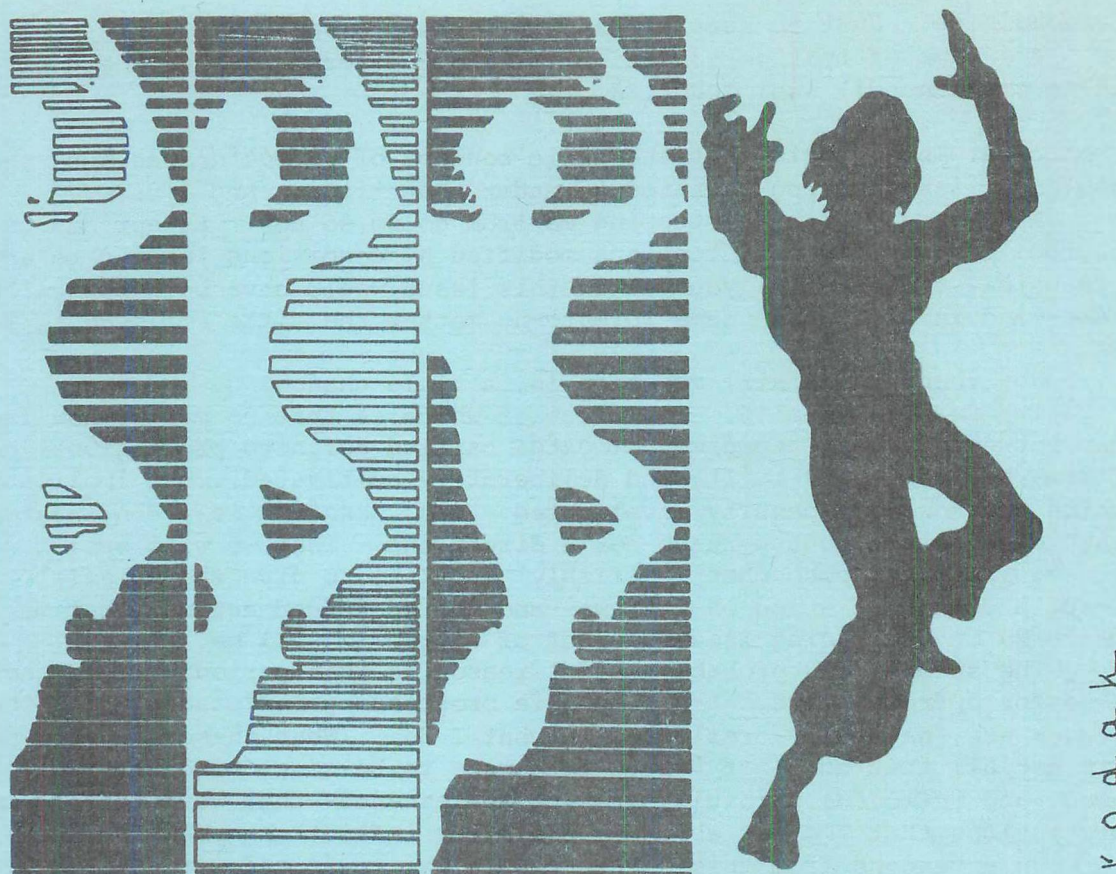


# Xenolith One









...his editorial policy seems to change every other issue, and usually Bill would devote half his editorial to explain it -- often, one suspected, to clear it up in his own mind as much as to inform the readers. He's had many conflicting goals.

---Cy Chauvin, p. 48, The IGUANACON Program Book

[illegible]

Outworlds is not dead, he said. Repeatedly. It is only resting. And, having rested...

You were expecting, maybe, *Outworlds* 30?

Well, until perhaps a month ago, so was I. With, for better or worse, my excuse for two years procrastination out of the way...I apparently (in a moment of weakness) made a statement, in front of witnesses, that I would have an issue of *Outworlds* out for CONFUSION. Now, once or twice in my life, I've made foolish statements before. But this time I made the mistake of saying it in front of two very persistent persons--Gold, Marla, and Parsley Leigh, Denise--who would not let me back down. I suppose that eventually I'll end up thanking them for the continual prodding...in time. In the meantime, if you are one of the milling hordes of people thrilled to find Bowers "doing something" again, Denise and Marla deserve a large measure of the credit. (And I'll get them for it, too: they promised to "help"...and I've only begun to count the ways.)

...of course, it is still my remembrance that I never said *which* CONFUSION. But in order to maintain harmony in the Wonderful World of Cincinnati Fandom (a Lou Tabakow/Sean Curry Enterprise), I am willing to make certain sacrifices.

It's not that I've been totally inactive since October of 1976 when *Outworlds* 28/29 came out: over the intervening years I did a couple of apazines, several flyers for parties & things, stand accused of having inspired a particularly catty fanzine--have lent out this selectric toward the production of several issues of other Cinti fanzines--and published seven issues of a



XENOLITH One / 4

On one occasion, a couple of years ago, when it was demanded that I "say something", I managed to get out:



"I don't make speeches; I just print them."

Now...despite the "practice"--and the constant advice of concerned friends who tell me to test them before mirrors, or memorize my words, or at the least work from note cards, I STILL don't make speeches.

I read them (from genuine Twill-tone) and let others print them.

In *Dilemma*, *Resolution*, *Xenium*, *Graymalin*. Not the biggies...just my friends.

In any event, this is BILL BOWERS' FIRST NULL-PRACTICE IGUANACON SPEECH, and it is called:

"I HAVE NO CAUSE, AND I MUST PONTIFICATE..."

Ten years ago tonight--Sunday night of Labor Day weekend--there was another World Science Fiction Convention going on. BAYCON. But all I know of that one was what I later read in *Granfalloon*.

On that night, on that very same night, I was in another world.

It was the last night of my eighteen month exile in an alien land. I was coming home.

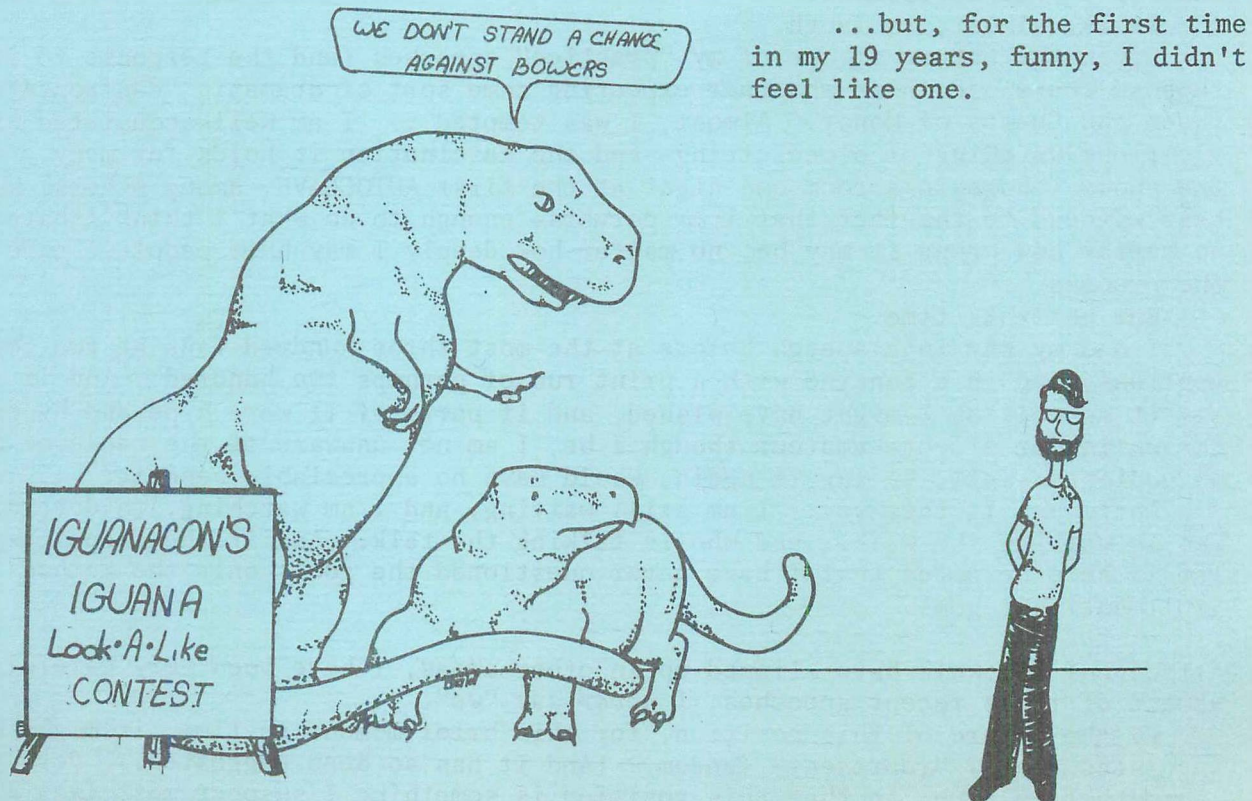
I arrived at Travis Air Force Base Labor Day morning of 1968...but I couldn't get discharged until the next day.

I had come home, but not in time to get to the largest annual gathering of my people, my friends. So close, yet so far... I think that made it worse than coming home any other day of the year.

Sitting in that barracks that day, I couldn't help identifying with the title of the Hugo-winning novel of my first Worldcon.

Sixteen years ago this weekend, there was another World Science Fiction Convention going on. It seemed huge to me, but "The Proceedings" assure me that there were only about 700 people there. It was my first convention: CHICON III.

...and the Hugo-winning novel of that year was, of course, *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND*.



...but, for the first time in my 19 years, funny, I didn't feel like one.



Two years ago. Etc. Kansas City; Big MAC. Friday night. Late.

I wandered into the Phoenix bidding suite, and Diane Drutowski said: "Congratulations."

I said, "...for what?"

"We won."

"That's nice," I said, "but what does it mean to me?"

"...you mean they didn't *tell* you!?!"

Later, when I recovered, I remembered to ask who the pro Guest of Honor was going to be. When I was told I said, among other things: "Good...he'll get all the attention, and I'll be able to relax and enjoy myself."

Of course, at that time, I didn't realize just *how* he would command that attention...

Labor Day weekend. 1978.

It's been an...*interesting*...two years for me. In many ways.

Alternately flattered at the prospect of being here, sharing this stage, with this man, tonight...and scared to death at the mere thought of it. It hasn't been easy...and there have been times when I was convinced I *wouldn't* be here...but it seems that I am.

And now, in a very few minutes, when this is over, I will be able to relax for the first time in two years. And that is something, no matter how great this honor (and it is) that I look forward to very much. And that is something that is also a bit frightening...

Who knows...maybe I'll go back to doing what I do best: Fancy, semi-pretentious fanzines...

But in the meantime, I stand here, having been dubbed the champion of frivolous socially-unredeeming fannish conventions.

I suppose, given my commitment to "mindless partying, not shaking things up, being a nice, quiet, hypocritical amusement", that has motivated my work for sixteen years, that is a fair assessment.

It is, almost, to laugh.

Given the nature of one of my "practice" speeches (and the response to it), I suppose there are those who came expecting some sort of dramatic "confrontation" between the Guests of Honor. Almost, I was tempted... I am well-acquainted with the vicarious watching of bloodletting--and the fascination it holds for many. And there are those (those in a room one night at the first AUTOCLAVE, among others) who will bear witness to the fact that I *am* perverse enough to do what I think I have to do, no matter how wrong it may be, no matter how deeply I may hurt people I care for in the process.

But not this time.

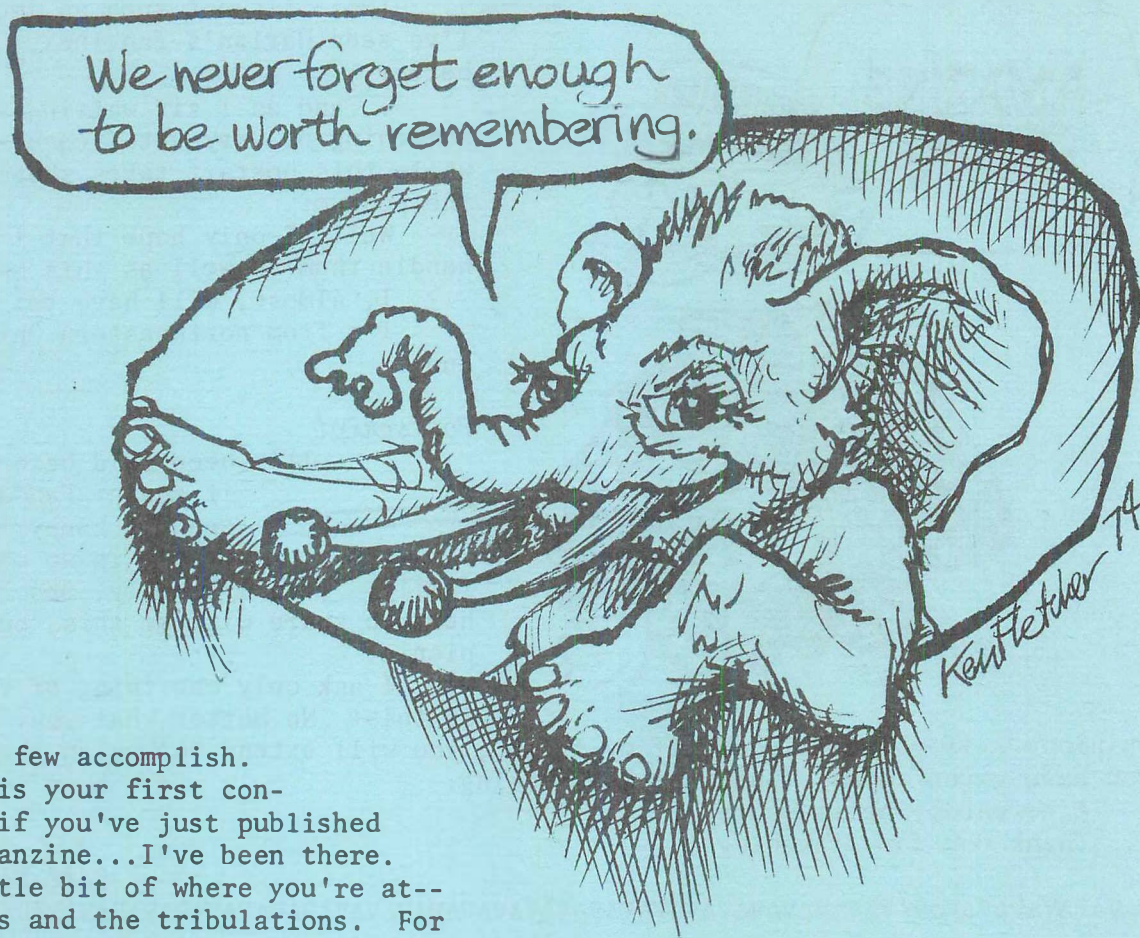
I had my say in a speech before at the most three hundred fans at two small conventions, and in a fanzine with a print run of perhaps two hundred. And if I didn't say it as well as I might have wished, and if parts of it were hype and hyperbole thrown in for effect--amateur though I be, I am not unaware of the value of playing to an audience--well, to say it again, would have no appreciable benefit.

