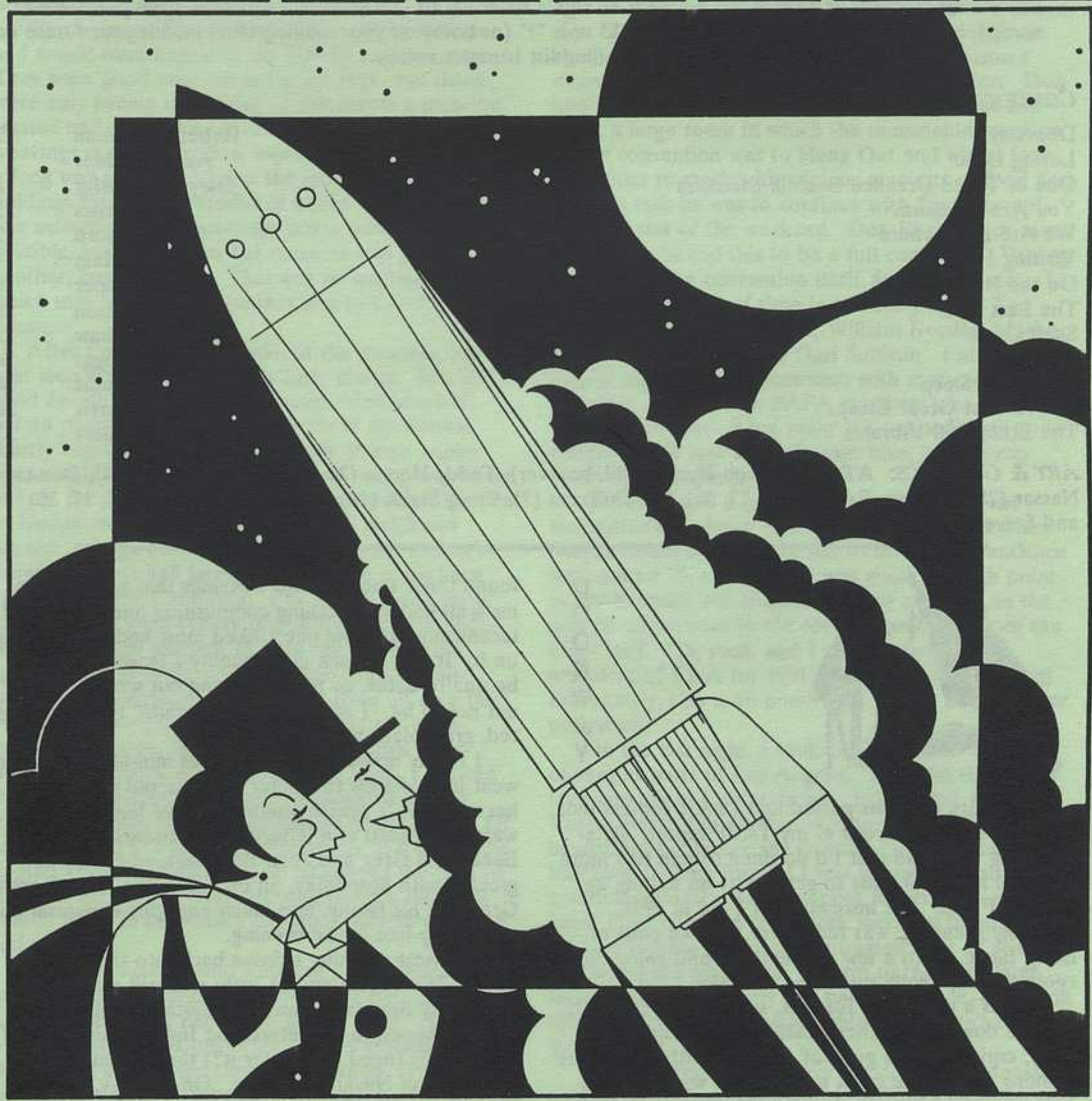
TRAPDOOR



DAN STEF FAN ©'92

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DOORWAY

An entire year has passed and I must confess that I haven't written a word of my TAFF report. After reporting last issue that I'd declined to join two more apas, I'd hoped at least to get a start on writing up my TAFF trip. But instead, what I did in 1992, fannishly speaking, was rediscover my own pace of doing fanac, go to a few conventions, and enjoy the egoboo occasionally cast in my direction.

It was a good year for that, starting out at Corflu. I drove down to Southern California a couple days early, cruising down good ol' Highway 101, where one is along the Pacific coast much of the way after the halfway point. I stopped in Buellton, a town known mainly for the original Anderson's pea soup restaurant; I remember stopping there as a child on trips north with my parents. I wanted to check out an Indian store Carol Carr and I had visited briefly last October. I can freely admit this now that I've been revealed (in Geri Sullivan's IDEA) as a Shopper. I found three small Navajo weavings that appealed to me – all had eye-catching composition and were good technically – but the one I liked most had no price tag on it. It was of such good quality I feared it would be unaffordable, so my heart sang out when it turned out not to be. I got it. It's a "Ganado" type – vibrant red, gray, black and white.

I finally arrived in Los Angeles mid-afternoon and went immediately to Canter's (a fine old deli in the heart of L.A.'s Jewish ghetto) to have lunch. Afterwards, I headed at a leisurely pace towards Laguna Beach and Greg and Joan Benford's, where I was greeted with hospitality, an excellent Thai dinner with Greg and his family, and much engaging conversation until fairly late in the evening.

The next morning I drove back into the L.A. basin. The beginning of Corflu was still many hours away. My destination was the Southwest Museum, where I hoped to see interesting Indian artifacts, and particularly (need I even say it?) their extensive collection of Navajo weavings. On the way, I took a side trip to Hawthorne, cruising the area and checking out the location, vibes and room rates of the motels nearest the convention. It was all half-familiar to me: similar in its physical appearance but quite different in almost every other respect from when I lived nearby in the '50s and early '60s. Back then Hawthorne was famous for being the birthplace of the

Beach Boys, but now it's on the fringes of L.A.'s huge South Central district and has no other distinguishing characteristics. I ended up at a middle-aged but clean and comfortable motel six blocks from Corflu (and with more reasonable room rates). I moved in and spent a few minutes relaxing before driving on to the Southwest Museum.

The museum was enjoyable, but not as extensive as I would have hoped in the Navajo rug department. They were good rugs but not great rugs, and there were only twenty on display. I ran across a museum trustee and asked if I could see any of the other weavings in the collection, explaining that I'd traveled a long way and that I knew the museum had larger holdings from photo credits in books on the subject. She said they were in storage and it wouldn't be possible, but added that the museum was planning another, larger exhibit. That was an exciting prospect which may well lead to another trip to Los Angeles in future.

After I'd thoroughly explored the museum, my next stop was Canter's for an early dinner. More good Jewish food: matzo ball soup, fried kreplach, potato pancakes. A total antithesis of my normal, mostly vegetarian diet and probably at least triple-bypass cholesterol content, but I was only going to be in L.A. for four days, so why not. Afterwards I drove to Hollywood Blvd. to visit one of my childhood haunts: a huge outdoor newsstand. What a treat to browse a newsstand larger and wider in scope than any in Northern California! I've always loved them for the wildly wide variety of publications one finds – obscure political journals of both the left and the right, poetry of every stripe, offbeat cultish publications, newsmagazines and papers from all over the world, and so much more. So much of my extracurricular reading years ago came from this newsstand. Later, walking on Hollywood Blvd., I noticed that Ronald Reagan's star on the sidewalk was in front of a trashy, boarded-up row of empty shops. (It seemed fitting.) I paused momentarily in front of the L. Ron Hubbard Life Museum to gaze at the bust of Elron in the lobby, water coursing down a fake cliff behind him. It was such a pompous, kitschy display I had to laugh.

It was by now around 6:30 and if I wanted to go to the official beginning of Corflu – that evening's LASFS meeting – I needed to hit the road. But *did* I want to? Memories of boring LASFS meetings of thirty years ago wafted through my mind. The clubhouse was over the Hollywood hills out in the Valley, a considerable distance away. Did I really want to drive that far? If I went, would I be subject to being "introduced" to the semi-faceless masses of the 150± fans who reportedly attend each meeting these days? The prospect of all this was daunting. Alternatively, I could continue to cruise Los Angeles and eventually return to my room, where I had books and fanzines to read, TV that could be watched, and various snacks in my ice chest. The choice was easy. It was a good relaxing evening.

The next morning I drove over to the Cockatoo Inn. Don Fitch was the first fan I encountered in the lobby. I believe it was from him I heard that the LASFS meeting had been largely devoted to a discussion of whether one of the rooms at the clubhouse should be a smoking room, with smoking banned elsewhere. I knew I'd made the right decision. Don was soon off to check out the readiness of the consuite, a large room in which the nonsmoking portion of the convention was to Hang Out and which Don was about to stock with copious amounts of food and drink, a task he was to continue with few interruptions the rest of the weekend. Don Fitch, snack saint.

I don't intend this to be a full conreport. During the heat of the convention itself, I took no notes. I spent a great deal of time in the company of Ted White, Arnie & Joyce Katz, William Rotsler, Moshe Feder, Lenny Bailes and Geri Sullivan. I also had briefer but pleasant encounters with many other fans, including the fourteen FAPA members who were there besides me. I led many meal expeditions up to Canter's. It's now all a pleasant blur, a soft fuzzy warm faanish spot in my mind.

It was overall a good convention, despite the committee's tendency to hold scheduled items when people would normally be out to dinner. Attendance was around 75, and the mix was good. A high point of the banquet was Rotsler drawing cartoons on the unused dinnerware to the seeming amusement of the hotel staff. Oh, yeah, and I was elected past president of FWA for 1991. Heady egoboo, indeed! Fortunately, this is an honor that carries no particular obligation.

On the last night, I took Geri Sullivan on a tour of various parts of Los Angeles. She said she hadn't seen enough of California yet. I drove her first to Venice Beach (an enclave of Unusual People). In a beachfront bookstore she found a Dr. Seuss book she had been looking for and I was pleased to find a tiny autobiographical volume by poet Robert Creeley. Later Geri bought a patchwork jacket of bright, colorful Guatemalan fabrics that attracted a lot of attention when she wore it on her trip to the U.K. later last Spring. Apparently this particular style – common for several years in coastal California – hadn't reached England.

Leaving Venice, we drove up into Santa Monica, another beachfront community, and then inland through upscale areas like Bel Air, Brentwood, Westwood, Beverly Hills and the Sunset Strip. We went up into Hollywood and visited the Chinese Theatre, where there are footprints, handprints and various other prints of *the stars* set in concrete in a courtyard. ("Other prints" includes Jimmy Durante's nose and Trigger's horseshoes.) Sharing parts of "my"

L.A. with Geri was a good way to end my Corflu experience. My last conscious fannish act was the dead dog party back at the Cockatoo Inn.

Though I've been in fandom well over thirty years, it wasn't until last spring that I was finally asked to be Fan Guest of Honor at a convention, Silvercon I in Las Vegas. "Welcome to the circuit," Carol said when I announced this upcoming honor. Arnie and Joyce Katz were at least partly responsible for this turn of events. Though they strongly disclaim influencing the local club in their selection of GoH, I know that my decision in 1963 to add the neoish Arnie Katz to the mailing list for my genzine, FRAP, was a wise one. Early influences can have far-reaching and -lasting effects.

"Be sure to bring your swim gear and hang out by the pool!" said Silvercon chairperson Ken Forman when he phoned about my guesthood. I had to admit to a little apprehension over Las Vegas as a convention venue, but it's a personal thing. You see, despite growing up in Southern California, my personal thermostat was set at birth – in Cleveland, Ohio. I start to wilt when the mercury rises above 80° F., and daytime highs in Vegas even in early May are in the 90s. At those temperatures, wilt is actually too mild; I melt into a torpid lump.

I told Ken about my antipathy to heat and he assured me that the con hotel had Serious Air Conditioning. I breathed a sigh of relief. Further relief came when Ken told me I was scheduled for only a couple of appearances and could spend most of my time partying and hanging out. Since that's what I do most (and best) at conventions, his assurances put me at ease. Silvercon should be a piece of cake, I thought. I'd get to be a masquerade judge, too, Ken informed me. Since I've rarely attended more than a moment or two of any such con event, I thought this would be a new frontier in my fanac.

What to say at the banquet puzzled me. Since I was the *Fan* Guest of Honor, something about fandom would be appropriate. But what? Should it be a personal anecdote (about my current life or a tale from my neohood?) or perhaps some incisive Monday morning quarterbacking about, say, the Staple Wars, the Willis Death Hoax, SAPS OE Elections of the '50s, or the Michigan Bomb Incident? In my usual decisive fashion, I quickly put it entirely out of my mind.

The flight from Oakland to Vegas was spectacular. We took off over the middle of the Bay. From my window seat I could see San Francisco and northward, then the Pacific coast as we flew south as far as Monterey and Carmel before turning inland. We flew over parts of the Sierras where the huge reservoirs that serve the Bay Area are located, and then out over the bleak Nevada desert. Las Vegas was both glittery and dusty when it finally loomed up as we descended. The first slot machines were just past the metal detectors. ("Don't Put That Change Back in Your Pocket!") As promised, Arnie and Joyce were waiting for me outside the terminal. They whisked me away to the convention hotel in their Big Comfortable American Car.

I spent a lot of time that weekend enjoying legendary Katzian hospitality with its namesakes and various of the other local and out-of-town fans. Mindful of being Guest of Honor, I made myself available in public places to connect with others and provide an opportunity for them to connect with me. Besides the many Las Vegas fans, Don Fitch, Jack Speer and Art Widner were present. During the FAPA party, new member Woody Bernardi asked Speer, who was sitting on the floor stapling his FAPAzine, whether he was a member of FAPA. "Just one of the charter members," Don Fitch responded as the entire room – Jack and Woody included – broke out in friendly laughter. It was a good moment.

As far as program stuff turned out, I introduced myself at an opening ceremony, was one-third of a panel on fanzines on Saturday afternoon, and gave a brief thank-you speech at the banquet later that day. Masquerade judging turned out to be no more difficult than approving of Peggy Burke's skimpy costume. Everything went pretty well, especially the panel. But mostly I hung out, since it was billed as a relaxicon (though it had rather more programming than one might expect). It was a little like a continuation of Corflu, and I enjoyed myself.

They're doing it again the first weekend of April this year. William Rotsler will be Fan Guest of Honor and rumor has it the con will be arranging with the hotel to lay in extra white dinnerware. Charles and Cora Burbee are flying in, too. (I understand there will be a panel featuring Burbee, Rotsler, Arnie Katz and Bill Kunkel – "the L.A. Insurgents Meet the Brooklyn Insurgents"?) See you there.

Around the time of Silvercon, I learned that TRAP DOOR had once again been nominated for a best fanzine Hugo. While this is certainly a wonderful thing, I tend to chalk it up to fannish demographics. The first time TRAP DOOR received a nomination was in 1987 when the worldcon was in England; the zine is widely circulated and popular over there and I expect that helped secure its nomination. Last year, I believe the Willises being guests at Magicon attracted a higher than usual percentage of Our Kind of Fan, resulting in the second nomination. TRAP DOOR ended up last in the actual voting both times, which I attribute to its relatively low circulation (around 260) in relation to the other nominees and, beyond that, to the fact that a fairly high percentage of its recipients are not particularly active in today's fandom (some only in these pages). Still, the generous thoughts of those who nominated it and voted for it are much appreciated. And in any event, whatever

lingering disappointment I might have had over the Hugo results was more than dispelled by the generosity of SPENT BRASS readers, who voted TRAP DOOR their favorite fanzine in that zine's first annual egoboo poll. Thanks for the support! Now write me an article.

Back in TRAP DOOR No. 2, I wrote that one of my biggest regrets about leaving fandom and California in 1971 was giving up my fanzine collection, even including my own zines. At the time, I thought I had to do it because I was moving to Tennessee to live in a commune, but in retrospect I always felt I should have stored them somewhere. I've managed to find copies of most of my own zines; as far as others' zines are concerned, I got to keep all the duplicates that turned up in Terry Carr's collection when I inventoried it back in 1987 and I've made some fanzine buys in various fan fund auctions and at Corflus. But it's been a dream of mine that a fellow oldphart would turn over an extensive collection to me and I could rebuild. My goal is to have the best fannish fanzines of all eras, as well as the most engaging of the more sercon zines (SKYHOOK, for instance).

In early November I received a postcard from Cora Burbee: "I have been organizing some of Charlie's paper goods. I find that he has a tremendous amount of fanzines. He was wondering if after I get them all into one staging area, would you be interested in acquiring them? He wants to give them to someone who will appreciate them and he thought of you. So far I have a stack of approximately two feet and I have a long way to go. He's kept every one. Are you interested? Let me know what you think of the idea." Was I interested?! I wrote back saying Yes, of course, thank you, how kind and thoughtful of you, when can I come? I thought, Assuming that he really did save every one, this could be quite a pile. My plan was to rent a Big American Car and fill it up.

Well, it turned out that Burbee *didn't* "keep every one." Cora admitted later that in the course of five moves over the last quarter century Burb had winnowed his collection. It now consisted of five 10-ream paper boxes. But by then I'd made up my mind to go. I'd been looking forward to visiting the Burbees long before the fanzines entered the picture. Determining it could hold five boxes, I reserved a Geo Metro.

The Monday after Christmas I headed southward through torrential California rains in a Buick I'd been upgraded to – which I appreciated, as it had cruise control. Naturally I stopped in Los Angeles for lunch at Canter's before heading on to far oof exotic Temecula. The Burbees live on the Pechanga Reservation outside of town, reachable off a secondary road via a series of unmarked, mostly unpaved roads. By prior arrangement, I phoned from a service station minimart just off the freeway and Cora soon appeared to lead me out to their home.

This was the first time I'd seen Charlie since the 1984 Worldcon, when I was part of a fannish pack that included (besides us) Elmer Perdue, Terry Carr and Moshe Feder. We've corresponded intermittently in recent years and Burb has been trying to write an article for TRAP DOOR about the sex life of Elmer Perdue. 1992 was not a healthy year for Charles Burbee. He broke his hip, underwent emergency prostate surgery, and suffered several strokes. The latter left him with mobility problems, so we sat by the fire during most of my visit. His memory of fannish events from decades ago remains intact, however, and we spent an enjoyable evening talking about fandom past and present. Cora surprised herself by joining in these conversations extensively. She also set up a videocamera (a Christmas gift) to tape us while we went over Charlie's notes for the article on Elmer. This amused me because I had purposely *not* brought along a tape recorder, not wanting to inhibit our conversation in any way.

When I first got there, Cora served me an excellent spicy three-bean salad. Later we went out for a mid-evening meal. I noticed that Burb was quite tickled to get out. I was surprised to learn later in a letter from Cora that this had been the first time nearly a year he'd gone out to a restaurant because of his difficulty in getting around. (He uses a walker around the house and we took along a wheelchair for the trip to the restaurant.)

On our return we continued to talk fan talk, but eventually we all began to wind down. I'd been up since 5:00 a.m. and the Burbees are not late-night people these days. I retired to a comfortable guestroom and was out like a light before I quite realized how tired I was. The next morning Cora made a great breakfast which included her homemade chili – worth a special mention.

It was raining lightly but steadily as I headed out. I drove in and out of both foul weather and heavy traffic to my parents' place in L.A. We talked a lot and had a light early dinner. Wanting to get an early start the next morning, I checked into a motel near (guess what?) Canter's and, once settled, went out to cruise once again my favorite parts of central L.A. – the Sunset Strip, Hollywood Blvd., the galleries on upper La Cienega, and the Fairfax kosher ghetto. I had a second, late dinner (guess where?) and went back to the motel. Before going up to my room, I opened the trunk of the car, rummaged through a box of fanzines at random, found *A Sense of FAPA* (a 375-page FAPAnthology published in '62 for the 100th mailing), and took it up to my room. After watching some news, I opened up *ASoF* to reread Laney's *Ah Sweet Idiocy* for the first time in about 25 years. What a joy to have Towner's deft turns of phrase rolling over in my mind. I fell asleep after awhile, but not from boredom.

My trip up the coast the next morning was splendid. The storms had cleared out and the ocean and beach were crystal clear. I stopped at a beach on the far end of Malibu. It's my favorite one because it's well out of the city and has easy access – no cliffs to scale and the beach itself isn't very deep. I walked slowly to the edge of the surf, and stood watching and listening to the ocean for about ten minutes. City vibes began to melt away and I felt closer to nature and to my essentially Southern California roots – which includes love of the beach as a place to recharge one's batteries. Getting back on the road at a more relaxed pace, I headed on. Once sufficiently past Santa Barbara and thus finally out of Southern California traffic, I set the cruise control and found some nice jazz on the radio. I stopped for gas and lunch (non-Kosher) in Pismo Beach, and took a walk on the pier for a last lingering look at the ocean before climbing the steep grade past San Luis Obispo and heading inland.

Upon my return to Glen Ellen after New Year's, I unloaded the five boxes of fanzines in an easily accessible row. However, what with going back to work and my push to get this issue completed, I haven't examined them all. I've been through the equivalent of perhaps 1½ boxes, skimming the top layers of each box. What an incredible batch of zines! If the rest of what I haven't looked through yet is as good as the portion I did check out, it's going to augment my existing fanzine collection in a very pleasing fashion. After this issue is put to bed, I'll be diving back in. Meanwhile, it's a double pleasure to read an occasional vintage zine – one knows in advance it will be good *and* you don't have to think about writing a letter of comment.

Speaking of old fanzines, the mail auction of Dick Ellington's old fanzines is in its last stages. Zines offered date from the mid-'40s to the mid-'80s; the vast majority appeared from about 1955 to 1975. Bids must reach me by May 1, 1993. Though many bids have been received, there are still numerous items unbid upon and hence some potential bargains to be had. There's still time to get in on it. For an 18-page descriptive catalog and list of bids received to date, please send $2 (or $3 for non-North American addresses via airmail) to cover printing and postage. All proceeds from this auction will benefit Dick's wife, Pat.

In previous issues I've written about various fannish source materials and their availability. Now I'm pleased to announce that copies of the Swisher/Pavlat/Evans Fanzine Index, listing fanzines published from the beginning through 1952, are available from me. Originally serialized in five volumes during the '50s, this 150-page reprint was issued around 1964. (No, these weren't in Burb's collection.) It's mimeographed on genuine Twiltone. Fanhistory wonks like myself use it as a reference when reading SaM's and Harry's histories of early fandom. If you'd like a copy, it's $7 postpaid. Part of the proceeds will go to a deserving fan fund or two.

Moving on to current fanzines, here's the latest tally of I've received:

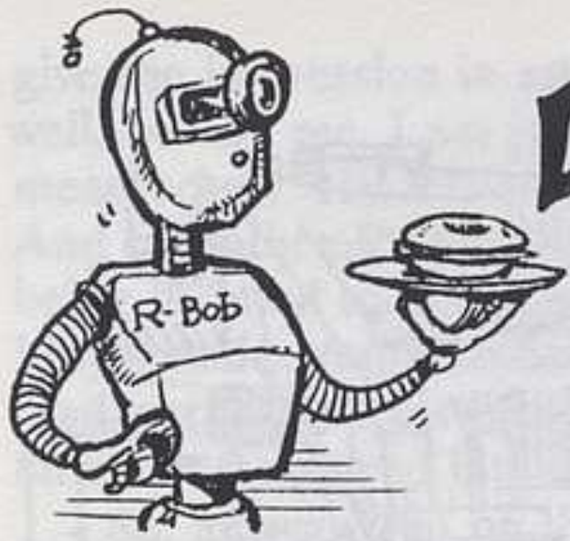
	'92	'91	'90	'89	'88'	87	'86
Australia	18	16	16	12	15	32	27
Canada	17	1	2	2	1	4	7
U. K.	50	44	30	61	51	33	33
U. S.	104	85	66	55	67	58	98
Others	2	1	5	0	4	3	1
Totals:	**191**	**147**	**115**	**130**	**138**	**130**	**166**

1992's Others were from Lithuania and New Zealand.

As in 1991, a significant chunk of these totals represent the production of a minority of very active publishers – the huge increase in Canadian fanzines received is, for instance, largely due to Dale Speirs and his entertaining OPUNTIA – but 1992 is not quite so dominated by the *same* few and has seen the emergence of a number of new, fairly frequent zines. Back in TRAP DOOR No. 9, I wrote, "If even a couple dozen people dropped out of a few apas and used that extra time to publish a limited circulation fanzine, it would energize fandom so much that we would soon be calling it a Golden Age." Without limiting it to apa refugees, I believe something like that is happening – and that it's just beginning.

