

TRAP DOOR



©brad w. foster • 1995

Trap Door

Issue No. 17, April 1997. Edited and published by Robert Lichtman, P. O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442 USA. Please send all trade fanzines and letters of comment to this address. Founding member and Past President₁₉₉₁: fwa. Also a supporter of afal. A Fanzine of Record (see below), available by Editorial Whim in response to The Usual, or \$4.00 per issue (*reviewers please note!*). The Usual includes your letters, contributions both written and artistic, and accepted trades. If there's an "X" on your mailing label, this may be your last issue unless you respond. All contents copyright © 1997 by *Trap Door* with all rights reverting to individual contributors upon publication.

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE:

Doorway	Robert Lichtman	2
For Dick Ellington, Berkeley Typesetter	Julia Vinograd	5
Agbergs Abroad: Paris & Sicily	Karen Haber Silverberg	6
It's A Mystery To Me, Too	Ron Bennett	11
Stuff	Carol Carr	14
Bodies In Rest & Motion	Richard Brandt	17
The Cosmopolitan Boy	Steve Stiles	19
Shock Horror Probe!	Dave Langford	22
Our Man in ...	Sidney Coleman	24
Grunt	Calvin Demmon	26
The (Science) Fiction of History	Christina Lake	28
The Ether Still Vibrates	the Readers	31

ART & GRAPHICS: ATom (2), Brad Foster (cover), Lee Hoffman (14), William Rotsler (13, 16, 27, 30, 48), Craig Smith (22), Dan Steffan (2, 6, 11, 19, 26), Steve Stiles (17, 24, 25, 28, 31).



Not long after mailing the last issue, I took off on a two-week, two-convention adventure. A lot of others have already written about Toner and LACon III, relating many of the things I would have written myself, so I'm going to restrict myself to probably the most amazing part of that fortnight: an in-depth tour of Hoover Dam conducted by ace guide and sterling fan Ken Forman. This was not your typical local see-the-local-sights convention sidebar – in Real Life Ken actually is a government tour guide working at Hoover Dam – and it turned out to be far from an ordinary tour. Ken told us he would show us parts of the dam seldom seen by other than the workers there. This will be a reprise of the high points – between them, insert many hundreds of feet of corridors, hallways, catwalks, stairs and the occasional elevator ride as we moved throughout the structure.

A little background: Hoover Dam is part of the American tourist experience, right up there with the Grand Canyon and Disneyland. Completed in 1936, the steel and concrete dam is 726 feet tall and measures 1,244 feet across its widest point. It's so wide that a two-lane highway easily fits atop it with room for sidewalks, and it gets considerably wider as you descend inside.

Yes, inside the dam. After showing us some of the dam's outbuildings where the story of Hoover Dam is presented, Ken led us – Alyson Abramowitz and Fiona Anderson rounded out our small party – through a door in a small entry structure just off the sidewalk on the downhill side of the dam, and onto an elevator. We went down. Way down.

Hoover Dam is like a highrise building, but there are no windows and the main entrance is on the roof. What's most striking on the outer face as you approach the dam, in the middle about halfway up, are two very large, round, grated vents. Over six feet across, they're the main intake vents through which air for the workers enters the dam – and they were one of our first destinations. To get to them, we made our way down a long tunnel through the thick concrete of the dam wall. Some parts of the tunnel were so low I had to duck, but

once there the view from the intake vents was spectacular: the raging waters from the spillways below bubbling and rushing past steep cliffs and around a long bend, gradually smoothing out, and finally flowing over the horizon and out of sight. Also, the cool feel of the air rushing by us into the interior of the dam was most enjoyable on a hot, dry summer day. We lingered.

There's a low building attached to the base of the dam, the flat roof of which is visible from above. On the base bottom itself—I could just barely make it out from above—is what looked like a standard-sized door, the kind you might have in your house. I wondered if we'd get to come out that door during the tour. After several hours, we did—and looked up. Yow!

Hoover Dam leaks. Channels exist everywhere inside the dam to drain off the water. All this interior water ultimately exits at the base of the dam. From the rooftop Ken pointed out the leaked-water drain; it was an impressive flow, not like the main spillways but no wimpy slow stream, either. As it begins to make its way to that final exit, the water trickles down walls and along corridors. As a result, there are mineral deposits here and there discoloring the interior walls and ceilings—and, surprisingly, some young stalactites and stalagmites, not something I'd expect to see in a man-made structure only sixty years old.

As is well-known, aside from flood control the main business of Hoover Dam is the production of electrical power, much of it for nearby Las Vegas. Water is channeled in huge pipes through the dam to its ultimate hydroelectric destiny, after which it rejoins the river beyond the dam. Ken had us put a hand on the outer casing of one of these pipes. It was cool to the touch, the movement of the water inside easily felt. At one point in our travels, we stood by huge turbines turned by water flowing at great speed and force. Then, negotiating various narrow and tortuous passageways, rounding a corner, and walking out onto a wide mezzanine, we reached a huge, high-ceilinged chamber containing half of the dam's generators. The scene from that vantage point reminded me of the first time I saw that 1954 film classic, *Forbidden Planet*. Just as in the movie, the generators came into view from above. My perception of vastness and raw power was instantaneous, intense. My sense of wonder was stirred in a big way, just as when I was twelve—a reminder of just how small we are in the cosmic scheme of things.

And *that* sure helps keep fandom in the proper perspective.

Something didn't work for me when Seth Goldberg died.

Fandom has lost many people in the last few years,

and often that loss has been deeply felt. I thought that I had come to rely on a few emotional strategies to soften the blow. For instance: Remembering that the person had enjoyed a happy and productive life and lived to a ripe old age; or, if the passing was the result of a protracted period of bad health, that their suffering was mercifully over.

But none of that obtained when longtime Bay Area fan Seth Goldberg died suddenly two days after Corflu. I could hardly believe it when David Bratman called to tell me the news. Seth and I had just seen each other Corflu weekend. We had paused over Burbee's antique mimeograph, on display before being auctioned off. Each of us turned the crank a few times. Seth was in good spirits; he looked fine. He was only 44.

Seth and I weren't particularly close, but we got along well. I found him enjoyable to hang out with. We had a history of working together as Official Editor and Secretary-Treasurer, respectively, of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. Seth had already been OE for several years when I rejoined in 1984; I became Sec-Treas in 1986. We both remained in our offices as the years passed and did the things the two primary FAPA officials do: scheming and scrambling to find people to run for the other two elective offices; talking up the organization in fandom at large to recruit new blood; exchanging views on the phone about FAPA and fandom; and, most important, getting the mailings out on time. We were both efficient at our FAPA duties from so many years on the job, and I think we both appreciated that in each other.

Other than coming to the occasional FAPA collation, our paths seldom crossed. Before Corflu Wave, I'd last seen Seth at LACon III, where I enjoyed his and David Bratman's clowning on stage at the Hugo ceremonies. (They did a parody of the Price Waterhouse people at the Academy Awards, walking on stage dressed *very* formally—tuxes with long tails, etc.) This revealed a whimsical side of Seth I'd previously only glimpsed, and now I'm glad I was there to see it.

I'll miss him.

Back in the '80s some fans tried to pin the "focal point" label on *Trap Door*. I protested, saying that a fanzine appearing so infrequently hardly deserves focal point status. But lately I've been thinking about just what sort of a fanzine *Trap Door* is, and I've decided that it's a (not *the*, mind you) Fanzine of Record. What's that, you ask, and what sort of content does that imply? Well, for one thing, since No. 7 ten years ago—the Terry Carr memorial—I've felt compelled to publish material by and about those worthies who've left us. As Vicki Rosenzweig observes in this issue's lettercol, "This

is a skill nobody really wants to have." Nonetheless, it's one of the necessary features of a Fanzine of Record.

I started one of *Trap Door's* popular features back in the January 1990 issue when I first published a box score of fanzines I received. I believe this sort of thing has a place in a Fanzine of Record. Apparently others agree. The 1995 tally was the only contribution from an American fan in the two-volume *TimeBytes* fanthology edited by Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake (my nomination for best fanthology of all time, by the way—a truly excellent compilation). It's noted in *TimeBytes* as being "the best available indication of the state of fanzines at that time." With around sixty U.K. fans on *Trap Door's* mailing list at any given time, I'm covering as much of U.K. fandom as has been responsive and in return receive most of the fanzines published there. (For which I'm grateful, since I continue to find them more interesting, on average, than North American fanzines, though the latter have improved in recent years.) So while this might make my tally as valid as an indigenous one, I'm surprised no one over there has copied me.