Let's put it this way: I am still waiting, and I am watching, to determine just who is walking the walk...and who is talking the talk. And if the skepticism shows, let it here be noted that I have never questioned the goal: only the methods chosen to implement that goal.

Although I may well have slipped up in other areas, I have been very careful in one aspect of these recent speeches: I *never* say "we".

By the nature of this position, for this brief moment in time, it might be suggested that I "represent" fandom. (And it has so been suggested.) Perhaps, in a sense that is true, in that this position is something I suspect most fans aspire





towards, but few accomplish.

If this is your first convention, or if you've just published your first fanzine...I've been there. I know a little bit of where you're at--both the joys and the tribulations. For each one it is the same, but for each one it is totally new.

I still don't know *why* I'm here--though I probably do deserve it--and I am very well aware, even though I may not always show it, that I wouldn't be here if it were not for all those neat people who wrote and drew for my fanzines, if it weren't for those few who had to put up with me as I did them, and if it weren't for the very special few, my friends, who have held me together, in and around everything else.

These people need no cause to justify themselves to me.

What I am trying to say is this: I do not pretend to speak for anyone else other than Bill Bowers.

And *no* one, other than I, speaks for Bill Bowers.

No matter how good, or noble, or necessary, the cause.

I say this with no malice whatsoever: I envy those who have their act together enough to comprehend the vast inequities that *do* exist in this world, this country, this state...this very room. And, even if I do reserve the right to, always, question, I do admire those with the courage of their convictions to fight for those goals necessary to write those wrongs.

But, as for me...

At the moment I'm still working, very slowly, sometimes painfully, on the simple process of coexisting with myself: of resolving the inequities that exist between what was drilled into me that I should be, and what in reality, I am. And once I accomplish that, and I will--you will never encounter anyone more stubborn than I--and then attempt to learn the fine art of relating to others as total individuals, because you are, each and every one of you...why, then, perhaps...

Labor Day weekend. Say ten or fifteen years from now.

When I stand before you again...

...as the PRO Guest of Honor.







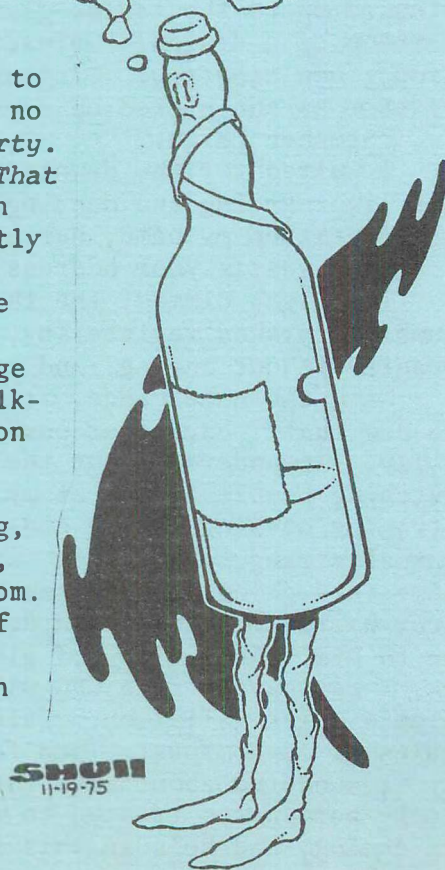
the then-current issue of *IASFM* contained one of my efforts. I'd received some kind letters from andy offutt commenting on the *Analog* stories, and I was aware that he was generally at Midwestcon--and I'd been intending to go to Midwestcon in any event: it was nearby, I could always retreat back home if it were something exceeding boring, and I would finally see what a con-ven-tion was like. The fact that Dale Tarr and Michael Banks, two local fans, had called to ask if I were the Stephen Leigh that had just had a story in *IASFM* only strengthened that resolution. I was *known*. People involved with the convention had asked if I were attending. Yes, I would go. Yes.

But I wasn't a fan. I knew nothing of fandom.

Banks had invited me to a pre-convention party on Thursday evening at the hotel. Yes, I told him, I'd be there. He gave me the room number and approximate time. Thursday evening found me, then, in the lobby of the Norwood Quality Inn--about a ten-minute drive from my apartment. Nervous and hesitating as usual, I tried to look as if I belonged there, for the clerk at the desk had accusatory, predatory eyes that wandered about the lobby in search of unwanted carrion, and those eyes glanced at me often. I ruminated, shriving myself of stupid questions. Why had I come? I didn't know any of those people. What if neither Tarr nor Banks was at the party? What would I say to this room full of strangers? "Hi. I'm Steve Leigh. Hesitation. The blond giant holding the door stares at me in dumb question and thumbs the keen edge of his battleaxe. I stammer in confusion. "Uh, a Dale Tarr called, you see, well, he didn't invite me to the, uhh, party... I mean, Banks did, and..." More confused looks from the giant. He licks blood from his slashed thumb and glances at it meaningfully. "Banks?" he says, finally. "Never heard of him. Now git." I looked at the fellow denizens of the lobby, the impressions of their faces slowly making their way through the paranoia filter that hangs between myself and the rest of humanity. Are these sf people? I ask myself. The older gentleman in the suit coat and pants that don't match, a dusting of cigarette ashes coating the rough fabric--is he perhaps a Famous Author? I shrugged my shoulders, attempted to be unobtrusive, and walked down the corridor toward the room, visions of unfriendly giants before me.

Outside the room, then. I leaned against the wall opposite the door and looked at the brass numbers tacked to the plywood. Yes, they match. But there were no signs, no clues giving further verification. Steve--here's the party. Or--SFWA members welcome. Or--Midwestcon Advance Party That You Were Invited To. I would have even been content with the improper grammar of the last. Listening--body slightly inclined toward the door, but not so far that I couldn't straighten up guiltily if someone hove into view down the hall--I could hear murmured conversation. Laughter. Unrecognizable voices. I gathered all my resident courage and walked back into the lobby. Cigarette Ash is talking to a wide, short woman in a red smock. She wheezes on the couch like a broken, blood-stained radiator. She laughed overmuch and hysterically. I smiled at the vulture-eyed clerk, showing my obvious sense of belonging, and walked downstairs. Busboys were putting chairs away, and I glanced at the bulletinboards outside the party room. A realtor's meeting. A wedding reception. No mention of Midwestcon. *AM I IN THE RIGHT PLACE?* I went back upstairs, undecided. Cigarette Ash and Red Smock have been joined by The Beard--a younger man with an extraordinary growth of facial hair. I carefully cemented an intent and serious frown on my face as I strode down the hall toward the party room once more. People were still talking inside. I raised my closed fist, knowing that

**DEMON ALCOHOL  
INDEED!**





this time I would really knock, and closed my eyes in preparation and found that when I knocked I only hit open air back in the lobby. Cigarette Ash was gone, though Red Smock and The Beard were holding an animated conversation. I smiled at the clerk as I walked from the lobby and out the door. I went home. End of Day One.

Second Day: Friday Noon. I returned to the scene of last night's defeat. The lobby was full of people now, groups of them wandering about, while a knot of serious faces sat on the ring of couches bordering a coffee table burdened with full ashtrays. Again the question--are these sf people? I saw Cigarette Ash getting on an elevator and almost smiled to him. *Old friend, remember me?* Sf people? I walked slowly about the perimeter of the room, seeing if I could detect that elusive, aberrant strain in their words that proclaimed them readers of science fiction. No, the dominant topic was politics and the hot weather. I went back to the room that had held last night's party, but the door was shut and nothing could be heard on the far side of the wood--though as I walked back to the lobby a person bearing a tremendous armload of styro-foam cups walks past me and into that room. He looks like an overgrown panda with glasses. Sf?

I wandered downstairs, and there found the first tangible evidence that this was the convention and not a gathering of the Teamsters. A sign shone in the firmament: Midwestcon Registration. Huckster Room. I breathed an audible sigh of satisfaction cum trepidation, and entered the indicated room. Three people blocked the entrance, talking loudly of some con they'd put on years before. They looked at me as I sidled past--and here I noticed that when one sees another person whose face is not familiar, one looks at his/her chest. I realized that I lacked the one accouterment that made this tradition viable in our society--the name badge. I moved to rectify that error. At the registration table was a lady with one of the most interesting faces I've yet to see--she looked, at alternate moments and sometimes at once, either twenty or fifty. She smiled, one of those rare smiles that appear to be at home in the muscles of the face. I had to smile in return--poor payment. To her left was a bearded man with a stack of magazines bulwarking him from the common run of humanity. *Quantum*. I stepped up to the table, glanced at the name badges they wore, adorned with a too-cute cartoon of a dragon. Grimacing at the artwork, I read the names. *Cincinnati Fantasy Group: Bea Mahaffey. Cincinnati Fantasy Group: Al Curry -- Quantum*. Ms. CFG asked my name as she picked up a pen. The moment had come. I licked dry lips, and spoke.

"Stephen Leigh."

I waited for the dawning of recognition on her face, the thunder from the heavens, the light arcing and dancing in the skies. *Author! Author!* Bea glanced up from where she'd written my name, her eyes aglow, and said...

"And what's your address?"

The light dimmed, the thunder faded into the burping of last night's supper. I humbly finished registering, gave Mr. CFG my money, politely looked through a stack of *Quanta* without buying, and went back upstairs.

With the name badge, it will be different, I told myself. Everyone will talk to me now that I have that powerful talisman. I am part of the convention. Such is folly. I wandered about the lobby, doing a fair imitation of the Flying Dutchman, and watching people glance at my chest, roll their eyes back in inward contemplation, and striking nothing, shrug and walk past. Bodies with their attached names flitted by in mutual strangeness. Then, with a shock of familiarity--like stumbling across your name in a phone book--I saw DALE TARR printed in neat block letter, attached to a grey-haired man holding a drink. He didn't appear particularly fearsome, so I went up to him. And--glory of glories--he recalled talking to me. Praise what gods there be, I was saved! The CFG will forever have Dale to ~~blame~~ thank for having rescued me from a quick gafiation. Dale and I talked for a while, and he entertained me with tales of fandom past. Then followed the Period of Introduction, with Dale as mentor.

I wandered about with Dale, and whenever he ran across someone he knew, that unlucky person was treated to an introduction. "This is Steve Leigh. He's had stories in *Analog*, and he's in this issue of *Asimov's SF*." I'd smile modestly, nod or shake



hands, and immediately lose my grasp of that other person's name. At one point, we were sitting on a couch when Gordie Dickson, Robert Asprin in tow, walked by on his way to the bar. Dale blockaded Dickson and performed the famous introduction. I looked modestly at the floor--wondering what I could say and not appear a total fool --when Asprin exclaimed to the world "Hey, Look! He's blushing!" If I hadn't been doing so before, I did now. I could feel the heat on my cheeks. I mumbled something or other and was very grateful when Dickson and Asprin went quickly on their way. Embarrassing.

It was about that time that offutt arrived. Dale saw him first, suggested we go say hello to him. I demurred, not feeling up to a second humiliation quite so quickly. Dale went over as offutt checked in, while I remained on the couch at the far end of the lobby. I crossed my legs, leaned back.

A call shattered the air.

Dale. "Hey, Steve. Over here." I looked up to see him standing next to andy, waving. I sighed, resignedly, and walked over to them. *Oh, hell. What do I say now? Offutt's the damn SFWA president. He doesn't want to talk to every neo-pro in the world...*

I shook hands with andy and smiled. I thanked him for the encouragement his letters had given me--yah, I had that much to say, at least--and he shrugged my thanks away. And I abruptly could think of absolutely nothing else to say. I didn't care to sound inane or boorish--that was the last impression I cared to leave him with. So I said something that sounded rather inane and boorish and excused myself, feeling more than vaguely stupid. This was not going well. Not at all. *Get out of here, kid. We don't allow mental defectives at science fiction conventions. I don't want to see your face around here again. Hear me?* The life of a recluse begins to seem more and more attractive. I mumbled old latin prayers. A monk. That'd be good--preferably a Trappist. Vows of silence, you know. I wouldn't have to speak at all, couldn't ever sound like a mental five-year-old.

I went downstairs, checked the setting-up of the art room, decided I didn't like most of the art, and went back upstairs. After performing my famous wallflower imitation for a time, I left. I gave the congregation a blessing from the doorway. My robes rustled softly, and I fingered the beads of my rosary with reverence.

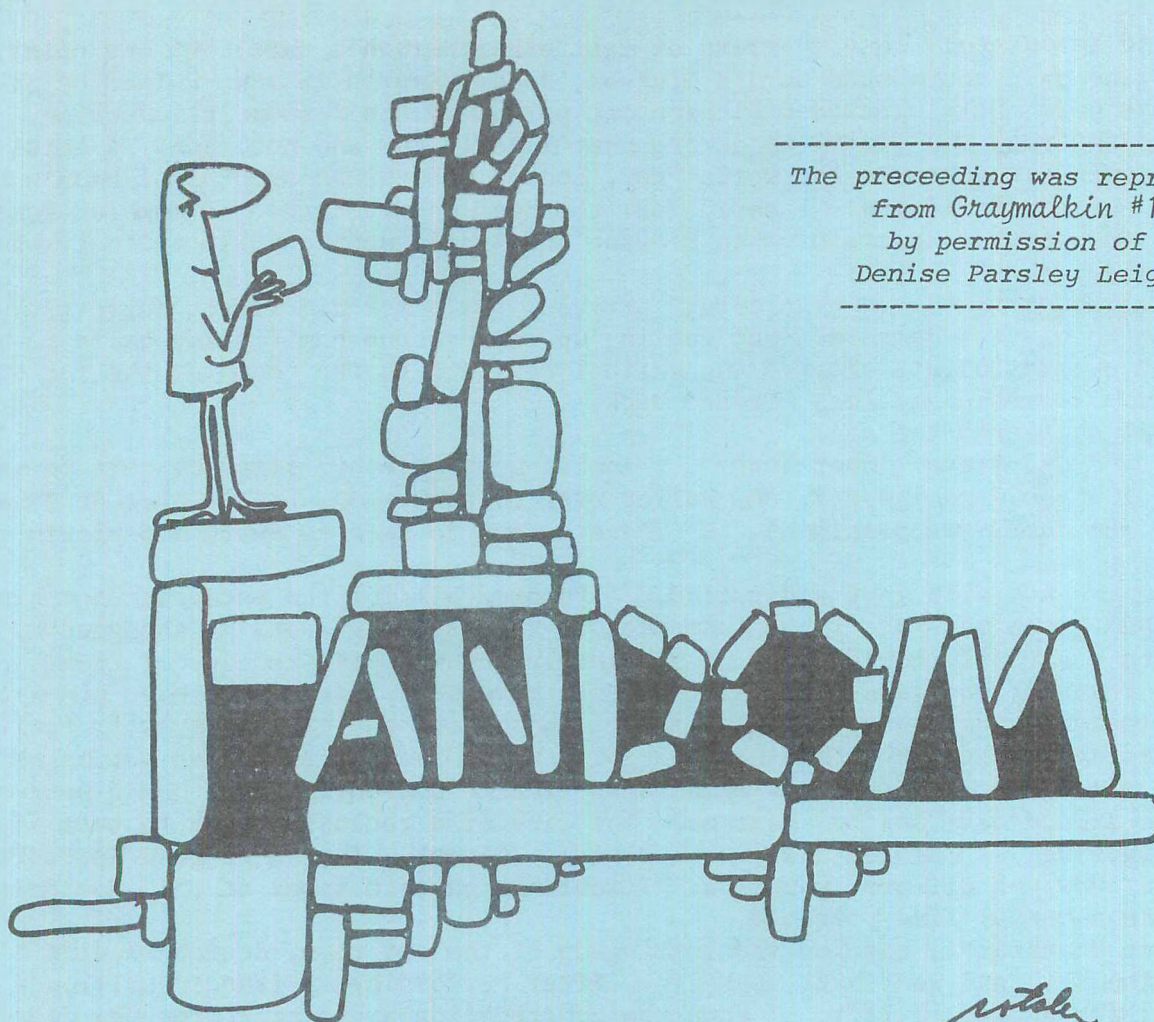
That night, I brought Denise to the con--not an altruistic gesture on my part at all. Denise is a social creature. Strangers are, to her, just friends waiting to be met. And--as I thought she might--she proceeded to fit in as if she'd been a fan all her life. In five minutes, she met more people and had more conversations than I'd managed in three and a half hours that afternoon. We stood/sat in the CFG suite and talked to those revelers there--err, in the interest of accuracy, *Denise* talked and I listened, throwing in the odd line or two. She registered with Bea and we stayed much longer than we'd anticipated after I'd given her my description of the con that afternoon. I even began enjoying myself.