This is an awkward transition in an admittedly rambling editorial, but I *need* to write about Roger Weddall who, as most of you must know by now, passed away late last year. Over the years I've enjoyed the unique letters of comment Roger would send; not exactly in letter form, they would be rendered in tiny handwriting (almost Lovecraftian in its smallness, though not "crabbed" as HPL's is usually described) that would fill all the logical surfaces of the pictorial card on which they were written and then turn corners and run overleaf with wild abandon. Roger's fanzines, while enjoyable, were seldom this zany. His last letter of comment closes this issue.

It was a genuine pleasure finally to meet Roger last fall – at Jeanne Bowman's house in Glen Ellen on his first evening in the United States. My son Arthur and I went up for dinner and conversation, and we had a wonderful time. Arthur observed afterwards what a cool dude Roger was, and Art isn't even a fan. I was grateful that Roger went ahead with his DUFF trip. He was an outstanding representative of Australian fandom and it was good to interact with him (after knowing him only via fanzines and letters for so long). Judging from what I've read in recent fanzines and letters about others' experiences with him during his visit, our evening in Glen Ellen was far from unusual. Roger was definitely a trufan, and I'll miss him.... *[–RL]*



Losing Isaac

by Andi Shechter

Although certainly we weren't close, I can still claim Isaac's friendship. During the early and mid-'70s, I would occasionally attend a Star Trek convention in New York City as a break from school. I remember being pleasantly amazed that someone whose name I'd seen in my library from the time I was a kid haunting the shelves – this same Asimov – was so accessible and available and talked to folks like they were folks. He talked to me. My mom couldn't believe it – we both thought this was pretty heady stuff.

The night that I heard of his death, I looked at some pictures someone took of Isaac and me. At a convention in '75 or thereabouts, he inscribed my copy of *Caves of Steel* "to Andrea with passionate love" and there's another Asimov book in the house similarly inscribed to me "with breathless passion" or something equally silly.

Sometime in late '74 or '75, a friend told me that he was coming to speak at SUNY Albany, where I was attending graduate school. He was speaking at a class in the afternoon (I think it was an English class on science fiction) and then was speaking to the campus that night. I showed up at the class, which was held in a small lecture hall, and waited as Isaac came into the center of the room. He sat down. I walked up behind him and did some devastatingly dumb thing like put my hands over his eyes. The most *gratifying* reaction – well, you know what Isaac was like. Isaac turned in his chair, leapt up, and gave me a great big hug, exclaiming delightedly, "What are *you* doing here? It's so good to see you!" Everyone in the room was abuzz, simply dying to know who *I* was that *I* was so friendly with Dr. Asimov. But it was never a big deal with him. He didn't hold audiences; he talked to people. So what if he'd written several million books?

In June of '75, I headed back to my *alma mater*, Connecticut College, where Isaac was speaking at commencement. (Lucky class of '75 – I was jealous. In '74, we had Buckminster Fuller and I don't remember a word he said.) I swore Isaac saw me from the stage and winked, and I think I got to say hello afterwards, but can't swear to it.

A few years later, after moving to California, I married Alva Rogers, who was old buddies with Isaac and, of course, we sent a wedding invitation. I still describe the wedding in glowing terms, as we were fortunate to have so many friends and it was the science fiction event of the month, at the very least. I always used to babble, "Oh yes, and Poul and Karen Anderson were there, and Fritz Leiber, and the Lupoffs and Quinn Yarbro helped decorate the whole place and Marta Randall performed the ceremony and our best people were Debbie Notkin and Bob Silverberg, and Isaac sent regrets and a check." Again, I called my mom, and we laughed. "Mom, we got a wedding present from Isaac Asimov!"

Over the years I only saw Isaac at an occasional convention and never got to talk for very long, but I treasured the friendship. We all have known people who think they *should* be treated differently because they write and we are being honored by their presence. For those of us whose lives revolve around reading, knowledge, creativity, it might have been a big deal. What made Isaac's friendship special to me was the ease with which he gave it – he didn't think it was any big deal. I didn't, couldn't, find it in me to mind the "dirty old man" routine either. You'd think I would, since I do find sexism objectionable. But with Isaac it was never offensive, never rude, just silly. It was always clear to me that it was in total self-mocking jest and that while Isaac took himself seriously about a lot of things, he was *not* serious about that. It was part of an act and he was supposed to play this particular part.

Everyone's going to have a story about Isaac. As I sat last spring, feeling peeved and angry and cheated that Isaac is dead, I thought of what so many others would be feeling. What are all those people who write to Isaac at the magazine feeling? What must Arthur C. Clarke be feeling tonight? And Greg, who just took over his column in *F&SF*? And Harlan, who takes the death of his friends so deeply and so personally, how shocked he must be at the loss of his friend. Yes, people get old and people die, but we weren't ready for this, you know?

It seemed like Isaac was finally going to take it easy for a while. He certainly had ten or twenty years more, or so I assumed. We were all going to have Isaac around for a long time. Isaac Asimov was going to live forever, if anyone was. And while his work, his contributions, *will* be around forever, and will form the foundation, if you will, for what everyone thinks of as science fiction, it was *not* time for Isaac to leave us. Dammit.

– Andi Shechter

Gloria came up to me after running away from her tyrannical father for the three hundredth time and cooed into my ear, "Come with me to the capuccino house where there is, they say, a stylishly hairy, slovenly dressed, overweight, indeterminedly aged male something who makes amazing conversation. He is *the live poet-talker*!"

I was twenty years old. I had been working as a clerk in a bank in Trenton, New Jersey. Gloria was a girlfan who was always running away from home – which for her was Philadelphia, where her father Jerry was a loudmouthed, obnoxious Jewish entertainment industry gossip columnist for the raggiest newspaper in Philadelphia, *The News*.

She would stop at my place in Trenton where I was then living with my biological mother, my surrogate mother and my sister-in-law. Even though, you must understand – and oddly enough – I was not even at that early age married. (And have never gotten married in the long decades since due to occupational impotency.)

Gloria stuffed cotton balls in her cheeks and put on an outmoded pair of my eyeglasses, being ones no longer strong enough for me to see through. On the train trip up to New York City that weekend she insisted on speaking German.

I had once told her that I knew how to speak German. "I learned it from my Grandmother Deindorfer's knee," I said, referring to Emma D., *nee* Emma Regler, born in Switzerland. She came over to Philadelphia at the age of three, eventually to marry my grandfather, John Calvin Deindorfer, one of the craziest sons of bitches ever to walk upon this planet. If any of you have wondered why I

give the impression in my writing – let alone in my in-person actions – of being a little "way out" – well, believe me, I am just a watered-down version of old John the butcher. Right, he was a meatpacker. His father, great-grandfather George, came from Germany to Philadelphia to cut meat. And my father Ralph, John's second oldest son, cut meat for "Old Granddad" until he couldn't stand being dictated to about every little detail in his life by the crazy old nut and quit to work for Oscar Mayer and a couple other meat companies where he worked his way up from salesman to sales manager, before his life came to an untimely end when I was twenty years old because his crazy father had screwed him up too much for him to want to live.

So, anyway, I'm on the train to NYC Saturday afternoon with Gloria, doing her "running away from home thing," cotton balls stuffed in her mouth, my weak outmoded eyeglasses on her face, and she turns and says something to me in German, expecting me to reply in German. I don't want these strangers to think I am on the train with this German-looking dog, especially since without the cotton wadding in her cheeks and the drippy eyeglasses she is a pretty good-looking girl. I say, "Look, let's drop this charade. I don't speak German."

She looks really fed up. She then says what she says in the first paragraph of this piece of word butchering (fitting, that, for my family background, huh?).

I chime into this more agreeable mode. "Well, Clarabelle, I have just splatted against the side of Gotham City like a raw egg thrown from a height by a heifer in heat. I am here to drink up all the fleshy snazzy uncurling bacon strips of *Existanz*. Gulp and gobble it all down and in and transmute it in the crude crucible of my red-hot imagination, because it's become the *thing* do be splashy and dionysiac, you know. After all, that's the sixties, which they'll sometime in the future do nostalgia about. Like you and me on the train to Gotham City and I have dislodged you from the fake German dog girl runaway shell and here we are talking about beatniks, instead of silly fans like our New York friends Ted White and Walter Breen and Leslie Gerber. So let's freak out these train inmates in our beatnik articulate way gleaned from eyetracking piles of Kerouac and go careening into Penn Station like a truck with gone brakes full of loganzas or something else imported from a Mexican kind of place, bound for brave Brisco!"

When we hit Manhattan and get off the train – leaving amazed looks from straggly strangers behind us – we take a cab to Gloria's friend Tim Buckley-clone in the Village.

"Oh good," I sigh, greatly relieved. "We don't have to hang out at Esther Davis's with Ted White, Walter Breen, Leslie Gerber, little Stevey Stiles, etc."

"Right," said Gloria, as we got out of the cab in front of the apartment of this Tim Buckley look-alike, except that at the time I didn't realize this because it was only five years later that I realized in retrospect that this secret beatnik, pre-hippy boyfriend of Gloria's either looked a helluva lot like the legendary folksinger Tim Buckley or *was* Tim Buckley. Anyway, it was in his presence in his apartment with him and Gloria that I first tried to smoke grass, all of twenty years old and Trenton bank clerk, secretly reading about beatniks and having fanned in New York City a few dozen times before on weekends. But Gloria knew beatniks as well as these silly *fans* we had in common. Maybe I did get a little stoned, because we went outside on the streets of the West Village and I saw through my blarmy fried egg eyes all these dionysiacs rushing around abrim with their own slosh aburst with hogbristling sloppy enthusiasm and dislodged idealism trying to break the crust of the "old dead skin" of the government. Because in this impressionistic memoir I am playing loose with the years, you see, and it's still Eisenhower power, you see. Kennedy hasn't slept around the scene as President yet, only as Senator yearning to be the big man, the top man, the eventually shot man. Back there I said something about the sixties. Well, this is beatnik, not hippy. It's the fifties waiting for the sixties. I'm playing with time here. If Philip K. Dick and Barrington Bayley can do it, maybe I can make the supposedly 22-year-old me do it too, though in some aspects of this thing I would be more seventeen or eighteen or so. But beatnik myth subsumes mere Lee Hoffman fan history, anyway.

Before you know it Gloria and Tim had disappeared into the night to have a cow or make a record about cows. I fall in with some beatniks around the corner drinking cheap wine and smoking marijuana and rolfing out their body terminants, and they talk, talk, talk a real lot about

Kierkegaard, Camus, Charlie Parker, Heidegger, Jackson Pollock and other high karma ghods like that.

But then I see blearily through marijane's induced clear that this off-balance wheel is going around too fast. The soup is *already* boiling, damn it! What's with the jagged freneticism?

"Whoa!" I shout from out of my calm clear blue eyes. "You people have all this Euroculture packed into you and you are running away with it into a gutter of cheap body sensations that you wish to obediently gurgle around within you and without you faster than Hume himself could have kept track of anything. All this angst and woe-is-me and authentication of what-not-much you already are. Well, there is a new wave coming of youths from middle class white households who make a floating happy marijuana bubble out of cartoons and red soap and plantation enforcers. They hold themselves well back from your hubristic Moha embraces."

As the days go by and I have completely forgotten about what Gloria and the fake or real Tim Buckley are up to, I fall in with these yaks. They have become complacently vegetable-ic. Thus, then, we have rough-edged rudies with a crystalline beereye (or a multitude of such eyes) who don't say but sing, "You are too passive and dainty and shopclass polite. Pull it all down so we can dynamite the shopping malls."

II

But about that capuccino house long-lost Gloria was babbling about. I guess there is air in there and it's not thick butter, but it is what you would say reminds you of thick butter if you tried to capture on paper the image that comes into your mind as you enter the field of sway of this, uh, place, that "thick butter" would be a way to put into words a description of something of the air of this place.

Do we mean merely air as it is part of the atmosphere of planetoid earth or do we mean the air or atmosphere in the emotional sense? And from whom do these emotions emanate? There are people in this capuccino house, and I must assume they are human beings, very much as I am, but I cannot be sure because there is something reptilian about them. I have memories as a wee kid of going to the zoo and seeing the lizards lying asleep or half asleep or dazed or somnolent basking in the sun on their rocks, making me think the atoms in the lizards remember as old friends the atoms in the rocks. There seems to be an affinity there, a conforming to each other, the lizards and the rocks. The lizards are in their right and fitting place. Somehow, once again, the egregious convolutions of Space-Time have arranged to have the lizards and the rocks intersect. Well, so do these people in this capuccino house, mammals such as I am, with the proper ducts and conduits of mammalian, warmblooded adaptability, seem more reptilian, basking on their rockchairs, meaning they feel themselves suited to their place in this capuccino house, and it feels itself suited to them.

They are here in public repose, gathered together. You and I are not to disturb them. They are part of a "scene" that has been going on for a while. So though this is a place of business and I am a potential customer, I feel like a mammal intruding among lizards. The thought doesn't build itself up in my mind that if I am a mammal I am a step beyond these reptiles, but if it had I would not want to be the *first* mammal to have to stand up to these reptiles.

But they actually are not reptiles. They are human beings too, I suppose – mammals who happen to have reminded me for a while of reptiles. And I have to live up to them. I have to suit them. Suit them in this sense not having to do with their wearing suits. These seedy, hairy capuccino dwellers wouldn't be caught dead in a suit. But I am in a suit. A dirty, sweat-stained suit, but a suit. The same suit (one of two) I wear or wore to work in the bank clerk job, and wore on the way to New York with Gloria, and since she ran off with Tim maybe Buckley, the same one I have been wearing for the two weeks since I have been staying in the Apple, living on cornflakes and ryebread in the Christian wing of the YMHA. I am in a suit. A stained, odorous grayblue, metallically and sweat-stainedly shiny suit. I have failed to realize that – horrors! – you don't go into a beatnik capuccino parlor wearing, of all things, a suit.

This makes me a marked mock, a target to be made fun of. I walk into the capuccino house with this suit on. The heads – still, I insist, reptilian heads – lift up. They see a young, suited

person, a clerkly guy. They recogitate, "He looks *green*, looks like a target, an object for our ridicule." What they fail to realize is how ridiculous they look now in that goddamned capuccino house twenty or even thirty years later, fallen over their little bitty capuccino cups like dead tree trunks. But all they see and can think of is, "A suit! In our beatnik capuccino house! Blasphemy!"

The Trial

Yes, they rig up a trial for me. I stand in a place whereupon all attention (such as it is or could be) is placed and am charged by them with the heinous crime of:

WEARING A SUIT IN A BEATNIK CAPUCCINO HOUSE

"Hey, wait!" I shout with all the energy of which I am capable. "You have your little enclave here, but out there in great big wide America there are many people in suits, even women wearing pantsuits, though those are in Beverly Hills and Manhattan's stylish east 60s."

"Hold on," booms a beatnik looking like a heterosexual Allen Ginsberg, laughable as that idea might be. "What is this prescience?"

"I have kind of a feel for the future," I say.

"But this part sidetracks the whole bit."

"It could, but we'll roll with it."

"Hey, what about the trial?" shouts a girl in black beaded demon lesbian vamp. "You, the creep in the suit daring thus to enter our beatnik capuccino house."

"Hah!" I thought. I walked out of the place and took the train back to Trenton.

I wrote a letter to Stevey Stiles the next week telling him I'd been in New York City for a couple weeks but had not contacted him or any of my other fan friends. I told him that Gloria had run away from Philadelphia to New York again.

I should add that Stevey was living with his parents in Manhattan then and going to Doc Savage's Commercial Art Union learning to become a fan cartoonist.

I got a call the next evening. It was Gloria. "Hi, Gary," she cooed into the phone. "I'm staying with Stevey and his parents. Could you call up my dad and ask him if it's okay if I can come home again?"

I hung up on her.

– Gary Deindorfer

This wasn't the *first* time that I had sat in a crowd of Hugo nominees at a World Science Fiction Convention. No; this was the *second* time (in a mere 26 years). In this case, however, I was a sit-in for Robert and it was TRAP DOOR that had been deservedly (and, given its circulation, unexpectedly) nominated. Since I've been reading and enjoying Robert's efforts for years, since PSI-PHI, I felt honored despite having to wear a suit. I felt tickled pink to be sitting among all the nominated fan artists and even the nominated Mark Owings and Jack Chalker who had done (I believe) a bibliography published by Mirage Press.

I carefully rehearsed my acceptance speech in my mind... yeah, sure. Actually, I figured I'd wing it; either I'd go for the sincere approach and choke a lot, or I'd go for laughs. Humor seemed to be winning out and it occurred to me that I could do whatever the hell I wanted to because, hey, this was in *Robert Lichtman's* name! I needn't have the slightest fear of bombing, not the slightest restraint, remorse or hesitation. That heady realization pounded through my mind, pounding, pounding. I realized that this was my *golden opportunity* to finally speak *frankly*, to finally *publicly* dissect all the injustices and cruel stupidities involved in the Hugo process – like, when is *Science Fiction Chronicle* going to win one, anyway? Fans should get *down on their knees* and thank ghu for Andy Porter! Yeah, I should go for it; live free, rock free, let freedom rock! I had the first line all figured out: "Robert Lichtman thinks you are all scum," I would begin...

"And the winner for best fanzine of 1991 is LAN'S LANTERN!" said Hugo MC Spider Robinson. A slide of the cover of MIMOSA No. 11 flashed on the screen.

– Steve Stiles

We Are EVERYWHERE

BY GREG BENFORD

Edward Teller is a daunting job interviewer.

What's more, the personnel office at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory sprang Teller on me without warning. I had gone up to Livermore to discuss working there as a research physicist, following my doctoral thesis at UC San Diego. On an early afternoon in 1967 I was ushered into a large office without preamble, and there sat a distracted Teller behind a desk piled high with physics journals.

To my surprise, the other physicists with me quickly excused themselves and left. Teller was scientific director of the Laboratory then, already a legend for his work developing the A-bomb and H-bomb and his epic split with Oppenheimer.

In the next hour, no one disturbed us as he quizzed me about my thesis in detail, turning every facet over to find undiscovered nuances, some overlooked difficulty, a calculation perhaps a bit askew.

He was brilliant, leaping ahead of my nervous explanations to see implications I had only vaguely sensed. Somewhat to my surprise, I apparently passed inspection. At the end, he paused a long moment and then announced that he had "the most important kvestion of all." Leaning closer, he said, "Vill you be villing to vork on veapons?"

Unbidden, images from Stanley Kubrick's film, *Dr. Strangelove*, leaped to mind. But Teller had impressed me as a deep, reflective man. I said I would – occasionally, at least. That began my long, winding involvement with what's now known inaccurately as "Star Wars" or the Strategic Defense Initiative. But here I'll talk about Teller the man – still with us in 1992, along with Hans Bethe, the last survivors of the famed Los Alamos leaders.

I discussed both physics and politics with Teller while at the Lab, finding him delightfully eccentric and original. One hammering-hot summer day in Livermore, we continued well into the lunch hour. Teller wanted to go swimming, but refused to break off discussions. I went with him. He cut an odd figure as he threaded among the muscular sunbathers, mind fixed on arcane points of theoretical physics, his skin pale as the underbelly of a fish. He sat at the pool edge and shed his entire working suit, down to – instead of underwear – a swim suit. *This man plans ahead*, I thought.

As a boy in Budapest, he had come in second in a contest with a streetcar, losing a foot. Beside the pool he unfastened his artificial foot, unembarrassed, and kept talking physics even as he wriggled over to the edge. He earnestly concluded his point, nodded earnestly satisfied, and then seemed to realize where he was. I could almost hear him think, *Ah yes, next problem*. "Edward," I began – and Teller instantly flung himself like an awkward frog into the water, obliviously comic.

With his penchant for problem-solving, Teller was a symbol of the "techno-fix" school of warfare, and the times were running against him. At one Livermore lunch, an arms control negotiator

furiously said to me, "He's the Satan of weapons! We've got to stop him." Many scientists felt just as strongly.

My long, though peripheral, involvement with strategic defense is a large topic, but here I'll stick to the sf context.

One of Teller's allies, Jerry Pournelle, is rangy, technophilic and occasionally dangerous. With a .38 automatic, he can hit a beer can at fifty yards in a crosswind. As we all know, he can also run a political campaign, debug a computer program, and write a best-selling novel – simultaneously. When he asked me to serve on the Citizens' Advisory Council on National Space Policy in 1982, at first I didn't realize that Jerry wasn't proposing just another pressure group. This was a body which had direct lines to the White House, through National Security Advisor William Clark.

Pournelle dominated the Council meetings with his Tennessee charm, techno-conservative ideas and sheer momentum. An oddly varied crew assembled: writers, industrial researchers, military and civilian experts on subjects ranging from artificial intelligence to rocketry. The Council met at the spacious home of Larry Niven – who has the offhand ease appropriate to a Doheny scion. They were a raucous bunch, full of feisty opinions. The men talked hard-edge tech, the women policy. Amid the buffet meals, saunas and Jacuzzis, well-stocked open bar and myriad word processors, a curious thing happened: ideas simmered, some emerging better than half-baked.

The Advisory Council met in August of 1984 in a mood of high celebration. Their pioneering work had yielded fruits unimaginable in 1982 – Reagan himself had proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative, and the Soviets were clearly staggered by the prospect. (Years later, I heard straight from a senior Soviet advisor that the US SDI had been the straw that broke the back of the military's hold on foreign policy.) Robert Heinlein attended and out of the summer heat came a surprise visitor – Arthur C. Clarke, in town to promote the opening of the film made from his novel, *2010*. Clarke had testified before Congress against SDI and regarded the pollution of space by weapons – even defensive ones – as a violation of his life's vision.

Heinlein attacked as soon as Clarke settled into Larry Niven's living room. The conversation swirled from technical issues – could SDI satellites be destroyed by cheap rockets put into orbit? would SDI lead to further offensive weapons in space – to a clear clash of personalities. Clarke was taken aback. His old friend Heinlein regarded Clarke's statements as both wrong-headed and rude. Foreigners on our soil should step softly in discussion of our policies, he said. Clark was guilty of "British arrogance."

Clarke had not expected this level of feeling among old comrades. They had all believed in the High Church of Space, as one writer present put it. Now each side regarded the other as betraying that vision, of imposing unwarranted assumptions on the future of mankind. It was a sad moment for many when Clarke said a quiet goodbye and disappeared into his limousine, stunned.

Behind much of this was Teller, close advisor to Reagan. Meanwhile, over SDI Nobel winners ground their axes, techno-patter rained down, politicians played to the gallery – ships passing in the night, their fog horns bellowing.

I had always wondered about Teller's effectiveness at influencing policy, and recently I asked him about his long range vision. "For that I trust in the real visionaries – the ones I like to read, anyway. The science fiction writers. I haf always liked Mr. Heinlein, Mr. Asimov, Mr. Clarke – they are much more important in the long run than any Secretary of Defense."

So we talked on about how he had read pulp magazines in the 1940s in Los Alamos, bought the hardbacks as they began to appear in the 1950s, and eventually from the press of events kept up with only a few favorites – the hard sf types mostly, but not exclusively.

Somehow I wasn't surprised. Sf doesn't get much space in the *New York Review of Books*, but it does make fans of figures you'd never expect.

Recently H. Bruce Franklin produced clear proof that Harry Truman read the sf pulps and was much influenced by their stories about ultimate weapons. He knew the idea of the atom bomb came from H. G. Wells and *Astounding*.

We are everywhere...

– Greg Benford

VISITING HOPI—ANDREW MAIN

In February 1990 I made a trip to Hopiland for the Bean Dance. Hopiland (*Hopitutskwa* in their own language) is of course in northern Arizona, some 400 miles from where I live in Santa Fe, New Mexico. As the most remote of the Pueblo communities from the original Spanish settlement around Santa Fe, the Hopi managed to resist the return of Spanish domination after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and so they were left pretty much alone until the United States moved into the area in the late 1800s. Of course the Anglo-American response to native cultures, while different from the Spanish, has been no less devastating. Still, the Hopi have retained a good deal of their culture and they are regarded with general respect among other Native American peoples as guardians of the ancient ways.

I first visited Hopi in 1981, during a two-week trip from San Francisco, where I was then living, to look around the Southwest country. As many have before me, I found it a magical place – full of contradictions, full of mystery. It's like this continent's Tibet, remote, elevated, desolate, with the feeling that some ancient wisdom is hidden in the rocky landscape.