That first box score back in 1990 covered only four years of receipts, but ten years are surveyed below, presenting a broader picture of fanzine production. Such statistics, in my opinion, belong in a Fanzine of Record.

	'96	'95	'94	'93	'92	'91	'90	'89	'88	'87
Australia	11	12	13	16	18	16	16	12	15	32
Canada	14	16	14	12	17	1	2	2	1	4
U. K.	47	52	60	51	50	44	30	61	51	33
U. S.	108	143	109	91	104	85	66	55	67	58
Others	0	0	2	2	2	1	5	0	4	3
Totals:	180	223	199	171	191	147	115	130	138	130

Other than noting a slump in U.S. production and a slight spike downward elsewhere, 1996 seems like an average year for the '90s. As I implied above, I'd enjoy seeing other active fans publishing similar tallies (especially those who've commented on mine). After all, I don't have a patent on fannish box scores (right, Victor?). Let many Fanzines of Record bloom.

Last summer, while getting my head together to complete *Trap Door* No. 16, it finally became time to reorganize my fanzine collection, something I've been meaning to do for years. It was housed in about three dozen boxes in various stacks all over my living room, which made it a major chore to search for something or to put away zines I'd finished. The impetus for this long overdue move was inheriting a 4-drawer file cabinet from Redd Boggs's apartment. It had over a hundred empty hanging files in it, and I had 400 more ready and waiting,

purchased several years ago when I'd had the initial urge to put my fanzines in file cabinets — and which always spoke up when I was in their proximity, accusing me of being a terrible person, a fake fan, for not using them by now. In one very busy evening, I filed as much of my Good Stuff as would fit in that cabinet. The result was *so* satisfying. Where before I had to move four boxes in order to uncover the one with the *Hyphens*, now I just had to open one drawer and there they were! I *had* to continue.

In a stroke of luck, I located a trove of second-hand 5-drawer steelcase file cabinets for just under \$100 each. Sorting and filing fanzines became an obsession. Moving like a blur, I'd fill up one cabinet and immediately rush out and buy another (my car could only hold one at a time) until I had everything put away. Altogether I bought three.

Several weeks later, I had about 35 linear feet of fanzines stowed in nineteen file drawers with five feet of expansion space. It was done. I breathed a sigh of relief and spent the rest of that evening opening and closing the drawers, looking in random folders, surveying my handiwork. As my pace slowed, I found myself focusing on the folders containing Redd's and Charlie's fanzines. This led to my finally being able to write my editorial about them.

And I returned to my normal fanac. *Trap Door* No. 16 finally came out; I began writing letters of comment again and catching up on correspondence. Before I left for Toner and the Worldcon, my newfound organization allowed me to prepare a want list which proved invaluable at the cons, where I bought a lot of old fanzines.

I'm still enjoying the novelty of being able to get out or file away fanzines without having to do a lot of heavy lifting. Almost every time I'm into my files I find myself dawdling: opening drawers and smiling a lot. It was much easier than in previous years to retrieve and later refile the fanzines from which I chose the items to include in *Fanthology '93*.

Then, in late October — and somewhat out of the blue — a package arrived from Greg Pickersgill containing some fanzines from Memory Hole, his fanzine archiving and recycling service. (I'd included some of my want list in a letter to Vinç Clarke, who'd sent a copy of it to Greg, who gathered up those he could provide, and shipped them off, airmail no less. Vinç also sent some stuff.) There was also a diskette containing a listing of what Greg has dubbed "the Memory Hole Permacollection." This has at its core Greg's own fanzine collection augmented by one of everything that has come in for Memory Hole. Printed out, in a narrow-margin 2-column format with 9-point type, it filled 143 pages. Now, because of the archival nature of

Memory Hole, Greg keeps a lot of stuff that I don't. I'm not a completist—I don't have the space—but also, let's face it, Sturgeon's law applies.

Greg's list inspired me to begin cataloguing my collection, and that consumed a sizable chunk of my fanac time for another month. Obsession returned as I paged through one fanzine after another to determine the editor's name (and country), title, issue number, date, repro method and number of pages. (Like Greg's list, mine also includes a space for annotations.) Sometimes, though, even this simple level was challenging: on more than one occasion I found the Pavlat/Swisher/Evans *Fanzine Index* and my print-out of Greg's list useful in making a positive identification. As I went along I would get sidetracked into reading parts of some zines, but I tried (sometimes not too hard) to keep that to a minimum.

There were definite rhythms to the cataloguing. When I was entering data on thick genzines like *Innuendo* and *Habakkuk*, the folders of fanzines would fly by. But there were also the slow times: fifty single-sheet issues of Ron Ellick's *Starspinkle* and nearly one hundred issues of *Fanac* (and all its riders), to name but a few. I'd work long and hard just to get through one folder. It was exhilarating, though, not only as I was doing it, but also because I knew at the end I'd have a complete listing that I could easily keep up in future. I've turned the corner on chaos, I thought.

I worked my way through the end of the J's before it was time to break for the holidays. It was a good place to pause: my collection is organized by editor/publisher, while Greg's is arranged by title, and stopping where I did put me halfway through the tenth drawer. Psychologically, I feel over the hump. Returning to cataloging once this issue is in the mail will be easy—even though the first daunting task I'll encounter is a long stretch of folders containing zines which Arnie and Joyce Katz (separately, together, and/or in combination with others) have published over the past 3½ decades, followed shortly afterwards by over a hundred issues of *Ansible*.

But even facing that, I won't deny that my desire to return to and complete my cataloging is a strong factor in dawdling no more getting this issue out.

Carol Carr discovered the poem that appears to the right. She called Julia and told her how beautifully she thought the poem described Dick.

Julia is a Berkeley poet whose work has appeared in many slim volumes since the mid-'70s. Dick was her typesetter for many of those years. It's clear that many of us saw Dick in much the same way, and miss him for the same reasons.

[—RL, April 1997]

For Dick Ellington, Berkeley Typesetter

You were a funny, knobby old man with a bald head
who knew everything,
but that wasn't impressive or even unusual.
Knowing everything was just part of you,
like your house where you went thru my books
on the kitchen table and we had to move the butter
and the cat tried to tell you you hadn't fed it
(you had)
so you told me all about the cat.
And all about the Wobblies.
And science fiction writers and various wars.
I let it all flow over me, no more listening
than the flowers outside your window listen to
the sunlight,
but no less either.
Once a hummingbird flew by,
which reminded you of another story.
You were always in a good mood
and I listened to your eyes twinkle.
I don't even remember what was wrong with
your arms;
because they were your arms
they had to be all right.
The only thing that ever seemed ill was
your doorbell.
You had a Chinese doorbell which I had to turn
instead of push,
and half the time you were with the machines
and couldn't hear me till I pounded on the door
and you yelled come in.
We both somehow assumed the doorbell would
get better
by the next time I visited but it never did.
Even when I came
and you were hooked up to an oxygen tank
you were still mad at that doorbell
and all ready to typeset my book.
I don't quite miss you because I don't quite believe it:
When my next book is ready
I want to take it to that sunny house for typesetting;
we can talk about your dream
of burying Joe Hill's ashes in People's Park.
If you're there I promise:
this time I'll listen.

—Julia Vinograd

[This poem originally appeared in *Against The Wall*,
Zeitgest Press, Oakland CA, 1992, and is reprinted
with the permission of the author.]

AGBERGS ADDROAD: AGBERGS ADDROAD:

PARIS & SICILY



Dawn aboard a 767: feeble sunlight, wintry and bleak, announces that we have reached Europe. Landing. Customs. Groggily we hire a taxi.

Paris stirs in the grey hour after dawn. The pavement shines with melted snow. We totter out of the overheated taxi, shiver in the freezing air, plunge into the overheated hotel lobby, and learn that our room isn't ready.

Merci fucking beaucoup. We drop the bags. Back out into the cold. We trek gamely toward the Louvre. Art may sustain us—that and perhaps a cup of espresso. But first a stop at our favorite gallery.

Blearily we slogged into Mme. Kevorkian's den of art along the Seine. She welcomed us graciously as ever but couldn't believe we were staggering in to see her first thing. We managed to eye a few objects we deemed acceptable. She invited us to dinner but time wouldn't allow it so we agreed to drinks on Tuesday. Au revoir. On to the Louvre—des Antiquaires. (Not to be confused with the Carousel de Louvres, or the Louvre proper—are you with me?)

(A word of warning here: do not, repeat, do not shop for personal items of adornment or clothing on jet lag: it can give sudden insight to the term "fashion victim" as you decide that puce *really* is a good color for you after all, or you can—and should—wear dirndl skirts. Until you're safely on local time stick with impersonal items like Biedermeier cabinets.)