The next night, I had to play at a local club. Denise went back to the con. She must have done well, by all the varied second-hand reports I heard at later dates. She managed to finagle her way into the banquet and sit at Gay and Joe Haldeman's table, met many of the CFG people we now (reluctantly) call friends, got drunk, was attacked by the familiar of a certain tall (well, not *short...*) BNF, and in general had a hell of a time. I wish I knew how she does that so easily--and when do I get to see all those incriminating photos everyone claims they took?

All of the above meant that by Sunday afternoon, all I needed to do was stay in Denise's vicinity and meet all those people I'd seen but not talked with. Sunday was a *good* day. We sat around the pool and chatted with Sally Sellers, andy offutt, Al Curry, and Ric Bergman. Bill Cavin surfaced from the pool long enough to give a wet hellow--Bill, for good or ill, is one of the most amiable creatures it has been my pleasure to meet. We contacted a plethora of people that I've come to know better in later times, though they were at the time, more a quickly-moving blur of faces that I only badly managed to match with names. I enjoyed Sunday. I finally, grudgingly, enjoyed Midwestcon.

Huh, I'll be damned, I muttered to myself, leaving the hotel that evening. Yes, replied that implacable voice next to me, you probably will. - --Steve Leigh





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 Denise Parsley Leigh  
 -----

I met Denise Parsley Leigh the Saturday night after that Midwestcon -- at Hap's Irish Pub--a hole in the wall establishment frequented by some of the lesser luminaries in Cincinnati fandom: Al & Tanya Curry, Ric Bergman...

There was some initial nonsense about how my extremely friendly cat (dubbed "Bill Bowers' Responsibility", (c) 1976 by Leah A Zeldes) having "attacked" Denise by the Midwestcon pool the previous weekend--but once I explained that 'Sponse had much better taste, we got along fine.

The following night I had a 4th of July party, and Denise brought Steve along... I adopted them (or was adopted by them) for their next couple of cons...and I was lucky enough to find two very cherished friends.

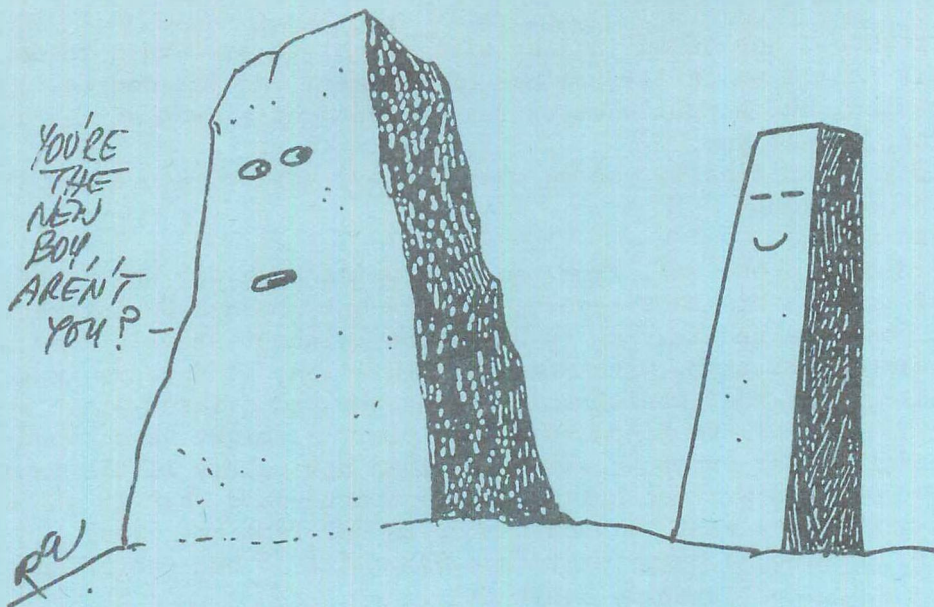
On occasion, I am asked how I managed to "land" a certain piece that I have published. Sometimes the implications are that I have done something devious. Well...

Denise has known for some time that I would like to have Steve write for me, but that I wouldn't ask him. Several reasons for that. I was not about to take him away from his pro writing. (It's not that I'm particularly noble: I want him to succeed for very selfish reasons.) Another: other than what you've just read, and a piece in the second *Graymalkin*, I'd not read any of Steve's non-fiction work. And although the Stephen Leigh that I've read to date in *Analog* and *Asimov's* is good--not great, but with definite promises of things to come--that is no assurance that he could write material fit for fanzines. In particular, my fanzines! Apologies, but priorities are priorities, after all. Besides, I didn't know what to ask him to write about: I very rarely make "assignments". What I've said in the past is this: Do what you do best...and if I like it, I'll publish it...and do my best with it.









I'm trying to cram everything into this one day. I guess I'm too used to only making one or two days of the cons."

"I know. I feel the same way. We should slow down--there's four days left, anyway. We'll get bored if we keep up this pace."

"Huh." (Remarkably articulate, am I.) "What're we going to *do* in all those spare hours?" I grinned lecherously, one eye closed against the sun.

Denise squeezed my hand. Very hard. As bones cracked, the lights changed.

We were both wrong. There wasn't nearly enough time.

...giggling and Eric's tequila: the CFG suite ~~late one night~~ early one morning. There was a veritable host of people on the one double bed in the room, though not quite the excessive number that certain femmefans would claim. For the completists among you: Eric Lindsay (in spirits, at least), Mike Glicksohn (and you *do* remember *this* night, don't you, Mike?), Denise, Suzi Stefl, Joan Hanke-Woods, Bill Cavin, Mike (Teddybear) Farinelli, Linda Moss, and myself. Someone insisted upon making atrocious puns about our clothed encounter, and both Denise and Suzi kept insisting to Eric (and his prehensile toes) that "women aren't ticklish *there*." Then the sun groaned and complained as it hoisted itself over the eastern mountains, and everyone went briefly silent.

Except, of course, for the one member of the concom--Ed Sunderman--who'd been sleeping on the couch through the debauchery. He snored. Loudly.

...the Symphony Hall was far too warm, and I felt uncomfortable sitting in the front rows with the potential Hugo winners. I kept waiting for some officious little bastard from the concom--the one with the sweaty dark hair plastered to his low forehead and the glasses that kept slipping down his priggish nose--to announce that there'd been a mistake and Bowers had no right to secure us seats in this section. We'd occasionally see the curtains to the wings part momentarily as Bill or Mike Glicksohn gave the audience previews of their magestrial robes--they never smiled at those times, and I wondered at such strenuous solemnity. Then Bill emerged to give his speech. I found Denise's hand and held it. Bill cleared his throat, ruffled the pages, and smiled lopsidedly at the footlights. He spoke: no, that implies a smooth delivery. Rather, he fought and clawed his way through the words he'd written. I turned to Denise and asked--was he always that nervous? She shook her head and told me that this was a vast improvement over the practice speeches, and Patty Peters and Bill Breiding nodded agreement. Bill, I love you but you're not a public speaker... I vainly wished for a pair of scissors so that I could snip that forelock that insisted on finding a home in front of his eyes, and I hoped that he could feel the warmth directed toward him from his rooting section. Bill does *write* a good speech.

Outside the hall, after the ceremonies had groaned to a halt, Bill, Mike, and Marla Gold emerged from the stage entrance. Bill seemed--incredibly--taller than is



his normal wont, and he was smiling. His relief was tangible. It made the Phoenix heat less oppressive. Denise kissed, I hugged. Everyone grinned foolishly, and Mike suggested a drink.

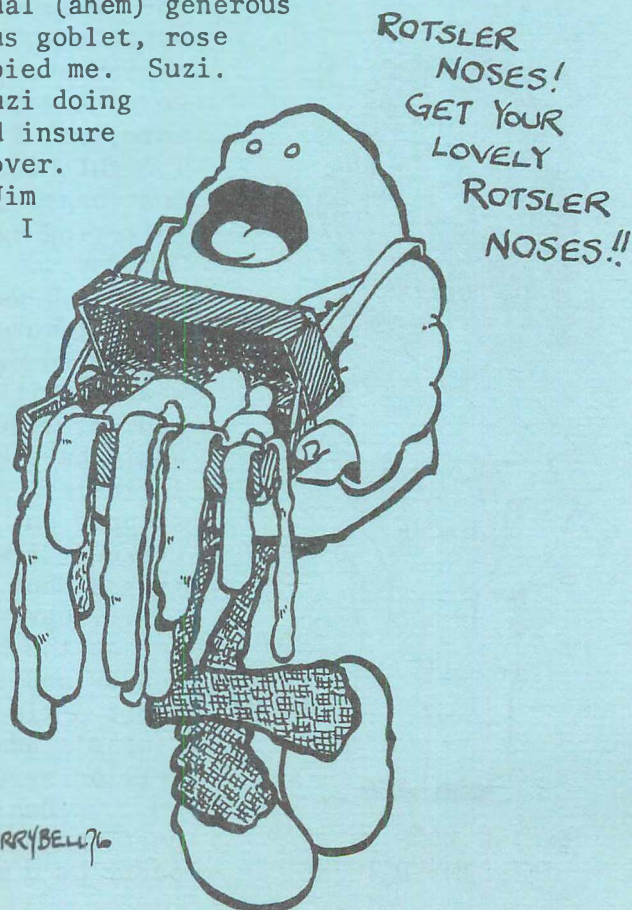
...and, of course, the Dell suite was far too crowded. Spider and Jeanne Robinson had mentioned the party to me and asked if I were attending. I told them I hadn't planned on it--in truth, I didn't *know* about it, and was simply hedging my ignorance--but said, well, I might be there. I went with one simple purpose. I wanted to congratulate the two of them for their Stardance Hugo. Damn, but I do like the feeling when something *I* feel deserving wins the award, and Stardance was the only Hugo vote I made. But there, in the crowded suite, I felt the old syndrome, the one I'd hoped was still lurking among the underwear in the luggage of our room--GODS I DON'T KNOW ANYONE AT ALL WHY AM I HERE AND WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW? People stared at what Bowers insisted on calling my red badge of courage and then walked by, obviously not recognizing me or my name--understandable, after all. One drunkard, err, *person*, blue-badged himself (he noted arrogantly) stopped dead in front of me, his drink spilling over his flaccid hand, and stared at the name writ there on my chest. His head described ellipses in the air as he weaved slowly. He looked up at my face, raised his eyebrows, and sniffed audibly--how does one maintain a cold in Phoenix? Then he shrugged and walked away in much the same manner as the knight moves in chess, wiping his damp hand on his pants.

(And time for a brief aside: I discovered at Iggy that most people, seeing my name without having heard me pronounce it, say "Lee." Wrong. Pronounce this: sleigh. Now hack off the 's'. Right. Or this: neighbor. Eschew the initial 'n' and make it an 'l'. Now carefully prune away the 'bor'. Right again. Alltogethernow, class. Leigh. As in Lay.)

Spider chose that moment to stroll into the room (relief!) and, simply because I was nearest the door, I managed to speak to him briefly. Still, this was his night and I didn't feel as if I should monopolize it to any extent. I made my congratulations short and left him drift away in the tidal flow of the room, thinking I might as well leave and try to find the others. But as I turned to leave, a familiar face, draped below in an evening gown--with her usual (ahem) generous cleavage--and one hand clutching an ubiquitous goblet, rose from the general confusion of the room and espied me. Suzi. (Again: relief!) We talked for some time, Suzi doing her best to perform as a surrogate Denise and insure that I didn't suddenly scream and bolt for cover. I told her that I'd intended to try to find Jim Baen, as he'd just bought one of my stories. I *did* intend to meet him, but somehow never managed to be in the same room with him. Suzi made a few unsuccessful forays into the crowded depths of the suite, but to no avail. My idiotic paranoia grew despite Suzi's ministrations, and I made my excuses. I left, kicking myself. I remembered leaving the bar, telling Denise, no, I'd really rather scout it out on my own...

Denise and Bill went up to the party later, after I'd retreated to our room, and *they* had a quite enjoyable time partying with Rotsler, Stephen Donaldson, and (of course) Jim Baen. Of course.

...then Andy Offutt came over and asked if I wanted to have coffee with him in the restaurant. Sure, I said, mildly startled. Both Andy and Jodie are people whose company I enjoy, but are also people with which I have little sense of intimacy--





this not through any fault of their own. For whatever reasons, I can't seem to force myself to get closer, to go beyond the most superficial of social anemities--for the preceeding sentence, read "I don't yet feel comfortable in their presence." Still, Jodie made one of the more pleasant memories of the '78 Midwestcon by ambling over to my chair and simply talking with me for fifteen minutes or so. Ask Denise... I tend to be in awe of women that are handsome both mentally and physically--it's too rare and pleasing a combination. And--even though this may be an odd coincidence--I recall Andy leaning over and whispering in Rotsler's ear at Iggy, immediately after which Rotsler reached into his carton and proceeded to make me a namebadge.

I like the Offutts. A lot. I just don't know them very well. But the coffee made for a pleasant hour and went a long way toward easing my, ahh, shyness in Andy's presence. A truly friendly gesture, that. My thanks, Andy. I'll buy you a beer next con.