My next visit was in August 1984, while I was in the process of moving from Santa Barbara, where I'd spent the summer, to Tucson. In Santa Barbara I'd met a fellow who knew some of the traditional Hopi elders, and he asked me to carry gifts and greetings to them for him. So I had an introduction to the very people I would want to meet there. The occasion of this visit was one of the annual Hopi ceremonies, perhaps the most famous one to the outside world because the participants dance with live rattlesnakes held in their mouths.

Unfortunately, such hordes of tourists and gawkers come to the "snake dance" that the Hopi have a hard time conducting their ceremony in the proper spirit, and this and other dances have sometimes been closed to outsiders. It's a terrible dilemma for the Hopi, as their religious tradition teaches them that the ceremonies are held not merely for themselves but to benefit the whole world, and thus should be open to everyone. There are eight Hopi villages and each holds its own ceremonies. Some (including the most traditional) have responded to the problem by simply canceling the dances.

At any rate, in 1984 the Snake Dance in the village of Songoopavi was open to visitors (it too has been closed since then, I believe) and I was among the crowds, sitting uncomfortably sideways on the roof parapet of a house on the central plaza, from which I could see the proceedings below. As often since I've come to this country, I rather wished I could have seen the ceremony fifty years ago before it was so overwhelmed by the modern world.

I ended up staying a couple of nights with quite a number of young white folks at the house of one Hopi elder who has been very hospitable over the years to seekers from the world outside. There I met a fellow named Tom Tarbet, whose name I'd seen on various articles about the Hopi over the years. Tom lives in Santa Fe, and has become a good friend since I came here. Some 25 years ago he was living in Los Angeles, looking – like so many in our generation –

for something deeper than what modern civilization offered, and he felt somehow drawn to the Hopi country. He began to visit there, met some of the elders, and was so impressed that he's devoted his life since then to trying to understand what they were saying and help convey their message to the outside world.

Tom visits Hopi often, and since I've been here I've wanted to travel out there with him. I'd read about another of the annual cycle of ceremonies that's held in the dead of winter, and thought that might be a better time to avoid the crowds of tourists that invade Hopi during the summer. So, each year I asked Tom to let me know when the Bean Dance was coming up, and finally in 1990 I got it together to go out there with him.

Visiting Hopi is always an intense experience, and the cold of midwinter was pretty harsh. The festival actually goes on for a couple of weeks – it's called "Bean Dance" because they grow bean sprouts in the kivas (an underground ceremonial chamber, the "church" of the Pueblo peoples), which are kept constantly warm with fires and ceremonies. Like our Groundhog Day and its ancestral European nature festivals, it's a celebration of approaching spring and the growing season so important to a farming culture.

We came like most visitors to the public ceremonies of the final days, to watch the lines of kachinas dancing through the labyrinth of lanes and little plazas in the old village. It was an amazing and moving experience; I could easily imagine I was in another time, when people still had a reverential, intimate relation with Mother Earth. Pueblo Indian festivals always include clowns and mischief-makers; in this ceremony masked and costumed boys ran about chasing members of the crowd and blackening their faces. I was blessed in this manner, and felt honored to be thus included, even though the blackening agent was the coal soot now commonly used in place of the traditional corn smut (a black fungus that sometimes grows in corn ears). It was like a badge of honor which I wore for the rest of the day.

In the evening everyone went to bed early, then arose at midnight to go to the kivas for the dancing. It's not often an outsider is allowed to enter a kiva, and I had no idea if I'd have the chance. But, by the kind of apparently random happenstance that is typical of events in Hopi and other sacred places, Tom and I did eventually find ourselves sitting crowded at one end of a bench in the very last kiva we went to – where, just by "chance," the "masters of ceremonies" sitting at the foot of the entrance ladder were two of Tom's friends among the traditional elders.

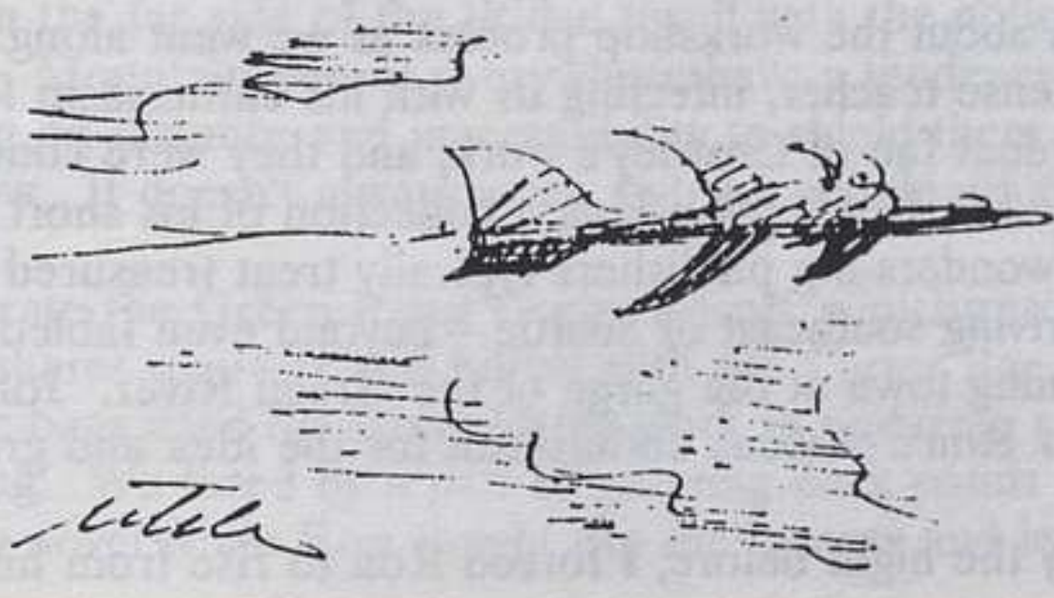
And there we sat for several hours into the morning, as troupe after troupe of costumed men came into the kiva to perform their ceremonial dances. They entered as we had, down a ladder through a roof doorway, first announcing their arrival from above and trading banter with the men at the foot of the ladder, then climbing down with drums, costumes and rattles, forming a tight circle in the small space, chanting and dancing for twenty minutes or so, then departing to move on to the next kiva, while another group arrived in ours. Some of the dancers were dressed as women, and some of the banter (all in Hopi, of course) was clearly off-color jokes which provoked considerable merriment from the audience.

The continual drumming and chanting was mesmerizing, and again I felt blessed to be a part of this event. My whole aim in coming to this country had been to become part of it, let it influence and shape me, unlike so many who've come to this land to impose *their* ways on it.

As Tom and I were driving back to Santa Fe, he remarked that he wished he understood the Hopi language, and it occurred to me that one of the ways I've always approached the ancient wisdoms I've studied from various cultures has been to learn something about their languages. So when I got home I looked around for some books on the Hopi language, and have been learning a little about it. I hope to find time down the road for some intensive study.

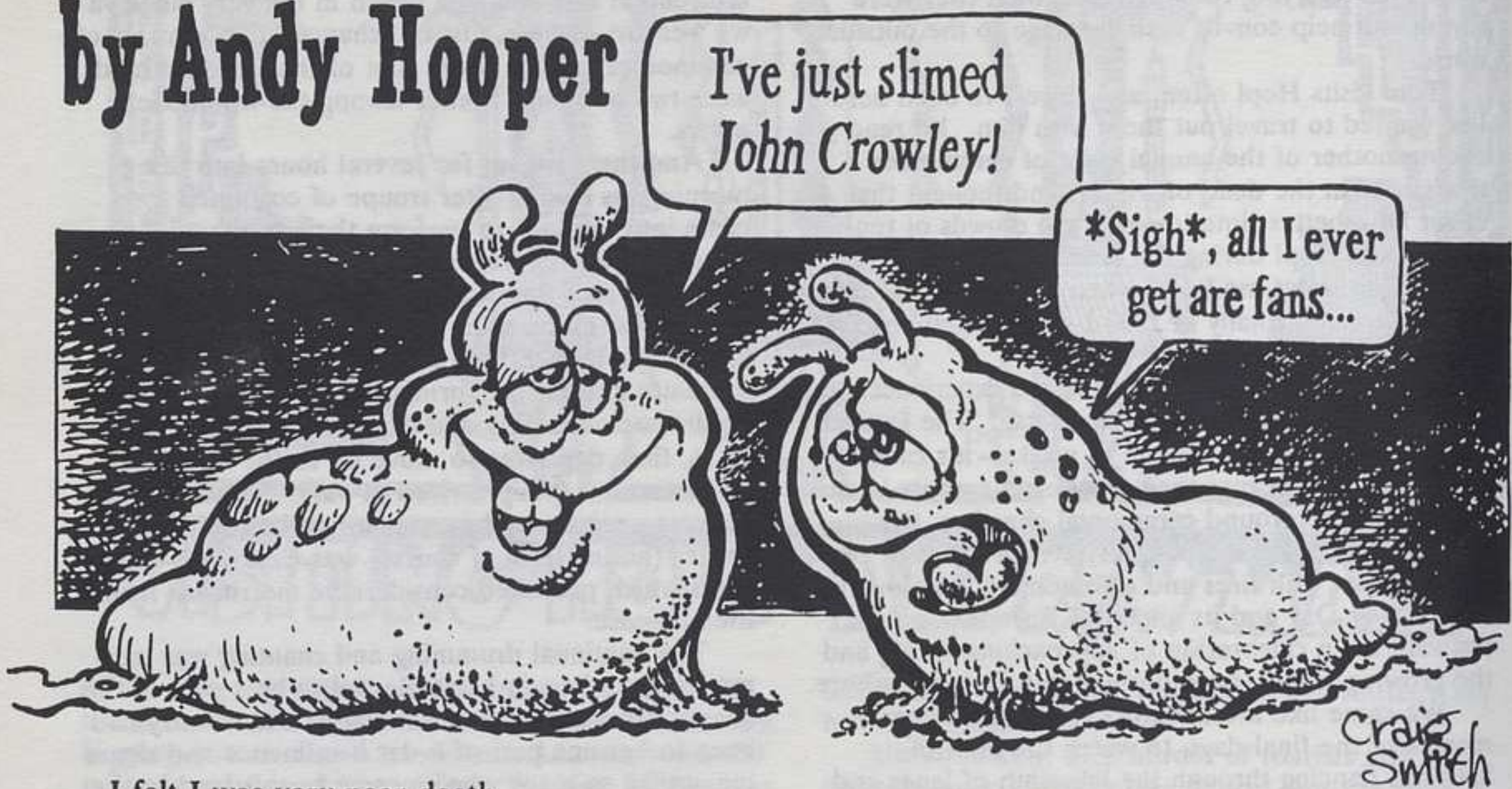
Visiting Hopi is for me like a pilgrimage to Mecca; I hope to spend more time there and find some way to connect myself more deeply with the sacred foundations of this land.

– Andrew Main



ON THE ROAD TO 1885

by Andy Hooper



I felt I was very near death.

Seven o'clock, Saturday morning. I had slept almost six hours and should have felt only little discomfort. But Friday night was the final party for the outgoing Clarion West graduates, among whose number I was counted, and it's debatable whether twelve hours of sleep would have made me feel human. I staggered into the shower and tried not to drown, occasionally cursing Ron Drummond's name.

Ron, for those of you who do not know him, is a Seattle fan of taste and vision. He has that fannish gift: a wide range of interests and the intensity to pursue most of them with equal energy. His strongest passion at the moment is for fine books; seeing too few which match his vision, he has started his own company, Incunabula Press. Our errand that Saturday was obliquely connected to a book Ron is going to publish, but I doubt he would feel the need for any excuse to take John Crowley for a drive in the country.

John Crowley – author of *Little Big, Engine Summer, Aegypt* and other works of fantastic literature – was in Seattle for a week, here as the ultimate teacher of this year's Clarion West workshop. I and the other students found him a fascinating person, with many opinions and methods of writing that we had not been exposed to by any of the other instructors. He began tentatively, discovering things about the workshop process as we went along. By the end of the week, he was a confident, intense teacher, infecting us with his enthusiasm for work and words.

Ron Drummond is an ardent fan of Crowley's work, and they were conducting negotiations which would with any luck lead to Ron's publishing a collection of his short fiction. I don't know what kind of excursions and wonders big publishers typically treat treasured authors to, but Ron's scheme for the day had us driving southeast of Seattle – beyond even fabled Enumclaw – to investigate an abandoned mining town at the gorge of the Green River. John listened beyond the bones of the proposal to hear Ron's obvious enthusiasm for the idea and graciously agreed to accompany us.

Prior to leaving the party the night before, I forced Ron to rise from his vaporous musing with

other book-design freaks to commit to a specific plan of action for the day. If I had to get up that early, I wanted to be sure it was for a good reason. He said we should tool by to get him at eight in the morning, come rain or shine.

So I found myself shortly after eight the next morning sitting semi-conscious in Randy Byers' aged two-door, waiting for Ron to rouse himself from his den and join us for the drive to pick up John. It is debatable if Ron had yet been to sleep or if he had only recently lost consciousness. Randy had to go bang on the door and mutter dark imprecations before Ron clambered out, looking only half dead.

The scene at Campion Tower, where John and all but one of the Clarion West students had been housed, was surreal. A new wave of students from Asian ports of call had arrived who seemed bent on milling around in the lobby and arguing about their luggage at the top of their lungs. After we struggled through them to an elevator, I couldn't resist stopping on the seventh floor for one more goodbye with my fellow students. I felt sorry for them; they were only packing and lounging around the dorm that day in preparation for their department to the distant cities they call home, while Ron and I would get to walk up and down steep hills in a soaking drizzle.

John surprised us by being awake, alert, and somewhat readier for travel than we were. I know that he wore sensible pants and a heavy shirt in the Seattle style, but in my mind's eye he is such a figure of distinction and class that I can only imagine him in a white suit, dapper and urbane, like Tom Wolfe in the Cascade foothills.

There was a brief flurry of map consultation in the parking lot. Four other people were along on the trip in another car. Of the four, only Luke McGuff, boy anarcho-poet, was known to me. Of what they talked about in their car I have no idea. Crowley joined Ron and I in Randy's vehicle, and the next hour was a tapestry of books, writers, publishers, readers, film-making, typesetting, science-fiction, Samuel R. Delany and the Romanian secret police. I lay swaddled in the conversation as by a fog; it is quite beyond my ability to recount any specific portion of it, or even to tell you what my personal reactions were.

The combination of the road humming under the tires and my hangover had a hypnotic effect on me and I found myself looking at the countryside that slid by the windows as if at a series of paintings. Cattle, sheep and horses – peasants out of Brueghel. The morning sun dipped in and out of clouds, around the mountains, shedding a watery rose-colored light out of Turner. Giant fiberglass animals and lumberjacks stood in front of truck stops near the highway seeming to float above the ground, incongruous objects from a Magritte. The landscape itself seemed almost lugubriously green and lush, far from the drought of the city, as heavy with color as one of those paintings they do while you watch on public television.

We passed through the town of Black Diamond, where the principal source of income is still coal-mining. Thinking of the volatile, volcanic Cascades, one doesn't think of coal-mining; yet the deposits are there, often close enough to the surface to strip out with graders and power-loaders. After Black Diamond, the road seems to slowly narrow and pare down to a lane and a half. Once you reach the actual bridge over the gorge of the Green River, a stop light admits traffic from only one side at a time.

We crossed the new concrete bridge. The old steel span was condemned recently, forcing the improvements. People on the far side of the bridge toyed with the notion of not replacing it, deepening their isolation. Mountain people everywhere have a tendency to embrace the remoteness of their homes, depending on distance and inaccessibility to shield them from whatever madness prevails on the plain below. It doesn't always work, but the people we saw that day seemed to have a pretty good thing going.

Friends of Ron's operate the Green River Gorge Resort, a picturesque cluster of buildings on a very steep hillside which shares quarters and billing with the Carter Bag Company. Carter Bag produces inflatable plastic bags used for heavy lifting work in undersea salvage. Since the Gulf war, business has been booming. We lazed by a pair of gurgling duck ponds that would have been at home in a Thomas Hardy novel while Ron sought out the owners and let them know we were on the premises.

We crossed back over the bridge and began walking a trail that wound up only a few yards back from the edge of the gorge. Far below, we could see the river falling over black rocks in lacy spray, although the mist thickened sometimes so that the bottom was hard to see. In the foothills where we walked, the clouds hugged the treetops; a light rain fell through much of our exploration. The trees were hung with moss and fungus, and the trails – we soon discovered – were alive with slugs.

Slugs are a fact of life in Washington and lengths of more than six inches are not uncommon. Such is not the case in New England, where John makes his home. He found the slugs fascinating and stopped on the trail a number of times to examine them. They ceased to be such a novelty as we went further. Soon it seemed impossible not to step on them as they covered the path in dozens.

The sign at the trail-head said "Franklin, Washington." There was certainly no outward sign that we were approaching a mining town with a population of over 1,500. But that was in 1885, when the demand for coal in Seattle and other cities of the west was not easily served by fields to the east. By 1910 Franklin had collapsed and remaining residents probably moved to nearby towns like Black Diamond and Enumclaw.

But you can't dismantle and carry away a whole coal mine, and so there were certain indelible signs of the operations which had taken place there. The first was a huge concrete winch-stand with the jagged ends of I-beams still protruding from the walls. From there, the main cable-winch had lifted cars from the pit and brought the men to and from the work-face. John and I were especially intrigued by these artifacts. We had both spent periods of our childhood in the Appalachian coal country, and both of us had spent part of the workshop on pieces of fantasy set in southwest Virginia and eastern Kentucky which revolved around miners and mining.

A little way past the winch-stand, we found the mine shaft itself. Rather than try to completely cover the shaft, local authorities had welded steel rails and reinforcing rods in an immobile mesh over it. There was a low railing around the shaft which bore a plaque explaining the short history of Franklin and its demise. The shaft was 1,200 feet deep according to the legend. We tested this by lying over the bars and dropping stones into the void. Most of them struck shelves or galleries only a few hundred feet down, but now and then we would silently count ten, eleven seconds, then hear a distant, thunderous "BOOM!" Every time I heard that hollow echo, a small shiver went through me. I couldn't help thinking of the scene in *The Lord of the Rings* where Peregrine Took pushes a pebble off a precipice in Moria and awakens a legion of vengeful orcs in the process. I was happy to move on lest something come stealing up from below.

Next we were into a wet tangle of underbrush and scrubby trees, slapping back branches and brambles to reveal worn gravestones from before the turn of the century. Many were children and bore small sentimental quotes from scripture. But more were miners. There were three brothers who all died on the same day in 1901. A large number bore Italian names: Begnini, Graziani, Pelledoro. The stones had once been relatively elaborate in their carvings, but a hundred years in the constant humidity had erased all but the barest details.

There was something dreadfully abject about the condition of the stones and their disposition in the encroaching forest. In a few more decades, they might achieve the status of an archeological site. A few decades ago, they could have been cleaned up, the trees cut back, and the cemetery preserved, even in the absence of the town. Now, they were simply a series of graves no one cared about.

After looking over the cemetery, Ron decided we ought to head back; he had other plans for us. In order to do so as quickly as possible, he took us along a different path, one closer to the side of the gorge. As we walked along the increasingly steep trail, John and I exchanged questioning glances. Neither of us had worn the right kind of shoes for wet, steep paths, and the rain had begun to fall in earnest. I think visions went through both our heads of one of our party plunging off the side of the cliff onto the presumed rocks below.

But we were being alarmists. There were only one or two wash-outs, where we had to transit slick clay banks – mindful as always of the ubiquitous slugs – and the brambles were no worse than taking a cold shower with an angry cat strapped to your body. Before long, we had made our way back to the bridge and rested there a moment, gazing down at the river as Ron had a cigarette.

I chose the moment to haul out my copy of John's book *Aegypt* and asked him to sign it for me. We stood high above air, earth and water, and as Ron's smoke wreathed us, there was something of fire in the mixture as well. I thought John might choose the moment to inscribe something alchemical, but instead he wrote: "For Andy: 'Of the making of books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.' – so beware. And keep at it. All best, John. Franklin, Washington, August 1992."

Quoting Ecclesiastes at me was no surprise in itself, but I had to wonder...was that line about much study being a weariness of the flesh a dig at my blown condition after our adventure in the ravine? I thought it might be. Yet John was very happy to concur when I suggested that seeking out lunch might be in order. Ron had other plans. He had hoped to show us the bottom of the gorge. But John also wanted to spend some time at the Pike Street Market back in Seattle, and we had spent a lot of time exploring the ghost town. We loaded back into Randy's car and made our way to another foothill town, North Bend, where we had lunch at the Mar T Cafe.

The Mar T was immortalized in David Lynch's television series *Twin Peaks*, where it was made over into the Double R, home of great cherry pie and damn fine coffee. Ron and John were not impressed by such base sources of fame and were far more concerned with the quality of the daily special. Fortunately, Mr. Lynch chose the cafe for reasons other than cosmetics, and I think everyone was happy with their orders.

While we ate, Ron asked John about his acquaintance with the late Ioan Couliano. Couliano was a professor at the University of Chicago whose field was myth and religion, and his work on magical beliefs of the Renaissance was of great value to John in writing his forthcoming *Love and Sleep*. Ioan had just begun to achieve wider fame – a fantasy novel was imminent, and he had discussed collaboration with Crowley – when he was found murdered in a men's room on campus. He had been shot once in the head, execution-style. It is believe that he may have been killed by agents of the Romanian government, nervous about his growing status and contact with the exiled Romanian royal family.

Whatever Couliano's professional potential, John clearly felt his loss in a very personal way. The two of them had corresponded for some time before meeting at the World Fantasy Convention in the late eighties, and John described him as one of the few people he had ever met with whom he felt an immediate kinship. His loss was a devastating blow. I looked at Ron as he spoke; in some ways, I feel that way about him, in that we seemed to have a number of interests in common and hit it off at our first meeting.

After a while, the conversation faltered a bit and we were left staring into our pie. The trip back to town perked us up a bit. We talked of authors and books we wished John might find the time to read. He responded with authors and works we could not avoid if we wished to be well-read men. I scribbled a few of them on my hand.

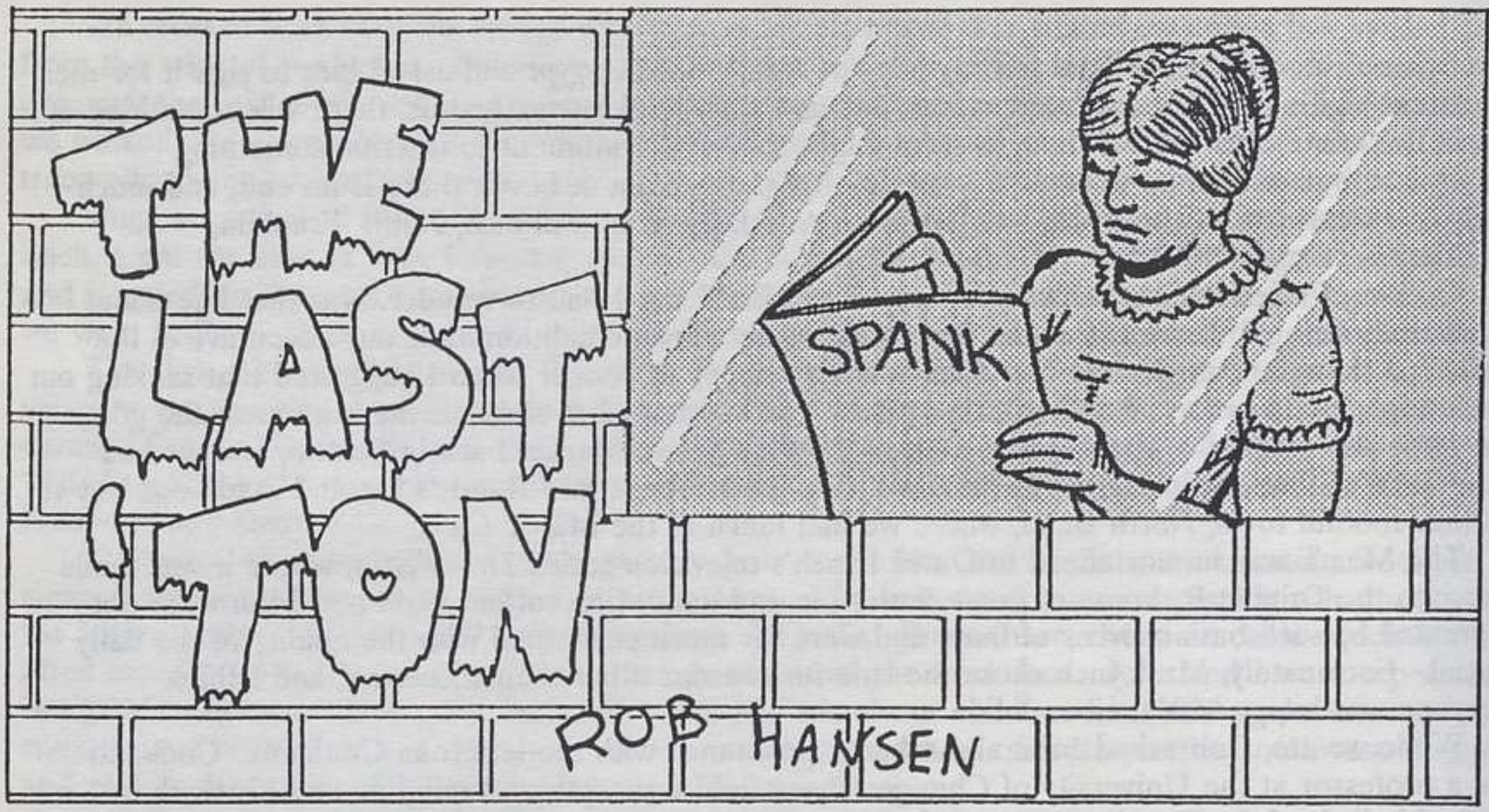
After a brief but brutal struggle with traffic on I-90, we were back in Central Seattle. Randy parked us in a lot next to a porno shop and we all got out to say goodbye. John wished me the best in my own work and encouraged me to write what I wanted the most, as he had all week. I will try to follow his advice.

