

GRAVEL

Please do not review. Copyright (c) 1978, by William L. Bowers, for the contributors. This is My Publication #98, and is dedicated to my older brother, Wally Franke. 1/27/78

drove for three hours...mainly by sighting between my upthrust knees, which stopped just shy of the roof. I will say this for the experience--it did serve to give me a new perspective on life. I now have a better idea why short people are so paranoid: I'm not used to having to compensate for the spokes of the steering wheel directly in my line of vision!

The surprise birthday party was engineered by Sandy Franke, and it was a total success. In addition to the Cincinnati expeditionary force, Steph was there from Iowa, as were the Toronto trio of Glicksohn, Harper and Carter, as well as Lynn and Jackie. And quite a few of the Chicago fans were in attendance. It was fun.

And it, apparently, was a total surprise. I will say this for my older brother: sometimes Wally is a bit slow on the uptake... He says he did not find it that unusual that it took that many people to move Paula's belongings (in truth it was not *quite* that massive an undertaking).

Of course, Wally may have had reason for being a little bemused that particular weekend. Saturday morning, before we left Cincinnati (and shortly after Ric had made a comment at the breakfast table about "these damn foreigners coming to town and stealing *our* women!"), the Gold's mother came over...walked past Wally, and handed me a card while saying "Happy Birthday, Wally!" Now to understand the significance of this, you have to realize that her daughter was moving to far-off exotic Illinois to marry this turkey... and she gave the card to the wrong turkey! (Of course, Marlyn is subject to calling Marla by Paula's name, or that of Lisa, Kelly or Sherry, if not all of the above at once...so I guess she had cause for getting confused as to which turkey was chasing which daughter.)

Needless to say, being his friends (or, as I told Lynn Parks almost two years ago: I only insult my friends...which is why I'll never insult *you*!"), we spent the next couple of months making Wally's life totally miserable. After all, he looked so much like me that his own mother-in-law couldn't recognize him! In fact, it wasn't until the end of March, when we were in Illinois (again) that we were finally able to set Wally's mind at rest that he was, indeed, an individual in his own right. After the funny hat wedding in downtown Chicago, we returned to the wide open spaces of Beecher (with Wally driving the Maverick, and Parks driving my Mustang, dragging at 80+ mph side-by-side... as we whizzed by a cop parked on a side street with his radar unit pointed straight at us...well, you might wonder why we have such a high regard for Hippotophers, but the cop never chased us...still can't believe that!).

There, at the Franke manse, we had arranged the ultimate test: When Wally's folks (whom I'd never met) arrived that afternoon, I was sitting in the big living room chair with Paula, while Wally waited around the corner, out of sight, in the dining room. Luckily, his mother walked right by me and around the corner to where Wally was, without a pause. Everyone cracked up.

When we explained things to Wally's father, and asked him how she had located her son so quickly, he replied that she had "smelled" him out. "Mothers can do that with their sons, you know!"

Despite the fact that I know several people who thought that the person arm wrestling Barb Nagey in that photo in OW 28/29 was me before they read the caption, I still say that Wally and I do not look *that* much alike. I say that despite the fact that at MAC Jodie Offutt told me that she would have to apologize to Wally for having been less than effusive in her greeting to him because, after all, she had already said "Hello" to Bill Bowers. I say that despite the fact that before I arrived at Chambanac 6, Wally told me that at least six people had asked him where *Outworlds* was. I say that despite a seemingly endless stream of such incidents.

Of course, the *final* final test still remains.

My mother has yet to meet Wally.

...and that has to be the longest rationalization for the publication of a mini-zine ever written. Even by me.

As I said, given the weather this week, it's by no means certain that we'll be able to make the trek next weekend. But even as I say that, I can't help but remember what

the weather was like the week before Wally's birthday last year. There was this convention called Confusion...and they closed the entire State of Michigan in honor, you see.

About the weather, here, this year. They told me that this was an unusual winter for Cincinnati last week when, after two snows, there was a total of 14.3 inches of snow on the ground--a Certified Cincinnati Record. They told me that this is an unusual winter for Cincinnati today, January 26, in the middle of the first blizzard recorded in Cincinnati since 1917.

I can hardly wait to hear the reason they're going to give me next week as to why this is an unusual winter.

I'll get you for this, Ric Bergman!

We didn't make Confusion π.

Well, Tabakow did...and Cavin went up with Rusty...but I was speaking of the important people. Marla and I.

As it turns out, if I'd called Marla at noon Friday (as I'd planned to do) we would have tried it. But by the time I called her that evening, she had inherited an emaciated dog that made me look like a cross between Cavin & Bergman. Now everybody knows that Marla Gold would not consider going to a convention when there's a sick animal to be taken care of. So we went to the vet's on Saturday rather than going to Ann Arbor.

