of friendship and old age being enacted for us by Mom and Aunt Donna.

Gerhardt sat for a while in the other chair near Grandpa's and the two men talked a bit. The therapist who had been in the other room packing up her equipment began to leave and Donna joked with her.

"We may have an extra patient for you," Donna said.

"Sorry, no 'two-for-one specials'!" she answered. And then the therapist drove away after Donna had moved Gerhardt's car with the possibly sabotaged accelerator.

Grandpa and Gerhardt talked a while, but soon Grandpa's breathing became ragged and he leaned back into his chair in exhaustion. Gerhardt didn't seem to notice any problem and went on talking.

"Would you like me to ask Gerhardt to leave now, Dad?" Mom whispered to him. But Grandpa was having too much trouble breathing to answer her.

She moved over to Gerhardt's chair and whispered to the other old man, "Would you mind leaving now? Dad's getting tired."

"WHAT?!" shouted Gerhardt, cupping his ear.

Grandpa/Donna began choking and Mom tried to find Gerhardt's cane. As she helped him up out of the chair, Gerhardt swayed back and forth, and seemed about to collapse backward into the chair. Mom grabbed his arm to steady him.

All the while Grandpa was choking and began to turn blue.

It must have seemed as though neither Grandpa or Gerhardt were going to make it out of the room alive that afternoon.

It felt more than a little macabre laughing about this panicky scene. But it was impossible to restrain our laughter, and in fact, it felt like a very good thing to do that evening.

Later, though, the time was not quite so appropriate.

The family—my parents, aunts and uncles, and brothers and sister—had arrived at the funeral home several hours earlier and were visiting quietly with my Grandfather's friends and relatives. It had been a long and very sad day. I was sitting in a side parlor with my brother Rick and sister Julie and a few others, when my Uncle George, Donna's husband, hurried in. His eyes were wide and his expression seemed to warn of some impending disaster.

"Gerhardt's here!" he gasped.

Then I understood. The disaster he was warning us against was laughter. When we heard him say, "Gerhardt's here," our immediate, audience-trained reaction was to laugh. If we'd met Gerhardt out in the lobby and had been introduced without warning, who knows how we'd have responded. As it was, we were barely able to contain bubbling giggles as we experienced flashbacks of Mom's story.

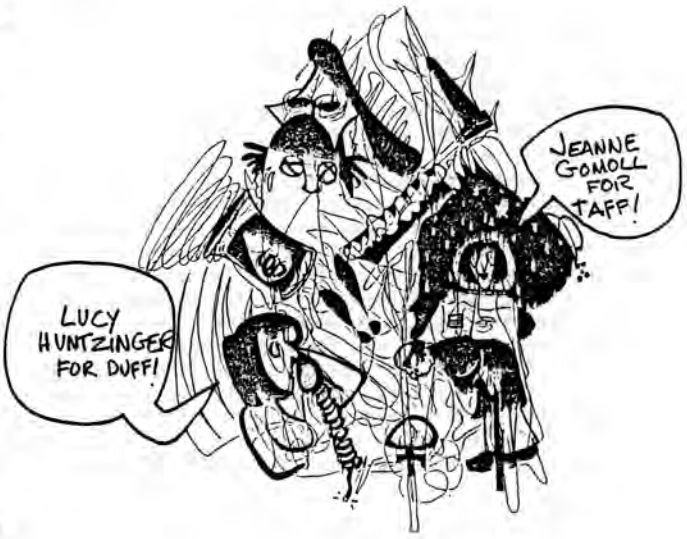
"Gerhardt's here" was whispered around the rooms. There was plenty of time to warn everyone because Gerhardt's trip from the vestibule was a long, arduous one. Of course, he was walking slowly, slowly. Just the thought of his deliberate approach, however, was enough to spark an errant giggle here and there among us. Others would "shush!" the giggler sternly. Some covered their faces and their shoulders shuddered in silent laughter. Relatives and friends who hadn't heard the story yet, looked at us curiously, with sort of horrified, fascinated expressions, but their questions were brushed aside.

"Not now, not now. We'll tell you about it later." And we'd look meaningfully at Mom.

Even today, Mom can still enthusiastically get into the telling of the Gerhardt story. I called her the other day to check out a few details in the story with her, and she easily slid into the story-telling role that she'd played back in February. The story, the laughter, are still there for her—to soften the memory of loss.