Ron and John exchanged happy promises on contracts that were pending and made plans to talk by phone in the near future. And then he was gone, striding into the traffic of the market, and again I had that image of a white suit, a man in wet shoes with an aura of panache surrounding him.

Back here in Seattle, the sun shone sweetly – and my hangover was gone at last. Still, deprived of the giddy exhileration of literary portent, the energy level in the car sagged. Ron voiced little, nibbling doubts. Had John enjoyed himself? Did we think everyone was cool? As Randy drove us back to our own neighborhood, I assured Ron it had been a great time, an epic event, in fact. "Yeah," he said, cheered, "there *was* something epic about it, wasn't there?"

"Oh, yes," I said, as I climbed out of the car and waved goodbye, "probably an immortal journey. An epic...with slugs."

– Andy Hooper



[*Author's Note:* When I got a letter from Robert saying he had been "wanting to have stuff on family, relationships and fandom...especially if there are any Cosmic Conclusions (of whatever kind) you can draw from it," I naturally rushed straight to my word processor and bashed out an article that is none of these things. It was the least I could do. This is that piece.]

In 1924, during the early days of radio, the BBC asked for permission to broadcast the wedding of Queen Elizabeth II's parents, the Duke and Duchess of York. This was quite impossible, declared the Palace, on the grounds that "disrespectful persons may listen in pubs—with their hats on."

The fans who regularly gather at London's famous first-Thursday pub meetings certainly count as "disrespectful persons" and few there are in these less formal times who would doff their hats for royalty and respectfully tug their foreskins. Not that most possess one, of course. (*Hats*, that is—this isn't America.)

The Wellington Tavern, a pub opposite Waterloo Station, is the latest in a long line of pubs London fans have met in on Thursday nights that stretches all the way back to the Red Bull in August 1938. The Red Bull is no longer with us, alas, having been destroyed in 1941 during the extensive program of urban demolition then being carried out by A. Hitler & Co. The meetings resumed after the war, first in the Shamrock (for one meeting only), then in the White Horse (later immortalized by Arthur C. Clarke in his *Tales From the White Hart*), the Globe, the One Tun and, currently, in the Wellington. The One Tun was known to one and all as "the Tun" so, fans being just as nostalgic and sentimental as they would vehemently deny being, the Wellington is known to everyone as "the 'Ton." Though not, as I write, for much longer.

It was 6th August, 1992, and the night of The Last 'Ton, not that I knew that as I exited Waterloo Station and crossed the road to the Wellington, home of the first-Thursday gatherings of London fans since February 1987. The pub seemed unusually crowded. Then I noticed that a third of it had been walled off.

"They're turning that bit into a wine bar," explained Alan Dorey. "A real smart move now that the yuppies have all vanished."

Indeed. I was surprised to see Dorey, who hadn't attended one of these in years, but it soon became clear that he wasn't the only non-regular in that night. Judith Hanna, who seldom shows up on first-Thursdays, arrived with Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown, who never do. Since they live twelve thousand miles away, I suppose they can be excused this otherwise unforgivable lapse. Another non-regular making an appearance was Michael Ashley, who had come down from Leeds to drum up support for his TAFF candidacy, according to Alun Harries, a local fan with a passing resemblance to Woody Allen.

"So he's down here to press the flesh and kiss babies?" I said.

"Not babies," said Alun. "He wants to kiss *babes*!"

I like a TAFF candidate with a strong fantasy life.

In the half century since the first meeting in the Red Bull, these gatherings have attracted as regulars all the major British pros and fans of that period,

people such as Arthur C. Clarke, Michael Moorcock, Chuch Harris, Arthur Thomson, Bill Temple, Bob Shaw, Roger Peyton, Greg Pickersgill, Leroy Kettle, Simone Walsh, Pat and Graham Charnock, Malcolm Edwards, John Clute, Linda Krawecke, Avedon Carol (my sweetie), Kevin Smith, Chris Evans, Ken Bulmer, John Jarrold – the list is endless – all of whom I think of in some way, God help me, as family. Some of us may not see each other that often, and our relationships can be just as fractious as those between real-life siblings, yet despite that there's a strong and undeniable sense of community and, yes, sometimes even love, that's as important to me now as it's ever been.

Two of the nicest guys I know, and among the people in our community I value the most, are 'Ton regulars Vince Clarke and Dave Langford. As usual, Dave was handing out copies of his monthly news and scandal sheet, ANSIBLE (otherwise available for a stamped and self-addressed envelope [in the U.K. – for labels and stamp money elsewhere], or as a reprinted column in *Interzone*). In return, I gave him a copy of my apazine, BORN IN THE UK, which carried a piece about my fan buddy Martin Smith, the latest in a series that describes his ongoing fannish education with great sensitivity. Martin was chatting with Zak Jane Keir, our friendly neighborhood pornographer, so I wandered over and joined them.

More than anything, first-Thursdays are about good conversation and "family" gossip, and I listened raptly as Zak, who works for *Penthouse UK* and who, like Avedon, is a member of local pressure group Feminists Against Censorship, told us all about a new magazine she'll be editing. Looming over us – at his height he looms over everyone – was up and coming author Geoff Ryman, who pointed at Martin and shook his head (his own, not Martin's).

"Lately," he said, "all I hear about wherever I go is this man's sex life."

"That's 'cos I write about it," I explained. "I'm his press agent."

"Unpaid," added Martin, hastily forestalling any speculation as to the exact nature of my ten percent.

"Only because I'm such a warm humanitarian," I countered. "For my next piece, I'm going to write about all those kinky civil service parties you go to. I think I'll call it 'Crops and Rubbers'."

Everyone groaned at this except Martin Smith, who actually managed a small laugh, his eyes twinkling the twinkle of a man debating whether he should get into the spirit of things by giving me a playful smack in the teeth.

"Actually, I've just seen some very explicit pictures of me from the last party," said Martin. "I complimented the guy who took them on how well he'd developed them, only he told me that he had in fact got them done at a photo-lab. It's amazing they actually printed them."

Sometimes, his *naivete* astonishes me. Martin obviously had no idea what they do at photo-labs when the get pictures of someone like him *in flagrante delicto* (an old Latin phrase, *in flagrante* translating as "committing unnatural acts" and *delicto* as "with a seventeen-stone rugby player"). I decided to break it to him gently.

"You asshole!" I said. "I thought everyone knew that photo-lab technicians routinely make extra copies of any salacious pictures that come their way and sell them to sleazy European sex mags."

"That's right," agreed Zak, our resident expert in matters nether regional.

Martin looked unconvinced, and all but oblivious to the potential embarrassment he faces when those pictures surface. How's he going to feel when his maiden aunt comes across one in *Spank*? (Title is anglicized here. Actual title is, of course, *Le Spanque*.) Or when an unscrupulous and unprincipled fanzine editor reprints one on the cover of a future BORN IN THE UK? I'll tell you how he's going to feel – really pleased, that's how. And why I'm so sure is it was about here that he grinned that dopey grin of his and made a grisly revelation that chilled me to the bone.

"All the exposure you've given me in those fanzine pieces you wrote over the last year," he said, "has definitely made me more interesting to female fans."

Incredibly, my sensitive descriptions of his ongoing fannish education, in which I portray him as somewhere between being a sexual sophisticate and a clueless cretin, have improved his stock in this area considerably. As his mentor, and with his welfare ever uppermost in my mind, I am of course pleased to have wrought this miracle. Yeah, right.

For quite some time now, Martin has been threatening to "respond" to those pieces of mine with some of his own, featuring me. Maybe this isn't quite the horrible idea I thought it was after all.

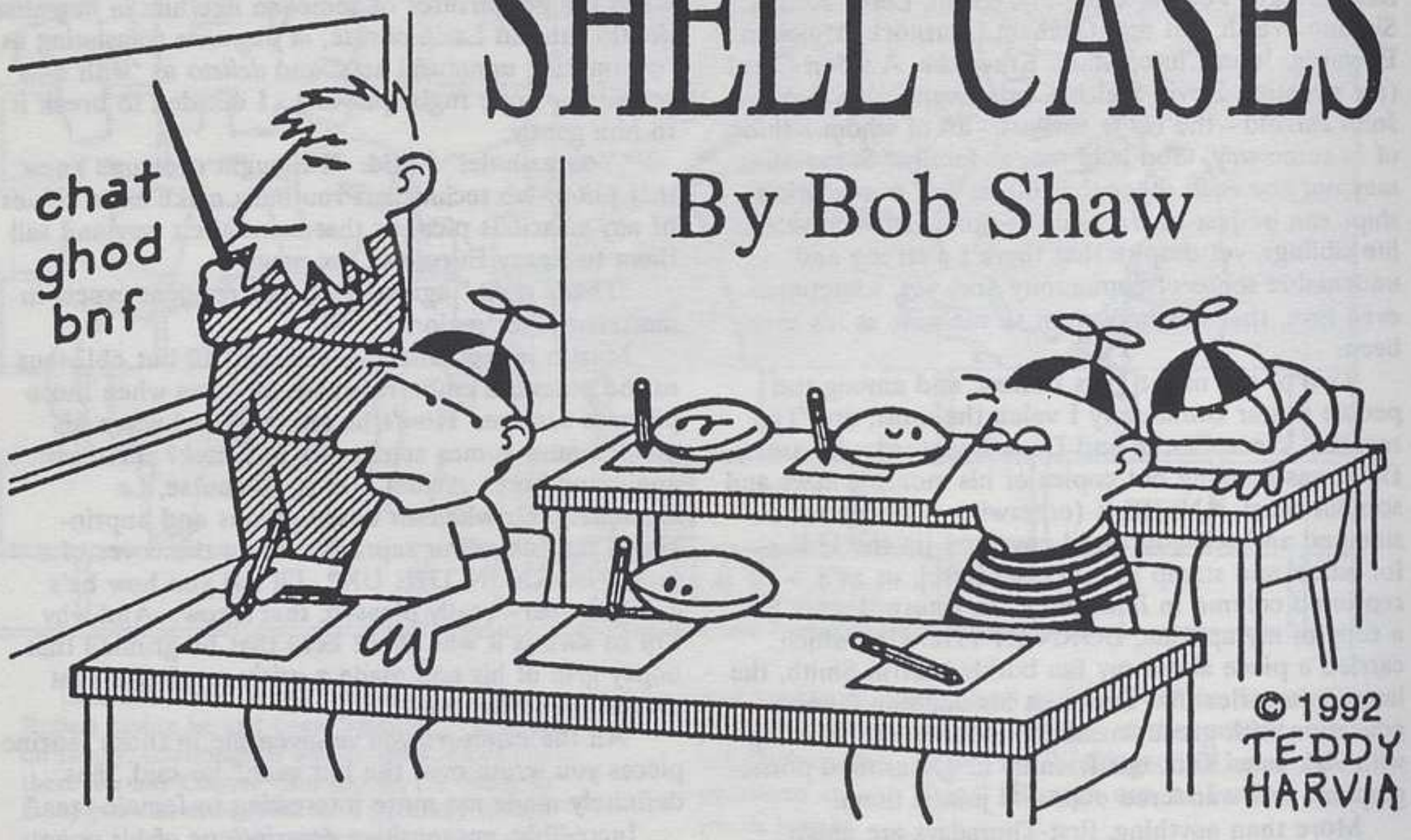
And that was that. It had been another fascinating evening of serious scientifictional discussion here in London, replete – as you can see – with the fiercely cerebral discourse that has made us the envy of fandom worldwide. Yet, it was also a sad occasion, for this was the last 'Ton. The alterations to the pub mean that it's now too small, so in future we'll be meeting at one near Liverpool Street station. Let's hope that at this venue, too, we shall be able to enjoy the spectacle of fans focusing their mighty intellects on such vital questions as the future of the genre and what to do about semiotics. (I recommend penicillin.)

Cosmic conclusions? Never trust a photo-lab technician; be careful what you write about someone – such writing can produce bizarre results; be sure to pick up the next issue of *Spank*; and life is like an aubergine.

– Rob Hansen

SHELL CASES

By Bob Shaw



In the last issue Walt Willis mentioned my system for comparing the potential of an ordinary fan with that of the common oyster. You must have been overwhelmed with inquiries about it, so the following is a brief account of the method...

Many fan groups like to have a regular publication, but it has often been difficult to choose a suitable and reliable editor from untried volunteers. Noting the value of management selection agencies to industry, I decided to set up a comparable organization in fandom with the aim of giving fan groups confidential and accurate assessments of neofen.

If that's all there had been to it my scheme would have been pretty derivative, but I added a touch of originality of the sort which could only have sprung from a mind like mine. Because standards of merit vary so much with time and place, and results and often influenced by personality factors, I hit on the idea of comparing the neofan's potential against a fixed, impersonal standard which can be reproduced at will under scientific conditions. For my reference standard – and this is where the true nature of my brilliance becomes apparent – I chose the BNF potential of an oyster.

The great advantage of my scheme was its obvious impartiality. Nobody could accuse a shellfish of any kind of bias, and a neofan had only himself to blame if he didn't achieve a satisfactory Oyster Rating.

The way I obtained a rating was to add up the number of points awarded a neofan for his personality and performance of certain tasks. This total was compared with that scored by an oyster in the same test. A gifted neofan will usually get the higher score, and it was quite common for somebody with real BNF potential to clock up three times as many points as an oyster.

The following table shows the results of a typical test:

	Neofan	Oyster
Cranking a duplicator	82	1
Stapling	73	0
Personal charm	28	40
Concern for deadlines	93	100
Avoidance of distractions *(like booze, women and conventions)*	6	97
Editorial discretion and ability to stay out of feuds	87	100
Totals	**369**	**338**

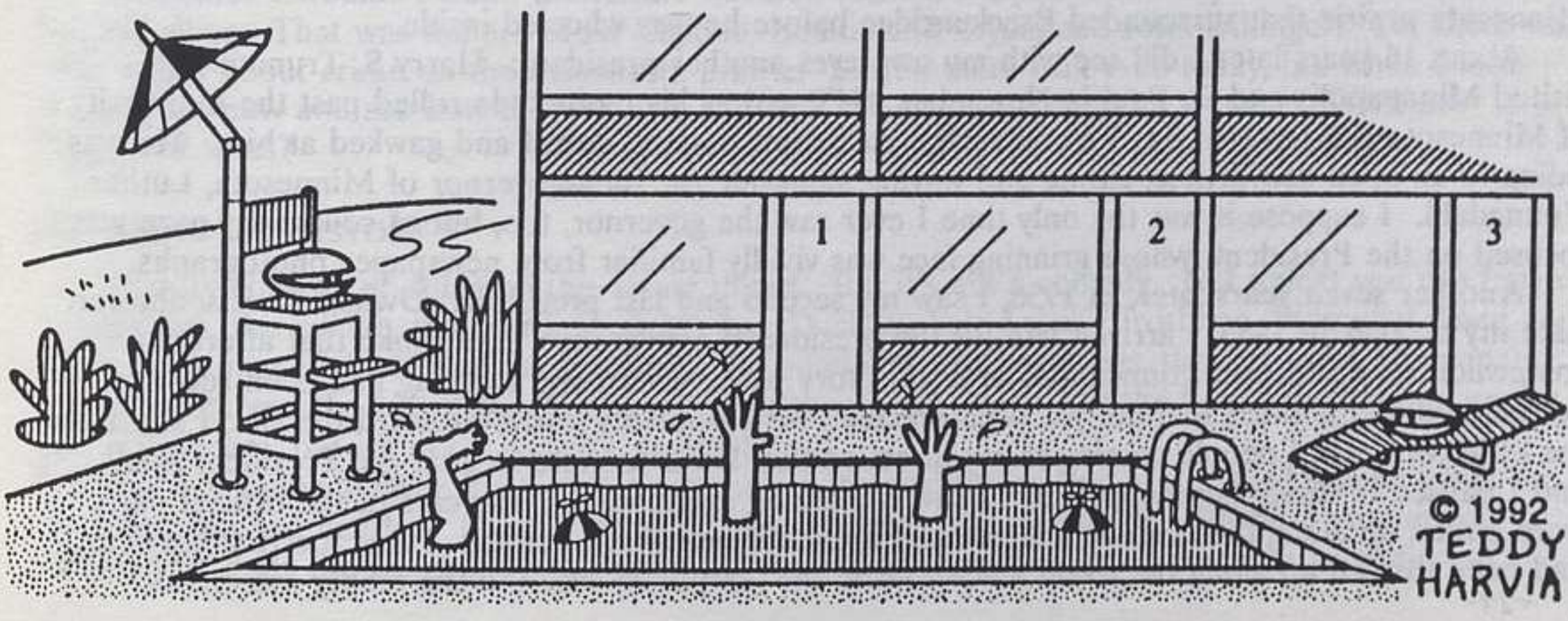
I named my outfit Crustacean Comparison Services, and it is worth noting here that some of my employees felt that this test was unfairly weighted against the oyster. It did not, for instance, take into consideration such qualities as patience, or ability to retrieve lost items from convention swimming pools. I think it was a pretty good compromise, though – in the early days a few neofen were drowned before they even had the chance to read *Battlefield Earth*.

Foolproof though the system appeared, great care was needed in applying it. It was vital that the oysters used in the test were of average intelligence, ability and physical strength. For this reason they were constantly compared with British Standard Oysters bred in the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington.

I remember an occasion, just before the rigorous safety measures were introduced, when an exceptionally gifted oyster got into the test batch by accident, and almost landed itself a plum job in the Science Fiction Foundation in Dagenham. From then on, any super-oysters were quickly winnowed out and disposed of at the Novacon banquet – an arrangement which helped offset expenses on both sides.

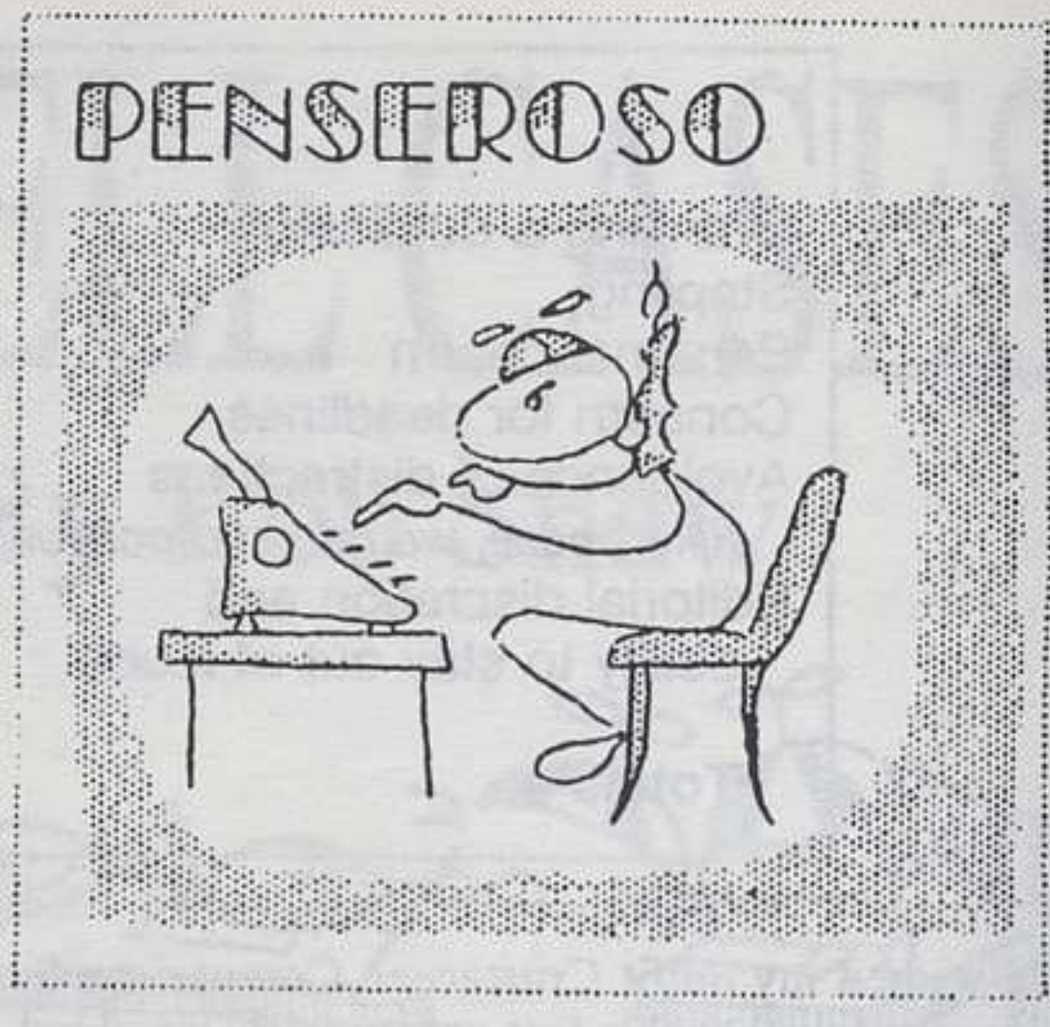
CCS was eventually wound up, however, mainly because of security problems. The appointment of clubzine editors in the entire north of England was halted for three weeks once because a batch of our most experienced oysters got eaten. It was a revenge job done by a new fan because his Oyster Rating disqualified him from running the British SF Association chain library.

– Bob Shaw



SUPERSTAR

It does wonders for my self-esteem. "Everybody knows and loves him!" carols the hostess of TV's "Entertainment Tonight." And immediately on the glowing screen we see the face that everybody loves: bearded yet callow, blandly confident in the way a little boy's is when he has just stolen second base in a Little League game. We hear him blather animatedly about his art, his fame, his accomplishments in a reedy abashed tenor voice. With suitable solemnity he discusses his chances of winning the Oscar, the Emmy, the Tony, and making a million dollars. All these things, it seems, he supposes will adhere remarkably to his unremarkable carcass as with Krazy Glue. All the while I smile to myself and congratulate myself for not knowing a single trifle about his universal overwhelming success and never having heard his name before.



A Column by REDD BOGGS

CRIMES OF THE YEAR 1933

I have always envied my brother Jerry – for many things, to be sure, but for at least one thing –above all: he once saw Franklin D. Roosevelt plain. Perhaps FDR wasn't yet the president at the time. It may have been when he was on the campaign trail in the summer of 1932. In those days presidential candidates stumped the country by train, not by whirlwind air trips and by TV debates and appearances. But more likely it was in the summer of 1933 or 1934, not long after FDR was elected by a landslide.

We had heard that Roosevelt's special train would come through our town that day: Breckenridge, Minnesota, not too far from Lake Woebegon and Gopher Prairie. But I suppose I was skeptical that the train would ever arrive or, if it did, that FDR would bother to make an appearance in our little dot on the map. My brother was more trusting. He went down to the Great Northern depot that afternoon. He arrived late, or else the train was early, but he was able to catch a last-minute glimpse of Roosevelt all the same. The train was just leaving, but FDR was still on the observation platform of the last coach. We were hardly aware then, or for many years to come, that the President was confined to a wheelchair, but because he was he was probably slow in retiring from the platform. He must have glimpsed a little of the freight yards in our town and the flat Minnesota prairie that surrounded Breckenridge before he was wheeled inside.