That's Marla's excuse for not going to Confusion this year.

I'm sure she's working on next year's excuse already.

What this all means for me is that, unless I'm out of work and catch a ride up to Minnicon with Rusty, my next convention won't be until Marcon, in April. And since my last con was Octocon, that'll put six months between conventions. And, if you care to check that list in the last issue, you'll see that it has been a looong time since I've had that big a gap!

Gad, it's almost enough to make a convention in Columbus Ohio look good! Almost...

But we did have our New Year's Party(s)...more about that after the letters, perhaps.

PEBBLES

TERRY MATZ I received the new Xenolith yesterday and it seems even smaller than the last and contains even less information about your fascinating life. Now whether this is an advantage or disadvantage I can't tell. You actually had me wondering for a minute that you might be doing something interesting that you didn't want to discuss but, then I thought, no, no, can't be.

How am I doing on insults? It finally occurred to me after reading this Xenolith that I must be the only one of your friends with no official Bill Bowers designation or name badge. That really hurt. Don't you love me? So I thought maybe it's the insults that get your attention. I realize I'm an amateur but I keep trying, though I really don't understand what kind of ~~perverse~~ quirk it is.

I did like "Tall People", not that I resented the original song. I think all short people felt as I did, that the poor tall people are merely envious of those of us of diminutive stature and we tend to ignore the song out of pity. (You know of course that IQ, success, happiness, and sexual prowess are inversely proportional to height.) However, it is nice to know you recognize your place by printing that piece.

I believe I enjoyed "Hippotopher Theater" the most. Thank Marla for me. But Bill, you should improve your layout (I'm beginning to get an eye for such things working on Nickelodeon).

I'm getting withdrawal pains from not going to conventions. Getting your zine and some others makes it worse. Part of the problem is I'm stuck in the house here. We still haven't gotten the loan for the business (do you know any rich people who might want to invest in a graphics art business run by fans?) so I spend a lot of time waiting.

[Continued on Page 28...]

 LANGUAGE AT MIDNIGHT * by Billy Wolfenbarger [for Jim Adams & Sally Pollak]

Chapter 21: Memory of Old Moons

Might as well remember old moons as anything else. My brain has been off the right time-track for a long "time" now anyway, so it follows... This timetrack nowhere/anywhere, it leads anywhere/somewhere if only I could grab hold of a focus. No, I am not "stoned", more like simply strung out on gulfs of consciousness. Like there was this story I read by a very popular English fellow about spider-like creatures invading our dear planet, and the hero wants his men to burn the house down while these spider-like creatures surround the place; finally, then, the reader gets this sense of gruesome alienness -- reader might even shudder -- and maybe shudder more at the shaking fear engendered from the insides of this hero. But that story is now nineteen years old. No, I'm not stoned on timetrack, merely webbing gulfs of consciousness in my own way. Brian Aldiss wrote that story, wrote it very well. That was 1959. At that time, I was in my second year of high school, reading that sort of thing a lot; now not read it so much. Other things now to read. Other things to do. Other places in which to dwell, to stretch, to realize what is there, and how it all comes back to . . . no, not necessarily timetracks, more like simple spacetracks all over the place.

Old moons, remember me. Old lights in those moon skies gave me large parts of my consciousness. Romance lived there, as well as other things. Ancient nights with full moon birthed creative bursts, lingering until night dimmed. Though a time like tonight, clouds so heavy in darkness, I can never hope to see moon, nor even how to feel it. Lonesome. Yes.

And this Saturday took more time to read. There was this early Aldiss novelette about a radioactive creature who escaped the eventual purges of mankind. Then another one, about a new art form who emoted emotions.

Don't know why I've been reading all this early Brian Aldiss. Actually prefer his newer stories, more slick, more real, more far out -- more inner. And the curious thing . . . I haven't been able to read much poetry lately, no, not even verse, not even Clark Ashton Smith, not even ole beatnik Allen Ginsberg. I'm in the wrong cycle, though I miss it. Keeps me lonesome. Lonesome enough now -- since it's so late -- to go to bed with light on, to read J. G. Ballard's *The Last World of Mr. Goddard* from one of his paperback collections, do that old British science fiction scene, then shut off light . . . then to sleep the sleep that Billy does. And maybe dream of moons no longer lonesome.