We decided it was time for le déjeuner and returned to a restaurant we found on our last visit. I had a wonderfully fresh salad with the best green beans I've tasted in years and grilled fish. Bob ordered onion soup and steak tartare (iron man!), and soon we'd refueled and were ready for more shopping. We managed to stagger through several hours in the antique shops of the L.d.A., found an Egyptian bronze cat, Bastet, that looked like a good bet, and then finally turned for the hotel. Oui. We were ensconced in our familiar room. Showers. Hot tea. Phone calls to our Parisian pals. A nap. Pre-dinner strolling in the winding streets of the Left Bank. Dinner at a Moroccan restaurant where we instructed a guy from Iowa in the finer points of bastilla. Finally, blessedly, we staggered back to the Angleterre and collapsed.

Church bells announced Sunday morning. Ooh, that familiar jet-lag light-trails effect in the shower. Continental breakfast: hot chocolate and croissants for Bob, rolls, a boiled egg, and tea for me. On to the actual (as opposed to virtual) Louvre at 9:30. Cold. Cold. Cold. It's really winter here. But the new Islamic wing is heated and we practically have it to ourselves. Bliss. Just two American Jews and fifteen centuries of potsherds.

By noon I'm feeling really glazed and jet-lagged despite our religious use of Melatonin. Gratefully I absorb a Coke and a "tunny fish" sandwich in the

Carousel de Louvre: the underground extension to the museum built beneath the controversial glass pyramid. (Re: the pyramid. I like its modern "sharp stick in the eye" impudence, especially juxtaposed against the beautiful ancient golden stone of the palatial museum. Bob doesn't.) The Carousel de Louvre is one-third staging ground and watering hole, one-third tourist trap, and another third shopping mall, but it does sell Coke.

Dinner that night avec Norman Spinrad and his wife, Lee Wood. They're fine cooks, lively company, and completely paranoid about Pat Buchanan becoming the next U.S. president.

We metroed back to St. Germain de Pres, and with Melatonin's blessing, slept well.

Monday, we walked to the Grand Palais—le grand mistake. Got caught in an ice storm (I'd forgotten how much sleet hurts) as gale winds sliced in off the river. Youch!! Drenched and miserable, we staggered into the museum only to discover that three tons of tourists had gotten there before us, mostly French and taking everything Extremely Seriously, as they will. We took in the Silk Road exhibit despite the strange low-level lighting. However, it was a sleepy, gloomy experience, not much improved when we discovered that the coat-room clerk with a bad case of merde-de-la-tete had hung our wet umbrellas inside Bob's raincoat, soaking the lining. (Perhaps she was too busy swapping metaphors with her fellow clerks or contemplating the importance of Truth and Beauty.) Shivering, we made our way out onto the Champs d'Elysee—rapidly becoming a theme park of Benetton and Disney boutiques (can Planet Hollywood be far behind?)—and into an Alsatian restaurant where I got the one seat without a heater behind it (bitch-bitch-bitch). Nevertheless, it was almost warm enough, the food was okay, they had nice bathrooms, and Bob got to have a choucroute. Best of all, after the meal I spied a Prisunic and dragged Bob across the street for some shopping. From there we moved on to a local bookstore that has the new French edition of *Lord of Darkness* proudly displayed. It's been published in two volumes, very handsomely by Denoel.

Dinner that night with Jacques Sadoul, of J'ai Lu, who functions as publisher for both of us, respectively. (Actually, he is just one of Bob's many French publishers. He is mine, seulement. Consequently, je l'aime beaucoup.)

Tuesday: Super Tuesday. Lunch with journalists and the J'ai Lu people to discuss "the meaning of art and great thoughts in Science Fiction"—Bob wears his "great man" suit and face—we have a mighty nice creme brulee, too—a visit to Denoel, more chit-chat, and drinks with Bob's editor there (and friend) Jacques Chambon—a rock 'n roll kind of Frenchman. Then we

rush over to Mme. Kevorkian's gallery, settle our deal, and are whisked to her fabulous penthouse apartment on the Ile St. Louis with its amazing view of the Seine, Notre Dame, etc. We admire her marvelous Islamic antiques collection, drink some champagne, are bundled into her husband's car and taken to our next appointment, dinner with Bob's oldest French publisher, Gerard Klein, a committed Marxist who nevertheless lives like a Capitalist. His apartment is in a seventeenth-century building near the Institute of Arabian Studies—charming rustic beamed place. Allo Gerard, Allo Jackie (his companion). On to dinner (and wine in a milk bottle with dymotape label—we're talking folksy here) at a Lyonesian place around the corner. We collapse into bed at midnight, and awaken at 5 a.m. (merde!) for the flight to Palermo, broken by a brief layover in Milan. Too early for breakfast, no food on the first leg—we are subsisting on stolen breakfast cheese and the bagels I brought from home. Those peasant goniff instincts come in useful after all.

Immediately, we are operating on Italian time. Precision, what's that? We leave an hour late. We change planes in Milan. Three hours late, we take off for Palermo. Arrivederci. Finally, we arrive in Palermo, taxi to our grand hotel—a splendid Art Nouveau villa—and happily link up with Saul and Arline Diskin, friends from Phoenix (Bob and Saul went to *grade school* together sometime in the Pleistocene, only they called it Brooklyn.) They are terrific travel companions, good-natured, good-humored, and Saul's fluency in Spanish is a surprise bonus: the Sicilians seem to understand him easily.

A gang of four, we embark upon the streets of the dark, haunted city of Palermo. How do you spell urban decay? The Blue Guide reports that 730,000 people inhabit this benighted place, once the most important city in the Mediterranean (from the 9th century to the 12th century, that is). Its historical city center hasn't been repaired since it was bombed by the Allies fifty-three years ago, and what the Allies began poverty and neglect have just about finished. There is an odd, ghostly quality to this place. The slums infest the inner city, with the poorest folk living in the bombed shells of buildings. Along the main drag, a sudden empty doorway interrupts the prodigious array of tobacco stores and liquor stores and bookstores (!) and religious icon stores like a missing tooth in a mouth. Laundry festoons balconies: beneath one family's underwear you can make out the faded baroque facade and graceful wrought-iron balcony of a once-fine villa, now subdivided into tiny apartments. A metaphor for Palermo is the pollution-stained "Four Corners," a strange, even grotesque gathering of classically-themed statues set

into elaborate baroque facades facing across a chaotic four-way intersection in which everybody is trying to cut off everybody else.

The city is well-situated, flanked by a graceful harbor and two craggy limestone peaks: Monte Pellegrino. Its climate is fine. But all the money in the Vatican couldn't fix what's wrong with Palermo. I suspect that the Mafia is only part of the malaise. And yet the inhabitants eat, drink, laugh, feud, make love, steal purses, hold strikes, and in general behave as Sicilians have for hundreds of years ... which may be most of the problem.

Although there are several notable historical ruins, churches, and a fine museum, these were all closed (chiuso) because of a civil servants' strike so we missed seeing many of the recommended sites. I did, however, see chartreuse cauliflower bedecking a Toyota much like a parade float: an improvised farm stand.

Arline and I narrowly escaped having "pani ca' meusa": grilled beef spleen sandwiches sold at a mobbed outdoor stand. (An Arab influence? Tunisia is only ninety miles away.) Bob and Saul were ready to camp out and have dinner then and there.

One "chiuso"ed park had its gate ajar and we snuck in: I unearthed dozens of colorful pot shards from under giant Banyan trees and brought them home. I may make a "memory jug" of them. Or maybe not.

Museums were closed. Botanic garden closed. Churches closed. Chiuso, chiuso, chiuso. To compensate, we walked a lot, ate bright green gelato, and drank. Saul, happily, is a true "caffiend" and Arline was not adverse to making a stop for gelato and tea. Yum.

Driving in Sicily: don't try this at home, kids. A Darwinian process indeed: only the fittest—and boldest—inherit their lanes. Bob and Saul displayed real taxi-driver minchiones in some tight spots.

Outside of Palermo, the scenery improved considerably. We visited Mondello, an attractive seaside town nearby where we pigged out on seafood at a restaurant Saul discovered: sea urchins with pasta, tiny polpetti (octopi) in garlicky sauce, anchovies and pasta, until we couldn't move.

In the hills above Palermo, we came to Monreale, whose cloisters and cathedral are renowned for their beautiful carvings and 12th century mosaics. The cathedral, in particular, is awesome. The effect is one of entering a giant jewel-box: the interior glows with gold: even the ceiling rafters are gilded in elaborate patterns. The walls glisten with golden mosaics set into intricate, elaborate "embroideries" depicting biblical superstars, etc. There is a Christ Pantocrator glowering down from the main apse, grim enough to scare the

pants off the staunchest atheist, and nearby, Thomas Becket (!), depicted ten years after his martyrdom but, nevertheless, a favorite of the Queen—Henry II's daughter.