About 16 years later I did see with my own eyes another president: Harry S. Truman. he visited Minneapolis and St. Paul in November 1949, and as his motorcade rolled past the University of Minnesota campus that day I stood on the curb amid a small crowd and gawked at him. He was riding in an open convertible, sitting and waving alongside the then-governor of Minnesota, Luther Youngdahl. I suppose it was the only time I ever saw the governor, too, but of course my gaze was focused on the President, whose grinning face was vividly familiar from newspaper photographs.

Another seven years later, in 1956, I saw my second and last president: Dwight D. Eisenhower. Like my brother in 1933, I arrived late for the president's appearance. Ike spoke that afternoon somewhere in downtown Minneapolis in a transitory plaza, where one building had been recently demolished and another had not yet been erected. As I belatedly hurried toward the site, I saw from the little torrents of people coming in my direction that I was too late to hear the President speak, and I paused in disappointment. Then I saw something encouraging: the cars of the official party were pulled up along the curb on a street half a block from where I stood. I saw too that barriers had been thrown up along the street leading from the temporary plaza to the empty motorcade

vehicles, one set halting vehicular traffic on that street, another separating the sidewalk from the street itself.

As I stood undecided in the middle of the blocked-off street, I looked up and saw a surprising sight. Walking briskly toward me along the sidewalk were Mr. and Mrs. Eisenhower, preceded by a couple of – I suppose – Secret Service men. These two were burly fellow, but not at all menacing. Neither of them paid the smallest attention to me. Yet as they strode past I stood so close to the President that I could have leaned across the barrier separating us and shaken his hand. I didn't but I don't suppose he would have been surprised or alarmed if I did. He was beaming and ruddy with satisfaction, I presumed, from the enthusiastic reception given his speech only minutes before. The Secret Service men seemed more intent upon reaching the car and making up for lost time in a busy schedule than in guarding the President. They walked purposefully ahead, not looking back. Nobody else was walking behind, or alongside, the Eisenhowers. For a moment in this crammed and crowded universe the Eisenhowers and I were almost alone together on this downtown street, separated only by some low wooden barricades.

I never saw another president, and don't expect to. I wouldn't bother to look out of the window if, say, Ronald Reagan rode past my house on an elephant. But I often think about these casual encounters with presidents of other days, and the thing that strikes me now is that, back then, not even in 1956, only seven years before a fateful day in Dallas, nobody seemed to worry much about assassins. Yet President-elect Roosevelt had been shot at by a man named Joseph Zangara on 15 February 1933, and the bullets killed the mayor of Chicago, who was standing beside him.

In the same era when my brother Jerry saw Roosevelt steaming away form Breckenridge on a train, thousands of other men were riding the rails through our town, and their accommodations were a lot less luxurious than FDR's special Pullman car. Every freight train that rattled through town had its load of men peering from the empty boxcars. These men were out of work and out of money, not knowing where their next meal was coming from. Their clothes were tattered and their faces unshaven. And yet nobody worried unduly about crime in those days. Now even "Dear Abby" cautions us solemnly to avoid the dangers of a far less desperate kind of transient, the hitchhiker: "For 100 percent protection, pick up nobody," she says.

In the early 1930s my father worked the midnight to 8 a.m. shift at a railroad switch tower a mile or two out of town. He was alone and unprotected, but so far as I knew, he was never threatened, mugged, or burgled. We were unprotected at home, at night. My mother was all alone with us kids, with no weapon to hand, except a butcher knife and a rolling pin. The house was probably locked during the night, but it was never locked in the daytime except when everybody was gone. I remember that it was unlocked even at night as long as a family member was still outside. When you came home from a movie at 9 or 10 o'clock you opened the door and walked in. None of us kids had a latchkey.

Of course I wouldn't claim that crime was non-existent in the 1930s everywhere, especially not in the big cities. That was the era of Al Capone, Bonnie and Clyde, and John Dillinger. Yet there was little worry about crime on the Minnesota prairie. Maybe there isn't even today, but when I look around me now and see how the world is, and how things have changed, I wonder: What has happened to us?

An Essay on History

History consists of doing all the wrong things. But it's not a comedy. Not unless you can laugh at the wars, the pillage, the murders, at My Lai, Dachau, Tule Lake, Hiroshima, Wounded Knee, the Korean jet liner flight 007, at the lynchings, the bombings, the hijackings, the terrorism, the napalm, the bayonets and the billyclubs. We're doing all the wrong things, like the bumblers and bad apples in a TV sitcom, but it's not a comedy, remember.

But it *is* funny, heaven knows. We resemble a trapped fly buzzing at the windowpane while the door stands open nearby. The self-delusion, the dreaming, the ignorance. We raise monuments to nonexistent gods, we worship according to a mistranslated text, we cast horoscopes according to

inaccurate star charts. The black man, himself a victim, hands out antisemitic leaflets. The Playmate of the Month joins the cult of Da Free John. A famous astronaut goes on an expedition to seek Noah's Ark, and a noted botanist is a fervent Creationist and believes in God. It's all so funny, and it goes on all the time. All this folly is called History.

Ten Tall Guys Acting Stoopid

I once played with the state high school basketball champions of Minnesota. You may wonder how I managed to preserve my famous modesty after this early triumph. You may also wonder how I, of only average height and of retiring disposition, was able to play with the elongated hooligans of the basketball court. And finally you may wonder why, after such astonishing success at the game, I nevertheless think – as indeed I do – that basketball is a remarkably silly sport.

Although I dearly loved to run when I was a kid I was never a natural athlete, and as far back as I can remember, I preferred reading a book or a magazine to joining the neighborhood boys in a sandlot game of any sort. My mother always worried when she saw me reading *The Pickwick Papers* or the latest installment of "The Skylark of Valeron" instead of running around in the sunshine. She thought I would grow up to be alienated, bookish, and weird – you know, sort of like a science fiction fan. Generally I have always disliked playing games of any sort, from tiddly-winks to basketball, whether they involved physical exercise, manual dexterity, or merely mental exertion. I have played chess only once in my life, egged into it by Gail Knuth of Los Angeles, who easily outmaneuvered me both before and during the game. I have *never* played poker. What other grizzled veteran of the armed forces and the LASFS can make that claim? Even so, I realized that some games are complicated and engrossing, and these include baseball and football, which I have always enjoyed watching, if not playing.

Basketball, though, from the first time I became acquainted with the game, struck me as a dismal waste of time. From an excruciating sense of fairness I have watched basketball on TV occasionally in recent years to be sure that my early impression was justified. But the only basketball game I ever saw in my life, live, right before my eyes, was a regional championship game at Breckenridge, Minnesota, when I was in junior high. I really wasn't interested in attending the game, and was hardly even aware that such a game was to be played. However, one of my teachers, Mr. John Lundh (spelled that way), presented me with tickets for myself and my brother Jerry, under the mistaken impression that we weren't going to attend because we couldn't afford to. To repay him for his misplaced generosity I felt obliged to go, whether I wanted to or not. My brother and I did see the game in the Breckenridge high school gym. I don't remember who won the game, Breckenridge or opponent. Although I actually found the whole spectacle fascinating, as any display of human folly is fascinating, I thought the game itself tedious and silly. I decided then and there that basketball is not a very well-conceived game.

"Why don't they raise the baskets about five feet higher?" I remember wondering at the time. "It's just too easy to score when they're in such easy reach." My thoughts on the subject haven't changed much in all these years, except that I would modify my question now to ask, "Why don't they raise the baskets by about *ten* feet?" – considering the freakish height of present-day players. There are only two good arguments for basketball's existence: *(1)* It provides a sport where extra-tall men can excel, as extra-big men can excel at football; and *(2)* it offers a game that can be played in Minnesota and such arctic places, in the confines of a heated building, when it's cold and snowy outside. But as a spectator sport it is surpassed for dullness only by tennis and golf. Love, birdie, slam-dump, and blop.

Of course I played basketball frequently before I actually ever saw a formal game. In the winter, during "gym," I was forced to play basketball with the boys in my grade school class. The girls usually did calisthenics, as it was called then – "aerobics" and such hadn't been invented. That didn't look too interesting, either, but I would gladly have joined them. Playing basketball I was always mystified by the frantic rush from one end of the court to the other. After a while I grew tired of the pointless running up and down with so few results and camped under "our" basket and

let everybody else run to his heart's content. After they dashed down to the other end and spent a while hurling the ball over and over at the hoop, usually futilely, the whole bunch would eventually return to my end of the floor and do the same thing. Then I'd get a few chances to grab the ball and toss it in the general direction of the basket.

The gym teacher didn't really care much what was going on (he spent most of his time morosely puffing cigarets in the men's room), but after a while my peculiar antics took his attention. He was puzzled, and then even annoyed. "What *is* this?" he asked me with an exasperated edge to his voice. I told him, "It seems to me that each team ought to leave one player under each basket so that you can toss the ball clear down the floor when you capture it. It would save all that dribbling and lots of time-wasting maneuvering." He would have torn his hair if he had had any, and walked away with a bemused frown on his face.

Later, after thinking it over, he came over to me and growled, "Look here, Boggs! If your plan were followed, the other team would have to station a man down here at the opposing basket to guard you. Pretty soon everybody would be standing around here and there on the floor, passing the ball back and forth, and nobody would be running. Why, you'd change the whole aspect of the game!" "Gee," I said thoughtfully, "I didn't realize that my plan was so revolutionary. Why, if it's adopted, my name will be mentioned right up there with that of Abner Doubleday!" "*James Naismith!*" he yelled at me, and stomped away, working his muscles strangely.

But about my playing with the Minnesota state basketball champions. You will note that I said I played with the champions, not on the championship team. Twice, in successive years, the team from Breckenridge high school went to the state basketball tournament which is played every spring in St. Paul. The second time they won the state championship, and I suppose the grand trophy still sits in tarnished splendor in a glass case somewhere in the Breckenridge high school building. However, by the time of that victory my family and I had long since moved away from the town and were living in Minneapolis.

As it was, I knew nearly everybody who played on those two state tournament teams, but the only times I ever played with the champions was when we were all kids together, back in grade school. I guess that's pretty important, just like it must be important that I used to correspond with Marion Zimmer Bradley and Robert Silverberg long before they became famous. Such brushes with celebrity lend a certain golden glow to one's otherwise humdrum life. Gilt by association, I suppose you could call it. But just because I tossed baskets with The Champions when I was a child I wasn't persuaded to think that basketball is a very exciting game. On the whole I would much rather sit in the bleachers and watch big league players lounging around squirting tobacco juice and scratching their crotches. Instead of playing basketball those ten tall guys galloping up and down the floor ought to go out to the park and feed the squirrels. It's a lot more fun.

Conversation at Midnight

He: I hear a twittering sound. Is it dawn already? It must be a bird singing in its sleep.

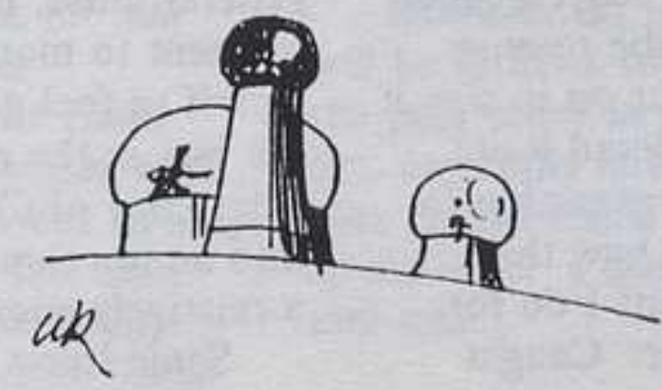
She: It's the smoke alarm.

He: Good heavens! And we're only talking!

She: Don't worry. The sound just indicates that the smoke alarm's batteries need replacing.

He: ... oh ...

– Redd Boggs



WE NEVER SLEEP

Paul Williams

I never really thought of it like this before, but if a person is defined by what he does, then I'm a mail clerk. Father, lover, writer, publisher, and mail clerk. Cut off a length of tape from the tape gun, and paste it over the address label. Staple the padded envelope shut, and put tape over the staples. Wrap strapping tape around the box in all three directions (length, width, girth). Stamp my name, or "Entwhistle Books," or "Crawdaddy!", or "Philip K. Dick Society" in the upper left corner. Take the stack of stuff to the post office.

Should I send this packet of PKDS back issues to Europe by surface or air? Remind Elaine or Art or whoever's serving me at the P.O. to note the weight so I can write it on the customs sticker. Type an invoice for this library wholesaler who wants one hardcover copy of *The International Bill of Human Rights*. My life. It gets to me sometimes of course, like anything will (I smashed a recalcitrant tape gun to bits on the garage floor just last week), but mostly I like it. Service. This is what I do.

Actually I made a decision some years back that really helped me. Still helps me. Probably I caught myself calculating the time it takes to fill an order, maybe type an invoice, find the right size box or padded envelope, cut a piece of cardboard to fit in the envelope and protect the book, type an address label and staple and tape (find the book, maybe remove the shrinkwrap, maybe put a price sticker on it, sign it if it's one of mine and an individual ordered it etc. etc.), versus the likely profit from this transaction (a dollar or two in most cases), wondering how this could make sense when there's other stuff I do for people that I bill at sixty dollars an hour. Caught myself, and decided at that moment to see it a different way.

Somebody wants to read this book or magazine. (My stuff is so small-time a bookstore usually doesn't order it until a customer asks for it, begs, pleads, whatever.) I am being of service to them. That's enough (I'm not saying life *should* be about providing service, just that that's what seems to work for me, gives me a sense of fulfillment), but as it works out, there's more. The stuff I stick into boxes and envelopes is mostly stuff I've written myself, or else that someone else has written but I published because I love it, identify with it, care passionately about it.

The whole objective of all this activity (six years at the computer writing *Performing Artist* Volumes 1 & 2) is that moment when someone on the other end of the process is holding it in their hands, reading it, making a connection. I do know, most of the time, how very lucky I am that there are some people who want to read what I write (other times of course I bitch about my $2,500 advances, my unsold or unread masterpieces)...

By putting the book or newsletter in the envelope and taking it to the post office, I am having my deepest needs fulfilled. It's like, isn't the very best part of lovemaking the feeling of being *wanted*? Not in a general sense, but in the act, the contact, moment to moment to moment. Somehow I decided to allow myself to feel good about sending people my stuff, not just in the abstract or overall, but as this particular copy of *Crawdaddy!* or *The Book of Houses* goes into an envelope (whether to a person with a name or a relatively anonymous bookstore or wholesaler).

Same thing over and over, day after day. But it

doesn't matter. It stays fresh. Part of my luck, I think, is that I haven't been more successful. Just enough to feel good about it. Not enough to lose interest or have to hire help.

Maybe I'm just a loner. (Part-time loner.) This work relaxes me, maybe even helps me get focused. Time alone, not even writing a letter to someone (certainly not talking on the telephone), just washing the dishes, as it were, filling the orders, "getting the mail out." My mind gets some time to itself. It's not always tranquil. Maybe I'm impatient. Maybe I get frantic as mailtime approaches, and I haven't finished the pile of things I hoped to get out today. Maybe I know I should be doing something else, but I'm catching up with the orders instead because it's a safe, even worthy, avoidance. But anyway for the over-active communicator it's a kind of meditation. Where did I put the damn scissors? Wow, time to refill the stapler already.

Time alone. Sometimes I listen to music, but not always. Often I just hang out and let myself feel at home (unconsciously, unnoticeably) in the familiar work and the silence.

Part two. I want to sleep. Never do, of course, but the temptation is considerable. The lure of the unconscious. Do you like mind-expanding drugs, or mind-deadening ones? Be careful. One can turn into the other at any moment. And can we be sure we'd know the difference?

My latest publishing venture is both old and new, and is certainly keeping this mailboy busy the last few weeks (with much great help in the database and labels department from my neighbor friend and editor Mr. L). I've suddenly and unexpectedly (in the wake of putting out the 30th and final issue of *The Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter*) revived the rock and roll magazine I founded in 1966, 27 years ago. *Crawdaddy!* is back, a newsletter somewhat in the style of a fannish letter substitute. The first issue is fourteen pages, thirteen of them a long essay by the editor on R.E.M.'s album *Automatic for the People* and five other fairly recent releases by Neil Young, Bruce Cockburn, Television, Sonya Hunter, and Bob Dylan. Fourteenth page features a review by my friend Gary Schulstad of Patti Smith's new mini-book, *Woolgathering*. The format is inspired in part by the simple two-column, 8½ x 11, black-and-white with two staples along the side design of the PKDS Newsletter (a format I love because it is infinitely reprintable, I started with 300 copies and have gone back for 300 more, and can as easily and more or less as cost-effectively – and quickly – reprint 100 or 1,000 whenever I need them. No color, no half-tones, and no slick paper means I always have back issues to sell, and that my initial run is off press four or five days after we finish the last page of camera-ready copy).

The other part of the format follows up on something Donna (my wife, the artist Donna Nassar) and I experimented with in our apazine (*Iron Barrel*, for Apathy): Donna's rubber stamp art (eraser carvings) as illustration, with computer-generated runarounds. The effect is very striking. In Apathy, I was mostly selecting her art for its aesthetic quality: our first apazine was all dancers, one of her favorite subjects (the dancer carvings primarily start as photographs of friends, copied, transferred, and then hand-carved on plastic erasers). In *Crawdaddy!* so far, she has carved images from the covers of the albums I'm discussing, or in some cases images from a song or a likeness of the artist.

Anyway, we have a Look. I like it a lot. A little like a fanzine, a little like *The New Yorker* in simpler days, and very distinctive thanks to Donna's hand, the personality that comes through in her home-carved lines (the logo is also hers, done in one of her carved alphabets).

First issue came out February 1st. A month later, thanks to unsolicited plugs (somebody decided this constitutes news) in *Rolling Stone* and in the entertainment pages of the Sunday San Francisco *Chronicle*, *Crawdaddy!* has 239 paid subscriptions and has sold another 100 copies in single copy and dealer orders. I'm thrilled. I (re) started the magazine because I wanted to write a long, leisurely essay about a bunch of records, and I couldn't think of any other way to get it published. Now I have hopes of building to a subscription base of 1,000 by the end of the year with no cash investment, writing long essays four times a year about music that excites me.

The old fanzine model strikes again. My plan, this time, is not to get slicker. If possible, I want to stay with staples on the side, and individual 8½ x 11 sheets. I've announced from the start that there will be no advertising (except for my own books), and I expect retail sales to be minimal because I don't want to get distribution if it means accepting returns. Subscriptions, that's what I want. Robert and Donna encouraged me to ask a decent price ($4.00 an issue, $12.00 for four) and I'm so glad. I should also note here that the first great boost, while I was still working on the R.E.M. etc. essay and trying to find the publication's voice, came from the readers of PKDS, who sent in 55 or 60 subscriptions in response to a tiny flyer stuck into the final issue of PKDS, often with encouraging notes that first made me realize that my timing might be good once again (hey, it's been bad plenty of times too!).

However the newsletter may do in the future, it will be difficult to equal the excitement of going to the post office in these early weeks and finding five, ten, or twenty letters addressed to Crawdaddy!, most with checks inside. But that's another story. *Picking up the mail*. I don't have to tell fanzine fans about that one...

– Paul Williams

the Almost Great Escape

By CHUCH HARRIS

My wife Sue has an abundance of aged relatives. Uncle Bill and Auntie Belle are the oldest. They are childless, in their mid-80s, and no longer capable of looking after themselves. They lived 200 miles away in an isolated part of Kent. We arranged a sort of "hot line" with their neighbor but it was never really satisfactory.

Their doctor insisted that they needed someone to watch over them full time and manage their affairs. Bill was a hypochondriac with an anal fixation (don't ask!) and Belle was evidently in the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease. No one else in the family was young enough or cared enough to take over the responsibility except Sue.

We talked it over with Bill and he agreed that they would move into Mulberry House, a private home for the elderly. It was expensive but highly recommended. He gave us a power of attorney so we could sell his house, manage the money, and pay the bills. We got an incredibly good price for the house, just before the housing market collapsed. The interest on the money, plus their government pensions and attendance allowances, covers most of the Mulberry House charges. Financially there is no real problem.

Now, Belle is no problem either, but Bill has deteriorated mentally. I feel that it is partly boredom. In his way, Bill is a mechanical genius, a veritable Mr. Fix-It. He can do incredible things with car engines, household appliances – you name it, he'll mend it. He felt that if he could only break out from this captive environment, like a butterfly leaving its chrysalis, he would be healthy, happy and fifty years younger. He won't accept reality. It has become an obsession. He yearns, he *aches* for freedom and the greener fields outside. His doctor has tried various unsuccessful treatments and finally decided that a spell in hospital might help him.

So Bill is in hospital, but I don't think Belle realizes this. She is always very vague and in her mind the past and the present are inextricably mixed up. She doesn't really understand what people are saying, and much of what she says is rambling gobbledegook. She seems happy enough, but reality seems to slip away a little bit more every time we see her. Names are now beyond her. I am "that man from Daventry who has all our money." Then, pathetically, there is "that man who used to be here. He is at the doctor's. He was a very nice man. I would write to him or send a card, but nobody tells me how he is." This was Bill, of course. All you can offer is a comforting hug and a

-30-

promise that she'll see him soon. (We arranged for the home to take her in to visit him later in the week.)

I suppose, in its way, senility can be a sort of blessing when it acts as a screen around reality. Apart from this, Belle seems well and happy. She enjoyed the company in the home, and the staff are kind to her. She is still putting on weight. She is quite short but since January she has gone from size 12 to 14, to 16, to 18, to 20. We stopped at Marks and Spencer to buy her two winter skirts, this time with elasticated waists, hoping they will accommodate her Christmas dinner in a couple of months time. We bought her some chocolate, too – it won't help her weight problem, but she really enjoys it and that's the main thing.

Ashford Hospital, where Bill is, is the usual Victorian red brick horror. It was superseded long ago by two modern hospitals more suited for the growing town. It has been skimpily modernized and is now used for geriatric patients and minor mental ailments.

Bill is there for "assessment" and ECT treatment – electro-convulsive therapy. This sends electric shock waves through the brain and, hopefully, will stimulate it back towards normality. We were all worried because he suffered from delusions about people poisoning his food and trying to kill him. He had gone on hunger strike and hadn't eaten anything at all for two weeks. We were concerned about this because he is frail, 83 years old, and unhappy enough to welcome death as a friend. He's seen it, done it, and is ready to go.

We found the hospital and asked at reception for William Sherman. The welcoming smile on the girl's face vanished immediately. Yes, she knew Mr. Sherman. Colville Ward, straight on down the corridor.

Colville Ward is a secure ward. The staff nurse let us in. She lost her smile, too; Mr. Sherman was in the end bed and a little dopey from the treatment he'd had two hours previously. He looked pretty awful, but the nurses assured us that was due to the ECT – which can be pretty traumatic – he'd had earlier and he would look better later in the day.

He was pleased to see us – rational but still a bit dopey. He doesn't think the treatment is working, but the Charge Nurse said it was and that he is now eating occasionally – but not very much or very often. He is in a locked ward along with a dozen or so other patients the staff are wary about.

His doctor is going to try to get a psychiatrist to see him. I have to write up everything I can remember about his anxieties and mental state to see if that will help. The first thing I shall have to stress is that *everybody* wears a white coat and a stethoscope because Bill is very impressed by appearances. One time he was astonishingly rude to the visiting dentist who *didn't* have a white coat and carried out his examinations wearing an ordinary jacket. Bill knew right away that he was just an imposter who was going to poison him, and wouldn't open his mouth. Afterwards, the dentist said he had *never* in thirty years tried to treat such a rude patient.

Now, to tell the truth, we still don't know if Bill is one beer short of a six-pack or not. He's a bit odd sometimes but he ain't deranged or gibbering. He hates the Mulberry House home and wants to go somewhere else. He volunteered for this treatment. I think the problem is genuine – that there is something definitely wrong in his head – but everyone else thinks he is acting up to get out of Mulberry. I am trying to arrange something, but it's awkward because Mulberry House is really ideal for Belle and I don't want to split them up if I can help it. Anyway, he is not at all happy. He doesn't like the hospital either. He wants me to buy him an old car. He will live in it and drive around the country and not be a trouble to anyone. He is a free spirit. He wants O-U-T. I think he has only read a couple of books in his life – *The Wooden Horse* and *The Great Escape* – both of them stories of POWs busting out of stalags during the last war.

Bill, believe me, was born to escape.