Chapter 22: A Hieroglyphics Evening

Monday evening got here, peaceful enough, with Sara (not quite so little any more now that she's 7), sleeping a sleep of angels, and Loretta off to a belly-dancing class. And I have been reading. Read three more absolutely fine stories by J. G. Ballard. Flash back to previous chapter, where I mentioned *The Last World of Mr. Goddard*: that's one of the finest end of the world stories I've ever had the pleasure to discover! Beautiful stuff. (What are you writing in 1978, Mr. Ballard?) The other three stories most recently read (by JGB) were *End Game* (a fine short novelette of life/death suspense), *The Subliminal Man* (high modern sf of the advertising game), and *The Time-Tombs* (a masterful yarn of ghouls on another planet, very much sf), which I first read in *16* magazine in 1963, when I was living with grandparents and an uncle in Farmington, New Mexico. Well, looks like I'm off on another Ballard spree. Wheeee! I wish one of those author-issues that F&SF does would have one on Ballard (& Aldiss, & Manly Wade Wellman . . . but I don't think they could come up with a new yarn by Arthur Machen). I'll be damned if I know why I've been reading All This science fiction lately . . . going through a cycle, I guess; (and I am a believer in such things). Even been tempted

to read all the stories in all the American sf prozines for 1978! Weird. Whatever happened to weird tales?

Probably all this is just a prelude to my writing a science fiction story. I'm itching to do one. It'd have to be soft sf (as opposed to hard), because what I know of science you could put in the bottom of a cough syrup cap. I've never subscribed to *Scientific American*, although I used to read it, but never like a faithful devotee. And high school biology was a long time ago. Science interests me, nevertheless, and I pick up useful bits & pieces here and there. Paul Novitski (Alpajpuri) came out to visit last week. Other than Paul's visit, have had no recent contact with sf writers. Haven't seen Damon & Kate for months, though Loretta & I (& our friend Jean) spoke briefly with John Varley a week or so before Christmas: we were headed for Loretta's car in a free parking lot in Eugene Oregon, done that Saturday with some Christmas shopping -- John had just arrived, we chatted in the rain; I showed him the January F&SF (with a review of his first published novel), and the January-February Isaac Asimov's *Science Fiction Magazine* which contains his lead story, *The Barbie Murders*. He'd been waiting for that issue to come out.

Cycles again. When I began my sf reading in the mid 1950s, the only fantasy magazine around was *Fantastic*; (sounds familiar, doesn't it?). Even *Fantastic*, at that time, published a lot of sf. F&SF published some excellent fantasies then (as now). Some of the sf stories in the magazines were so "fantastic" they seemed more fantasy than sf. The sheer *deluge* of sf, then, was overwhelming. I'd become saturated. Sated. Just like I get into writer-cycles, returning again & again to old favorites. Every so often some newcomer (or even relative newcomer) in the field will blow my mind (uh, like Spider Robinson), which makes me look forward to more of their imaginative material. The real writers who turn me on are those born with the gift of imaginative gab in their fingers, the honest storytellers.

New Wave, Old Wave, it doesn't matter.

Then there's New Wave prose poets, which is a different hieroglyphics altogether. New Wave fantasies written by people who get to the inner realms of what's happening right away, and completely.

To be honest.

To be honest.

A HOBBY IS A HOBBY IS A HOBBY * by Jodie Offutt

How many hobbies have you had in your lifetime?

Now I'm not talking about passing childhood periods of saving matchbooks, postcards or stamps. I mean something that you have to invest some time in, learn something from, use your brain in different ways from usual. Reading doesn't count unless you read in a foreign language.

In a delightful essay titled *Painting as a Pastime*, Sir Winston Churchill said that for a hobby to be of any value at all--that is, to exercise different mental muscles while giving the often-used ones a rest--change is the master key. A long walk doesn't necessarily rest the mind. In order to give the brain a rest, one must give it something totally different to think about.

Churchill built his brick wall, which kept his hands busy, but I imagine his brain stayed on its usual track. When Sir Winston took up painting he was very enthusiastic and eager about it. Not only did he use his hands, he used his brain to learn about colors, shadows, perspective, reflections, light. He could totally absorb himself in painting. This man, one of the few really important men of our century, took childish delight in squeezing oils from tubes. "The colours are lovely to look at and delicious to squeeze out."

Sir Winston had his favorite colors: "I cannot pretend to feel impartial about the colours. I rejoice with the brilliant ones, and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns."

One should learn from one's hobbies. Churchill learned new appreciation of art. He also became much more aware of the world around him.

Involvement in a hobby is limited by time, money and space. One year I got interested in furniture refinishing after my parents shipped me a couple of pieces that belonged to my grandmothers. I learned a lot, too. Like--I damned near antiqued a wig stand until somebody suggested it was *cherry* and *maybe* I didn't want to cover it up.