The most startling element was the control of the medium by its artisans: the illusion of depth and dimension achieved here that would not be seen in painting for several more centuries. (Of course, there's controversy over how many of these mosaics have been restored by artisans familiar with the artistic teachings of the Renaissance. Popular wisdom has it that the Renaissance passed Sicily by. (P.S., Saint Louis apparently left his heart in Monreale—the rest of him is buried elsewhere.) Our first pass at Monreale was frustrated by local strikes. Bob insisted we return. Glad he did.

The astonishing Greek ruins of Sicily are more impressive than any I've seen elsewhere, with, perhaps, the exception of Turkey. Full temples, entire cities whose ruins have only partially been excavated. The quality and quantity of them begin to diminish the impact of even Athen's famed Acropolis.

Siracusa, Selinunte, Agrigento: each has awesome relics of the ancient world, some standing, some strewn across wildflower-bedecked fields, awaiting excavation, reconstruction. The history of this land: one of being conquered, and reconquered by Greeks, Carthaginians (think of them as early Nazis), Arabs, Normans, Spanish, and finally, the Mafia. Another historical note here: when Athens set out to conquer Sicily, the move proved so difficult and costly that it ended in the ruin of the Athenian empire.

As we drove around the island (Bob driving, me navigating in our splendid Alfa Romeo sedan with Saul and Arline following valiantly in their little teal Fiat) some of the sights we saw were:

First stop after Palermo/Monreale: Segesta: site of a lone Greek temple that is still standing after 2,000 years. Apparently it was never quite finished—seems that the archaeologists are attempting that process now (actually, in the land of volcanic eruptions, what they are doing is your basic holding action.) Very romantic, a lone temple in a field, waiting for its owners to come back and claim it.

Next stop: Selinunte: site of a vast, ruined Acropolis, the remains of ancient temples and mosaics, and one splendid reconstructed temple that looks down upon romantic ruins backlit against the Mediterranean. Bob took a long hike here between temples—through a field that I now realize was full of snakes, some poisonous. He didn't see any.

On to Agrigento, home of an impressive series of Doric Greek temples dating from 5 B.C.: an awesome

sight at night, splendidly lighted. Yes, that's right, the girl said temples: an entire district of them, separated by a bustling, busy main road. (The Sicilians are rather casual about their antiquities....) Some of the temples are, of course, in better shape than others, but even the average tourist can get the basic idea: it was a holy district. The best-preserved, the Temple of Concord, is a truly nifty sight, surrounded by olive trees and greenery. The reason for its excellent preservation is that it was turned into a church by San Gregorio della Rape (St. Gregory of the Turnips – would I lie?), bishop of the area, in 500 A.D.

In the lovely museum is a startling demonstration of the scale and eroded beauty of the ancient stonework that ornamented the Temple of Olympian Zeus: a colossal figure of a male caryatid, ten or fifteen feet high, once one of several supports for the roof of the temple, an eerie, eroded sculpture now. But an 18th century illustration shows it in much less eroded form, a cryptic expression on its face. Spooky.

The temples and museum are the only thing to see: the hideous modern town is the capital of one of the poorest provinces in Sicily and suffers from a serious lack of water – they bathe in desalinated sea water.) As Donna Tartt put it: "Agrigento possesses all the chaos and disrepair that characterize urban Sicily, with little of the eccentricity or charm one finds in other Sicilian towns."

Siracusa: getting there was not half the fun. There was a nice autostrada but, unfortunately, the Sicilians had neglected to paint the highway signs in reflective paint: difficult to read after dark, which is when we came into town. Luckily, Bob had been here before, (twelve years ago) and relying more on instinct than vision, he brought us safely into port at the Jolly Hotel. Next morning, we saw the bones of dwarf elephants no bigger than Great Danes, dating back to the Neolithic. Poignant displays of burial urns opened to reveal a pile of bones and a few precious objects metal: a brooch, a ring. Even in prehistory, kipple was important.

And the white marble Greek theatre, still used, encircled by the remains of an ancient water system (a gushing waterfall) and ancient burial caves. Elsewhere in this vast excavation we entered a spooky echoing cave, the "Orecchio de Dionisio" (Ear of Dionysus) where, legend has it, the emperor would eavesdrop upon unsuspecting subjects. Arline, a trained operatic soprano, let loose with a note of astonishing purity (and frequency) that delighted us and may yet be echoing in the depths of that dark, winding place.

A quarry nearby had been used to house some seven thousand Athenian prisoners of war, according to Thucydides.

Also in Siracusa, at Saul's urging, we visited the damp and dripping catacombs of San Giovanni, where Christian families had lived in underground communities. This makes a bit more sense when one considers just how hot Sicily gets in the summer. (Alas, we missed the Capuccine catacombs of Palermo, where the mummified dead are lovingly dressed in costumes. But we got the idea – and we'd seen the elaborate Capuccine catacomb in Rome on a previous trip – rosettes of skulls inset into the ceiling, etc. What is it with those guys, anyway?) These were plenty fascinating, and creepy, too, thank you.

Siracusa had a charming "old town" connecting to the bustling modern city by bridges: a sort of "east village" effect. Decent pizza, too. However, I picked the wrong season to order a pizza "crudo" – it was practically raw, a piece of bread topped with slices of Mozzarella and tomato. I had to beg for hot peppers. Refreshing in summer, perhaps, but on a rainy night in February, not so buono.

Sicily is definitely Italy, but a Martian Italy, with unexpected touches of the Arabian and Baroque. All around the island we saw familiar flora: agave, prickly pears, bougainvillea, much of the New World subtropical flora has made it to Sicily. (Why not? Everybody else evidently has – it was a bus stop for the ancient Mediterranean.) And of course there were the obligatory orange groves, gray-green olive orchards, and green luscious fields grazed by goats and sheep.

We drove inland to grey, sinister, frozen Enna with its famed museum – our target – only to learn that lack of funds had closed it. Coldest damned place we visited. Left in a hurry, you betcha.

Saw Mt. Etna smoking away above snow-covered slopes: a molto-dramatic sight against the blue sky and surrounding green fields. Arline and I both mistook the stones in local fields for sheep until we realized that the stones were probably much smarter.

Noto: memorable for its fanciful baroque architecture (and as the only place where we temporarily lost Saul – but he found us! How did he do it?), a former provincial capital so proud of itself that emblazoned upon official buildings is the legend S.P.Q.N. all over the place.

An odd note here: we saw children in splendid costumes: knights and princes, queens and fairies. Then we blundered into Carnivale in Taormina (so that's what all those kids in all those costumes were about). One little girl in a clown suit smiled an evil medieval smile as she squirted at me with shaving cream. (Missed!) But an ugly little kid in camouflage duds had better aim: hit me in the face with a handful of confetti. His mother apologetically told me, in Italian, "He's very

sincere, really." Yeah, right. And I'm extremely forgiving. Really.

The mardi gras floats were charming: a wedding cake topped by live bride and groom, preceded by two rows of bakers and their confections (women wearing towering cake hats), dancing to rap. A sun with hinged rays (those narrow streets!) led by dancing sunflowers: twenty women in green satin catsuits and hoods sprouting golden petals. The winning float: Swan Lake in drag: a "Ballet Trockadero" send-up with sturdy guys in tutus and wigs. (And can these middle-aged Sicilians ever boogie.) Once the floats had made their way through town, they turned around and came back—after the judging—as both onlookers and float-participants danced, sang, and pulled flowers off the floats to throw at one another.

Taormina was one of the nicest spots of the trip: a charming little tourist town at the foot of Mt. Etna possessed of beautiful views and a wonderful Greek/Roman theatre. Therein Arline again unleashed one perfect note, to general applause.

Our hotel there was a former monastery with many of the trappings, (cloister, paintings of beatified nuns) including one statue of Christo that never failed to startle me as I walked back from breakfast—a cloaked figure about to pounce from a niche in the long, empty corridor.

While in Taormina, Saul and Bob decided to search for the perfect grappa. They carefully selected a bottle, sampled it, deemed it fit, and decided to go back and buy another. But that was the one bottle available at that shop. (Eventually, we located another elsewhere.)