Sadly, these wards are made with people like Bill in mind. There are no padded cells or strait-jackets or anything like that, but they are still very, very secure indeed. There are notices on the entry door warning visitors to be careful not to let anyone get out when the door is opened. Inside, there is a sort of keypad lock on the door handle which can only be activated when you press the right numbers in the right sequence.

Evidently Bill – he really is a mechanical wizard – has spent much time working over the keypad, but no bliss. Sadly, it's a bit like those slot machines where you have to get four bars up to win, or chanting through the 10,000,000 names of God hoping to trigger the one that brings Nirvana. So, after a couple of fruitless days, he more or less gave up on the keypad lock and seemed more resigned about staying in the ward.

Or so they thought.

The windows were secure. The floor was concrete. There were no tools – even the plastic cutlery was collected after meals. Ellery Queen could have done a crafty locked-room mystery on the ward. Nobody had *ever* got out of the place.

So, in the middle of the night, Bill gets up – dressing gown, slippers – ostensibly to go to the jakes. The night nurse in her little office doesn't even notice; old people with weak bladders are always up and down all night.

Bill goes down to the entrance door, smashes the glass of the fire alarm, pulls the handle, and all hell breaks loose.

Fire is the one thing that terrifies all hospitals, especially in a big old place like this one. It's absolutely the biggest potential catastrophe imaginable, so they take the biggest precautions they can. The alarms are priority wired direct to police, fire and ambulance departments. The crews turn out and are on their way within ninety seconds. At the same time, throughout the county, emergency crews outside the immediate vicinity go on standby alert. They dress and stand by their trucks ready for the call to reinforcements. A long time ago, when I was a probationer at the Royal Navy Hospital in Chatham Dockyard, they used to spring dummy run drills on us every month or so. I expect the procedure is pretty much universal.

When the alarm goes off for the emergency services, it goes off in the nurses' quarters too. Panic stations ain't in it! You grab a topcoat and shoes and run like bloody hell to your ward to get your patients out in the open away from danger. Surgery stops immediately – temporary sutures and a fast gurney to safety. Oxygen and other potentially explosive gases are removed if possible or bled into the atmosphere. Sisters and wardmasters start running around with admission rosters, checking off patients and trying to remember the name of the poor bugger still on the roster who was shipped to the mortuary yesterday morning. (In the Navy we were always tardy to cross DDs (discharged dead) off the roster because the ward loses the Comfort Allowance, the Tobacco Allowance and the nice tasty patients' dinners which became staff perks the minute the brave heart stopped beating. You have to be callous and pragmatic about these things. Or hungry.)

Pardon the digression. Anyway, apart from alerting the emergency services and getting Vicar up to pour tea and comfort the believers, the alarm automatically switches off all electronic locks throughout the hospital. All of them. No option. A locked ward would be a death trap far worse than anything you ever saw in *The Towering Inferno*.

And with one bound, Bill was free! But they got him – in dressing gown, pajamas and slippers, and just fifty yards from freedom – as he crossed the car park towards the main gate and the Great Outside.

There were no real recriminations. The night nurse was chided a little, but you could hardly expect her to watch everything all night. The firemen rolled up their hoses, the police and ambulance men went back to their stations, and Bill and the rest of the patients went back to bed.

Bill, of course, remembered nothing. No, he certainly didn't touch the fire alarm, and no, he didn't know what would happen if they were set off – and anyway, how can you blame an 83-year-old man with a suspected mental problem for anything like that? All you can do is be more careful next time.

So now, when Bill gets up for a nocturnal widdle, he finds the night nurse, arms akimbo, stern faced, standing foursquare in front of the alarm, daring him to even stretch his hand towards her. They told him the replacement glass is bullet-proof, but he knows better.

He ain't daft.

– Chuch Harris

THE ETHER STILL VIBRATES

LEE HOFFMAN:

TRAP DOOR #11 set me into nostalgic melancholy for times and people and places that are gone now.

Dick Ellington was one of the best people I ever knew. I was lucky enough to be there for at least part of the time of the Nunnery, Riverside Drive, and the Lib League. It was through Dick that I got into the Village folk music scene. Through him I met people and discovered ideas that shaped the rest of my life.

Carol's return to New York reminded me of my own trip there a few years ago. I went by car, with friends, and stayed with friends while I was there, but I too had the feeling of being an Alien, seeing my personal landmarks embedded in strangeness. Wash Square had changed and the faces were all unfamiliar. I walked down MacDougal Street and never saw anyone I knew. That would never have happened when I lived on Greenwich Street. The coffee houses where we'd hung out were gone. There were different shops in the storefronts. I ate at strange places – the old ones were no more. It just wasn't the same Village, or the same NYC. Or the same me.

Gary Hubbard's item brought memories of my own father's death. The two fathers had very little in common. Aside from a failure of communication with his kids, my father was probably pretty good, as fathers go. He didn't get drunk and/or beat us. He tried in his own fumbling way to be good to us. He just didn't know how to handle the job.

When he died, he'd already made prearrangements to be buried with no ceremony, and there was no funeral service. If there had been, I suspect not many people would have come – or cared. He was 90 when he died. His wife, his son, and most of his friends had gone before him.

When we were getting the news of the Oakland fire back here, I was very worried for old friends there. I think it must be very traumatic to stand by in anticipation of losing one's house to fire. Such a loss seems so meaningless. At least when I lost my home and a large part of my accumulated stuff, it was for a good reason. Even so, I've never quite gotten over the loss.

Praise ghu for the cheerful graphics and the lettercol, which went a long way toward cheering me up again.

Rich brown is right about the personnel of the Great Fanoclast Trek of '65, except that he's omitted Robin White. I was prolly the only one on the Trek who just looked at the slots in Las Vegas, but never fed them. I haven't trusted those things since my childhood when my folks had friends who ran a gas station/grocery store in Midway, Georgia. They had a one-arm in the store and my father'd give me a nickel or two to put into it. I never got anything back. Eventually I was told that particular machine never gave anybody anything back, but by then I'd already got it burned into my mind that I was unlucky with such machines. Foosh, I don't even trust pay phones and Coke machines.

As to parents, I was one of the lucky ones. My parents did not object to fandom. They'd both read *Argosy Magazine* when they were young, and saw no harm in science fiction. Fanac by mail prolly seemed a desirable alternative to some of the other things a teenaged female might have been doing for entertainment. I was afraid my father'd grumble when I invested a whole $35 in a mimeo of my own, but someone told him I could make money doing mimeo jobs professionally. I never did do professional mimeography, but just after I got out of school I saw an ad for temporary help, preferably someone with printing experience. I called and said I had experience with a mimeo. I don't know whether that helped or not, but I got the job. It was three days of hand-feeding a Gordon printing press. However, it was through fandom that I eventually came to make my living by writing professionally. If it hadn't been for Ted White, Terry Carr and Don Wollheim, I'd probably never have had the nerve to even try it.

Vin¢ says there's no tradition of Trick or Treat in Britain. There wasn't any in Savannah, Georgia, where I grew up either. The first I recall hearing of it was around 1950, give or take a year or two. Some of the neighborhood kids wanted to try it out, and asked me to go along. I was in my late teens, old enough to offer some protection if necessary. But none of us knew quite how Trick or Treat was supposed to work, including the people in the houses the kids went to. As the kids understood it, the householder had to give them either a treat or a trick, and since no one had laid in stocks of candy, most either chased us off or did tricks, like making faces, for us. I have since heard Trick or Treat was imported from Ireland, but I would not be surprised if it was actually invented by Hershey & friends.

In line with Mr. Bloch's comments, the name "Wiedenbeck" certainly sounds an ancient echo. I'm glad you included an explanation of how you happened to have a contribution from him. *(CoA – 3290 Sunrise Trail, Port Charlotte, FL 33952)*

PAUL SKELTON

An amazing cover by Harry Bell, for I see by the signature it was done in 1990 and yet the Onion-Eating Vaudeville Spider (male of species depicted by Harry) did not first come to scientific attention until late 1991 (although as usual scientists involved in parallel research but beaten into print insist that they discovered it in June of that year). Surely here is proof positive and irrefutable, even for such doubters and skeptics as Mike Glicksohn, that precognition and other psychic phenomena genuinely do exist, and that aliens really did steal my homework all those years ago!

Perhaps, now that we know of Harry's *Secret Powers*, we should study his cover more closely to see if it reveals any other hints of as yet unexpected scientific breakthroughs. *And indeed there are!* For a start, the spider's TV dish is of a new and unique design, presumably offering superior reception to the normal circular antennae or the bizarre BSB "squarial." Even this pales into insignificance, though, when compared to his revelation that different parts of the letter "A" have different gravitic properties, so that the bottom right-hand corner bends light far more sharply than the upper-right edge, leading to anomalous shadows on the "P" and "D" in the title lettering. I've never noticed this effect before. Perhaps this is a special "A", one of those "Null A"s that science fiction first speculated about back in the 1940s. Could this be a final triumph for the prophetic powers of SF? Are The-Aliens-Who-Stole-My-Homework coming back in an attempt to enslave the entire planet? Will the Human Race be saved only by an example of some of those psychic powers that some profess to scoff at? When we've all been saved by a teleporting superbeing, maybe disbelievers like Mike Glicksohn will have the courage to eat their words and apologize to that nice Mr. Von Daniken and his associates. Alternatively, perhaps I should find some drink other than scotch to replace the liquids my body is losing through the cold I'm suffering through. Who can say? *(25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5NW, U.K.)*

A. VINCENT CLARKE

Elegant cover, and well-crafted comment from you and Greg on Dick Ellington. I'm trying to reconcile myself to the fact that well-known fans who have been familiar to me for forty years have gone, but it's hard.

I think what strikes me about this issue is the amount of personal element involved in the articles and of course the editorial. Only trouble from a loccer's viewpoint is that one can't intrude one's own memories. Any of these pieces would have been outstanding in a run-of-the-mill fanzine. Fair level of seriousness, too – interesting contrast to the letters. Had to grin, tho, at the bit in Busby's piece about Greyhound losing the President's luggage.

Letters: Walter on James White is a joy. Rich brown's account of his parents shows how little we are influenced by them. My own were generally supportive of anything I did, even to the extent of letting Bob Shaw lodge in this, the parental home, when he came to London seeking fame and fortune in his early days. In fact, it was difficult for me to break free from Mother's smothering influence. How different from rich, and for that matter Lloyd Penney with his mother introducing him to sf. Ghod! If mine ever read a book, I didn't know about it.

I think that Chuch, Arthur and self huddling together at Conspiracy as mentioned by Andy Hooper

was caused by the mutual dependence of aging fans rather than by the fact that we were fanzine fans. In any convention one (*i.e.,* me) feels somewhat lost, I reckon. I asked Ted White once how fanzine fans managed in the many-thousand attendances of American Worldcons. "We hold our own small con in the middle of it," he said.

TRAP DOOR is like a room party with all one's friends from far and near gathered together. I could write for hours but Bob Tucker would frown. *(16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN, U.K.)*

ALLEN BAUM

I can't say that I knew Dick Ellington very well. By the time I met him, he wasn't going to cons very much. Still I ran into him occasionally, at parties or Corflu. I always made a beeline for Dick. He was always worth talking to or, more frequently, just sitting and listening to. That man had stories to tell and, without trying, really made history (fannish and otherwise) come alive. I hardly knew him, and I'll miss him a great deal – that says something about a man.

Regarding family history, I lost my mother rather suddenly about a year ago. It was clear that she knew what was coming, but the rest of the family was surprised. Sine many in her family had been killed in concentration camps, there didn't seem like there was a lot of point searching for ancestors. But, as Irwin Hirsh's letter mentioned, my (firstborn) cousin on my mother's side and I (also firstborn) are both named Allen. I knew we were named after the same person, but hadn't realized the custom existed until TRAP DOOR.

She hadn't talked to us much about her concentration camp years (though she wouldn't hold back if asked), but in her last years she wrote her autobiography up until the end of the war. It's pretty horrific; after reading it I can understand how she survived the aftermath of her cancer. There was also a *big* surprise: a marriage before being sent to the concentration camp, and divorce immediately after.

She also filled eight big photo albums with all the photos she had of her family and us, all carefully labelled as to who each person was. She knew that after she was gone, we'd ask all these questions, so she spent a great deal of her last years answering them so they'd be there when we asked. It's just another reason I have a great deal of pride in my mother. *(The Old Dairy, Hall Farm, Fen Ditton, Cambridge CB5 8ST, U.K.)*

DEREK PICKLES

I enjoyed reading of your conquest of the West, returning burdened with bootyful rugs, throws and blankets. I relived all the John Ford movies fully expecting you to meet John Wayne and the rest of the Ford Movie Company hanging around the saloons and spitting into the dusty Main Street. Then you mention the Petrified Forest and I'm off on a Bogart memory trail ... ah well! All those sunny afternoons I spent in those darkened auditoriums with the attendant going 'round spraying disinfectant in all directions weren't *entirely* wasted.

I *think* I understand about 60% of F. M. Busby's references in "Scenario"; however, the Geraldo I know of was an English bandleader, couldn't possibly be the same, or could it – *don't* answer that question; leave me in suspense. *{OK!}*

The descriptions of the Oakland fire are very moving and deeply disturbing. I believe that here in the U.K. we don't really appreciate how lucky we are that we only have one rare poisonous snake (the viper or adder), our quarantine regulations mean we haven't had rabies since the 1920s, we don't have forest fires because we chopped them all down – we wiped our the oak forests to build ships for the Napoleonic Wars – and as our houses are almost entirely built of stone or brick, they survive disasters that would level wooden buildings.

The Ether not only Still Vibrates but pulsates with names from fandom's pre-history; there are names that make Harry Warner Jr. look like a neofan.

I keep coming across comments on and discussions (arguments) about fanzine fandom fading away, like fanzine fans. Well, I gafiated for 36 years and came back to a scene very much like the one I left. Yes, there are some changes – the quality of reproduction of fanzines *in general* has improved, but forty years ago there were photolithed mags, handprinted mags, and even handwritten mags – just like today. The quality of fanzines is just as variable as it was forty years ago: a few very good ones, a good number of middling, and some that are poor. So what is new in that? It's the usual state of things and would produce a normal curve on a graph. We could argue about the skew or the length of the "tail" but so much is objective that we should do what always was done – that is, to encourage anyone who is prepared to put his money where his mouth is and produce a fanzine. *{Amen to that!}*

Vin¢ Clarke comments on Halloween trick-or-treat and it is true that there is no such tradition in the U.K., *except* that we moved Halloween to 5th November and tied it in with assorted pagan beliefs and traditions. No trick-or-treat, but in the North of England (where I was brought up and still live – less than three miles from where I was born) on 4th November we had Mischief Night when we got dressed up and went 'round playing tricks and jokes on people. Looking back, some of the "jokes" aren't very funny in retrospect, such as putting a "banger" firework in someone's keyhole and blowing the lock off the door, or tying the doorknobs of two adjoining

houses together and then knocking on both doors. Another gem was to put black tripwires across dark paths. *(44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorks. BD5 8LX, U.K.)*

LUCY HUNTZINGER

I really enjoyed your trip account and envy you the journey into Hillerman country. I love the southwest and I'd especially like to visit the Four Corners area. My parents spend the winters in Palm Desert and my aunt owns orange and avocado groves in Redlands so I've passed the field of windmills many times, not to forget the swell roadside dinosaurs (life-size!) on Highway 10. I think they look like thin silver aliens which is not particularly imaginative of me, but they look so tech-y, planted at the base of San Jacinto on the dry valley floor. Aliens in an alien environment.

It was difficult to read through the fire accounts since I had old family friends who died in the blaze. That was the second day of my vacation; on the last, Bill Graham died. It was a hard week.

I have been in the vicinity of three natural disasters. One was the morning of May 18, 1980. I went out to get the paper. When I straightened up, I saw a vast column of smoke, mushroom top hideously distended all the way across the southeastern quadrant of the horizon as the wind carried the top of Mt. St. Helens across the Cascades. "Portland went first," I thought and waited, frozen, for the bombs to fall. I wanted to die outside, I remember. The second was in my office, five stories up in a brick building on landfill (every San Franciscan's nightmare) during the 1989 quake. "Shit," I said as the windows bowed in and out and the ceiling began falling in, "I don't want to die like this." I was really mad. I was inside. The third was walking out of Macy's all unknowing last October and looking up at a nauseous sky, dirty yellow-brown and hot. "Christ," I thought, "Oakland must be gone. At least I'm outside." Must be some weird instinct not to want to die in a corner but out in the open.

So far Tennessee's been really quiet except for the plague of locusts last year. When the frogs start falling, I'm moving. *(2305 Bernard Avenue, Nashville, TN 37212)*

BOYD RAEBURN

In your account of your vacation in the Grand Canyon area, you mention the "El Tovar dining room, the only restaurant with anything approaching decent food." Apart from their comparative cheapness, probably the popularity of chain restaurants is that people know they can expect a certain standard of menu, food quality and cleanliness. ("In our town we have McDonalds, Wendy's, Arby's...all the fine restaurants...") Playing restaurant roulette with local places can be sometimes very rewarding (and sometimes not). When traveling by car in the U.S., I have had some excellent meals on dropping into a small local place and some poor ones, but generally I have come out on the winning side. Inasmuch as the U.S. is predominantly a coffee-drinking country (as opposed to tea – by volume) , one would expect the quality to be fairly good, but you did not find that to be the case on your travels? Why, do you think? The obvious reason for bad coffee is when it is allowed to sit too long and stew. The sight of one of those big coffee urns can be a danger signal, but even a small batch of coffee in the carafe of a small-scale coffee brewer can turn nasty if it sits too long. But on the other hand, the British are heavy tea drinkers and I have read that the quality of tea in England tends to be low, not because of the brewing methods but because the quality of the actual tea used tends to be low. (Hey, nobody jump me on this; I'm quoting British tea fanciers.) I wouldn't know, for I have never tasted tea. *{Never? Regarding the poor quality of coffee we encountered outside California, it was mostly brewed too weak...too weak to tell if it was from decent beans or not.}*

"Brian Earl Brown launches a modest creeb about..." Creeb was initially a verb, but I don't think you are the first person to use it as a noun, in which guise it works quite well. As originators of the word, you owe Bob and Barbara Silverberg and me a small royalty for its use.

"The Cracked Eye" by Gary Hubbard is quite wonderful. Although it is obviously a piece of personal writing, it reads like a professional work. It was a nice contrast to read the letter from Harry Warner Jr., where he writes of his happy memories of his good and kind parents who encouraged his interests even though they were different from theirs.

Contrary to Nigel Richardson's impression, I wasn't "slagging off the English over [their] bland food." Bland can be good. Not all food has to be highly spiced. Britain has many excellent dishes. I was just having fun with the British reputation for Bad Cooking, some of which derives from the propensity to overcook; but I never imagined it extended to "a couple of saucepans filled with greenish sludge," etc. Yes, as Nigel says, there has been a culinary foreign invasion in some respects. Nowadays in pubs, one finds alongside the usual long-established pub fare such dishes as lasagna and moussaka which formerly would have been derided as "foreign muck." Some people say "you can't go wrong with pub food" in Britain. Oh yes, you can. I have had the occasional execrable meal in a British pub, but those have been outweighed by some truly excellent food in the past decade in British pubs. But watch out for an extensive menu. That is a signal that the microwave lurks in the "kitchen" and that rather than being lovingly prepared on the premises, the prepared food is trucked in frozen from some central commissary. I

suspect that the introduction of "foreign" dishes into British eateries comes from younger people who have traveled in Europe, the older ones being more "set in their ways." A few years ago I watched a TV documentary on British going over to France for a day trip of shopping. One older lady being interviewed said she didn't dare go into a French restaurant for fear of being "made to eat snails." I don't know whether she thought the restaurant would maliciously slip her some snails buried in "sausage and mash" or that some beefy French waiter would stand over her with a club snarling "You weell eat zee snails and zee frogs' legs. Ve haf ways..." Oops, I've slipped into the wrong accent, but you get the idea. I don't know why some British have the fixed idea that the French diet consists largely of snails and frogs' legs. Snails are a regional item in France, far from universal, and I have never seen frogs' legs on a menu in France. But I have seen snails on a pub menu in Bath at a stag dinner preceding my nephew's wedding. (As he was marrying a girl from Bath he had to make the trek to her home country and city to marry her.) I induced the teenager sitting beside me to order the snails as an appetizer. His reaction on tasting them was, "they're *wonderful*." *(189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)*

KEN FORMAN

Your trip to Northern Arizona brought back many memories. I lived for many years in Flagstaff, which is considered the doorstep to the Grand Canyon. My roommate in college (Northern Arizona University) was a Hopi whose family lived in Tuba City. His father was a tribal councilman for the Hopi Nation. We used to stay up late talking about the similarities and differences between his and my cultures. It's quite a different thing to come from a matriarchal society (like his).

My mother's family has been in the area since late in the 19th century. I have some old Navajo rugs that my grandmother used 70 years ago. Navajo rugs always have a flaw in them to "let out any bad spirits" that had been inadvertently woven into the pattern. A top quality rug will have the flaw so skillfully hidden that they are almost impossible to find. As a child, I used to search for the "flaws" in her rugs. I've always suspected, though, that hundreds of years ago some rug maker screwed up a particularly difficult pattern and explained it away as an "out" for bad spirits. I've never been able to confirm this. *(P. O. Box 95941, Las Vegas, NV 89119)*

JIM CAUGHRAN

A "renovated" ghost town! I miss the southwest; that's a nice area of the world. Lived there for a summer in 1959, surveying roads for Canyon de Chelly. And I remember the Shootout at the Holbrook Motel the year before, while traveling to South Gate with Bob Pavlat. Nice memories, but I haven't been back.

Carol's account of her experiences with racism on the train made me more sensitive; her "people whose English is obviously not native-born" could be construed unfavorably. I suspect we are all overly sensitive these days, and should relax and tolerate fuggheadedness to some extent. I don't mean to tolerate racism, rather to recognize we all have blind spots. Overt racism should be stepped on, with consideration for the fear that creates it.

Her nostalgia for New York regional culture is part of why people choose to live there. Some New Yorkers can't imagine living anywhere else. I can't imagine living there, so I guess we're even. *(24 Prestwick Crescent, Willowdale, Ont. M2H 1M9, Canada)*

ANDI SHECHTER

The trip you and Carol took to the Grand Canyon and surrounding country made me envious. I have driven cross-country twice, using the southern routes, and did go through and even stopped in the part of the country. Driving through New Mexico I kept thinking, "Usually they put the freeways through the ugly parts of the state, because no one wants them. If this is *ugly* New Mexico, I don't think I can handle the rest."

In Memorium: Dick Ellington was very much appreciated. Dick was someone I always put very high on my list of worthwhile people (it's a very short list, and come to think of it very few of my relatives are on it), and I didn't get the news of his illness at all and read of his death in *Locus*, which was not easy. I was, in fact, upstairs at Jerry and Suzle's and was paging through *Locus* and surprised the rest of the household by suddenly bursting into tears. I liked Dick a lot and the parties at Dick and Pat's were something I looked forward to every year with glee. Greg's description was spot on. ("Dick was wry and smart and worldly wise ... both comfortable in and amused by the world. Yet he never lost his ready warmth ... ") Thank you for making sure Dick is remembered. I too will miss him very much.

Thanks to Robert, Karen and Carol for the stories about the fire. They were horrifying and scary and reassuring, and told me a lot of what I wanted to know about the experiences you all had. I don't know if it was more helpful to write about it or harder to live through it again in writing, but those of us Out Here appreciate the narratives. I was so very relieved that with the awful exception of Barbara's house, our community appears to have been quite lucky. *(8618 Linden Avenue N., Seattle, WA 98103)*

ANDREW HOOPER

Just before reading TRAP DOOR #11, I read

through SLUBBERDEGULLION #3 from Nigel Richardson, which didn't leave me in the best frame of mind for the leading article in your latest. SLUB was so unremittingly bitter, negative and condemning of fandom that it left quite an unpleasant taste in my mouth, and when next confronted with Gary Hubbard's general dismissal of both his late father and his family as a whole, I had to put the whole mess aside for awhile. Gary is not at fault, of course; he sought to write about a series of events which were valuable clues in understanding what he is all about, which is the height of the fannish ethos. He wanted to tell the truth in the face of the mendacity of his father's funeral, and I'm not about to criticize him for that. But coupled with Nigel's hate-letter to fandom, I found myself wondering what it is in the fannish soul that seems eternally to prefer to concern itself with the subjectively negative rather than with things which it finds laudable or pleasing. Of course, this isn't a new question, and one merely has to contemplate life as a Chicken Brother to understand the wellspring of some of Nigel's complaints; but when I read on through the first pages of Carol's "Stuff," it all began to seem so dismal that I wondered what the attraction was.