So I learned about wood and finishes and antiques, and I appreciate the *feel* of a fine piece of wood under my fingers now and enjoy looking at a good solid piece of furniture.

Space and money were the big limitations in my furniture refinishing career because old furniture can be expensive and it does take up space. I spent many happy hours, though, junking--poking around dusty dark rooms looking at old castoffs. With knowledge that I didn't previously have, I can much more authoritatively admire the efforts of others.

There was a brief but intense period of painting during which I learned a lot about the mechanics of painting and read and studied art and artists. As Churchill said, all it took was audacity. I have spent hours totally engrossed in the smell and feel of oil on brushes and in mixing colors from my palette; afternoons spent painting, no matter what the results (not very good, really), were always satisfying. I have come away from it with enough knowledge to understand more fully the time, talent and experience that goes into art.

Two other hobbies that I've gotten quite involved with and that have had similar effect on me and my attitude during the intense involvement periods are sewing and raising house plants.

I had a minimum of domestic training at my mother's knee. My mother belonged to the generation of women who got the first taste of liberation. During and following WWII it became acceptable for women to work outside the home. Women began to drive cars. Cake mixes and laundromats were introduced, with other time-savers that liberated women from kitchens and houses.

My mother loved it. She loved talking on the phone, visiting her friends, and just going places in the car. She loved to chase fire trucks. I'm sure I learned my love of driving from her.

I didn't learn to sew until several years ago after a friend gave me an old machine. Another friend told me that putting in a zipper is the hardest part of sewing. I bought a zipper and put it in a pair of pants and didn't think it was so hard so I made a jumper and then a dress and decided putting in *sleeves* was the hardest part about sewing. And I was hooked.

The ability to sew never struck me as having any practical value. While I seldom sewed for my children, I proceeded to fill my closet to overflowing. There was a period of time when I actually thought I couldn't go out without making something brand new to wear. I experimented with materials, altered patterns and discovered shortcuts. I rarely made mistakes and was always happy with my results. I enjoyed the entire process of making clothes, but eventually space limited me and I slacked off.

I wouldn't trade knowing how to sew for anything. I think I am prouder of the ability than I would be if I'd learned during my childhood. (For that reason I've not insisted that my children learn to sew. When they've expressed an interest, I've said, "There's the machine, so sew." And because it is an old castoff of somebody else's, I've never hesitated to let them use it for fear they'd hurt a good piece of equipment. They haven't hurt it, either. I have much the same philosophy about cooking. I didn't learn anything about it from my mother, who was a good cook. Yet when I needed to learn to cook, I did. When my children want to cook, I say, "There's the stove, be careful, and clean up after yourselves." And they do all right.)

Raising plants is my most recent hobby, and a thoroughly enjoyable one it is.

One day I was in a hardware store where I inquired about clay pots, and the clerk asked how come so many people (his wife included) were suddenly growing house plants. I told him I thought it was part of the ecology, back-to-earth movement, along with so many

people living in apartments. I opened my mouth to say that I'd only been into plants a short time myself, decided I didn't want to use the current cliché, 'into' and discovered I could not think of another way to put it. I was chagrined.

Other than a philodendron now and then that suffered a short neglected life and a petunia patch out in the yard, I'd never had much truck with plants.

When we went to the Stopas' Wilcon a few years ago, Joni gave me a couple of cuttings. A spider plant and a purple passion plant. They sort of sat around merely surviving for a year or so when a friend in nearby Morehead gave me an Irish Shamrock. I had admired hers on St. Patrick's Day with tears in my eyes. Pat knows as much about plants as Joni and if her house were as large as the Stopas' Pat would have as many plants.

It was a real thrill having a genuine shamrock that folds down its leaves at night and grows delicate little white flowers. Then Pat gave me a coleus and I was hooked on house plants.

The spider and purple passion plants got coaxed into healthy growing specimens, and the spider plant has sprouted a litter of spideys, most of which I've given away. There've been several cuttings taken from the passion plant and passed around.

Other plants have fannish origins. Bev Swanson brought me Swedish Ivy from Minneapolis by way of Nashville. There's a purple mallorn growing nicely that arrived from Miami as a bonus in the Jenrette's *Tabebuian*. I bought a Zebra plant in honor of Zebra Books (who published Andy's *Sword of the Gael*). And there are the avocado plants, started from seeds from avocados brought to me from Texas by Geo. and Lana Proctor. We made guacamole dip with the fruit that made me sick at my stomach, but the plants thrived. I've just given away two of them.

One of the secrets to enjoying hobbies is not being afraid to show your ignorance. Ask people questions. Ask their advice. People love to show off their knowledge and you learn a lot, too. I have gotten cuttings from my dentist's office, the bank, my neighbors, my ophthalmologist, the university library, my mother-in-law's get-well planter in the hospital, and from front yards. Audacity.