...unbelievably (except, in all likelihood, to those that know them well), Spider and Jeanne came up and introduced themselves to me as we were standing outside some anonymous panel. After getting over the initial shock of someone who is "known" actually speaking to me first, we managed a passable conversation--I had, in any case, quite a lot to say to the two of them, most of it favorable. Stardance had rammed a sucker punch through to my emotions. I don't cry that often. So... talking with the two of them, I found a sudden, burgeoning empathy. My subconscious kept sending folded-up pieces of paper to my brain which, unfolded, read: hey, dummy, I like these people. Who makes people like this, and will he, she, or it please make several more? They remind me of what Denise and I kindly refer to as 'old hippies', a versatile term that is either derogatory or complimentary depending on the type. In short, people still clinging--perhaps semi-disillusioned now--to the idealism rampant in the late sixties and early seventies. Uh, people much like Denise and I.

...I'd always wanted to meet/see Chip Delaney--I consider him to be one of the best poets (read: word-arrangers) extant. His short stories are sparkling and complete gestalts, his novels... well, I don't find them quite so successful. I read them with mixed awe and frustration. And he hides even better than I. The closest we came to seeing him was at the tail end of a panel that Denise and I stumbled across. The man is articulate and obviously intelligent (yes, the sercon in me coming out. Damn, I am serious about sf being literature) and I suddenly realized that were I ever to meet him, I might become a blathering idiot reduced to muttering the most banal of banalities, or a boor out to bolster a faltering ego by spouting esoteric litspeak at the author. Someday...

...I was riding the elevator up to our room so that I could remove my Analog AnLab Winner t-shirt. I'd put it on simply to prove to certain skeptics that I could indeed wear it without it being forced on me--I had little recourse, since the threat of retaliation to my not wearing it would have been carried out with righteous glee by the infidels. A few unknown fans rode up with me. As I stepped out at my floor, one turned to the other and remarked: "I wouldn't brag about it if I were him." The door hissed shut.

...leave-takings hurt. Suzi and Dotti and Denise and I sat at the breakfast table and tried to pretend it wasn't Monday and that we didn't have to leave. Dotti, in far too short a time, had carved a large niche for herself in Denise's admittedly generous heart. We laughed when she spilled syrup on the table.

...Denise and I were waiting with Bowers for the airport shuttle bus. Bill was talking about the Dead Dog party he'd attended the night before, and the woman he'd



DENISE MADE ME WEAR  
THE DAMNED THING.











meeting him, I probably wouldn't be able to speak to him this day: I'm in literal awe of the depth of the man's work.)

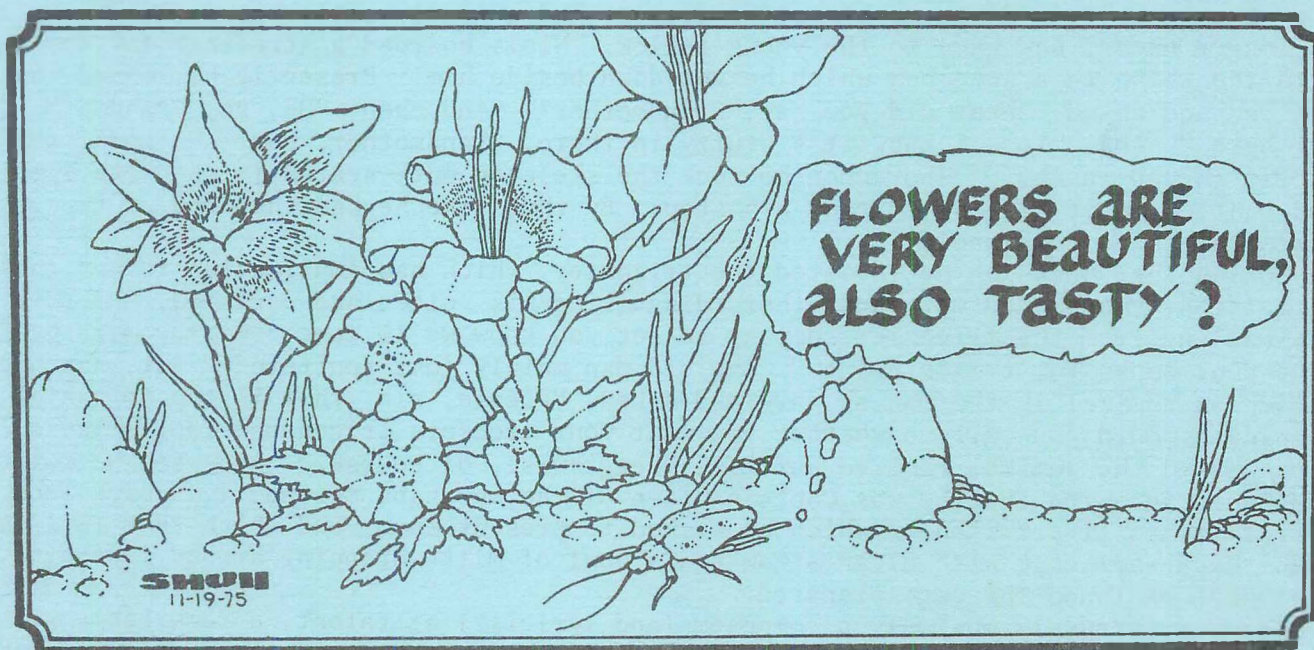
I went to IGUANACON really wanting to meet one author, someone whose work I'd only recently discovered...proceeding to go through the entire published canon virtually non-stop, enjoying myself tremendously. I made the "mistake" of mentioning this to Rusty Hevelin...and he introduced me to C. J. Cherryh. And I was totally speechless.

Poul Anderson has been sending *BEER MUTTERINGS* to me, for a few years now. And I've encountered him at several conventions over those years. He's always been friendly, and obviously willing to talk. But I find myself unable to talk to him, other than glancingly.

I don't know... Part of it is the respect I have for wordsmiths: those people who can put strings of alphabetic characters down on paper and have them come out not only coherently, but in such a manner even I can understand. (The "intermission" type of material in this issue I find [now; it hasn't been that way long] relatively easy to do: mainly because in essence it's all extremely self-centered.) Another reason I have trouble talking to the authors-I-admire is this: I don't know how you do it, but I *don't* remember details...certainly not details like plot, character's names, and themes. When I read a work of fiction I, very simply, remember only whether I enjoyed it or not. I bring no critical facilities to most of the things that I read: that takes up too large a portion of other areas of my life, for me to be able to bring it to fiction, music, or art.

I have this continual nightmare of walking up to an author, saying I really enjoyed your latest story--and being hit with the eternal question: "Why?" (I know that creators need valid feedback; it's just that they're going to have to get it from sources other than myself.)

The writers I can talk to--Steve, Joe, George, a very few others--well, we rarely talk about writing. In particular we very rarely talk about what they have written, except on the most superficial of levels.



A long, long time ago, Poul sent me two "BM's" at once. One appeared in OW 28/29. The second one I felt guilty about holding so long, so I published it in the first issue of my personalzine, for a very limited audience. I'm re-printing it here not only because I feel it deserves the wider exposure but also because, by far, it is my favorite *BEER MUTTERINGS* to date...



POUL ANDERSON  
-----  
BEER MUTTERINGS  
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A few evenings back, down in Brennan's bar, a chap was telling about some medical treatment he'd once gotten. It was interesting--a war story, actually. But of course most iatric experiences make dismal conversation. Only three of mine seem worth relating.

One occurred several years ago, when after spending a night in considerable pain I had Karen drive me down to a local doctor. He examined me, said that I appeared to have a broken rib, and asked how that had happened. "Well," I told him, "yesterday I was fighting in a tourney, and didn't move my shield quite fast enough to stop the other guy's sword...." I still wonder if he believed me. Whether or no, it probably made his day.

Long before that, in adolescence, I had to have an appendectomy. This was in a small Midwestern farming community, and the doctor there was a bluff, hearty scion of that land. While preparing me, he remarked that it was simpler with small children. "Okay, I'll remember that in my next incarnation," I said. He pondered for a moment, then observed, "Yeah, I guess we have to believe in reincarnation. Some animals are so dumb they can only have been human."

And in between, as an impecunious bachelor visiting relatives in Denmark, I fell pretty sick. The physician who came around to see me was a cousin of my mother, and had shown me magnificent, often hilarious hospitality. He opined that I needed an antibiotic and took out his large needle. "Uh, look," I said in an embarrassed fashion, "friendship is friendship but business is business. I do expect to get a bill for this." He answered, "You'd let me stand you a beer, wouldn't you? All right, I'm standing you a shot of penicillin. Roll over."

It is him I would like to reminisce about. Niels Henrik Bording (not his real name) was a big, handsome man, irresistible to everybody. As a student, he pulled a number of inspired practical jokes. For instance, he needed a skeleton to study bones, and my maternal grandfather, himself a doctor, had a nicely articulated one which he no longer needed and gave to the young fellow. Niels boarded a streetcar for home with the thing in a long box which he set down beside him. Presently he leaned toward the box and asked, "What did you say, Grandmother?" And then: "Oh, no, Grandmother, not here." And: "Yes, I know it's stuffy in there, Grandmother, but --" And finally: "Well, if you insist." Whereupon he took the skeleton out, seated it opposite him, and chatted to it till he reached his stop. By that time he had that end of the streetcar quite to himself.

On another occasion he invented the trigonier, which has implication rather than definition. He phoned my grandfather, disguising his voice, and declared, "Dr. Hertz, I'm calling from the trigonier company to let you know we'll come tomorrow morning to take your books for trigoniering." The old man mainly just sputtered. But when Niels called an admiral in the Danish navy and asked, "Please, sir, this is the trigonier company. Could you tell me whether you want your trousers trigoniered lengthwise or crossways?" the admiral replied huffily, "Lengthwise, of course." And when he notified the Copenhagen zoo that he was Captain Olsen of the merchant marine, just back from Africa with a live trigonier which he wished to present them, and which they realized required a warm cage with clean straw and a bowl of milk--dropping around incognito next day, he found the cage prepared.

He was intensely musical, a composer (and lyricist) of talent, a remarkable performer on paino, guitar, and much else. When I first met him, as a boy visiting before the war, he won my adoration by producing notes out of his pipe and a sprinkling can. His voice wasn't great, but the verve with which he sang more than made up for that. He was very active in Visens Venner, a pan-Scandinavian organization devoted to rendering ballads old and new--not the artsy-fartsy sort of thing you get around college towns, but a recreation of real people. He especially loved the eighteenth-

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century Swedish poet Carl Michael Bellman, whose *Fredmans Epistler* contains some of finest, most Dionysiac song ever written. I treasure four tapes of music which Niels gave to my mother and she had copied for me. Someday I want to write out good enough translations of the best words therein that it will be possible to share them with friends over here.

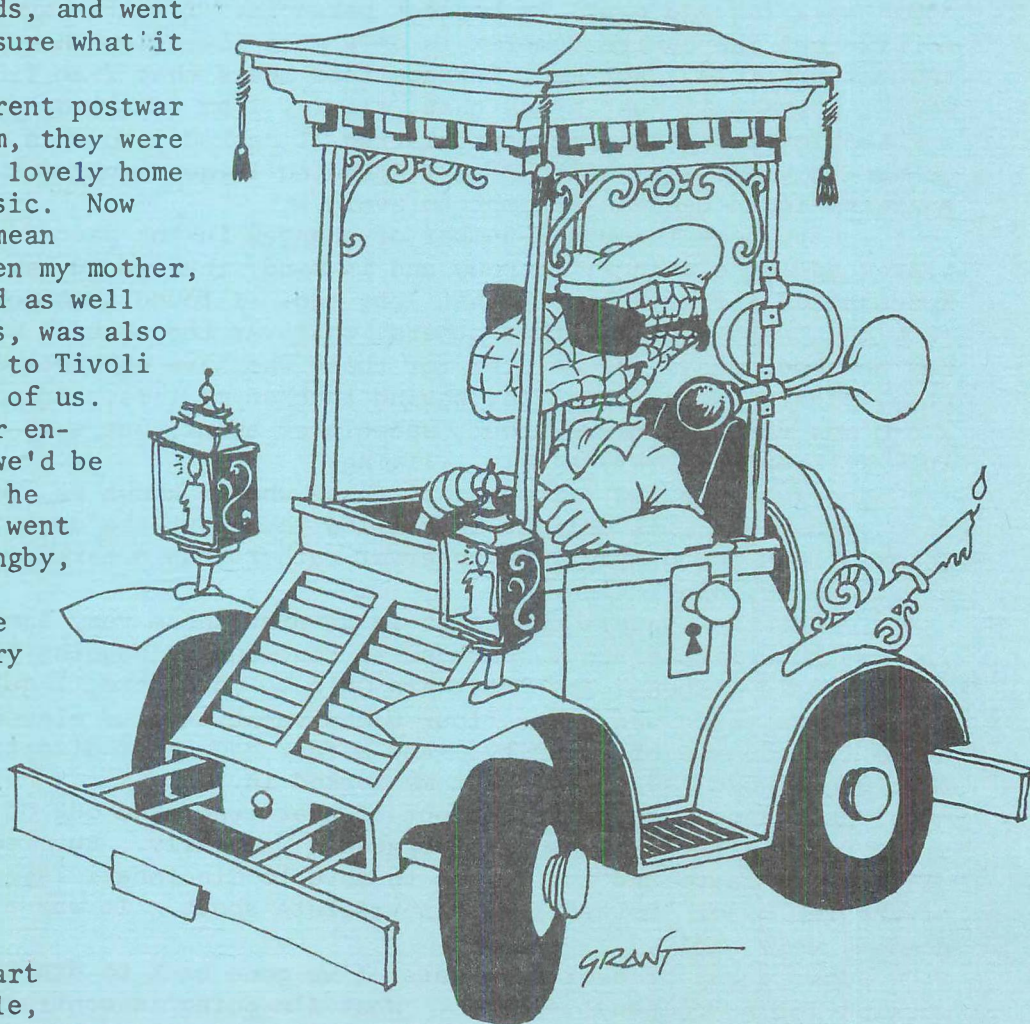
Visiting not long after the war and staying with my aunt, I met a man who had been in the anti-Nazi underground and asked him if he had ever met Dr. Bording. "No," he answered, "but I did steal his car a few times." It turned out that, during the occupation, only automobiles with medical license plates might go freely about. Niels used to remark where he could be heard, "I'm terribly forgetful. I keep leaving my car parked in the street, unlocked, with the key in the ignition. Oh, if, say, an illegal outfit should take it for transportation, I do hope they'll bring it back by sunrise so I can visit my patients."

This was the real underground, membership in which could cost you your life. I resent the appropriation of the word by those who merely whine about having to live in a free country.

Various other things Niels did--I'm not quite sure what, because he never bragged about it afterward--finally caused the Germans to throw him into a prison camp. He did later tell how grim it was to be lined up from time to time and hear the list read, alphabetically, of those who would next be sent off to do slave labor. As it happened, "Bording" was never called. And he was not involved in a disturbance which caused a number of the prisoners to be sentenced one day to duckwalk till they dropped. But he had his guitar with him, and played and sang to hearten then the whole while.