Worst stop: Piazza Armorina: yucky town, yucky hotel filled with noisy Sicilian teenagers on a field trip, smoking away, and the weather was the worst of the Sicilian arm of the trip: cold and rainy, but we had to see the Roman Villa that had belonged to one of the wealthiest men in the Roman Empire, Diocletian's co-emperor Maximian. The villa was a sort of consolation prize for old Maxie when Diocletian decided that one emperor was enough, stepped down, and took Max with him. The villa exists in a startling state of preservation: with its modern protective roof it gives the best idea of an ancient villa that I've ever seen. Nifty. And the mosaics on the floors are the reason for coming: lions and tigers and elephants, oh my, and famous mosaic portraits of a Cyclops (with three eyes: isn't that a triclops?) not to mention a little erotica (pretty tame: one tushy) in the imperial bedroom. Alas, not all of the marvelous mosaics could be seen: the Villa was still suffering from the effects of a catastrophic flood that had ruined many of the floors several years ago. But what we saw was swell.

Then on to lovely little Cefalu—and sunshine—with its museum (a nobleman's private collection), its church with mosaics (second best Pantocrator of the trip) and seaside restaurants. (This was also the location of a memorable morning tiramisu by the Duomo—see below.) I liked this golden-hued town a lot, despite its notorious past as the headquarters of Aleister Crowley and his witchy crowd.

Food: My vote for best pasta was the Pennette con Acciughe: homemade tubes of pasta cooked al dente with grated anchovies and bread crumbs—in Taormina. Fondly I recall fresh ricotta cheese for breakfast. In Siracusa we ate winkles, pasta with currants and sardines, and with pistachios. In Palermo I tasted the greenest pistachio gelato I've ever seen. In Cefalu, Arline and I indulged in cafe lattes and a tiramisu while watching the grizzled old men in their flat caps and black boots throw back their morning whiskies. (Ah, tiramisu. My drug of choice. What would Coleridge have written powered by it?) Also in Cefalu, we tasted mandarin orange-flavored marsala wine: lovely. In Palermo, I absorbed generations of new-born Mozzarella with fruit for breakfast, washed down by blood-orange juice. And although this is the land of cappuccino, with only a few exceptions I found the coffee to be awful and relied on tea con limone for my caffeine fix.

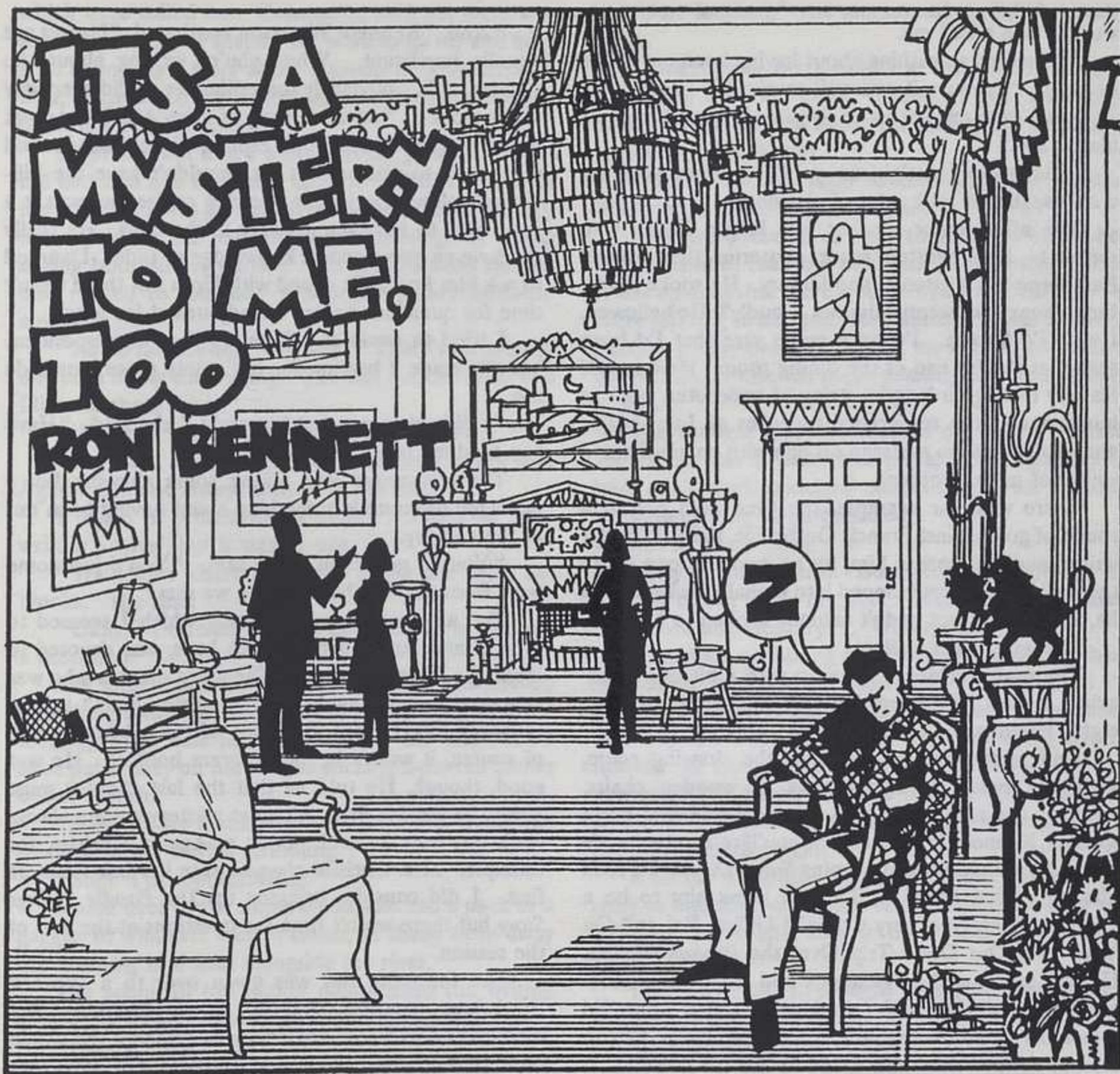
We returned to Palermo for one desultory dinner (no one was very hungry), dropped off the cars, and set out the next morning (after Mozzarella and fruit) for the airport, and Paris.

We spent forty-eight cold-but-not-quite-frozen hours in Paris picking up our treasures (and missed a terrible European snowstorm by a scant two days). Had dinner one night with Jacques Chambon at a little bistro where they served truffles with scrambled eggs, and the best chicken-pot-pie I've ever tasted. Our last night in Paris, a knock-out cous-cous dinner chez Simone and Robert Louit, with other Parisian friends in attendance.

Au revoir—we arrived home to some of the worst weather of the winter (thanks a lot—this isn't what I do California for) and the news from the Diskins that, on their last day in Palermo, Arline's purse was snatched. Luckily, she only had a pair of glasses in it and some lire, but merda anyway.

Despite this sour note, I must confess that Sicily had a peculiar charm. I went there expecting dark places, dark people, old ladies in black, etc. Palermo aside, I saw very little that struck me as sinister, and much that was agreeable, even delightful. Still, all things considered, I'll take Paris, even in an ice storm.

—Karen Haber Silverberg



The stately home's drawing room was exactly what one would imagine the drawing room of a stately home to be. The sturdy wooden shutters to the tall French windows were folded back to reveal the thick velvet drapes, scarlet with gold braid. There was a Wedgwood ceiling with an ornate crystal chandelier. Above the high mantelpiece hung a photographic painting of Venice's Grand Canal. The walls were decorated with a golden flock paper and the furniture, pushed back to the walls for the occasion, was well maintained and oft-polished. It might not have been genuine Hepplewhite but it didn't look as though it had been picked up at a flea market.

From the drawing room window the River Swale could be seen meandering away in the distance, for this was Stirling Hall, the ancestral seat of the Duke of Beddington, set high in the Yorkshire Dales above Richmond. And I was there to attend a Mystery Writers' Weekend. What I, who haven't written any mysteries, was doing there isn't a ... er, a mystery. My money is as good as anyone's.

The gathering had begun the previous evening with an informal cocktail party and a lavish dinner. I'd found myself sitting next to a smart woman of about thirty. Well, all right, fifty. One tries to be *galant*.

"I don't suppose you've read my latest published

work?" she asked me.

I mumbled something about having been out of the country. "I'm sure it was well received," I remarked.

"Oh, yes, my letters to *Woman's Own Magazine* always are."

I didn't reply straight away. The mashed potatoes were tough and took a lot of chewing.

The after-dinner speaker was Roger Blane, who seems to have written more mysteries than Lionel Fanthorpe has written sf and fantasy. He spoke loudly for an hour and twenty minutes. Loudly? He bellowed. I wish I'd known. I'd have made sure that I'd been seated at the far end of the dining room. He boomed his way through a lengthy string of anecdotes, each as humorous as the conference speeches of John Major and all designed to massage his ego with an unashamed welter of name-dropping.