There is a lesson in natural patience to be learned from waiting for a cutting to take root or a plant to bloom. This new hobby affects my thought processes much the same way as sewing did when I was so heavily involved in it.

I used to drive from shopping center to shopping center so as not to leave out one fabric shop in my search for material. Now I can't bear to come home without at least looking at one last garden shop.

Obscure sewing shops with a large selection of notions have given way to out-of-the-way plant stores with lots and lots of supplies. I used to shop for zippers, buttons and trim; not it's potting soil, hanging planters and fertilizer.

The same head-cocked, squint-eyed concentration that used to go into arranging pattern pieces on material on the dining room table is now applied to arranging plants in a terrarium on the kitchen counter.

Any hobby has scads of gimmick tools and I confess to having bought my share of unnecessary items. When you get right down to it, the basics are all you need. Scissors, a yardstick, a pack of pins, and a place to spread out are all that're necessary for sewing. A plastic watering can, a few clay pots, some potting soil and you're in business for growing plants. You also need a machine and a pattern for one, and water and sun for the other. And the raw materials.

The fancy things, like seam rippers, tiny rakes, magnetic pin pullers, and climbing poles are all useful occasionally, but generally you can make do as well with scissors, forks, fingers and sticks from the back yard. I have a tendency to buy things "just in case", because the stores are so far away (I pretend to think). As a result, I have a couple of drawers full of sewing notions upstairs and a shelf full of garden supplies on the back porch....

I used to fall asleep at night visualizing what a dress would look like with the sleeves in it. Now I have twilight visions of plants when their leaves unfurl. I'd wake up thinking about filling the bobbin, tapering darts and attaching the zipper foot.

Now as I wake up I'm taking stock of my pots, picking out bigger sizes for the pot-rooted plants that need re-potting.

I used to strike up conversations with strangers in fabric shops discussing a bolt of material, how easy it is to work with, how it does when washed, exchanging tips on patterns and threads. Now my fellow gardeners and I recommend plants to each other, recall common plant names together and discuss how much sun a plant needs and how big it will grow.

There is a kinship among hobbyists, no matter what the interest is. Have you ever listened to a couple of camera enthusiasts conversing?

Some clerks in stores know their wares and know *about* them, whether it is fabric or plants. Others don't know and aren't very interested.

No matter what your interest, you can spend a fortune on books. A couple of paperbacks for general reference and information are nice to have. Other than that, the library is full of books about specifics from which notes can be taken.

What now? I don't know. I've immersed myself so in plants that I have quite a bit of knowledge. I don't spend as much time messing with my plants as I did. And, as with other hobbies, space is the limiting factor. Like bookshelf space, there is just so much window space in a house.

Just the other day I bought 4 1/2 yards of material on impulse just because I loved its texture, pattern and colors. I don't know what I'll make with it; I didn't buy that impulsively when I was sewing all the time!

Certainly I intend to go to the Garden Club's spring plant sale at the Methodist Church.

Church. Something else will probably catch my attention, too, and in a few months I may have knowledge and skills in an area that I barely know exists right now. [Mail 1976]

[May, 1976]

What an exciting prospect!

PEBBLES [Continued from Page 23]

I saw Close Encounters and enjoyed it--I think I enjoyed it more than Star Wars, for which Ken and all fandom may crucify me. I am cynical about UFOs but I thought CE3k had more characterization and a plot that was more interesting--and I'm a characterization freak. It also had better acting.

[1/9/78]

[1/9/78]

Me...respond to insults!?! Surely you must have me confused... The "name badge game" seems to have reached a lull: Denise & Steve's were done for Hippotocon, and I haven't done any since. I'll have to come up with an appropriate "designation/name badge" for you, Terry. Let's see, now...

PATTY PETERS Got both "X" and my birthday card today when I got home from work. I'm not sure which impresses me more... That you are actually publishing again or that you can judge the postal system well enough to get the card here on the exact right day. Both are wonderful feats for the like of a Bowers.

Close Encounters--I was able to see it last weekend with Bill and D. I really enjoyed it. Thought it much better than Star Wars, though I suppose that our difference of opinion there may be because you've only seen S.W. once. The first time I saw it I thought it was great too. But the second, while it was still fun (it'd been 6 months in between), I found myself only being impressed with the opticals...nothing else seemed worth much. The third time was definitely the cynch. The glamour left. So, when I saw C.E. I was very impressed with such things as the "wonder" type mood. Of course, the opticals were excellent...but this was so human, so true-to-life. C.E. had real emotions like awe and compulsion. The movie did more than entertain me, it involved me. The whole S&M scene with Dreyfuss was very close to home with me too. Though they have different names, they live in Royal Joke and Joke Park and Roseland and... Dreyfuss reminded me of the typical fan living in suburbia...with his neighbors staring and gawking

and gossiping and all ready to commit him to the State home for the permanently befuddled. Don't try and tell me your neighbors didn't wonder at your volumes of mail and your stacks of fanzines and your abundance of books and now at your strange friends and all those people who drop in on you from out of town! I KNOW BETTER!