I.A.H.F. (I Also Heard From...)

Dan Steffan by phone who wondered if I couldn't have mentioned him a few more times in the last issue, and Amy Kinosian, also by telephone, who sternly corrected the story of "my" first fanzine, *Foma*. Amy reminded me about the other co-editors, herself included—Jim Orban, Eric Gomoll, Wendy Straw, and David Giese. Sorry, Amy. Apparently she's kept a complete file of *Foma*'s and she's exhorting this apology from me with threats to reprint them all. Anything you want, Amy. I'm at your service. Steve Bryan Bieler sent a copy of "All the News that Fits" to replace the one I'd lost (thanks, Steve!) and I also heard from Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Dave Rike, Pam Wells, and Jerry Kaufman, who wonders about the woman whose gate I admired. "What about the rest of her fence?" he asks. Jerry also hints about inside knowledge of fandom's secret glue, gift-giving. Want to continue that thought, Jerry? Letters came in from Avedon Carol, Joan Rogers, Jessica Amanda Salmonson (who also sent a catalog of "Useful Stuff," including an automatic bingo chip dispenser, toe cushions, that sort of useful stuff), Jacque Marshall, and Gary Mattingly (who tore up his first politically incorrect LoC which left him with nothing to say but thank-you). David Vereschagin gave me some art and pointed out some spelling errors, the worst of which was my misspelling of the name, "Hayden." I got it right for Suzette Haden Elgin, but consistency was not the virtue to be striven for in this case, and I ended up homogenizing the Nielsen "Hadens" by mistake. Sorry about that. I'm beginning to suspect that there will be at least one, inevitable name misspelling per issue of *Whimsey*. I wonder who will fall victim to the curse this issue? Brand new fan Dave D'Ammassa wrote, as did long-time fan Rick Sneary. IAHF Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Christine Kulyk, Candi Strecker, Sarah Prince, Kim Nash, and Richard Bruning (who recommends the new ~~comic~~ graphic novel mini-series, Frank Miller's *Dark Night*, and after looking at the copy Richard sent me, I do too.) Take a deep breath, because there's more. I also heard from Greg Benford, Joyce Scrivner, (a mostly illegible) D. M. Sherwood (I think), Linda Blanchard with wedding bulletins, Neil Kvern, and Carrie Root. Andy Hooper handed me a schizoid, possessed, 4-page, 4-letters-in-one LoC. He explained that "For three weeks now, I have been possessed...The malignant presence, living like bees in my head, was confirmed when I could find no functional difference between Muslim Fanatic Killers and American Fighter Jocks in a blind taste test." His letter(s) was a virtuoso performance, and rather complimentary in parts, too. ("Any zine which is able to include a quote by both Garrison Keillor and Doris Lessing without appearing completely insane, is sufficiently advanced to be indistinguishable from magic.") But I decided against printing the whole gonzo performance here. Instead, I recommend that you write to him (1664 Monroe St. #E, Madison, WI 53711) and demand to know why he failed to send you his fanzine, *Seattle Wire* #1. Maybe you can guilt-trip him into sending you #2. And still there were more IAHF's, which doesn't sound as good as WAHF. IAHF reminds me of the noise one makes when one almost but not quite, completes a sneeze...not as appropriate an image as the sad-eyed orphan painted on black velvet that is conjured up by WAHF. But still, truth in packaging and all, it's only I who has also heard from Richard Bergeron, Mark Ortlieb, Tom Perry, Bill Bowers, Terry Carr, Mog Decarnin, Jennifer Bankier, Luke McGuff, Randy Byers (who is recovering nicely from a severe case of gullibility exposure), and Joseph Nicholas (who says that he does not think he's a member of the Ted White Group Mind or even that such a thing exists.) Also my dad said he liked *Whimsey*.



FANZINES MENTIONED

Fuck the Tories 1, Leigh Edmonds & Valma Brown (PO Box 433, Civic Square, ACT 2608, Australia), Joseph Nicholas & Judith Hanna (22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER England), and Terry Hughes (6205 Wilson Blvd., #102, Falls Church, VA 22044).

Crystal Ship 10, John D. Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks MK16 9AZ, England).

Gallimaufry 2, Joni Stopa (Wilmot Mountain, Wilmot, WI 53192) and Dave Locke (6828 Alpine Ave., #4, Cincinnati, OH 45236).