There was, for example, the time he'd played a round of golf against Francis Durbridge, the BBC script writer, and had beaten him, ha ha, two and one. And the time he'd almost bumped into Donald Pleasance, ha ha, in Harrod's but hadn't actually spoken to him.

The wine was excellent.

The next morning I woke up with a bit of a headache. It must have been that voice booming at me for eighty minutes.

And now, here we were, in the drawing room, sitting in neatly arranged rows of wooden chairs, awaiting the arrival of the weekend's principal guest speaker, Kenneth Waterson, who you'll remember made such a hit with his award-winning *Suttee Dawn*. I'd seen him on a chat show on TV and knew him to be a Colonel Blimp type, very Colonial Office, Raj and On Your Way Out Don't Trip Over the *Punkah Wallah*. He was introduced to generous and sincere applause. He looked a little older and more gaunt than I'd remembered from the TV interview about fifteen months earlier. Probably made up for the cameras.

Local color, he began, is tremendously important. But in short stories it shouldn't be overdone. It slows down the action, you see, but in a novel it fills in the background to the scenes and... he smiled to show that he was sharing a secret with which many in his audience would be already familiar... it pads out the wordage. Three-quarters of the assembly nodded agreement and smiled back at him.

And equally important, he said, was accuracy. "We've all seen these movies in which Julius Caesar is wearing a wristwatch," he told us. I mulled this over, but couldn't think of one movie where I could remember Julius Caesar doing anything but spilling about Yon Cassius and getting himself stabbed. Perhaps the knife had been a switchblade.

"And," Kenneth Waterson continued, "Names are equally important. When you're writing about the Hindus..." obviously something we all did every day of the week... "never call any of them Ali. They don't like it, you see." He didn't explain why not but instead moved on to tell us that we shouldn't have the hill-workers above Darjeeling growing coffee, nor was it a good idea to have tea growing in the Sind. He really did have an encyclopedic knowledge of India. I wanted to ask him how PC's coped with Urdu but there wasn't time for questions before we adjourned for lunch.

I tried to avoid the *Woman's Own* correspondent but she made a beeline for the empty place alongside me.

"I *did* enjoy our chat last night," she said. "Have you read my latest published work?"

The *consommé* was taking some chewing but I managed to mumble something about having been out of the country.

"You *do* get about," she said. "You'd just come back from abroad the last time we met."

The afternoon session, during which I seemed to drift in and out of a post-lunch haze, was devoted to Writing a Detective Novel. The guest speaker who was supposed to have conducted the session hadn't turned up and I didn't catch the name of the substitute and, of course, it wasn't in the program booklet. He was good, though. He told us that the last chapter must *always* be written first. All great mystery writers *always* work this way, he said. Look at Agatha Christie, for example. Mrs. Christie *always* wrote her last chapters first. I did consider bringing up *The Poodle Springs Story* but there wasn't time for questions at the end of the session.

The following day was given over to a Writers' Workshop, presided over by Edwin Salisbury, the weekend's organizer. He'd been in evidence the whole time, flitting about the place, sweeping stragglers into groups and the like. He'd circulated during the evening cocktail parties and had everyone in stitches with his anecdotes about the publishing industry.

"There's a new magazine coming out soon," I overheard him tell one little group during one coffee break. "*Mystery Monthly*. They're looking for just the sort of story you usually write."

He really did seem to have his finger on the pulse of the mystery field.

He perched himself on the arm of one of the easy chairs. "We'll split into pairs or groups," he said. "Not more than three or four, though. Above that it gets a little unwieldy. Now... what sort of mystery would you like to write?"

He began to write down the various suggestions

which were called out. Eventually, he'd got them into some semblance of shape. We were to go off and have a go at writing a story about a group of counterfeiters who, unknown to the owner, were working in the cellar of an old country mansion.

I'd picked out who I wanted in my group. She was tall and slim and decidedly attractive. But I didn't get the chance. I was yanked to one side by the dear lady next to whom I'd had the joyous privilege of sitting during both dinner parties. For some reason no one else rushed to join us. I hoped I hadn't offended anyone.

"I'll do the writing," she said. "There's no point in our both doing the writing. You call out the ideas and I'll write them down."

"We need a good opening," I said. "We..."

"No," she said firmly. "We must start at the end. Agatha Christie *always* started at the end."

I began to protest that I hadn't realized we were writing a *novel*, but it was no use.

"We'll start where the police arrive and catch the crooks," she said.

"Okay," I offered. "They could break in through a false wall."

She didn't seem to be listening. She was already scratching away, her head low over her sheet of lined foolscap. Her lank hair was covering her face but I'd have put money on her tongue sticking from the corner of her mouth.

"How are we getting on?" I asked after about ten minutes of her slavish scribbling.

"Shh! I'm concentrating."

I went over to the window and watched a pack or a gaggle, or whatever they're called, of sheep sleep away the morning in a field alongside the river.

The sound of the dinner gong ended the writing session. I walked over to my laboring partner.

"How are you...?"

"Just finished," she announced, definitely breathlessly.

I looked over her shoulder at the lined foolscap.

"Dear *Woman's Own*," I read. "Your correspondent who complained about the lack of salt in packets of potato chips should..."

I felt a sudden urge to transform the *Mystery Weekend* into a *Murder Weekend*.

I had the presence of mind to sit at the back when we gathered to read out our pieces of deathless prose. It was obvious that there wouldn't be sufficient time for every offering to be read. As I noticed Edwin Salisbury passing quickly over the head of my literary associate it dawned on me that she might possibly have been known to him.

The thought also occurred to me that a Writers' Workshop was a wonderful place, not necessarily to have one's work criticized constructively, for I hadn't written anything to be criticized.

But to glean ideas.

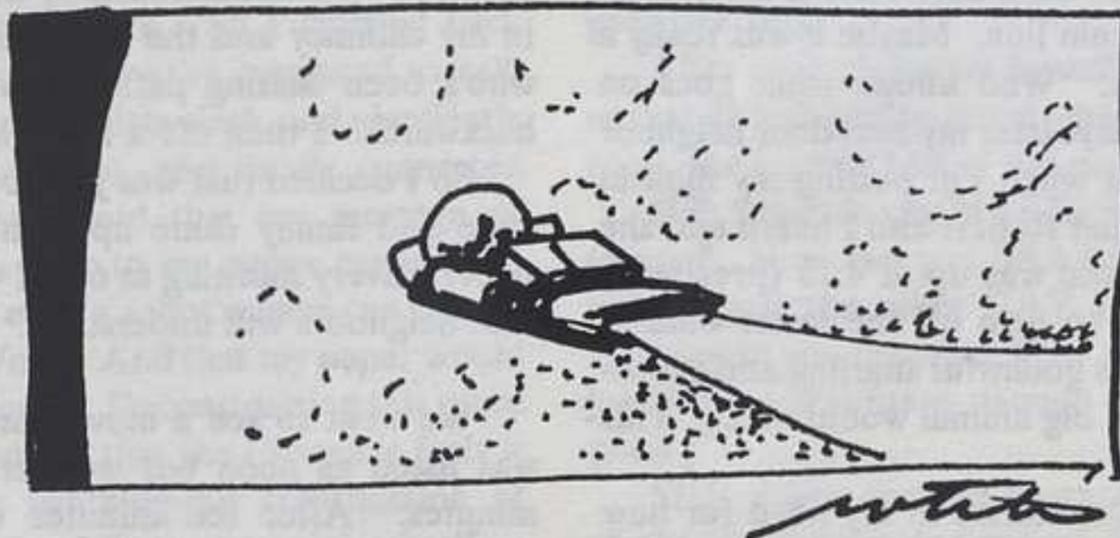
Nasty of me, I know. But there's no copyright on ideas, is there? All's fair in... Every man for himself... Queen and Country... Women and chil...