Is it any wonder that you're broke, my friend? At least when I pulled stunts like cons every other weekend, I was living safely with my parents and knew that I had no worries about the next meal. It also helped not to have to pay rent or anything like that. If phone bills and cons are ALL you have to pay for, it's easy.

Enjoyed Xenolith #2 much more because of the longer editorial--it's almost as good as a letter; at least I know you're alive and kicking. [1/9/78]

...for the benefit of anyone not familiar with the idiom of the late Suburban Femmefen, Patty's use of the term "S&M" is in the classic sense of "Suburban & Middleclass"; not the latter corruption.

I've now seen *Star Wars* that 2nd time; Marla and I went Confusion weekend. Other than a few drawbacks (too many kids, a bad print, and a rear door to the lobby that blanked out half the screen every time it was opened...which was at least 50% of the time...) I enjoyed it. Not as much as the first time, admittedly, but I do want to see it at least one more time, under better circumstances...as well as seeing CE3k again before I make up my mind. In the new operative word of Wishy-Washy Midwestern Fandom (copyright 1977/78 by Lynn Parks & Paula Gold), I'm remaining "flexible".

...but then, neither movie is exactly a *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, is it?

(...anyone for Charlie Callas or Marty Feldman as Luke Skywalker, and, say, Diane Keaton as the Princess, in the SW sequel?)

...what's this "...and now at your strange friends"? My friends have always been strange. I wouldn't have it any other way; it sets them apart from me!

BILL BREIDING They are right, of course. Xenolith is much too "short". Skinny.

Since all of the tall, old, short, and institution jokes are done with I'm not left with much. I mean, there is even a "serious" letter from Harry Warner and one too many Mike Glicksohn jokes. Jeez. This ain't gonna be no fun at all!

Your con attendance is astounding. Even if it is for the last 15 years. You went to as many conventions as I (minus one) in your first four years. So maybe I can learn some new tricks before I turn into an old dog like you.

I like Xenolith. It has that ineffable tangy exuberance that only a few other fanzines have had; due mainly to it's "group of friends" feeling, even if I don't ~~like~~ know them...how about, Bill Bowers' version of Title. Gosh, that sounds nice. [1/9/78]

STEPHANIE OBEREMBT I guess I should write a loc for your skinny fanzine and by the time your next Xenolith comes out in late June I'll have forgotten what I wrote. It's such a surprise to open a fanzine to find a letter I wrote. Then there are those thoughts of, Did I really write this to Bill?

When I saw Xenolith I was somewhat shocked by its delivery. One so soon? (You must have had some help) I thought as I opened it, another excuse for a letter. (As Terry Matz would say.)

Finally a short person strikes back (maybe at the ankles but at least it's something). However I think other adjectives for squeaky and little in little minds should have been used.

No loc from Mike Glicksohn? This has got to be a first when I appear in a letter column and he doesn't. It must either be all those women or else he's getting up there in years along with Bill. (Can anyone be that old?)

That was quite a collection of conventions you've been to. I'm astonished that you've kept track. Cons used to be an important part of my life for awhile also. But since I've been away from them for so long the withdrawal symptoms have lessened and I don't feel quite so bad when I have to miss one. Unfortunately the people I like most don't write often (Hi big sister) or else they just send occasional fanzines.

BRIAN EARL BROWN Leah handed me a copy of X-2 at Confusion. I kept trying to tell her that it was too small, that I take an XL-17, but Leah insisted that it was this or nothing at all.

I'm glad to see you still alive...wished you'd found the way to Confusion. Like Denice said, we don't see you much in Detroit, or at cons anymore.

Got a kick out of Marla Gold's "Tall People". How perfectly true. I'm so tired of perfectly straight teeth... Of course tall people have their problems too. Walk into a smoke-filled room and our heads are smack dab in the middle of all that pollution, while anyone small, like Glicksohn, have their noses close to the floor where--we're told in fire fighting classes--is where the clean air is to be found.

You don't need to explain this, "fannish institution" thing, Bill; everybody knows you're a fannish instution. It's so obvious.

Old rubber stamps never die, they just look like they have.