His wife was Norwegian, a tall and beautiful woman with the spirit of a gentle Valkyrie. She wanted to visit him but couldn't get a pass. So she swept up to the entrance, waved her meat ration book under the eyes of the guards, and went on before they were sure what it really was.

In the two different postwar years when I saw them, they were living serenely in a lovely home full of books and music. Now "serenely" does not mean "sedately". Once when my mother, who was a dear friend as well as kinswoman of Niels, was also on hand, he went out to Tivoli Gardens with the two of us. (His wife had another engagement.) Knowing we'd be drinking a good bit, he didn't drive, but we went by streetcar--via Lyngby, for the hell of it, which is kind of like going from the Battery to Central Park via Brooklyn and Queens, only far prettier. It was an epical evening. Along with much else, I remember how we wanted to ride a carousel, but the operator wouldn't start it up for three people,





so Niels buttonholed passersby and offered to treat them till he had enough. At last we got back to his house. I considered myself a capable drinker, and was thirty years his junior, but at this time I--did not pass out, but laid myself to rest--while he and my mother discovered to their delight that it was possible to dance the minuet to something by Bach.

Years later, when she was back in the old country by herself, she heard he had had a heart attack. Coming anxiously around next morning, she found him in bed, all right, but sitting up in sky-blue pajamas happily strumming his guitar.

He was a sailor around the beautiful coasts of Denmark and Norway and a traveler throughout western Europe. A favorite vacation spot for him and his family was Biot, a charming out-of-the-way village in the French Riviera. When my brother and I went there on his recommendation, the proprietor of the local *auberge* could not do enough for the relatives of *Monsieur le Docteur*.

Over and above the war, Niels had his share of tragedies, and was inevitably drawn by his profession into those of many other people, for some of whom--including a beloved cousin--he performed that last service which most old-time doctors were ready to render when asked; I don't know how that is with the impersonal modern kind. But these are not matters to relate here.

He died of a stroke, with barely time to bid his wife goodbye. Driving back from the funeral home with their daughter, she cried, "It isn't right! He always hated to be alone, and now he's lying there all alone."

"Nonsense, Mother," said Ingrid. "He's with Bellman."

Yes, those who have lived well can die well.

[illegible]

Up until a very few years ago, given my upbringing and temperament, the fear of death was, far and away, my biggest paranoia. I still have a healthy respect for it--but the entire complex is on a much lower key than I would have ever thought possible. For me. Perhaps this means that I am finally "living well"; perhaps it just means that, slowly, I am learning to accept the inevitable--and while not capitulating (I backed into this world, and I'll go out the same way) neither am I spending large amounts of my limited energies in an useless attempt to avoid.

I have gone through a number of changes in the past few years--I've gone places and done things, in body and in mind, that would have been beyond even speculation for me, not all that long ago. I found that some things thought forbidden were "good"...that others, whatever the reason, were not for me. It has not been easy, for me...or for those who have encountered me: some to stay, others to pass on after having touched my life. But it is all a part of a process that I'd heard about, speculated about, but very rarely participated in. It's called, very simply...living.

And I have a few friends (say those who've known me, well, for at least five years) who will delight in telling you about the days I cringed in corners, and found myself an observer rather than a participant, because it was the only role I knew.

...yet the biggest change is in an area those very same long-time friends know little about, because it concerns my ongoing battle with the "real" world. When I left northern Ohio to move here, I quit a job where I had sixteen years seniority, four weeks vacation plus eleven paid holidays... and a fair degree of security. And a fair degree of dissatisfaction...but that magic word "security" kept me locked in.

The reason I found to get out of that trap, and out of that area, did not prove to be all that I had anticipated. Naturally. But regardless, the decision to leave and the reason to move to Cincinnati is, in retrospect, one of the few major "moves" I have no regrets about. It was a break that I needed, very badly.

After a gap of over ten years, I've gone back to drafting. But I'm not working for a "company", per se. What I'm doing is contract work, or job-







Gregar Bohassian, Clay McCord, Andrew Garth, Clint Randall, Fletcher Westflag, Lothar Korda, Waring Brackett, Hord Markham, Harmony Holt, Beverly Sorensen, Beth Waring, Linda Holland, Honey Malcolm, and lots of "one-shot" names. Each has a certain viewpoint and area of expertise.

My mornings are usually occupied with sleep, until 9 or 10, then breakfast, post office, marketing, a trip to *Adam, Knight, Film World*, etc. I'm at the typewriter about noon, maybe one, and I quite at five, sometimes six. (And sometimes three.)

I use an IBM Correcting Selectric, which has been a boon to the appearance of my manuscripts. I type on 25% rag bond, which I buy through Kelly Paper Company, in Los Angeles, at about \$2.50 a ream. (You can, too.) For my articles and short stories I type on unperforated stock, but for novels I type on three-hole paper, and keep the manuscripts in binders. This method has numerous advantages: nothing gets spilled or lost, you can transport the mss. around easily, and if you are working on more than one project, it keeps things neat.

I make no carbons, but Xerox the originals at *Adam*. For the longer works I do not number the pages until I am completely finished, though I keep a daily log so I know how many pages I've done. This allows me to rewrite and insert at will, and is a very liberating influence. If I have a contract for a book, they do not get the original, only a Xerox. If the work is completed before contract they get the original, as that 25% rag bond has (I think) a beneficial effect--it feels like money.

At the end of each day's work (generally) I sit down while watching TV or waiting for dinner, and proof the pages with a pencil. Where there are typos or corrections I make an X in the lower right corner, to draw my attention. Then at the start of each day's work I fix up the typos, etc. and start on the new stuff.

I often work seven days a week, but since I can take off any time I want (conventions, movies, trips, sleeping late, quitting early, etc.) I feel I must work all the time. I write 2,000 to 5,000 words a day, depending. I've hit 7,000, 8,000, 9,000 and one fantastic 10,000 word day.

I have raised my typewriter up, constructing a temporary wooden structure that raises the front 4" from the standard typing shelf level, and the back about 7". This has proved very beneficial in minimizing neck strain. A sore neck and shoulders sent me to a doctor some months ago, and he sent me to a therapist, who said this was very common among secretaries. They stretched my neck daily and gave me hot pads and massages. This gave me to think and I made my typer-riser, which has helped a lot. It wasn't at all difficult to get used to it, though the keyboard is much higher. Try it. Put a telephone directory under the front and some heavy books in the back and give it a run.

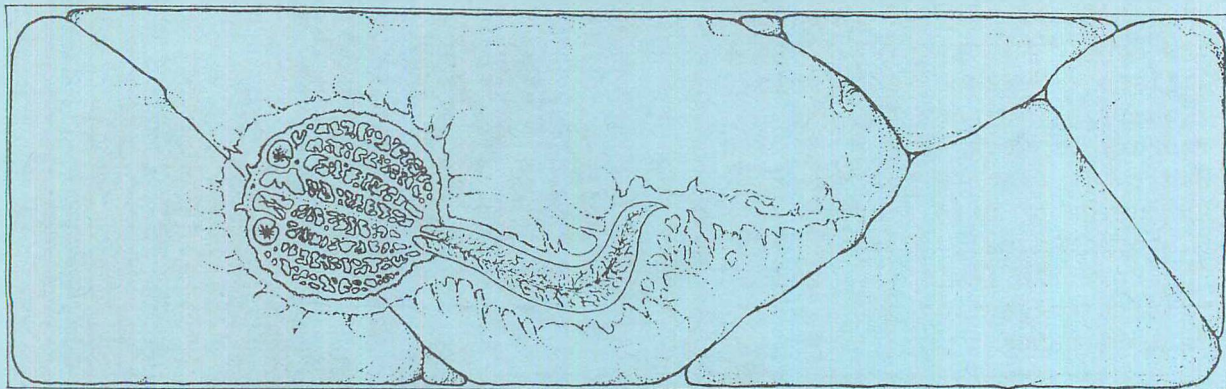
I am "testing" a "writing machine", too. This means a desk to my left, topped by two 30-drawer files that hold paper and other items. A moveable lamp, an air-conditioner straight ahead four feet, a telephone to the right. Bookcases *fill* the room (I use a separate apartment for my writing and have stuffed the living room and bedroom with bookcases and storage) and a reference shelf 3'x8' is to the immediate right. This is due for redesigning and remaking soon as I have too many odd-sized books to fit properly. Behind me are more bookcases, with binders of reference material and my printed work, extracted from the men's mags, big dictionaries, ledgers, etc.

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For example, I kept a record of the reference books I used in writing *STAR-SEED*, a recent 122,000-word novel: Random House Dictionary / The Harper Encyclopedia of Science / "Prehistoric Animals" (Cox) / Hammond Contemporary World Atlas / "A Concise Etymological Dictionary" (Skeat) / Webster's Dictionary of Proper Names / "The Films of Errol Flynn" / Bernstein's "Reverse Dictionary" / Laughlin's FACT FINDER / 20,000 Words (Leslie) / Kings, Rulers and Statesmen / A Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms / What to Name the Baby / "The New Age Baby Book" / Dictionary of Foreign Words & Phrases / Dictionary of Classical Mythology / The World Almanac of Facts / "Handbook of Secret Organizations" / Modern Home Dictionary of Medical Words / Metrics: Measurement for Tomorrow / Dictionary of Difficult Words / A Dictionary of Cliches / The Merriam-Webster









GARDNER DOZOIS

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...an Interview of GENE WOLFE - June, 1974, Annual Milford Writers Conference  
Reddingtton Beach, Florida  
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[Dozois] *I'm going to start off with a very cliched question. When you were a boy did you ever think that you'd end up being a writer?*

[Wolfe] *No, not as far as I can remember.*

*You never had any conception that you'd end up writing stories?*

*No, I used to write stories as a boy, but I had no idea that I would ever be a writer.*

*Why did you write stories?*

*It's fun!*

*Just for fun?*

*Sure--to concretize fantasies.*

*Yeah--but you never had any intention of sending them to magazines or being in print. What kind of stuff did you like to read when you were growing up?*

*Science-fiction, of course; Oz books. Fantasy, mystery stories--I read a great many mystery stories because my mother was a mystery story reader and they were around the house. History, archeology. I didn't read much mainstream fiction at that time.*

*Was there any common denominator to the stuff you read? Was there any one quality that you were interested in more than others?*

*I think the thing that I was looking for was stimulus to my imagination, which in many cases I could get from books on archeology, from, just for an example, pictures or description of bronze age implements. I can remember when I was eight or ten I found those very intriguing. Of course I liked dinosaurs. Everybody liked dinosaurs when they were a little kid.*

*Were there any other kinds of influences that pointed you in a similiar direction besides the reading? Were there any experiences that gave you the imagination, the broadening effect that you were looking for?*

*I don't really think so. Probably the thing that had a lot to do with it was that there wasn't anything else that I found stimulating in the same way, that was not essentially reading.*

*So...Were you encouraged to read or was that frowned on?*

*Yes, I was encouraged to read.*

*Were you encouraged to write?*

*No.*

*What was the general attitude toward that?*

*Indifference.*

*Indifference. It wasn't considered to be unwholesome?*

*Oh, no, no.*

*Now you say that you were writing primarily for fun. How long did that pure motivation last?*



Well, probably about through the sixth grade.

*What else came into the picture then? How did your motivation change?*

I think that the main thing was that my critical sense developed and I no longer found the things that I was writing myself acceptable.

*At some point you must have changed from writing purely for fun, not caring whether anyone saw it or not, to writing things that were other-directed to a certain extent.*

Yeah, I didn't write anything as near as I can remember from about the time that I left elementary school until I was a student at Texas A & M.

*What made you start again?*

I think the fact that my roommate was an artist who worked on one of the college magazines; and we decided it would be neat if I wrote things and he illustrated them.

*What do you set out to do when you sit down to write?*

Of course with every complex action you have a complex goal, and that certainly includes writing. I think the primary thing that I set out to do is to write what I think of as a whole and artistically satisfying story--an object.

I will create this object and I will make it as good as I can.

*So the major difference between what you were setting out to do when you sat down as a boy to write, and what you started doing afterward in college, was primarily a change in your critical facilities? You began trying to shape a conscious work of art?*

Ah.....yes.....When I was writing as a little kid, which is what I was, I wanted to have pieces of fantasy life in which I was a cowboy or pirate--I remember those two specifically--set down in words, but I didn't even have the concept of a story in the sense that I have it now.

*But when you started writing the second time you weren't interested in just setting down a fantasy?*

Oh no.

*You wanted to set it down in such a way that maybe other people...*

Oh no. I was an unpaid commercial writer. I wanted to write things for the college magazine that would be acceptable to that magazine.

*At this time did you have any idea that you would end up writing?*

Absolutely not. I was an engineering student.

*What do you look for when you read other people's stories?*

Oh, lots of things. If I pick up something by someone I don't know at all or have any feeling for, the first thing I am going to be looking for is to find out what they have to give. In other words, are they good at characterization, are they good at style, are they good at plot or whatever it may be, and I'm going to suck that out of them to the best of my ability.

*You mean that you read primarily so that you can learn things to improve your own writing?*

No. No. I mean that I'm going to find out what that writer has of value because that is the thing that I'm primarily going to enjoy when I read his writing. If you're trying to read the Pickwick Papers for the plot...you know it just...(laughter) It's lost, it's gone. There are certain writers that you read for style--for the music of the prose primarily, and I'm going to look in there and find what, if anything that writer has that I enjoy and that's the thing I'm going to be particularly watching for. Just as you may go to a movie mainly for the scenery or the camera shots.

*Is there a certain element or quality you look for in reading above the rest?*

Yes. Of course I'm very hip on character, and I'm very interested in style. I don't mean by that that I think I'm particularly good at it but I like to read people who are very good at it, and like anybody else, consciously or unconsciously, I'm particularly interested in what I call theme, which is just: what is it about? You know, where the two little kids go to the movie or...rather one little kid goes to the movie and the other little kid doesn't, and the other little kid says, "what was it about?" And the kid that went to the movie said that it was about knights. This is theme in the simplest sense.



What about the stuff you were reading as a child? You were primarily looking for imagination?

I was looking for things that stimulated my imagination. In other words, before I read about pirates, I was not very capable, if capable at all, or imagining the pirate thing...of imagining myself to be a pirate captain. Of imagining what the ship looked like, what kinds of things might be expected to happen, what kind of weapons and tackle and weather and so forth. But when I had read about pirates then I knew all that and I could do that "up here". I could shut my eyes and I could...do...the pirate.

Could you say that you are more interested in processes now than in the basic concept itself? The style of different people who write about pirates rather than the idea of pirates?

This is back to style, or whatever we want to call it, verses theme. I think that good things in theme are harder to find than good things in style. When I do find them, I'm very happy to find them.

Do you write the kinds of stories that you like to read yourself?

Oh, yes, absolutely.

In other words if somehow you came across a manuscript you didn't remember you had written, and it had someone elses name on it, you would read it with great pleasure?