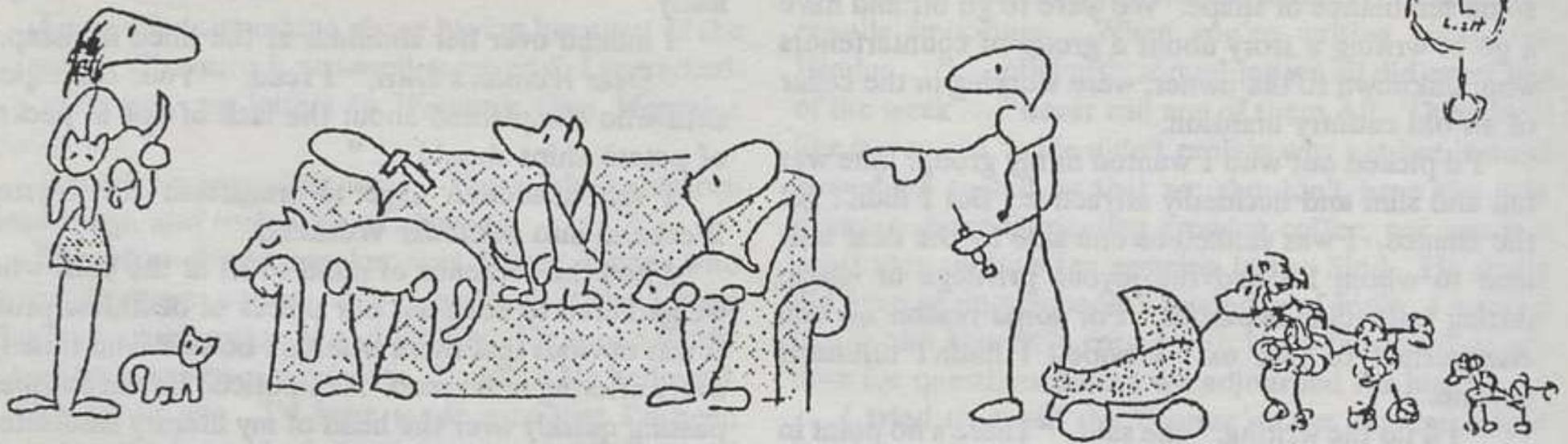
I was soon scribbling away as I picked out the best ideas from the different stories. In no time at all I'd got the plot for a rattling good crime story. The crooks would be relatives of the butler who were living surreptitiously in the cellar. The maid's newly-recruited policeman boy friend got wind of their activities when he heard their printing press belting out the greens in the middle of the night.

It all fit. I couldn't wait to get home. I wrote the story in one session, revised and polished it during the following week and sent it off to the new *Mystery Monthly*.

They didn't buy it, though. The lead story to their first issue was *The Counterfeiters in the Cellar*. It was by Edwin T. Salisbury.

— Ron Bennett





STUFF

BY CAROL CARR

I tawt I taw a mountain lion. Actually I thought I heard a mountain lion. Actually Robert thought he heard it. One morning he sez to me, "You know, last night I heard some snarling and growling that sounded as if it might be a mountain lion." Oh. Goody. For the last couple of years the deer population has megarupled here. Used to be if I saw a deer it was an occasion of surprise and joy. Wow, a deer; right here; right now; only a mile from my house; it's so beautiful, so majestic, so organic, so big-eyed and shy, etc. Now I look out the kitchen window and there's a mommy with her bambi and I say "Ah! You again!" and they say, "Yeah? What?" and continue eating my ivy, which is fine because they like it much more than I do. So anyway, it made sense, what with all those stories about more deer in the hills and more mountain lions following them. But I forgot about it until the other night when I was awakened at 4:15 (precisely) by the most godawful snarlings and growlings and peepings of birds. Big snarls, like from a big animal. And right under my window. The thing is, though, sounds behave strangely in the canyon and it could have been farther away. And maybe it wasn't a mountain lion. Maybe it was really a panther or an elephant: Who knows what goes on down there. A couple days later my next door neighbor is outside her house just when I'm putting my mail in the box, and I tell her what Robert and I heard and she says, Oh yes, last night she was up at 4:15 (precisely), because she'd forgotten to turn off the water outside her house, and heard this godawful snarling and growling, the kind of sounds a big animal would make. This was not happy news.

I've got a couple of scenarios in my head for how I'll leave the house in the morning. One plan is a little

complicated. It involves carrying a screech alarm plus my purse plus the gadget advertised in geriatric catalogues that helps you pick up toilet paper from a high shelf in the supermarket, plus, as I sometimes do, a bag of garbage and my outgoing mail. It also involves making myself look very big, because that's what you're supposed to do. And wearing a jacket no matter how warm it is, because when you open it up and flap your arms you look even bigger. (The supermarket tool is for picking up the newspaper in my carport because you're not supposed to bend or you might be mistaken for prey.) And I figured I'd better walk up the steps (all eighteen of them) backwards, because if it's crouched on the roof, the back of my neck will be in perfect position for it.

So there I am, walking backwards up the steps with screecher, geriatric pincer stick, purse, mail, and garbage, holding my jacket open and flapping my arms. I stop to put the mail in the mailbox and the screecher falls. Forgetting what it's all about (isn't that just like me), I crouch down to pick up the screecher and I'm pounced on simultaneously by the mountain lion hiding in my chimney and the mountain lion across the road who's been waiting patiently while I walked upstairs backwards. I then die a horrible death.

So I decided that was just too complicated a way to cope and finally came up with a better answer: an AK47. Every morning at 6:30 I will come out spraying. The neighbors will understand.

We went to see a movie last weekend. Showtime was listed as noon but we were kept waiting twenty minutes. After ten minutes we complained. The "manager" said the projection booth was being cleaned,

but he'd go up and see what was happening and let us know. He came down after a few minutes and said the projection booth was very dusty and was being cleaned. That's all he said. He didn't say why it wasn't cleaned beforehand and he didn't say when it would be clean enough for them to show the movie.

Ten minutes later the natives were getting a little restless, so they threw the "assistant manager" down into the pit to say the projection room was being cleaned and the movie would start soon. Note that nobody said I'm sorry and nobody said why it had to be cleaned during our time and not theirs. We were offered free popcorn. We declined. My private theory is that somebody was sprocketed to death in there and they were stashing pieces of the body in the film cans.

There's a big difference between Kaiser-Oakland and Kaiser-San Rafael. Not just that in San Rafael the doctors and nurses look at you when they talk to you (i.e., "at" you, not above, around, or through you) but also in the literature in the waiting rooms. For instance, compare and contrast Kaiser-San Rafael's *New Yorkers* and *Homes & Gardens* to Kaiser-Oakland's pamphlets on "How to Protect Your Family from Running Sores" and "Crack, AIDS and Family Violence: The Deadly Trio."

Concerning hospitals, and the recent proposal (or is it already a reality, God help us?) to replace registered nurses with medical technicians, whatever that means. I wish I could draw so that I could draw this cartoon:

Intensive care ward. Patient in bed, hooked up to IV, staring glassy-eyed at perky youngster in McDonald's-type outfit wearing name tag that says "Patient Resource Associate," who is fiddling with patient's IV. Caption: "Would you like fries with that?"

From the flu-bed of...

Crawled upstairs to get my *S.F. Chronicle* yesterday morning, and lo it wasn't there. So I crawled back down and called the number you're supposed to call, which connects with voicemail labyrinth, and obediently pressed this number and that, and finally connected with robot central, which said that my message of missing paper would be sent to my paper carrier in — and here I learned that even a robot's voice can convey pride — ten seconds. (Wow.) And that my paper would be delivered today. (Plonk.) Deconstructing this piece of information, I understood that the *Chronicle* feels it deserves kudos for its lightning-fast transmission of complaints (ten seconds), while the complaint itself... well, no promises — you'll get the paper sometime before

midnight. OKAY? Sure. Sure. Hey, I'm grateful. If I make you mad you might put me on hold while repeating how important I am to you.

Figured out that *Sick and in Hell* is when you're standing in the kitchen in front of the fridge forcing yourself to drink a few ounces of that 1% liquid chalk dust while simultaneously trying to figure out a way to cut the procedure short so you can get back to bed, fantasizing that the container of milk will fly out of the fridge, knock you to the floor and in the process pour a few drops down your throat, thereby letting you rest on your back a few minutes sooner and sparing you the physical burden of having to open the container all by yourself.

So there I was, unable to do much more than play at my laptop and think dire thoughts, and I thought, why not combine the two and go online to Medline, where I could speculate wildly about my condition, find the facts to back me up and then put myself into a panic. Now, wouldn't that be a familiar thing to do.

So I typed some catastrophic key words and was told there were 5,400 citations on that very subject. Time being no object, I instructed Medline to type out the first abstract, which was taken from a case history, and this is what it said:

Other strange things were happening
to Marianne. She was too weak to
PRESS RETURN TO SEE THE NEXT SCREEN

Finally saw Woody Allen's "Husbands and Wives." Reminder: I'm not a Woody Allen fan; when people call him profoundly psychological I can only look blank and stammer "Huh?" But I saw it, because even if Woody Allen isn't profoundly anything, it would still have a funny observation here and there. Which it did; he's master of the one-liner. But it also clarified why I don't take him as seriously as he (and his fans) do. As I was walking out, I found myself listening to a Woody Allen movie in my head — ANY Woody Allen movie. It goes like this:

After main character (usually Woody) clearly shows us that he isn't paying attention to female character (e.g., Mia), she accuses him of not paying attention to her.