This Cincinnati mayor, Gerald Springer, does seem like a guy one could appreciate in politics. He seems to be a member of Monty Python's Silly Party.

Al Curry's spot illos are nice. Your cover was interesting and nicely done. Didn't know you had any artistic leanings in your body. I'm not sure what to make of Marla's "Hippotopher Theater". Strange may be the word. [1/17/78]

Brian also reports that he met Dave Locke "who I see is fractionally taller than Glicksohn." Told you, Mike!

Springer's latest: Monday he was the "guest dj" at a local disco, and this Friday he will be having a tuba "duel" with a representative of the Cincinnati Symphony on a local radio station. ...sure beats the hell out of a Ralph Perk!

SUSAN WOOD Dear Tallbill... Let me go on record as stating my envy of people who can reach things off the top shelves of cupboards without running for a chair to stand on. Middle shelves, even. [1/12/78]

...which is matched by my envy of people who can enter my bathroom without ducking!

SARAH PRINCE As soon as I mailed that poc (or PoC) I began to think it was too flip. But then I don't write LOCs, & you're not going to print a silly thing like that anyhow... as far as I remember, it's my first loc ever printed. Meanwhile, your ghoud example & my youthly vigor notwithstanding, my perszine languishes on its nth false start. Still wasting my time on all those damned apas. [1/2/78]

...well, I had a chance to get back in AZAPA, and I was in APA-50 (briefly), but I've dropped both. I don't know...I've been in several apas over the years, but while I can appreciate the lure they hold for many, I've never really been comfortable in one. (Part of the problem is that half the people I want to talk to aren't in a particular apa, and that involves over-runs, etc.) At one time I speculated on forming My Very Own Private Apa--but that was a bit too egotistical, even for me. Still, I suppose that in its own way Xenolith is a variation of that "private apa" idea; only I set all the rules, in an arbitrary and thoroughly capricious manner... If you meet my activity rules, you're in!

I also heard from George Flynn and Grant Canfield on X#1. Again, thanks to all who wrote! +++++ Now comes the fun part: Despite Tanya's more than reasonable rates for printing, and in spite of the fact that I've been "raiding" OW supplies, the cost of plates and postage and other things for something even as modest as "X" is not insubstantial. "X" is not, and will not be available for money...but I will swallow my pride, and accept donations of stamps or offers to "angel" an occasional issue. In the meantime, if you've gotten all three issues and I haven't heard from you in one way or another by the time #4 comes out, this will probably be your last. I'm having fun with this, and I hope you enjoy it. +++++

Last Year was our Very First New Year's Eve Party Ever -- given that we decided to show the Experts how to do it right. Come and practice your insults on Lou before Hippotocon 2....or show Al Curry how to draw...or frisk Ric Bergman. ...participate in singing "Tall People"...enter the Lottery on what'll be the Ohio River Chemical Spill of the Week; sell a copy of Hustler to Simon Leis--and more! Final Persuasion: If you don't come we'll have Lynn Parks call your Hippotopher Home. Think about it!

THE CINCINNATI COMMITTEE OF THE TALL & SHORT OF IT
Committee Members: Marla Gold & Bill Bowers

...since I was having overnight guests, and since I was behind (as usual), I spent most of Friday, the 30th, cleaning up the place, doing laundry...all the fun stuff. As a result I didn't make it to the Curry's party until about eleven...stumbling over the Detroit and Cincinnati Jews as I entered the crowded living room. In fact, Sid was the only out-of-towner there. (The remainder of the attendees were mostly CFG people, but with some of Al's musician friends thrown in; it wasn't nearly as "strange" as Cavin's occasional mixes of fans and nurses.)

Paula, Wally, & Lynn finally made it in from Illinois sometime between one & two in the morning, and revitalized things. We left Al & Tanya's about 4am: I kidnapped Marla while the Hippotocon Mafia followed in the incredible Franke-tank.

Putting up five people in my 3-room "apartment" is about the limit...but cozy!

Saturday afternoon, when we finally got up, we took the foreigners to the Natural History Museum...a fascinating place with a complete walk-thru "cave". Then we came back here to await Jon Singer's arrival. (I had been sworn to secrecy about the fact that Jon was driving in, rather than flying in that evening. That worked until Lynn called Jon at work...and found out he'd been given the day off!) While waiting for Jon, I ran Marla out to Addyston to change and to feed all the many critters...

Saturday night was "our" party...well, Lynn & I did throw Lou out into the cold, while Marla held the door, but we didn't protest too much when he came back in.

Other than the Tabakow's, and a number of CFG people, Kitty Lyons was there (the only time I got to see her in the week she was down here...but, boy, did I get an incriminating photo!), as were Tim Kyger and Sarah Prince. Also, most of the "family" clan (Marlyn and Nathan, Kelly and the other Bill, Sherry and Brian) showed up.