Yeah, normally. Probably would read it with more pleasure than if it did have my name on it. [laughter] I wouldn't blush to the same extent. [laughter]

[Damon Knight] Wouldn't you feel jealous?

I feel.....sometimes I feel tremendously jealous.

[Knight] If you read your own work and didn't know it was yours would you be jealous?

Yes...Well, I can read, for example, The Killimanjaro Device, by Ray Bradbury, and when I read that story, I was sick with jealousy. [laughter] I was literally sick with jealousy. You know---I could have killed that s.o.b. [laughter] because it was not only that good, but I felt rightly or wrongly that it was the kind of thing that I might have done. It would have been mine, but he got his rope on it first.

If you read your own work, again not knowing that it was your own work, and you were jealous of it, what would you be jealous of? What aspect would you be jealous of? Would it be the style, the plotting, the thematic content of it, or what?

That would depend on the story. It would probably be all of those things.

It would be a question of which bar on the chart is highest.

Well, let's take a story---say The Island of Dr. Death.

I think probably theme. With character and style about equal then.

What about The Fifth Head?

Very similar answer really.

Style.

No, theme, with character and style secondary.

What do you think...I'm not going to talk about what a writer has to do...what do you think that a reader has to do? I know that sometimes you are criticized as being cryptic and obscure, and I'm just wondering what you think a reader should have to do ...what is his part of the contract? How much do you chew for him and how much do you let him chew for himself?

This is one of the biggest problems, because--it's like the old thing that you can't make everybody like you, because the same things that will attract certain people to you will repel certain other people. You always end up with a set of friends and a set of enemies. If you explain too much you are going to lose a certain set of people who feel vaguely insulted that you found it necessary to explain this type of thing to them. I can't think of a good example off hand from my recent reading, but whenever I do a great deal of reading I run on to some of these things in which I--well--to take an oversimplified case that irritates me to fury whenever I see it, is something that is set in Paris, comma, France. [laughter] And if it was Paris Comma Texas, yes, I would agree, but Paris, France! You know--Frederick the Great built his palace in Pottsdamn, Germany. You know. And when you put in the



comma and you put in the Germany, you lose something. Yet at the same time, if you go too much the other way, you lose other people. I suppose I have a reader in my head and I try and write for him. So that it is not too cryptic and it's not too "see the dog".

*Now when you say you have a reader in your head, you mean you have a projected image of your ideal reader?*

Yes, I have a mental image.

*I thought that you write for yourself?*

Well, I write the things that I would like to read, yes, but I also have a reader in my head. Who I imagine as my reader.

*How do you answer the persons, the readers, who say that they can't understand your work? Who wonder why you don't just write straight-forward stuff?*

Well, if they can't understand my work, I'm truly and deeply sorry but there isn't a hell of a lot I can do about it...and I do write some straightforward stuff. I try to trim my style to the story that I have to tell.

*How did you start writing science fiction? Did you always write science fiction? Or were you just writing stories? Were they specialized?*

The first thing I really wrote with the intention of selling was intended to be a mystery novel...and I've always written some mainstream. I did eventually sell two mystery stories that didn't amount to anything, and I wrote some science fiction. The first sale I ever made was a ghost story.

*Most people would consider you to be a science fiction writer. How did you end up specializing in this area rather than in another area?*

Well, it was always an area that interested me a great deal. Of course, I don't have to do the thing about how wide science fiction is. It's tremendously wide. It's far wider than mystery or mainstream. And I wrote a good deal of it. I sold a larger percentage of it than I did of anything else. In my experience the mainstream short story is practically unsaleable. The little magazines publish some very fine short stories and it's appalling to read some of those short stories and realize how good they are and that they're being published in magazines of minuscule circulation.

*When you sit down to write a mystery novel say, rather than a science fiction novel, are you still writing for that ideal reader in the back of your head or are you writing what you think people will expect?*

No, I'm writing for much the same reader. I think he reads mysteries.

*Well, how come the science fiction sells then and the mysteries don't?*

I really don't know except that I think the science fiction is probably better. I haven't really done any mysteries for a long time.

*Why does the science fiction come out better? Are you putting anything into it that you aren't in the other?*

Not consciously, no. I probably have a better direction in it than the other.

*What do you think science fiction should do? What should be its direction? You hear a lot of arguments these days about this. Whether it should do this, or that, or...*

I think that any kind of fiction should be intended to be an artistic experience for the reader. I think that this is what he is entitled to and I think he's entitled not to have somebody shoving their own brand of propaganda or panacea at him. I think he is entitled to exactly the same thing from a composer of music, or a painter. I think art of any kind should be a thing in itself. It's stupid to think of it as a means to some further end. It's as if we said raising a family is to support the state, or something like that. The state is to enable people to raise families and to enjoy music and to look at the waves and so forth.

*When you create a world or society, like in The Fifth Head, what do you want to do with that? You're creating a whole place, a different world. What are you trying to do? What are you putting into it?*

Well, I think again you're looking for a propagandistic purpose. And I don't have one. I'm interested in the world, because any story flows from the world in which it is. In which it is laid. Can you imagine Mr. Sammler's



Planet laid in the World of Alice Through the Looking Glass? You see, it's not there. The first thing that you have is a stage, and then the plays have to be adapted to that stage.

*When you have very vividly realized the stage or world, as in The Fifth Head, is it something that is organically evolved? How closely do you control and build it?*

Not very, I guess. I start with a concept. Sometimes things come out which are wrong and then I strike those during revision, and try to make the thing into a harmonious whole. I hate the damn things where everybody runs around with ray guns of their hips slashing at everyone with broadswords, and I think that you have to put lines through the ray guns and throw them away. [laughter]

*So you couldn't explain something like why you have a French ambience in the culture of The Fifth Head.*

Well, the trouble with this explanation thing is that it's very easy to come up with questions that I never really considered. In other words, why French rather than Japanese? I never really considered Japanese. I can tell you why French worked, but I put it there first and discovered that it worked and then I could say why it worked. And if it hadn't worked, it never would have gotten to that stage. I would have pitched it out. You know, psychic engineering. How many bolts do you put on to hold it...five! [laughter]

*I find this with my own stuff where in a way it almost seems like you know what it is beforehand, somewhere, and you just have to find out.*

Sculptors say that there is a shape in the stone and they'll discover that shape.

*Yeah.....that's what I was getting at.*

Sculptors say a lot of dumb things. [laughter]

*Do you believe that as it applies to this art?*

Well, the shape is in the sculptor's head as I think we all really know. The story is in the head, and to some degree you achieve on paper the story that was in your head. I've had cases where I've come very close to one to one correspondence.

*When there is this knowledge of what the story should be and the writer consciously doesn't know it, since he has to discover it, then just who is it that has this knowledge in the first place? Obviously it's there. Who is setting the parameters?*

Well, I think that the writer does consciously know it. That's falling into a linguistic trap. I think the writer is consciously aware of the effect that the story should have. And that neither he nor anybody else knows the whole thing until he works it out. Now he may work it out entirely in his head--which I do not do, but I know that some people do that--or he may work it out on paper, but until that working out takes place it's nowhere...it's uncreated.

*Do you work consciously? Do you have control of what you put on paper? Symbollically? Do you know what's going in?*

I think the answer is no. I tend, at my best anyway, to let my characters talk, and the story itself carry things. Then if I discover that I don't like something, I go back and change it or strike it or tinker with it. But a good character has got a lot to tell you.

*That fascinates me. I went to hear Heinlein recently, and he said something to the effect that when he could hear his characters speaking in his head with individual voices and accents he knew that he was onto it. That's really odd.*

One of the strongest emotional reactions I ever got from the writing process was in a novel that never sold and I think deservedly never sold. But at the end of it, in the last scene, I had most of the important characters gathered together and for some reason or other they all left and left one character alone in the room, who as it happens is an old man in a wheel chair. As I was writing about them all piling through the door, I was very strongly struck by the fact that I was saying goodbye to them all at this point. They would never come back. They would go out the door and for me they were utterly gone when they left, and I still remember what a kick in the head that was.



*I think most writers have many stories in their heads that never actually come out on paper. Most of them probably just as good if not better than the ones that do come out on paper. Why is it that some come out and others don't? Do you have any idea?*

Well, of course one thing is simply mechanical. It depends on what your situation is. If the story idea comes up when you're in the middle of a novel you may want to stop work on the novel for awhile and do the story instead, which is favorable. Or you may be hot on the novel, and so when that story comes around you just write it on an index card and drop it in a little gray box, and some of the index cards never come back out.

*Did you ever write anything on, say page three, that you didn't understand at the time but connects up with something on page fifty?*

I don't think "didn't understand at that time", is meaningful in that connotation. I think that I may have seen possibilities when I was writing page nineteen of something that had been said rather routinely or put in rather routinely on page three.

*When you reread your stories after a period of time, or even after you write them, do you see anything in them that surprises you?*

Yes, yes, absolutely. I think in many cases I did know that some things were there at the time I wrote them, but they were in short term memory and simply had vanished before I rediscovered them. And then you always get lucky coincidences in anything, and in many cases you can point them up, can polish them up, when you revise them.

*This is a kind of dumb question, but if you had to sacrifice one element in preference to another what would you let go?*

Plot!

*What stories of your own do you like the best?*

One of my permanent favorites I guess is the Toy Theatre because it was a story that came very very close to coming out just the way that I originally envisioned it, and usually I'm to a greater degree disappointed with what I did.

*Do you find that there's a fairly large discrepancy between the story as it is "up here" and as it comes down on the page?*

Yeah, yeah.

*What stories of yours, if any, do you consider failures?*

Oh...King Under the Mountain, just right off the top of my hat. Another one whose title I can't even remember but which is about three guys who are on a simulated Mars flight who kill each other, so to speak.

*Oh...Blood on the Something. I don't remember.*

Yeah, yeah, I don't remember it either.

*Why are those stories failures?*

Because after I had written them I had discovered that they were much smaller than I thought.

*That there wasn't enough there to justify...*

That they weren't significant.

*That the story element itself wasn't significant?*

That the story as a thing wasn't significant.

*It wasn't a failure in execution, in other words. It was a failure in concept?*

Yeah, it was primarily a failure in concept. They were concepts I probably would have been better off not executing, assuming that I put the same time and energy into executing something else

*This is another Sophomore question, but do you feel there's any basic "message" to your fiction? Is there any philosophical viewpoint that you're trying to get across?*

Probably the real answer is "no" because I don't think fiction is a proper vehicle for philosophy except that the character's philosophy affect their own actions. Of course I'm more drawn to characters with certain philosophies than I am to characters with other philosophies, and some philosophies are so extremely alien to me that I can't write about them convincingly. But I think that a writer should try and execute the story, and I think he should



make his characters act and speak truly to what they are, not to show some sinister purpose of the writer's.

*Then you think that the stories should almost be an end in themselves?*

I think the story is an end in itself. Absolutely. Yes. I think that if a person wants to read philosophy or political science or something like that, he should be reading philosophy or political science books or essays. Not novels or short stories.

*Carol said something to the effect that she was primarily interested in improving her writing techniques, and that she wasn't really interested in the philosophical content. Do you agree with that or do you disagree with that?*

Again, I'm very interested in character. I'm a people watcher. I'm never bored where there are crowds milling around, if you know what I mean, because I can watch the people. I can see how they're dressed and I can see what their faces tell me, and what their expressions tell me and how they relate to the other people in the crowd, etc., etc., etc. And I'm interested in that thing apart from writing, but it's very applicable to writing. I also kind of enjoy machinery, not as much as I enjoy people. Maybe that gets in to some of the writing somewhat too.

*What do you think the average reader wants?*

I think they read for the affect reading has on their persons. On how they think; how they see themselves. How they see other people. The putting of the book into the head so that it's there.

*What do you hope readers are getting out of your stuff in particular?*

Well, I think I've pretty much covered that. I'm hoping that they're going to say, "gee, that's a good story", and when they say a good story they're going to mean a good story of the type that it is.

*What ambitions do you have as far as your writing career is concerned? What do you want?*

I want to be a great writer.

*[Gardner Dozois] I think that's about it for me. Does anyone else have any questions?*

*[Ben Bova] I have a question for Gene. It's kind of self-serving. Concerning How I Lost the Second World War and Helped Turn Back the German Invasion. I had talked about the basic idea for that story with several writers, and if my memory serves me correctly the only way we talked about it was through the mails.*

Yeh. Well, you wrote me a letter and said you wanted---

*But what I gave you--what we talked about--was a tiny little idea. How did you get from there to the story as it came out?*

Well, I guess I'll have to answer this in detail. As I remember, you wanted a story which could be illustrated by a picture of Hitler trying to sell Churchill a Volkswagon. [laughter] Well, to begin with, that story is obviously farce. You can't write anything other than a farce that can be illustrated by that picture. And I have nothing whatsoever against farce. And so obviously---

*But there's so much more in the final story.*

Well, you work backwards. If you see the picture, there's something holding the cars up; and the something is either England or Germany or some third place that isn't England or Germany, and so you think "now where is it?"

Okay, now I picked England. Now why is Hitler in England selling Volkswagons? Well, obviously since Hitler is the head of the German State, he's in England selling Volkswagons because this is a big German export effort, and so where would he be--not at an Agency, in all probability, but at a trade fair for something of that sort. The point that I really liked but apparently no one else liked was the transistor thing.

*Where did that come from, because that's a stroke of genius.*

The reason for the long pause is that I'm making an honest effort to try and remember.

*Because that's part of the writing game that hasn't come out at all in your interview so far. Lightening struck, and can you recapitulate the events?*



Yeah, to some extent I can. I was going through at that time a home study course on solid state electronics which of course I pulled into this thing, obviously. I had to resolve the problem of Volkswagens being sold in England --either the thing was successful, the Germans succeeded in selling the Volkswagens, or they failed, and it's very dull to say it was because of bad packaging. And of course the obvious thing, particularly with automobiles, is that you have some kind of a race. Some kind of endurance contest or something like that, and I put this together with the transistor thing and used that. You said something about transistors in your letter.

*Yeah, just the idea that the Germans and the Japanese were trying to conquer the world in the late 1930's, not militarily but commercially. The Germans with automobiles and the Japanese with transistor devices. Both had been invented in the 30's.*

Right, right, the whole thing, at least to me, was an automotive or transportation-wise thing, and so of course I put in the Zeppelin thing because I dig Zeppelins. I think almost everybody digs Zeppelins... And I put in the little Japanese transistor-controlled cars because I thought it was neat to have them running over people's feet while everything else was going on. And they made very nice rolling obstacles to create simulated holes, holes in the sense of holes in a solid state conductor. For the race.