Fortunately, my mood improved, as did Carol's experiences on her trip. Train travel in America today is indeed a grueling and difficult experience; I would never have done it if I were a woman traveling alone. But on the whole I still endorse it in one important detail: Regardless of how bad Amtrak may get, it is still far less subject to brute idiocy and malfeasance than air travel. Unfortunately, Amtrak seems to be adopting more and more practices it has learned from Northwest Orient Airlines every year...

I am not old enough (really!) to be able to have the kind of identification with an urban landscape half-submerged such as Carol found in New York. I have been back to places I once trod in Detroit almost thirty years ago, but my memories are washed-out childhood recollections and I cannot see the way things have changed. The closest thing to feeling that I have outlived an old neighborhood so far happened to me three years ago when Nevenah Smith and I took a trip out to Pennsylvania and we stopped by the house where I lived from age 5 to 7 in West Virginia. Walking around the yard, which had shrunk from its huge childhood proportions, I was struck by one time-binding image: When I lived there from 1968-70, there was a small creek running through the property in a very shallow bed that never got more than a foot deep. Now the stream runs through a deep V-shaped cut, six to eight inches of water at the bottom of a three-foot gorge. Standing in the January snow, looking at the water that gurgled through the ditch, I had a sudden flash of just how long twenty years is. *{In 1976 I went back to see the home in Cleveland, Ohio, where I lived from birth and from which my family moved (to L.A.) in January 1951 when I was seven years old, and like you my main memory was how small both it and the surrounding houses were compared to my childhood impressions. Interstate 90 ran behind the end of the block where a wooded area provided endless hours of play and exploration when I was young.}*

Carol's article was a very fine piece of writing, by the way; in 1996, when we get around to doing *Fanthology 92*, I hope someone will keep it in mind.

Now I come to your group narrative of the terrible wildfire of 1991. If it had been in my neighborhood, I don't know if I would have stood on station spraying down the house as calmly as you did. I have had some unpleasant experiences with fire in the past. I once managed to set my closet on fire as a child and nearly succeeded in burning down the house in the process, and then nearly set a forest fire in the summer of 1982 as a camp counselor in northern Minnesota. Ever since the latter incident, the sound of rushing wind or water or sometimes even a truck cruising by on the street will put me in a sudden panic by its auditory resemblance to a fire burning out of control. Ghu only knows how I'll react when Mt. Baker goes up and sends a column of glowing, super-heated gas and ash surging over the entire Puget Sound basin. I probably will not rise to the occasion. *(4228 Francis Ave. N. #103, Seattle, WA 98103)*

PAMELA BOAL

I do enjoy armchair travel, so "Doorway" was particularly enjoyable for me this issue. I have always felt the most interesting fans are those who bring their other interests and hobbies into fandom. Where would the future we all care about be if not illuminated by knowledge of the past? A knowledge often garnered from an interest in collecting such as your own Navajo weaving. Our zines would certainly be the poorer without the fans interested in illustrative art. Then there are the gabfests enjoyed by so many fans, often taken up where left off, though the leaving and the taking up may be years apart. Would the conversation flow so well if the participants had nothing but a single-minded interest in written SF? Could we enjoy our favorite genre without some interest in science and technology?

Is it because of the deaths of well-loved fans or is it because a significant portion of fanzine fans are – shall we say? – no longer in the first flush of youth that for the past couple of years in several zines there has been a significant awareness of human mortality? I wonder how many have, like myself, acted upon that awareness. After many years of procrastination, I have put all the family paperwork in order and made sure that our children know where important papers

are lodged. It's not just things like insurance policies and wills (not that I have anything to leave) but bills and bank statements that can cause problems if not in good order, as we found to our cost when my mother-in-law died. I took out an insurance policy to cover the cost of my disposal some four years back. That was less to do with awareness of my mortality and more to do with my obstinate streak. I wasn't about to let insurance companies put obstacles in the way of disabled people obtaining policies unless said disabled people were prepared to pay exorbitant and unwarranted surcharges.

Have you ever had the feeling that you were at the wrong funeral? My sister and I had that feeling at our father's funeral; indeed, that feeling has never quite dispersed. While I was in Cyprus, my father remarried and moved with his bride from London to a remote part of Devon. As my father and stepmother refused to travel and I cannot undertake long car journeys lightly, it was a year after we returned to England and nearly two years after their wedding before I met my stepmother. As we couldn't afford hotels or even bed and breakfast and were only offered hospitality for one night, it was a brief meeting and did not include an introduction to either of the two stepbrothers (one of whom was my father's absentee landlord) or the one stepsister I had acquired. My sister (and my two eldest children who were in boarding school at the time) had met all our stepkin at the wedding, but as she had the hassle of a long journey with a detour to collect (and later return) my children from school, the faces that went along with the hurried introductions did not make a lasting impression. My sister was never even offered overnight accommodation so the wedding was my sister's one and only meeting with our father's new family, at least until she remet our stepsister and stepmother two days before he died.

Like my father, my stepmother was no letter writer. I tried but pretty soon correspondence was no more than my birthday cards to them and an exchange of Christmas cards. Then came the phone call from my stepsister to tell me my father was in hospital and dying. Pretty rotten for her having to introduce herself on the phone at such a time. My sister at least managed to visit the hospital, though she warned me that there was little point in my making the effort to visit as she was certain he wasn't able to recognize anyone and seemed not to derive comfort from visitors.

On the day of the funeral, we were supposed to arrive at the house in time to have a brief rest and at least a hot cup of tea before setting off to the crematorium with the funeral party. My sister and her husband decided to break their journey and stay overnight with us the day before and after the funeral. The weather reports indicated that the overnight blizzards should not have affected any part of our proposed route. As ever, the weather reports were wrong. Yet despite the deep snow we made good time; that is, until we reached the lanes surrounding out stepkin's home. We arrived just in time to tack on to the end of the substantial number of funeral cars. No time for introductions – indeed, it may well have been that our stepmother seated in the leading car didn't even know we were there. We were shown to the front of the crematorium simply because there was no other place where my wheelchair could be slotted in. Fortunately, there was just enough room in the second pew for my sister and our husbands.

I was not surprised by the large congregation. Our father was the amiable type of alcoholic and it was more than likely that all the regulars of his local hostelry had turned out to see him off. The vicar confirmed this guess, making it clear that he was the trendy type of cleric who met his parishioners at their local where he had come to know and love the deceased. I wasn't able to take in much of what he said because his second sentence was along the lines of we had come together to bid farewell to our friend "Tommy." Our father's given name was Ernest and he had the nicknames of Steve (short for his surname of Stevens) or Slim (factual, not ironic), but who the heck was "Tommy"? If we were not at the wrong funeral it would seem that our father had acquired a new nickname along with a new family and friends. My sister leant forward, ostensibly to pick up a dropped book, and whispered she was fairly sure that the backs of the heads in front of her were indeed those of our stepmother and stepsister.

The curtain closed on the coffin that may or may not have been our father's. Stepmother got up and did a double take. "Oh, you did make it. You are coming back to the house for sherry and sandwiches?" Then everybody scattered. None of the usual introductions and thank you for comings at the chapel door, due perhaps to the weather or to the fact that this is not the practice among our stepkin.

Back at the house, we were hastily seated in a corner of a crowded living room, trying to juggle a plate of sandwiches thrust upon us by a teenage girl (later identified as a stepniece) and dispose of glasses of sherry (for which I, my sister and our husbands have a uniform loathing) while talking politely to the vicar who hadn't a clue who we were. Hardly the situation when you can suddenly say, "Oh, by the way, we think that was our father you just eulogized at the crematorium." During the conversation it became clear that the vicar thought that my sister was my daughter (much to her delight); true, she is seven years my junior and at that time looked very young for her age, but while most people remark on our likeness to one another, few venture even to surmise which of us is the elder.

The vicar suddenly rose to his feet, muttered "Excuse me," and along with a couple of other people

(never introduced) abruptly departed. Then I was introduced to the various stepkin and my sister and I were shown into a bedroom and asked to take our pick of our father's clothes, none of which (not surprisingly) were familiar to us. Shocked mumblings from us about being sure some local charity would be grateful; noises from them about us surely wanting something to remember him by. Next I prompted an uncomprehending silence by suggesting that, yes indeed, I would like to have some of his books as a memento. Eventually some sort of light dawned on the face of one of the stepbrothers. He reminded his mother that Ernie had had some books when they moved in and as they had thrown out the eyesore of a bookcase he was certain the books had been put in the attic because Ernie had insisted he wished to keep them. Eventually a promise was given that the books would be sent to me if I would send the money to cover the postage. We were ushered on our way.

My sister and I decided that while it was possible that our father had picked up a new nickname and that Tommy was appropriate as he was an old soldier, it simply was not possible that he had married into a family that was totally uninterested in books. True, that apart from those purchased in and treasured from his youth, our father seldom used good drinking money buying books, but we had never known him to be without his full weekly allowance of library books. We arrived home chilled to the bone, utterly weary, and convinced that whatever we had been doing on that ghastly day, we had not been to our father's funeral. *(4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, U.K.)*

JERRY KAUFMAN

My absolute favorite piece in this issue is "Stuff." Carol does a lot with this trip across the country and into the heart of New York. I liked very much the glimpses into the people she met: the disheartening train companions, the old friends, the cabby, and Pauline Kael.

By the way, Dan Steffan's illos for "Stuff" are wonderful, far more polished than anything I've seen from him before, yet still with Dan's wit evident. The rest of the art is good, too. In Craig Smith's drawing of Dave Langford, I recognize even the poncho that Dave wore at Mexicon years ago after winning a quiz. I ought to recognize it, since I took the photo that Craig used to base his drawing on. *(8618 Linden Avenue N., Seattle, WA 98103)*

ROB HANSEN

Some superb writing in these pages as usual, particularly the Oakland fire triptych and Carol Carr's "Stuff" with its superb Dan Steffan illos (Dan, ATom and Harry Bell remain my three favorite fanartists). This and her fire account were the biggest chunk of writing by Carol I've come across in one place and it made me realize just what a good writer she is. Her account of being seated across from one of the twice-born (as Gore Vidal calls them) on Amtrak brought back a memory from about ten years ago that I'd been trying to forget.

Back then, being relatively impoverished, I used to take the bus when traveling down to Wales to visit my parents rather than the train as I do today. This was quite a hardship since the inter-city buses of yesteryear didn't have the facilities they do today—*i.e.*, in-flight videos and toilets. The former is easy to live without, but the latter could mean two or three hours of gritted teeth and crossed fingers 'til the next pit stop. Anyway, on one return trip I was unfortunate enough to have an intense young woman seat herself next to me and proceed to spend the next three hours trying to convert me to the joys of worshiping Guru Maharaj Ji. Door-to-door religion salesmen are bad enough (though a simple "We Give Blood" sign in the window is usually enough to keep the Jehovah's Witnesses away, and reciting the Lord's Prayer backward when answering the door might work on the others—must try that sometime), but what do you do when you're pinned in your seat by one of these people? Being too polite to tell this woman to shut up and let me read the book I was ostentatiously trying to bury my head in, I had to endure hour after hour of the most vacuous load of old bollocks. All attempts at irony or even blunt sarcasm on my part were met with the same blank look, and my barely suppressed giggles when she showed me glossies of the cherubic guru and his adoring acolytes went entirely unnoticed. Indeed, the only sign of irritation she showed was as we pulled into London's Victoria coach station and she realized her time was up, with me as unconvinced of the guru's divinity as I'd been when we started out. Not having a strong religious belief of my own to threaten her with, I had suffered for her faith. Sometime's it's hell being a heathen.

I had to marvel at the people on Carol's train who complained about "immigrants ruining the country." Surely, the only Americans who should be able to do so with a straight face are the Indians. Still, these idiots are everywhere. The population of the U.K. is 94% white yet there are still those who argue that the other 6% are somehow going to destroy our culture, pollute our precious bodily fluids, and otherwise destroy civilization-as-we-know-it. Go figure. *(144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, U.K.)*

MARK MANNING

Carol Carr writes satori-inducing things about New York, a city I always find very enjoyable. Lots of moxie. Lots of places that are intriguingly very home-like (people have sat on this very stoop since 1901) and threatening (because it's the best viewpoint

in the neighborhood for watching strong-arm men pull tourists into the alleys). Lots of undeniable musical history – Texaco's Met broadcasts, Duke Ellington at Carnegie Hall, the Lovin' Spoonful, Kapelye, Lou Reed, singers beyond number who could play a guitar like a-ringin' a bell (if not as well as Harry Bell can do TRAP DOOR covers), the endless procession of soul acts booked there over the years. My scratchy LP of James Brown live at the Apollo was recorded there – thank you, New York! Next time, though, you can keep the scratches. *(1709 S. Holgate, Seattle, WA 98144)*

GERI SULLIVAN

Carol's trip report was lovely. Thank you for being a good editor and not cutting its length. It was interesting comparing her Amtrak journey to my trip aboard the Empire Builder (Minneapolis-Seattle and back) nine years ago. Yes, the scenery. You do See America. (You don't even have to pay attention to driving.) I had what was billed as a two-person sleeper on my second night out. What a joke. It worked reasonably well for one and did contribute to the scenic high point of the trip: waking up at 5:30 a.m., pulling back the curtain, and seeing the fog-enshrouded fairyland of the Cascades. Mountains, mist, early morning light, me in my own private world. I wouldn't have wanted to see it any other way.

The goddess of fate must have watching closely over me on that trip, though. She certainly gave me a more enjoyable set of people to meet on my cross-country train travels. The only time religion entered the conversation was when a couple mentioned in passing that they were Baptists, and what little sexism I encountered was the type that is culturally pervasive. No ass-grabs, no passes. I got far more of the "You're traveling alone?!" comments on my driving trip around the north shore of Lake Superior three years later. At the time, it actually seemed easier to be a woman traveling alone than a man. (Other campers, locals and tourists were more suspicious of men and steered clear of them rather than striking up comfortable conversations.) I'm glad Carol wrote about the racist/anti-Semitic attitudes she encountered, and I'm pissed at their existence and prevalence in our society. I remember being sickened by how racist one of my high school friends became as he "matured."

It was good seeing New York through Carol's eyes. Pizza. Yes. I'd thought Jeff was exaggerating his disappointment with Minneapolis pizza until he took me to a random mid-Manhattan pizza shop when we went to the New York Corflu. (But at least we've finally discovered a local provider of chow fun.)

Thanks for the reassurances, but you're too smart to leave fandom seeking the perfect horse blanket when the chances are good your fannish contacts could lead you to it. My only fear is that you and Don Fitch will fall into such a flurry of comparing notes that both of you will lose what little time you have for other fanac. *(3444 Blaisdell Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55408-4315)*

BRAD W. FOSTER

F. M. Busby's "Scenario" was *the* high point of the issue for me – just fall-down funny, and such an obvious one (as these things always are when someone else is brilliant enough to actually think of them!).

Carol Carr's "Stuff" also grabbed me right off the bat when she started by noting her visit would include a short stop at Leo and Diane Dillon's. I've always been fascinated by the Dillons' work, so any sort of "behind the scenes" info has me going. And I wasn't disappointed. I enjoyed the entire trip! (Wonderful illos, too!) *(P. O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016)*

SUE THOMASON

There seems to be a lot about mortality/death/funerals in this issue. Not a lot I can say in response to this. No close friends have died recently; both my parents are still alive. The only funeral I've been to in recent years was that of a colleague at work, a devout Anglo-Catholic, whose funeral was held at the church she regularly attended, complete with all the trimmings: incense, choir singing the Orthodox Kontakion (in English). Being unfamiliar with the conduct of funerals, I was surprised that the coffin (closed, and piled with flowers) was up on two trestles at the front of the church when the congregation came in. We were not given any opportunity to approach the coffin, which I regretted as I would have liked to "say goodbye." Curiously enough, my feelings were of distance and isolation. However, another work colleague who went with me said the thing that struck him most was Pam (the dead woman)'s presence, that everything was as she would have liked it to be.

I often briefly imagine the deaths of people close to me. It just pops into my mind, "so-and-so might be dead now," particularly if it's someone I am supposed to meet and they are late. It doesn't distress me; it seems to be a way of rehearsing how I will cope when people close to me do die. Although my partner is a GP and constantly involved in local deaths, it doesn't seem to touch me much.

What reading these accounts of the Oakland fire has done to me is make me resolve to do a *complete* backup of my fiction writing and poetry onto floppies *immediately* after finishing this letter and having lunch. Of course I have printed-paper versions of everything, but it has just occurred to me how much easier it would be in a crisis to grab a small box of floppies rather than a huge amount of cardboard files. Also the accounts have made me think What I'd Grab

in a Crisis (in order): Rory (my partner), all three cats, writing disks and friends' addresses cardfile, survival stuff like food and clothes for immediate needs, and musical instruments, particularly the bagpipes. After that I start dithering. *(190 Coach Road, Sleights, Whitby, N. Yorks YO22 5EN, U.K.)*

ALUN HARRIES

I was quite shaken by Gary Hubbard's description of his father's funeral, reminding me as it did of my own dad's eleven years ago. Now my family is no domestic utopia as I have a brother who I haven't seen for over ten years and my mother refuses to accept the existence of my sister's second husband or indeed my girlfriend, but I was astonished by the level of hostility reflected in this article.

My father was a member of the Society of Friends and, as there is no Quaker Meeting House in Newport but he was a long-time adherent of the ecumenical movement, the ceremony was held in an Evangelical Church. Along with two of my brothers and my then brother-in-law, I was a pall bearer. It was a Friend's funeral with a period of silence and the only speech was by a long-standing other member of my father's meeting. A subset of the mourners then went to the crematorium at Cwmbran and subsequently there was a buffet back at the house laid on by the lady next door. My brother's wife, a teacher, flew back especially from a school trip in Germany. In retrospect it was very moving and just what was required to start the period of mourning which is necessary to recover from a great loss.

The point of all this is that I can never remember the sort or level of animosity described by Gary to either my father or my siblings. True, we used to fight and as the youngest I was, and to a certain extent still am, the object of a fair amount of teasing; but I loved them, felt part of something, and still do. The most my father ever said against my reading science fiction was that sometimes he wished I would transfer my passion to westerns or some other form of genre fiction. I still miss him and probably will the rest of my life. Maybe I am the unusual one but I pity Gary, hopefully not patronizingly, for missing out on familial affection, and I wouldn't want my family any other way. It sure brought it all back to me in any case.

Dave Langford is too clever for his own good once again.

Reading about the Oakland fire made me glad, yet again, that we don't have much in the way of natural disasters in the U.K. The only thing I can think of that I have ever suffered even vaguely like this – and people may think this an unrealistic comparison – is the "life during wartime" feeling of traveling on London Underground every day during a fairly intensive IRA bombing campaign. A while ago there seemed to be an explosion or a scare at least once a week. Now this has only ever affected me to the extent of making me late for work or delaying my arrival home, but it gets to you in the end and I am glad that it seems to have died down for a bit at the moment. I do not believe in violence as a means to a political end and I don't want to die, especially for the cause of a united Ireland which I reckon is an eventual certainty anyway. *(399 Kingston Road, London SW20 8JS, U.K.)*

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Of all the items in TRAP DOOR #11, I was most struck by the personal accounts of the Great Oakland Fire of October 1991. Of these accounts, though, yours had greater impact than Carol Carr's, which in turn had greater impact than Karen Silverberg's. I think the reason for this is that each of them were relating very much the same story, so that by the time one reached the third account one felt that one was not being told anything new. I'm aware, of course, that the reason for running three (or more) different accounts of the same event is that each writer brings a different perspective to it, so making it sound completely different; but in this case I felt that it didn't quite come off, so that all I gleaned from Karen Silverberg's account were a couple of incidental details, such as that a tab of Valium was insufficient to knock Robert Silverberg out for more than a few hours.

However, these personal accounts did provoke me to wonder what I might do, and what I might try to save, if our house ever caught fire. The possibility of incineration or other domestic catastrophe is something that crosses my mind from time to time – will the gas boiler malfunction while we're out at work? will the water tank rupture and flood the place? – but apart from a minor burglary in November 1990, we've been remarkably lucky. (The thieves, clearly juveniles who got in and out via a narrow window, were obviously interrupted at some point, since they made off with only a camera, some traveler's checks, and – most irritatingly, since it delayed a call to the police – the telephone.)I daresay that, statistically, we're likely to go on being lucky; but, just suppose ....

Judith and I are fans, but unlike most other fans aren't collectors – partly because we don't have the room, but also because we don't see much point in surrounding ourselves with vast stacks of paper that we're never going to look at again and which will be of no use to anyone else once we're dead. So we pass on all the fanzines we receive to Vince Clarke for his Heritage Library, don't collect first editions or favorite authors or particular genres, try to keep the impedimenta that inevitably accrues around us to a minimum. I have a complete (and continuing) collection of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science*

Fiction, but suspect that I acquire each new issue of that more from inertia than active desire. We also have just over 600 (vinyl) records, some of which (if destroyed) would probably be gone forever because they're likely never to reappear on CD or could only be obtained at great expense via specialist dealers (and while some of the records in question – those old Jefferson Airplanes! – haven't been played for a very long time, I can't imagine myself disposing of them), but if destroyed by fire the bulk of them could be replaced from the proceeds of any insurance settlement. Ditto the several shelves of history books, although the question is whether, having read them, we'd need to replace each title or even buy replacements at all. The stereo and computer equipment are of course fully insured.

When it comes right down to it, the only things we have that are literally irreplaceable are the albums of photographs and postcards from our foreign trips and the little souvenirs that we acquire on them – a piece of graffitoed concrete from the Berlin Wall; pen and ink drawings of Prague's Charles Bridges; a brown glass bowl from Bukhara; pewter goblets from Singapore. In theory, we could revisit these places to retake all the photographs and purchase similar souvenirs, but in practice that would be impossible. So if this place were to catch fire while we're around to do something about it, it will be photo albums and souvenirs first. Then, perhaps, the records ...

I notice that Harry Bell's spider, on the cover, has the wrong number of legs – a mere six, when it should have been eight. It could perhaps be claimed that the two arms alongside the head are in fact the "missing" two legs, but their size and position suggests to me that they are more in the nature of antennae. But I can't remember whether spiders have antennae... What a fannish sort of comment that was! Witter about cover illustrations instead of the great issues of the day – you'll be mistaking me for Mike Glicksohn next! *(5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH, U.K.)*

DOUG BARBOUR

I had heard from Debbie Notkin that no one we knew had been harmed by the fire, but the triple whammy report here certainly brought the whole thing home. Terrific personal reportage, and especially interesting to get both your and Carol's perspective on the same happenings. Shortly after the fire, our national newspaper ran a science page story on the whole situation in the hills there which had intriguing allusive reverberations for, I suspect, any sf reader. Basically it argued that the placement of houses and gardens on those hillsides was ecologically suspect from the first, and that the increasing population growth made ever more probable such disasters, while each such disaster made the place itself more dangerous and more open to another such disaster. The article also pointed out that nevertheless human technology was determined to resettle the hills as soon as possible.

I was especially glad that the Carr house survived because it is the only fan home in the area I have ever visited, when Sharon and I were kindly included in the invitations to the 1976 New Year's Eve party with Susan Wood, the first time we ever visited San Francisco. We had a terrific time. I met a lot of people who had previously only been names in books or fanzines. Terry showed us the fabulous fanzine collection which totally bowled me over. I still remember that warm and friendly evening with pleasure.

I was especially struck by John D. Rickett's letter, as I too knew nothing about fandom until I was working on my PhD thesis (on sf). It was a librarian at the University of Alberta who told me that I might find some interesting commentary on sf texts in "fanzines" (this was in 1969, when critical interest had barely begun). I thought they sounded pretty weird but sent off for what he told me was a good "sercon" zine in Britain. Upon receipt of my first issue, I read a column which I thought was dead wrong about Alfred Bester; I saw down and responded with a three-page single-spaced letter. I think I was hooked (even if I now tend not to maintain such grandiose length). As I got to know some fans, mostly of the fanzine type, I have come to enjoy the "conversation," but then I am essentially literate (by which I mean the written word still carries more weight with me than any other medium). Will future fanzines be video cassettes? I sometimes think most young people understand the "grammar" of the visual media and they will never understand that of written communication. I think of Katin in *Nova*, who is writing a novel, an utterly archaic form. Ah well, my point is that I found fandom when I was almost thirty, and so found in it not so much a community/haven as simply another ongoing conversation I enjoyed joining when certain others in it were also talking (writing).