The almost nine hours we were there passed enjoyably and quickly, what with the Euchre games (our answer to the bridge and poker addicts), rapidograph draw-offs...even a mini-costume ball (courtesy of Lynn and Marla) and dancing...dancing?

Sunday afternoon after breakfast (one seems to get on a different time-track) and after Steve & Denise dropped Lynn & Jon (who they boarded Saturday & Sunday nites) off, we six (Paula & Wally, Lynn & Jon, Marla, and I) piled into the Franke-tank and headed Out West to get Marla her daily change, feed critters, and show off Smudge and Bart--the remaining members of Marla's Menagerie.

On the way back to Bill Cavin's Sunday nite party, we stopped briefly at Bea's Open House. ...well, that "briefly" ended up being close to five hours. I'm not sure if the "lure" was Bea's hospitality...or Ric's new tv-game toy, but we finally tore ourselves away.

I won't mention the meal we had on the way to Cavin's; ask Lynn about it sometime.

Most of the people from Bea's ended up at Cavin's eventually for the dead dog party. I do have this list, however, of those who closeted themselves in Bill's den, to attempt to do damage to my already battered "reputation": Gold, P.; Gold, M.; Parks, L.; Singer, J.; Parsley-Leigh, D.; Leigh, S.; Curry, A. ... However, I'm fairly sure that the world is to be spared "The Good, The Bad, and The Iguana". Knowing Paula's publication record of late, it can't possibly appear before Iguanacon 2!

Monday morning I got up early (11) to take Marla out (the usual) and then to Bea's from where they were going to dinner and a movie with Lou and Sid. I got back in time

to say good-bye first to Lynn & Jon, and then to Wally & Paula...

Immediately after they left, an incredible sense of loneliness set in. I have been, most of my life, a loner. By nature, I thought. But sometimes I wonder...

Our thanks to Al & Tanya, to Lou, Phil, Mary & Sonja, to Bea, and Bill Cavin for being the hosts. And our appreciation to the out-of-towners--Wally & Paula, Jon & Lynn, Sid, Sarah, Tim, and Kitty--who responded to our invitation: we hope you enjoyed it all.

We, The Committee, have pronounced it a Success. We'll probably do it again--sure beats us traveling in the Dead of Winter! (And we'll probably have a picnic this summer, if we can find a weekend in between conventions!)

It was fun.

Actually, I just realized/remembered that last year was not my "first" New Year's Party... If you care to check #10 on your list of Conventions: Bill Bowers Style, you'll find something called "Alpha & Omega" listed. It was held over New Year's 1969 at the same motel Octocon frequents. The hosts were Bill Mallardi...and...Bill Bowers. Damned if I know why it keeps blanking out on me... Perhaps some day I will tell you about it. When and if I take up drinking again!

The blizzard of '78 cost me two non-paid days of work last week, but it had its benefits. (A large portion of this...if I can afford to mail it out now!) We didn't get much snow, but since it was on top of two days of rain, ultra-quick-frozen, the city was virtually closed. I got my car out Friday afternoon, and that evening--against all warnings/orders to stay off the roads--I made a milk & munchie run out to Addyston. (The Golds were grounded since Nathan had buried the truck in a 4-foot drift trying to get home Wednesday nite, after which he went back to work, where he was until Sunday morning.) I had no trouble getting out there due to the almost total absence of other traffic (getting food on Friday was much more difficult: Americans hoard in a panic...pass it on) but since the way back was 90% uphill, I stayed there the night. ...and the heat went out at Lyn's. Marla had heat, but no water, and since she has consolidated everything into one room; so Saturday (after a trip downtown to the post office; priorities, after all) I brought Marla, Sherry & Lyn back to Cavin's for the afternoon. We made an evening run to Addyston (to feed critters & clean the winnies stall, and out to where Nathan worked) and then back to Cavin's for a party. Total attendee's: 5; you got it. Sunday, after Nathan got the heat on, I took my wards home, and then Nathan & I went out and rescued Marla's truck. All this without any heat in my car! It was sort of fun; a fitting aftermath to last year...

Saturday Marla called the Findlay National Guard Armory, and wished Sgt. Rice a Happy Anniversary... (There'll be a make-up quiz for those missing that esoteric bit!)

...and it's now 2am, Feb. 3, and I still don't know if we're going to Beecher tonight... Stay tuned, until next time...which will be when you least expect it! Take Care...Bill
▽▽▽

BILL BOWERS
POBox 3157
Cincinnati OH 45201

FIRST CLASS MAIL