*[Dozois] Where did the war games come from? It doesn't have anything to do with the original idea at all.*

Well, it would be very tough to tell the thing from the standpoint of either Churchill or Hitler, so I started looking around for someone who would be an outside observer to this thing. I guess I had a strong instinctive urge to make him an American because as everybody knows it's much easier to write your fellow countrymen than it is to write a foreigner successfully. Who could you really consider? Well, you could consider, as far as I was concerned, only Roosevelt and Eisenhower. I tried to go back to the period at which Churchill was out of office and was a writer, which is what he actually was. Churchill was a writer and a journalist when he wasn't being a politician, and the First World War ruined him for all practical purposes or at least it seemed so at the time, really disgraced him. And so I thought well ok, now at this period where is Roosevelt? Well, hell, Roosevelt was President of the United States and if I brought him in I was just bringing in a third king onto the board who was just going to encumber the thing. And then I thought, where was Eisenhower? Well, Eisenhower was a fairly obscure military officer, and he brought in the war game with him.

*[Bova] When you hit on Eisenhower you got the idea for the war game too?*

Yeah. Because military officers who aren't employed in actual combat, and who are good officers--of course bad officers don't do this kind of thing--but who are good officers, spend their time thinking about past wars and future wars, and they're saying to themselves "What should Napoleon have done at Austerlitz that he didn't do, etc., etc., stec." The American Navy was really founded from a strategical standpoint in a school that was run in a Moroccan prison among the imprisoned officers. This kind of thing crops up over and over, and if Eisenhower is a good officer and he is an obscure officer in peacetime Britain, this is the kind of thing he is going to be doing.

*[Damon Knight] Gene, you casually mentioned about half an hour ago that you think of a story as an object. I was struck by the word. Do you think of a story as having a particular shape, like a vase or a table or chair?*

Yeah, very much so. A story is a *thing*. Life is the wrong word perhaps, but it has an existence of its own. Just as I may eat my dinner off a table that was built by somebody who has now been dead for fifteen years, but his table is still there, and it's however good a table that he made it, basically.

*[Knight] I'm going to put this badly because I don't know how to put it. Do you have any feeling of immortality in your stories? After you're dead they will go on. Does that turn you on?*



It turns me on, yes, but I don't consider that immortality.

[Knight] *I said I was going to put it badly.*

Yeah. Well you did. [laughter] But I feel much the same way a person feels when he plants a tree. I think immortality is too big a word for this, but if it's a good tree in a good spot, it's going to be around for a long time after he's gone.

[Knight] *Why do you care about that?*

I'm trying to avoid the word "pride", which is one of those multivalued words like "love". Self-image, then, because I respect good work whether I do it or somebody else does it, whether it's in writing or carpentry, or whatever the hell it is. Good work to me is good work. Again you've got a thing that's an end in itself rather than something you can define in terms of something else. I like good work even if I don't like the reason it was done. I like good military strategy even if I don't favor the side that employed it. You see what I mean.

[Knight] *Let me put it this way. If you knew that all your work was going to be burned, on January 1, 1975, would that affect the way you feel about it?*

Oh, yes, yes.

[Knight] *It would still be good work.*

It would still be good work, yes, but it would make me mad as hell is what it would do. [laughter] I hate to see good work destroyed. I hate to see a fine old building knocked down for a damn parking lot or another damn supermarket, for the same reason. And if I'd built the building I would hate it even more, but I hate it a whole lot even though I didn't build the building.

[Carol Emshwiller] *How would you feel if you were the person building the good parking lot?*

Well, there are things that just ain't hardly worth doing, and even if they're good in themselves, they're not worth sacrificing something that is better, and a lot of parking lots strike me that way.

{end of tape}

...thanks go to Rosemary Wolfe, for typing the transcript. And Gardner asks that I mention some of Gene's latest projects: a science-fantasy tetralogy called THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN, a short-story collection called THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR DEATH AND OTHER STORIES AND OTHER STORIES [both from Pocket Books], as well as reminding you of his already published books: THE DEVIL IN A FOREST and THE FIFTH HEAD OF CEREBUS [both Ace], and PEACE [Harper & Row]. (And thanks to Gardner for patience while waiting on me!)

..in those euphoric moments following my Iguacon-speech, after Mike, Marla, and I managed to squeeze past the hordes descending on the Hugo winners and escape to the lobby and waiting friends...I was approached by a man, handed a sample cassette, and was asked if I'd be willing to do an on-tape interview. I begged off as best I could; that was not the moment in any event. I never do well, to my satisfaction--but I do much better when I can write it out first.

It's the same when people ask me to do things for their fanzines or a special project. I am flattered, but most of the things I do, I use myself. If not, I do them first...and then decide where to send them. Assignments are not my thing; and anyways, I'm not that prolific. Not even with "speeches"...



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 ...notes toward a speech, to be delivered at  $E/C^2$  CONFUSION: Friday, January 19, 1979  
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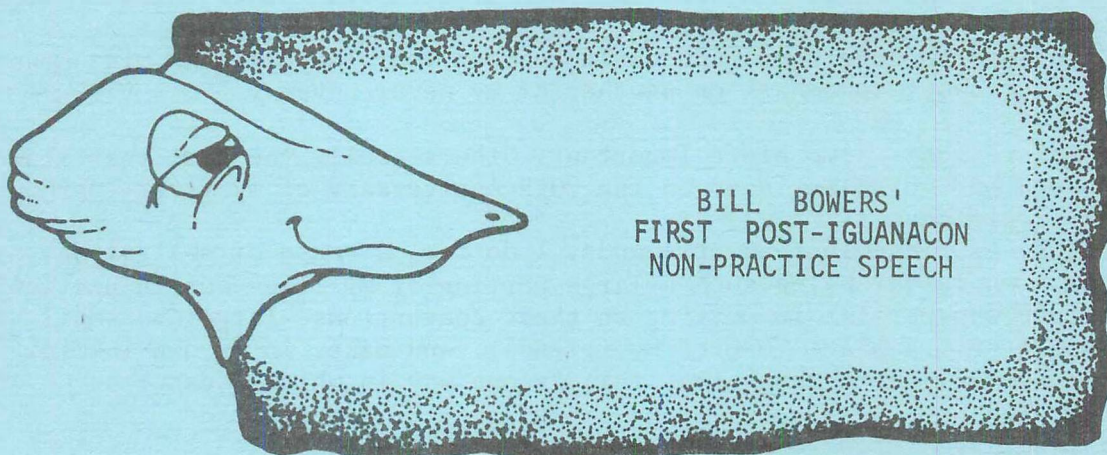
...you people...particularly Lin, Ro and Randy...really don't know what you started when you placed a very self-assured individual on the ConFusion stage just three years ago.

You're about to find out.

I hope you can live with it!

...after Phoenix, I had thought (other than for the one Ross asked me to do for Marcon) that I wouldn't have to do any more of these things. Perhaps, after my Moment in the Valley of the Sun, it is only sheer ego. But, more probably, it is simply the newest Bowers schtick: the name-badge game is past-tense...and the groupies have groupies of their own now. Of course, I could simply resume publishing *Outworlds*, but...

In any event, I must admit that I *asked* Larry Tucker for the time for this:



But first, a brief commercial:

Nine-and-a-half years ago this weekend, a man stepped out of a spiderly-looking vehicle, onto the surface of the Moon. I saw it happen, and I've never been quite the same.

All the details aren't finalized yet, but I can tell you this much:

Six months from this weekend [July 20-22, 1979], Rusty Hevelin and I will be co-chairing something called SPACECON--to be held in Wapakoneta, Ohio. And if you don't know the significance of that little speck on I-75, then you probably won't understand why I wouldn't let Rusty forget an idea he mentioned to me in a van, on the way to Boston, almost two years ago.

But even if all that romantic sense of wonder nonsense don't grab you, you should come anyway...

You see, it'll be my birthday party, also.

End commercial.

Now then...this is the 70th convention I've attended, which is trivia--and Labor Day weekend of 1982 will mark the 20th Anniversary of my initial contact with such things. ...which is probably also trivia--but still sufficient enough an excuse to let me talk about a subject apparently dear to the heart of most any fan from a city starting with the letter "C" in the state of Ohio:

Worldcons.

...which, of course, requires a very forceful disclaimer: When I say *I*, that is precisely what it means: a personal statement or opinion. It is no secret that I am associated with a few others who share some thoughts on the subject, and while I have shamelessly appropriated what I have liked from those others, nothing I say here is in any way "Official". Nor has what I have to say been in any way dictated by *anyone*,



no matter how fervently some might wish to believe it. What I have to say is, in the final analysis, on my head and my head alone. End disclaimer.

...and part of the problem is that I felt it necessary to say that in the first place.

I've attended nine World Science Fiction Conventions. I was involved in the initial stages of one (TRICON), was very close to the people who put on another (ST. LOUISCON) --and the "Guest" of a third.

Because of what I saw it do to people, and some of it wasn't pretty, in the first two cases, I swore I would never involve myself with a Worldcon on any level other than as an attending fan. My experience (at once a part of, and no part of) with the third did little to reassure me that putting on a Worldcon was any form of fanac other than suicidal for those who did it.

...well, as I learn the hard way never to say never about anything, no matter how unlikely it may seem at the time...after all, I managed to control myself (if not my hair) enough to talk in front of a couple of thousand people, and Harlan Ellison...and if I could do that, there's no reason I can't accomplish other things I've been so convinced I couldn't possibly do.

...and, having done *that* (you can't rest on your laurels, and mine aren't that big anyway), I am about to embark on another of my never-nevers.

Why?

Several reasons--some Big & Important. Others--well, the fact that it would be neat to be a part of a Worldcon on the 20th Anniversary of my first--perhaps not so terribly significant.

Perhaps, as ridiculous as it sounds, I do feel a sense of obligation, not only to fandom as a whole for being such a large portion of my life--but in particular to those idiots who persist in putting on these conventions--large and small--for me to enjoy myself at...a place to meet my friends...and make, in my own inimitable way, new friends. I like to think that this is one way in which I can repay a small portion of that debt.

And I do have a few ideas on how things *should* be done.

Let's take a for instance---

Suppose by some far-fetched process I was to end up associated with six others on a Worldcon bidding committee. Accepting this, suppose these seven people had fair claim on being possibly the most experienced Worldcon bidding committee ever assembled, with credentials such as having run over sixty regional conventions, having had intimate association with over a dozen Worldcons, as well as being active in all areas of fandom...and with a total aggregate number of conventions attended (not to mention active years in fandom) that would be astounding if calculated. Suppose further that these seven said that we will prove that a democratic--one person, one vote--committee *can* work.

...suppose I were to somehow discover myself in that position, on something that has already been described as the most laid-back committee imaginable...would I go with it?

Yes, I think I will...

But let me make this one point perfectly clear at the onset: I do not have any intention of spending the next several years of conventions--win or lose--smocking. Given a committee that despite a geographical spread, its friends and see each other frequently in any event, this isn't necessary.

Besides, I have other things to do: I personally will be rather disappointed if, over the intervening years, I don't regularly get accused of "womanizing".

(Advertising pays.)

Nor do I intend to spend the 1982 Worldcon--wherever it is, locked into all work and no play. There is no need to: by choosing competent people, delegating authority to them--and by *trusting* them until and unless shown incompetent--it not only should be, *it can* be possible--that there be a Worldcon at which everyone, including the committee, can enjoy themselves.

(...and if this can't be managed by people who started Octocon--the real one--as



a relaxacon from the pressures of putting on Midwestcon, who could do it?)

But the main reason I'm involved is this: I would hope that we in our miniature (but growing, whether we like it or not) world, have learned one lesson from recent world history:

I (for one) don't believe that it has become necessary to destroy the Worldcon (as we know it) in order to save it. ...either by inneuendo concerning people's competence--or by imposing a continuing board of directors.

...even if they are our friends: "Pogo" said it best.

Yes, yes, yes... There are indeed problems, and big ones, in not having the professionals run our conventions. They are big business, and there are a lot of people involved, on every level...and good intentions don't always match expertise. But may I carefully point out that the word "amateur" is *not* spelled "incompetence"--no matter how many recent examples you may be prepared to cite.

The things that I do that I take the most pride in, and the most care with, are the very things no amount of money could entice me to do.

...such as making speeches;

...or being on a committee. *Any* committee.

Organizations serve a purpose. They allow us to function in roles other than as the individual--and no matter how much some of us...me--decry that, it is to some degree necessary.

But one thing history *has* proved, time and again, is that no matter how good or noble the reason for the initial organizing--organizations rarely disband themselves after their goal is accomplished--if, indeed they limit themselves to the stated goal they used to gather support and acceptance. Organizations tend to become institutionalized--sometimes it even happens to individuals--ask me!--and at best that leads to stagnation. At worst it stifles any vestige of individuality.

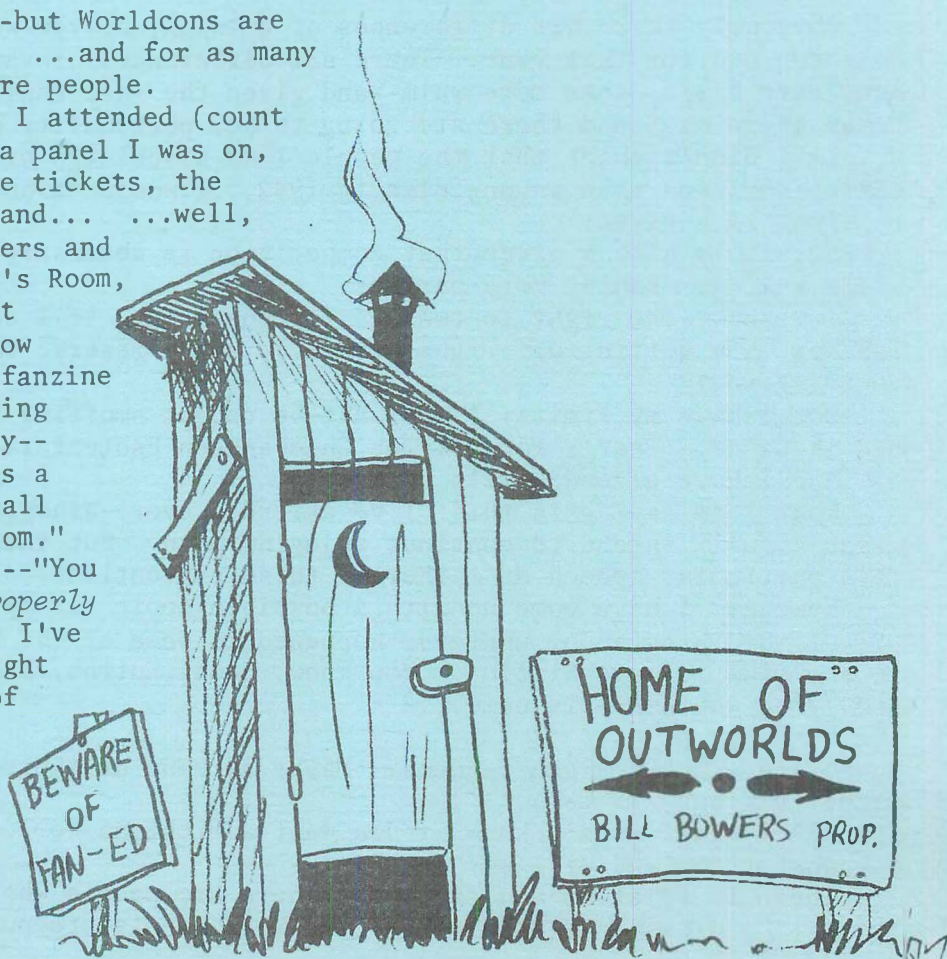
Once an organization has done its job, congratulate it or chastize it--but don't perpetuate it. And that includes World Science Fiction Convention Committees.