I have yet to mention Carol Carr's terrific trip report, with nary a fanfest in it. I especially enjoyed her account of life aboard the train. The New York scene came across in all its vast concatenations; the anticlimactic meeting was fun to eavesdrop on anyway. As a number of your letter writers pointed out and as I have seen in the past, Carol is one terrific writer.

Gary Hubbard's piece cut kind of close to home – not in the details, but because I too wasn't as close to my dad as I might or should have been, yet another few years and we might have begun to build the bridges that had never been put up before. I miss that opportunity, but also understanding Gary's feelings of not quite caring or being there for a ritual that didn't connect with the man he had known and escaped. As balance for the downer of a funeral, I

can't think of anything much better than a Dave Langford article, and this one is up (or is that down) to his usual standards, which is to say I laughed a lot while reading it – and I always already knew better than to meddle with such literary forms. *(11655 – 72nd Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0B9, Canada)*

MARTYN TAYLOR

The descriptions of the Oakland fire were the highlights for me. The fire even made it on the evening news over here and it is only grand scale foreign catastrophes that can edge aside the interminable royal soap opera. So interested was I in the descriptions of hosing down roofs that I did a little research over here. Now we are in a state of drought here – garden hosepipes are banned; even farmers can only extract water six hours a day – and this has been in force since the summer of 1990. (This on an island, in an area immortalized by Evelyn Waugh as the plashy fens.) I called the local water company and put the question to them – there's a huge fire coming my way; can I use a hose to damp down my house? The answer, when it came, was no, it would be against the drought regulations in force. So, not only would my house burn down but I would be prosecuted if I tried to prevent it! *(14 Natal Road, Cambridge CB1 3NS, U.K.)*

LESLEY WARD

Certainly a very dramatic issue, with the accounts of the fire. Interesting to have the events described from different perspectives in this way. Your own account seemed very matter-of-fact about it. Calmly descriptive of what exactly had happened. Reading on, I got more of an impression of how terrifying it must have been from Carol describing her feelings and Karen's description of the heat and the look of the sky. It sounds as if Carol's house was so close to the fire line that a few sparks could easily have blown onto it; staying on to hose it down might well have saved it. *{Well, actually not. It was nearly eight hours later than the fire finally reached her area and by then, in the heat of the day and the approaching fire, the house would have dried out.}*

There was a very sharp feeling of nostalgia in Carol's New York revisited. Enjoyed reading this, despite the fact that none of the places described were anything other than foreign names to me. Love the illos of the in-shop beautician with the trowel! *(71 Branksome Road, Southend, Essex SS2 4HG, U.K.)*

LENNY KAYE

I've just finished helping to type up part of a speech my sister, Jude, gave at an Oakland seminar about what might have been learned in the intervening year since the Oakland Hills fire. It made your eyewitness testaments all the more real. For last year, in mid-October, my sister came to visit our family on the east coast. She planned to stay a few days with my Mom, and then come to Pennsylvania to spend a few more with us to enjoy the fall foliage, which she never sees in northern California. Usually she makes an autumn visit at the beginning of November, but this year, because of her presence as a budget consultant at a Washington DC AIDS conference, she came earlier.

She arrived particularly happy, because the weekend before her boyfriend of the last decade had formally asked for her hand in marriage. Though they had lived together in the Hiller Highlands section of the Oakland Hills for the past five years (and known each other another half-dozen before that), their vow to become official was the last frontier of their long and somewhat sweet courtship together. He had hand-built his home for himself in the early '70s, intending to live alone. After they'd met and experienced love, they overcame their mutual shyness and she moved in with him, beginning a 1,500 square foot addition that would bring their lives together. The curved walls, the stained glass, the workshop with the tools and the accordion – they looked to be finished by the spring of 1992 and to celebrate their housewarming they planned to be married.

By your and Carol's and Karen Silverberg's accounts, you graphically pictured the nuclear-like devastation of the Oakland Hills. On the Friday following the fire, I walked with my sister through the ruins of her home on Charing Cross Road. There was nothing left – not a shard or memento – and her intended had been killed by the firestorm. The blaze had started only a half-mile away and had probably shifted into explosive overdrive as it approached their property. On Sunday there was a memorial service held for Gregor McGinnis at the Oakland Museum of Art, beneath a kinetic sculpture in the inner garden that moved and swayed with the wind.

I've never had to deal with a tragedy of this magnitude, and even today its sense of unreality is inescapable. Of course, I live a continent away; my sister has faced, with a great deal of inner courage, its primary, elemental horror, trying to find understanding in grief expressed. Beyond the personal (and try getting to that place on a regular basis!), the totality of loss provides a new yardstick of life's problems and perspective for me, and a knowledge that those tragedies and catastrophes aren't events that happen to somebody else, a world away, in a different time, in another neighborhood. And so we bear witness ...

I've been meaning to make a comment on a small sentence or two from your editorial in #10 which struck a responsive minor seventh diminished chord. "When I moved on from comic books to automotive magazines" was about how you put it. Interesting, that. All fandoms interact, and the car axis is perhaps peripheral to sf fandom (if you discount the Mad Max

fantasies) but one I remember fondly coexisting with my own fannish days.

I was more into the custom car world and, like you, soon abandoned it (even before I reached driving age) for rock and roll. Though these days I see a lot of spatial relationship between the Fender Stratocaster and the '59 Chevy, then the obsession with one effectively rendered moot the other.

These days I've once again become entranced with internal combustion fandom. Call the impulse what you will (and my wife attributes it to a 45-year-old thrash-core fan who's too old for the mosh pit ... maybe), but I've had a lot of fun getting back into the world of spark plugs (I've become a collector of vintage 'uns!) and carbs. Hey, what's life but a good hobby? I know you understand. *(P. O. Box 407, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156)*

WALTER WILLIS

I was sleeping in front of the fire this afternoon after lunch when I dreamed of a way to start my letter of comment on TRAP DOOR #11. But now that I and the computer are booted up, myself with a cup of coffee, I can't remember what it was. Did I really think of a way to start the letter, or just dream that I had? One way to answer this question is to do what I've just done. At least it makes it clear that I felt that TRAP DOOR #11 was something special, even for TRAP DOOR.

Even the cover, a thing I seldom remark on, is special with its mysterious associations with Ted White collaborations of the distant past. The tributes to Dick Ellington add to my respect both for him and the contributors. Your editorial does its job with deceptive competence. Gary Hubbard's funeral piece starts off well and gets better, acting climactically. Carol seems to carry on at the same standard, justifying Mark Manning's description of her style in the letter section. The three pieces about the Oakland fire are memorable. Not just for their intrinsic interest, but for the vividness with which they convey the bonds of friendship which unites this group of fans. They make one proud to be associated with them.

In the letter section, I was most impressed with Andrew Hooper's letter, partly because of his tribute to ATom and partly because of his theory that the scarcity of new fans is due to their deploying their talents in the mundane world. The deployment phenomenon is one I drew attention to in my report on Tropicon 1989 and was a central feature of the later life of Jophan in *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator*, but it hadn't occurred to me that it must also be responsible for the fafiation of so many valuable fans, as Andrew Hooper points out. This despite the most obvious and painful example of the phenomenon: the loss to fandom of the Nielsen Haydens. One can only hope that the day won't be long delayed when they have reached a position of such power that they will be able to summon an underling and, like the legendary H. C. Koenig, declaim, "Take a fanzine."

Congratulations on the first use I know of, of a new annotation to a reader's letter: "Note change of country," after Bruno Ogorelec's letter.

It was nice to see the letter from Ethel Lindsay. Every time the thought occurs to me that my expenditure of time on fandom has been wasted, I recall that it was my column in *Nebula* that brought Ethel Lindsay into fandom. She has never regretted it, and neither has fandom. *(32 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 0PD)*

TOM PERRY

Could there have been a fanzine fandom before Russ Chauvenet thought up the word "fanzine"? I wouldn't think so. And that means that Richard Gilliam's statement that "fanzine fandom as it was originally established has already died" is just plain wrong. As I recall, 1940 was when the word in question came into being, and it seems that fandom was sufficiently self-referential by that time (at least, so the memoirs of Futurians would indicate). Certainly you would concede that Laney and Burbee considered fandom a legitimate topic in their writings? But even in the '30s there was the Great Staple War and the Tucker death hoax and other aspects of fannish humor. Isn't that recognizably the same fandom that produced this TRAP DOOR, with its humorous accounts of burning houses and tragic predictions of the death of true fandom?

In fact, this issue strikes me as the best possible refutation of the talk of the doom of fandom. One writer says that he might never have seen a fanzine if a fellow participant in an apa hadn't sent him looking for Vincent Clarke. It apparently hasn't occurred to John Rickett that the apazines – or for that matter the BSFA publication that led him into apahackdom in the first place – were also fanzines. These apas grew out of fandom as a cheap means of distributing fanzines, and the BSFA itself was created as a recruiting stand for fandom, as Walt Willis explained in one of his Harp columns almost three decades ago. That these offshoots have taken on a life of their own would be considered a tribute to their parent in any other field.

Why, fanzines can still inspire a denunciation of trufans for being elitist snobs! I can't think of a better way of proving the constancy of trufandom in a troubled world.

What seems new to me is that fandom – once a veritable hotbed of rationality – seems positively Lovecraftian lately. Recently in TRAP DOOR we've had James White talking of the ghost of George Charters and Bob Shaw seeing premonitions come to

pass. We've had ghosts before from James, I remember – years ago in Terry Hughes' MOTA. Perhaps worst is the fact that I find myself (having met George and being an admirer of his poems – both of them) finding satisfaction in thinking of him preparing to publish James's contribution on a ghostly mimeo. And the solution to the question of how to submit to THE SCARR was brilliant! I find myself thinking about trying it myself – with just a little trepidation as I wonder what form a rejection might take. Would the unfit piece flash back on my screen suddenly and wind up stored on my disk? Would the file pointers be adjusted correctly? Where would I look for the polite note from George expressing deep regret that my submission was too esoteric (that is to say, incomprehensible, in the best tradition of the Fansmanship Lectures) even for his ethereal publication? It's all too eldritch to contemplate. Yes, fandom is definitely maturing.

I can't tell you how much enjoyment TRAP DOOR has brought me – from insight into Bob Shaw (I find myself agonizing at the thought of the typewriter turning into rust in the back yard, er, garden) to appreciation of the terrors of the Oakland fire. Topping it off this time is Carol Carr's return to New York City which generates its own nostalgia. It's hard to think of fanzine fandom dying when it's obviously alive and well in Glen Ellen. *(7272 E. Broadway #264, Tucson, AZ 85710)*

STEVE GREEN

Rob Hansen's comments regarding the "post-literate generation" brought to mind a bizarre conversation I had recently with the new editor of a magazine which had hired me six months earlier to write a monthly book review column. The magazine was switching its focus from general sf and fantasy to concentrate purely on cinema and video releases which, he informed me, meant there was no longer any need for my column. More than slightly surprised, I mentioned that his predecessor had advised me of the relaunch and that I'd already begun gathering film-related material for review; but he remained convinced that movie audiences did not read books and the column was therefore redundant. Of course, taking his argument to its logical next step, there was no point in publishing a film-oriented magazine, but this seemed not to have occurred to him. *(33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull B92 7LQ, U.K.)*

SID BIRCHBY

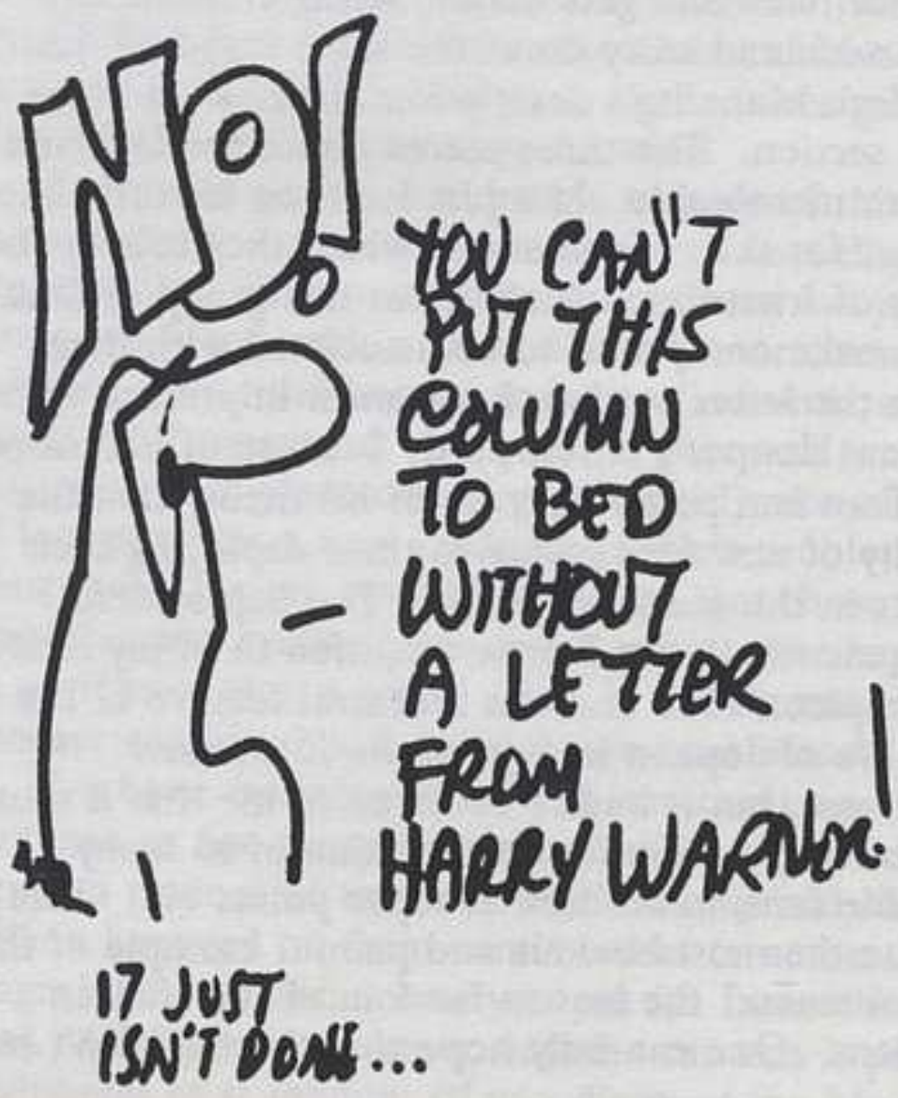
Vincent Clarke's letter about the Halloween trick-or-treat custom puts me in mind of the similar practice in Manchester of removing all the front-garden gates – that is, as a penalty for not paying up when the trickster came around. That was in the days when householders were still trustful of the knock on the door in the dark evenings – and for that matter, when the local kiddies used to go around without any fear of having a mauling from the household Rottweilers.

Talking of such pleasant folk customs, I'm all in favor of the U.S. mail people decorating envelopes with the current postage stamps – a picture of two members of the finch family consorting in the trees over the slogan "Love."

As to the sexual habits of love-birds, let us draw a veil; rather, let us consider the giant panda, which in various zoos steadfastly refuses to, uh, consort. Is it the dreary diet of bamboo shoots which could be the more tempting dish for the gourmet panda? Well, there's no doubt that eating peculiarities go hand in hand with sexual perversities (so they tell me) and I saw by the papers that there were reports in the remote regions of China about the killing of livestock. It seems that pigs are being eaten by marauding giant pandas – maybe they are getting tired of bamboo shoots chop suey. *(40 Parrs Wood Avenue, Didsbury, Manchester M20 0ND, U.K.)*

BRIAN EARL BROWN

I have to say "bosh" to Mike Deckinger's comment that Frank R. Paul "is not remembered because he was not a particularly skilled artist; he was just the first." Throughout his career Paul had a clear, direct style that showed you exactly what was going on in a story. He wasn't some mere copyist for Hugo Gernsback but had an intense personal vision of what the future would look like, or at least could look like. Paul's drawings were incredibly detailed and architecturally sound. He may have been weak



on figure drawing but that's no different from the writing of the time which was likewise weak on character. Frank R. Paul was popular when he was drawing for *Amazing* in 1926 and when he drew for *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* in 1946. If he is not well known today, it is only because old magazine art is never reprinted. What magazine illustrator today, I'd ask Mike Deckinger, can do as well as Paul? *{This has been this issue's Serious Stfnal Discussion.}* *(11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224)*

THEY ALSO WROTE

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, JOHN BERRY, JOHN D. BERRY, SHERYL BIRKHEAD, rICH bROWN (who wrote a wonderful letter about how Dick Ellington indirectly helped him during his Air Force days, but which is far too long to fit in thish), **MOG DECARNIN, GREGG CALKINS** ("Did you remember that I went to school in Barstow and lived just across the desert from Calico? You should have seen it the first time I went there, circa 1940 ... the last resident was still alive. Also, you did *not* spot the Bagdad Cafe in Bagdad, I am sorry to inform you. The actual cafe shown is located in Newberry Springs, a few miles to the west across the tracks from where my folks live, and I have eaten there on a number of occasions both before and after the film was made."), **GARY DEINDORFER** (who entertained me all summer with a series of humorously apologetic letters about getting his article In On Time), **ALLYSON M. W. DYAR, CYNTHIA GOLDSTONE, TEDDY HARVIA, DAVID HAUGH, IRWIN HIRSH, ERIC MAYER, MARC ORTLIEB, JAN ORYS, LLOYD PENNEY** ("I see you received exactly one Canadian fanzine in 1991 ... which one was it? I suspect it was a clubzine." No, it was Colin Hinz's NOVOID No. 8 – and Colin, isn't it time for another?), **GREG PICKERSGILL** (sending his CoA to Wales and "*Please* keep sending TRAP DOOR – despite my silence I do very much enjoy it" – good to know, Meyer, but I hope you write before you move again), **ANDY PORTER, BARNABY RAPOPORT, JOHN D. RICKETT, KEN RUDOLPH, BOB SHAW, CRAIG SMITH** (who thought the Jay Kinney PKD "pink light" cartoon lastish was "hilarious"), **STEVE SNEYD, TARAL WAYNE, KRISTIN THORRUD** and **TOM WHITMORE.**

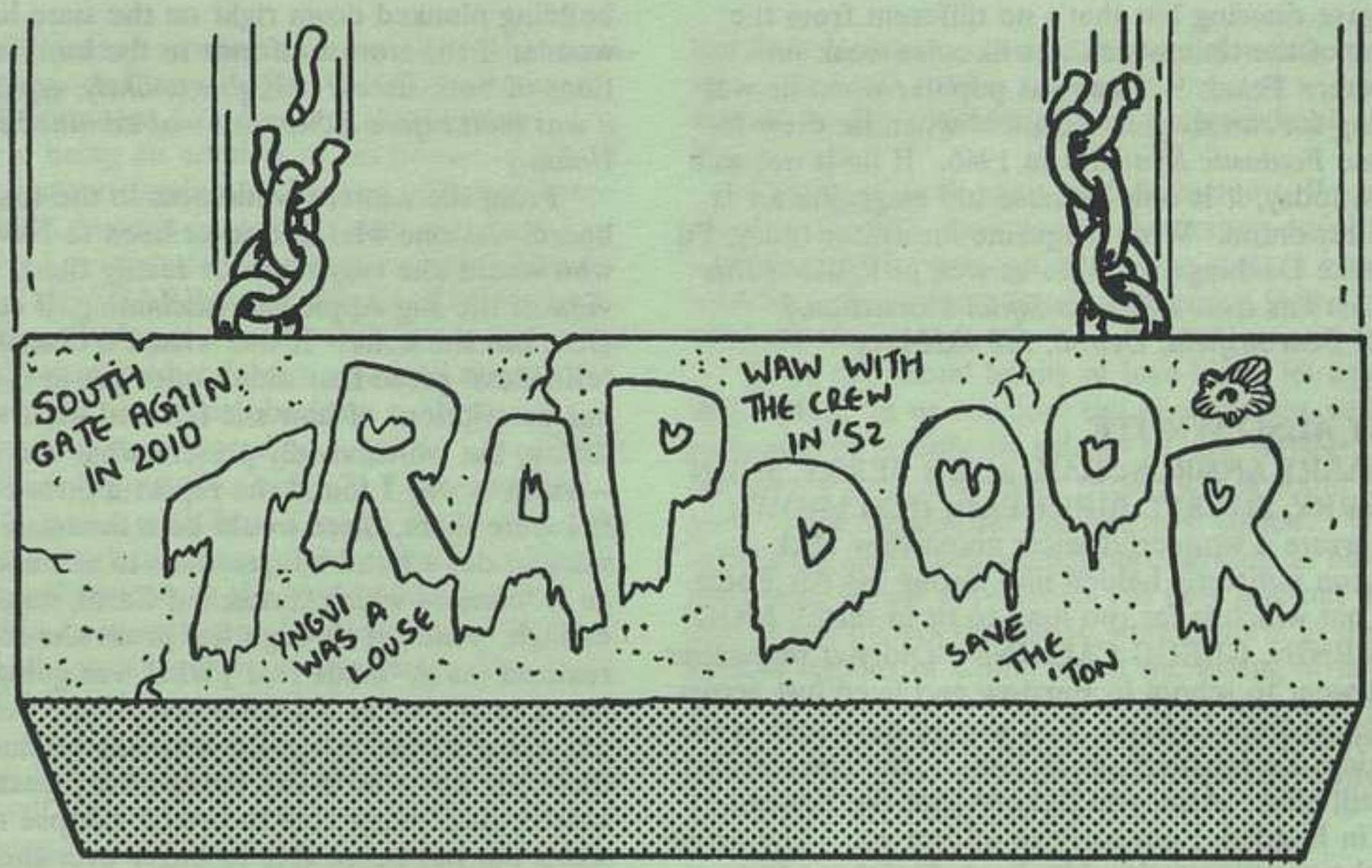
As I mentioned in "Doorway," herewith the last LoC I'll ever receive from...

ROGER WEDDALL

I had a lot of fun reading your article about your and Carol's holiday. I hauled out the atlas and traced out the path you were taking, imagining a scenic outlook at (roughly) this point and a general store at that point. As for kissing across state lines, well, "it could only happen in America" – referring to the building plonked down right on the state lines. I wonder if the store conforms to the building regulations of both states? *{Highly unlikely, especially since it was built before either state was admitted to the Union.}*

From the western wilderness to the eastern seaboard: As one who has never been to New York (but who would like very much to rectify that), Carol's view of the Big Apple was fascinating, if confusing. Gee, can she write! It was what I'd describe as "effortless" prose that didn't once get in the way of her descriptions of how she felt and what she was seeing, but which vividly present what was going on – which is why I found the report a little confusing. If I were there, there would be a thousand things I'd want to do, a hundred questions to ask and places to go ... none of which concerned Carol, naturally enough. And yet through her prose she so vividly realized (as in "made real") what was going on around her, I really felt as if I were there – and yet "I" was not doing all the things I'd normally be doing if I was there. It was a little like being on a pleasant roller-coaster ride, being able to briefly glimpse a lot of sights but not being able to linger over them. It was tantalizing – and yet, it was somehow a familiar experience in that I have been "back" to places I once knew well and have, as Carol did, quested after landmarks, reminisced about what building *used* to be on that now-vacant lot, generally been touring through two different landscapes at once: the familiar past and the touchable present. Isn't it a strange experience, just as I felt how strange it was for Carol to be given a different face by that cosmetics salesperson. Sometimes I will see an item of clothing that I like the look of but which is quite different from the sort of clothing I'll usually wear. And I will buy it, but when I wear it I will feel quite "different." It is an odd and – I find – enjoyable experience, reinventing what sort of person I am as represented by the clothing I wear, and the messages that will send to people around me. So, this is something I rarely get to have happen to me, because it's rare that someone will describe their experiences well enough that I will be able to feel as though I'm there with them. So thank you, Carol, for enabling me to be an ex-New Yorker with you, revisiting the old stamping grounds for a few days. It was most enjoyable.

Gary Hubbard's article was another piece of extremely fine writing. I don't know what Gary's father was actually like, but I now have an extraordinarily good sense of how he was, for Gary. The way he related what it was like at the funeral also made me feel like I was practically there, and what a strange occasion that was. I believe Gary when he said he didn't know what to make of it. And isn't that like so much of life? It simply happens, and then we wonder: "I wonder what *that* all means?" *(c/o Charters...)*


SOUTH GATE AGAIN IN 2010
TRAPDOOR
WAW WITH THE CREW IN '52
YNGVI WAS A LOUSE
SAVE THE 'TON

HANSEN '92...