Every convention is special--but Worldcons are more so--to a lot of people. ...and for as many different reasons as there are people.

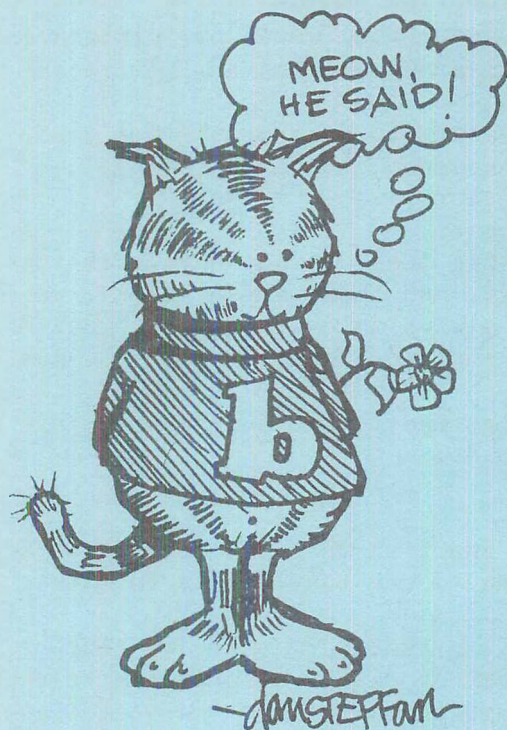
In nine days in Phoenix, I attended (count 'em) four scheduled events: a panel I was on, a banquet to which I had free tickets, the Sunday Night of Reckoning, and... ..well, I was sitting with Patty Peters and watching Phil Paine's Neofan's Room, innocently reading the Pocket Program and idly wondering how many words I could get in a fanzine if I were to stoop to something like reducing typewriter copy--when I noticed that there was a panel in progress down the hall called "Introduction to Fandom."

"Hmmm..." I mused aloud --"You know that I've never been *properly* introduced to fandom." ("All I've had is Mike Glicksohn," I might have added. Had I thought of it.)

A former friend of mine happened to overhear this remark, and proceeded down the hall to inform the in-progress panel as to what I'd said. Whereupon I was forcibly dragged into







participating on it...

(All of which is by way of informing you that there will be a party in Midge Reitan's room at all future cons. Lou Tabakow is in charge of arrangements.)

Obviously I don't go to Worldcons for the programming. I go for the far too rare chance to be with my friends from faraway places. (Places like... Cincinnati, lower Michigan and...dare I say it? Chicago) -- if I can find them.

But the one thing I think anyone connected with a Worldcon bidding/planning committee must never forget is that, more than any other, a Worldcon is a *first* convention for a lot of people. And if you take their money in the form of a membership, you owe them something in return. You can't automatically assume that they will amuse themselves.

However, you can assume that I will amuse myself or, failing that, at least amuse other people.

In any event, be kind to the neophyte Worldcon goer. After all, who knows, in a mere 16 & 1/2 years he too may well end up telling you what for!

I hate to be the one to break it to you--I'll try to be gentle--but there *is* such a thing as fan politics. And it is well-known that the Midwest is the hotbed of the art; Mike Glycer said so. And since the rotating finger of fate has placed the Year 1982 in the Midwest...

...well, you got it.

Obviously there are differences of opinion, or you wouldn't have more than one Worldcon bid for that year. There are differences of varying degrees of magnitude--some very basic, some mere whim--and given the fact that most fans are no less than human there are, and there are going to be, personality clashes.

If I didn't think that the people I am associated with could (and will) put on a better Worldcon than anyone else in 1982...I wouldn't be associated with them.

That is a given.

But it is also a given that competition is necessary, and that it can be fun. ...as well as meaning more parties.

I reserve the right to tweak a few noses (and if I can't continue to pick on Lou Tabakow, I'm getting off right here...), and I reserve the right to disagree, and to do so strongly.

But I have my limits: I will not be caught smoffing in a bathroom; the Flushing bid is passe. (That's for all you Chambanaccon Esotericia 101 fans out there.)

And I have placed limits on myself.

What I am saying is this: I've attended every Windycon and at least seven Marcons --and I fully intend to continue enjoying both. But then, I would not consider making this particular speech at either of those conventions. It would be inappropriate.

However, I have come up with a possible topic for my next Marcon speech.

...something about whatever happened to some of the kids around Cleveland fandom in the mid- to late-Sixties. You know, Scott Kutina, George Fergus, Jerry Kaufman, and...now what *was* his name...?

There are many Michigan fandoms. Maybe as many as there are Chicago fandoms; sometimes it's hard to tell.

Now I really don't know if *you* want a Michigan Worldcon; that's not for me to say.

What I can and will say is this---

There is friction and factions; there are people who will not talk to each other, but will endlessly talk about each other. There is, to put it bluntly, a considerable



failure to communicate. On all sides.

This is not news; nor is it noticeably different from a lot of other areas, in and out of fandom.

No, I don't know if you want a Michigan Worldcon--but if you do, a certain amount of fence-mending is in order. Again, on all sides. Life long friendships are not a prerequisite; a certain amount of cooperation and basic respect for the positive qualities of others *is* required.

It is certainly presumptuous--but then I am nothing if I am not... --but perhaps a slightly "tainted" outsider might be able to help.

If I can, I will. To the best of my abilities.

I have certain credentials. For one reason or another (a little moderation on the snickering, please; Sid doesn't realize that he's the one I'm after) I seem to have spent a fair amount of time in Michigan over the last few years. As a result I know a fair number of Michigan fans (even if it does seem as if there's a new Ann Arbor fandom every time I come here...).

I am willing to help, if I can, but I have one basic drawback: I rarely initiate conversations; you'll have to talk to me.

Above and beyond that, there is enough talent and experience in Michigan fandom to put on a fantastic Worldcon.

But only if we come...err, strike that...only if we pull together.

...but before anyone gets any ideas from my use of the word "we" in that sentence, I wish to squelch one persistent rumor for all time:

There is simply no way that I'm going to *move* to Michigan. If I did that...knowing me, I'd end up visiting Ohio a lot. And that's a fate I wouldn't even wish on Larry Downes. (I always mention Larry in my speeches; he likes my fanzine.)

But, in case I do move, remind me to tell you about my Cincinnati in '85 bidding committee sometime...

Science fiction fans are, as a group, probably the most conservative people on the face of the earth.

I should know; I am a science fiction fan.

The self-proclaimed broadening influence of the genre is not always reflected in our dealings with each other as individuals. It is very rarely reflected in our fanzines: the fact that I received acclaim for utilizing essentially common graphic formulas is proof of that.

...nor is it reflected in the conception and execution of our conventions--most of which have about as much innovativeness and sparks of originality as your average PTA meeting. (A fanzine panel is, it seems, a fanzine panel...whether it is at the Worldcon, or Autoclave.)

Generalizations? Yes...

I'm sure that some of my opposition to a Worldcon governing body is based on a conservative gut reaction against change. But not entirely. I didn't *Quote*--join--*Unquote* SF fandom to join an organization; I'm here because it, and its people, and the trappings such as fanzines and conventions, fulfill a certain need in my life better than anything else I've found to date.

No, I don't have the answers. At least not all of them.

But I can't help feeling that the most innovative, the most far-out thing a Worldcon committee could do at this stage is to go back to the basics.

And perhaps the most basic of basics is that a Worldcon should be *for* the attendees--and not the ego-gratification of the committee.

Simplicity, in both concept and execution, is perhaps the most complicated goal to achieve. But if God had meant for the World Science Fiction Convention to be a Van-Vogtian exercise in maze-building, he would have made it the domain of the U.S. Congress...

When, in the course of human events--or Boston in 1980--it comes time to choose a place of our own for 1982, please examine all of the factors:

...not just the city;



...not just the names on a committee--

...but consider, while remembering that everyone involved is human, the basic concepts behind *each* of the bids.

And if you do, I'm pretty certain of where that Worldcon will be...and even more certain that it will not be a Worldcon built for you--but one that will be evolved from you, for your pleasure -- and mine.

[illegible]

I spent Christmas weekend working on this crittur, but I took a break between typing the Wolfe interview, and finishing up the draft of the speech. The occasion for this time-off-for-(relatively)-good-behavior was the 2nd Annual Floating New Year's Parties, sponsored by The Cincinnati Committee of the Tall & Short of It. ...now Marla and I don't actually "host" anything: we just invite the out-of-town people, and then tell the Leigh's, the Curry's, and the Tabakow's which night *they* can have a party. Last year it was a two-nighter; this year, three nights. I don't see anything against a four-nighter next...

It was fun! Thanks to everyone involved...and the 50° (if wet) weather!

Two fanzines came out for the holidays, which gives me an excuse:

Denise blamed a chance remark of mine as the reason she did a fanzine for Midwestcon, which was cute. (The reason; not the fanzine.) When she did a 2nd issue for Iguacon, even though it was better--I was in it--I still thought the aberration had run its course. After all, everyone knows that people who get into fandom through cons don't do fanzines.

...well, with the third *Graymalkin*, I'm beginning to feel immensely proud that I had *anything* to do with its inception--whatever the remark was, anyway. This is not a review; it is an appreciation. If you want to see a *good* fanzine, send a dollar to: Denise Parsley Leigh [121 Nansen St., Cincinnati, OH 45216].

Denise...I like your fanzine!

(Ask Patty Peters to explain that to you...sometime.)

...I was going to say: "For a much lesser fanzine...", but perhaps size isn't everything? I've been...ummm..."suggesting" to Al Curry for some time now the notion that he give up *Quantum*, and concentrate on *Gnomenculture*. ...and now that it's happened...

What Al has developed in four issues is one of the most uniquely enjoyable personalzines arounds. He doesn't indulge in the self-confessional that has become almost synonymous with the term "personalzine". Instead he specializes in amusing stories spiced with innovative (and increasingly skillful) cartoons, blended together with locs and a rare outside piece into a mish-mash that works...and is fun.

I'll even forgive him his lack of Bowers-cartoons in *Gnomenclature* #4.  
[50¢, from: Al Curry, 3904 W. Liberty St., Cincinnati, OH 45205.]

...I find it hard to believe that this issue (the second "first" *Xenolith*) is drawing to a conclusion. It has been a while, hasn't it?

I have a lot of fences to mend with contributors ignored far too long...a lot of things to catch up with in other ways, but it's a start; not a bad one!

I do appreciate the fanzines and other things that came my way during the lull, but I will point out that, other than subscriptions carrying over, this is *not* *Outworlds*...and it starts with essentially a new mailing list. At the moment I can neither afford (nor do I want to) the 3- 400 "freebies" of yore. And a lower print run dictates a tightening of availability, in any event.

I do welcome contributions: as I said, whatever you do best...

I promise nothing, except that there will be more, when you least expect!

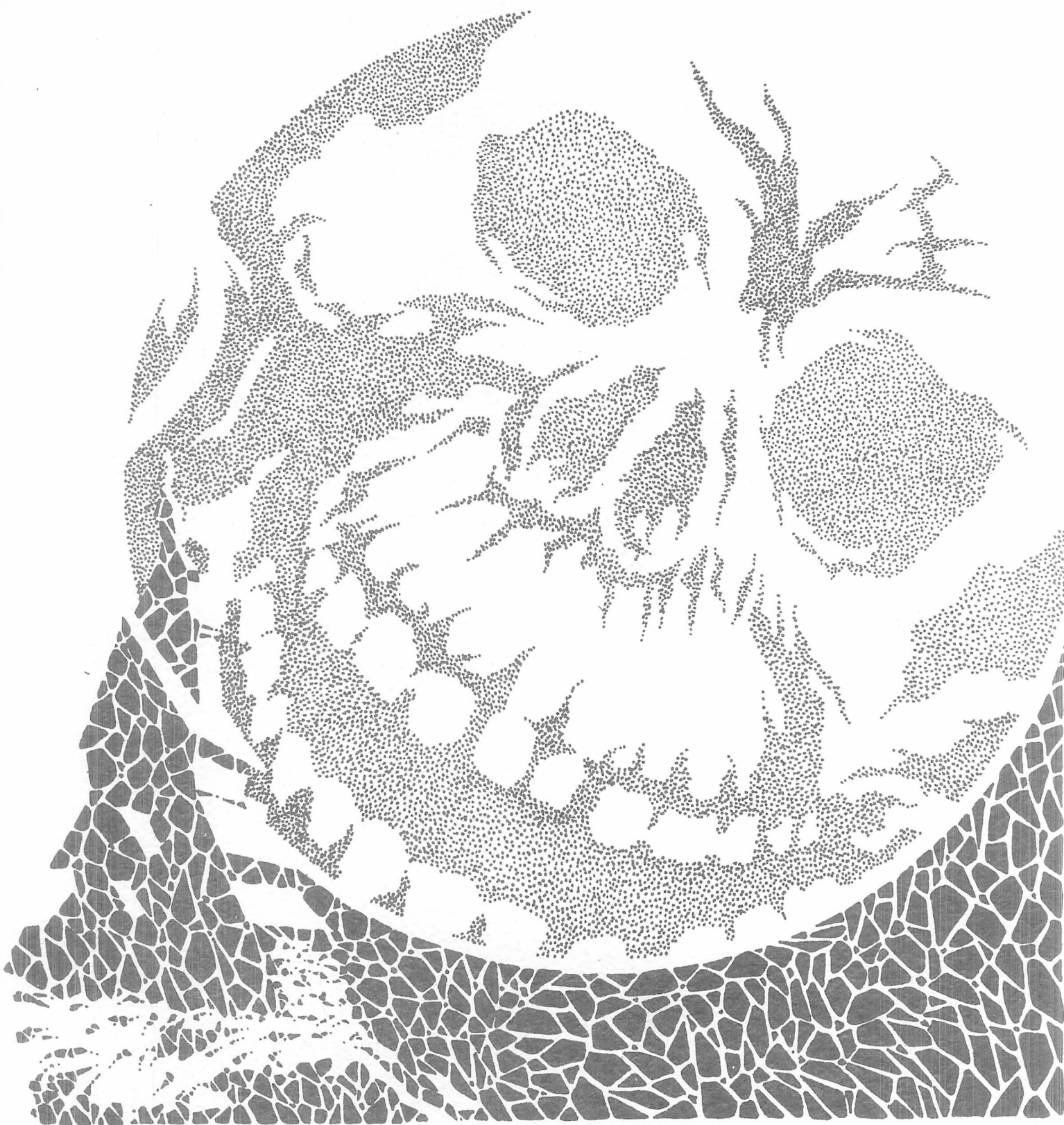
Without my friends, I am nothing: Thanks, Denise & Marla...for the push!

---Bill Bowers, 1/4/79









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