HE: What do you MEEEEEN I don't pay attention to you? How can you SAAAAY such a thing? Uh, um, er, just the other DAY I spent the whole night listening to you breathe. [The example he brings up to justify himself is funny enough to take our mind off the point.]

SHE: [same tone of outraged perplexity] What do you MEEEN what do I mean? How can you SAY that? You were listening to me breathe because you always

think I'll die in my sleep. I can't believe you SAID that. I don't understand what's HAPPENING to us.

Repeat this kind of conversation several times. And, for good measure, introduce us to a couple who [in the case of "Husbands and Wives"] announce to HE and SHE that they're splitting up.

HE and SHE: How can you SAAAY that? I can't believe you're DOING this. [etc.]

Nobody listens to anybody. Nobody listens, nobody changes. The characters observe acutely and complain incessantly; they have a kind of whiny incredulity about each others' behavior. They accuse each other of Freudian sins. They blame themselves but they don't understand themselves. They blame others without hearing their case. They never never learn and may God forgive me for using this word, they never Grow.

At the end of the movie the Woody Allen character says he doesn't know what he was in the relationship for—maybe it was the eggs (but we never see the eggs), or that he blew it (blew what? we never saw their good times). He often brings up the question of why we bother with Life at all, and this is followed by a muted little paean to the small but tasty things of life like a good slice of jazz or pepperoni pizza. There's a dispirited and resigned shrug in his voice, which you're supposed to read as Maturity.

There. I've said it and I'm glad.

Went to Marine World on a beautiful fall day. My first time there. Didn't expect it to be such a huge park and enjoyed most of it a lot. Especially:

The butterfly house—tropically humid, with ferns and free-flying, vibrant-colored butterflies: one that was maybe eight inches wing to wing, a couple of slightly smaller ones perching on a log, wings folded at their sides, eating their (allegedly) favorite rotten-fruit lunch.

Patricia and I, walking down a little side path, munching on half a cheese and chutney sandwich, and an elephant (led by a park person) comes strolling towards us, passing within an inch of us. We could have gotten out of the way but didn't want to. At this

distance you could have seen a flea dancing on a hairy wrinkle. A clean old elephant.

What I liked least was the shows. This isn't a moral thing or an anything thing except a visceral thing. I'm aware that the animals are treated well, get fed regularly, sleep a full eight hours, and are allowed to call home. They probably even like the stimulation, given the alternative of just moping around all day. But the sight of a full grown, often magnificent creature jumping through a hoop or swimming like a maniac in order to catch a ring with its nose, and doing it for Me—well, just gag me with a dangling mackerel.

Have you noticed that the fast food establishments have stopped offering "lean" stuff and introduced big fatty concoctions that they call "adult" and "sophisticated"? Have you noticed that the word "adult" has become a euphemism for sex and grease?

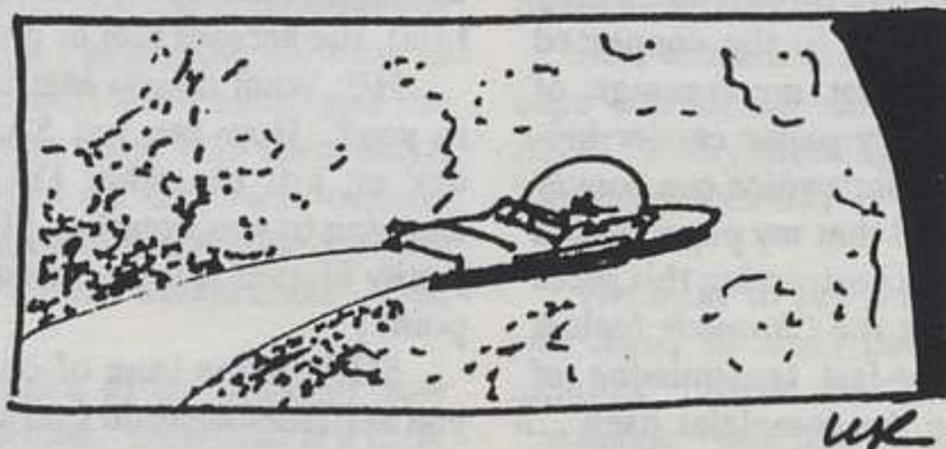
Speaking of grease, when I was very young, every Sunday afternoon, like Jewish Clockwork, my mother and I would "eat Chinese." The Chinese we ate was Combination Plate #1 (chicken chow mein, egg roll, fried rice, a choice of rubbery jello or pineapple chunks for dessert—I think it was the pre-fortune cookie era). One day I ordered #2 (shrimp chow mein) and my mother raised an eyebrow very high because it was ten cents more (i.e., 65 cents instead of 55 cents).

Nostalgia food porn.

Couple of weeks ago I dreamed I was on an ocean liner on one of those long cruises, and I realized I'd forgotten to pack all my personal stuff—all the things I felt I could never replace onboard. Like, panic.

A few nights later I dreamed Robert and I were driving up the road to Yosemite for a three-day vacation and I realized I'd forgotten all my clothes, makeup, etc. "Damn," I said to myself. "How could I be so stupid? Just this week I dreamed that I forgot this stuff, and I still forgot it."

—Carol Carr



BODIES IN REST AND MOTION

By Richard Brandt



When I worked weekends for News Four El Paso, one of my duties was dropping by the police department in the morning to see if any juicy homicides or traffic fatalities had transpired overnight. One such morning, when I checked in with the weekend assignments editor, he told me to get my butt over to the station, pronto.

"We'll have the camera and deck waiting in the car for you," he said. "Get on down to the levee by the border highway; we've got a call on a floater."

So I dropped by, picked up my car and my gear, and headed for the levee. It only took me a few minutes to spot a parked patrol car and a cop standing by the side of the water looking upstream expectantly. I pulled off the highway and drove over to his side.

"Here he comes," he told me, pointing upstream.

I got out my primitive, manually-color-balanced vidcam, got down to the edge of the water, and set up to grab video of our catch of the day. He came by floating face down in the water, not much really visible except for the back of a largely submerged head, and a blue shirt stretched so taut by the swelling of its contents that it resembled a blue vinyl backpack.

"What's going to be done with this guy?" I asked the officer.

"They're waiting downriver at the Zaragosa bridge," he said. "No one's sure which bank he's going to drift closest to at that point, so our folks and the Juarez fire department have their people standing by on each side."

After he drifted by, I ran back to the car, grabbed a quick shot of the cop and his car for a cutaway, then hopped in and drove off in the direction of my quarry. When I got downstream of him, I stopped, got out with my gear, and grabbed another shot of him floating past.

I spent the rest of a good chunk of beautiful spring morning driving downstream, hopping out of the car, grabbing another shot of the victim, then hopping back

in and driving off to grab more footage for as long as the guy stayed in the water.

After a while I started trying for more cinematic effects, framing the shot with foliage in the foreground slightly out of focus.

I finally got to the bridge and set up to wait. Unlike the elaborate border crossings in the center of town with their arrays of inspection stations, Zaragosa is a sleepy rural crossing whose bridge is barely more than a trestle. Custody of the body in question had been left to the Juarez *bomberias*, who had one fireman waiting under the bridge with some kind of jerry-rigged rope harness to secure the cargo.

The fireman was in the shade of the bridge, the body floating towards him on the brightly sunlit waters, yet I caught in one shot the body darting out of the sun and into the waiting arms of the firefighter, the entire sequence perfectly exposed. All told, the entire episode was the camera work of which I was most proud in five years in TV news.

The body was then lifted out of the water and carried into the high weeds along the bank, evincing a gray pallor and sodden condition which I tastefully covered for the viewing audience with a cutaway of passengers craning their rubber necks out of car windows overhead for a better look.

One of our more bilingual reporters called the Juarez police to see when they'd have an ID on the body. Turned out it was a guard in the Juarez jail.

"There's a story we'll never get to the bottom of," I opined sagely.

Floaters are not uncommon in El Paso. Much of the year, the Rio Grande is so low that the commuter traffic can wade across without getting their cuffs wet. But once the spring irrigation hits, many crossers are unprepared for either the depth or swiftness of the waters.

One of the first bodies I ever saw was a floater, a sweet young thing who had been pulled over to the cement bank of the Franklin Canal. The EMTs were applying their fibrillator paddles to either side of the victim's chest, just over the brassiere.

Of course, in an ironic twist foreshadowed by anyone who's read Ray Bradbury's "Long After Midnight," the victim turned out to be a he and not a she. Accident or swan drive, anybody's guess.

Once you make it across the river, of course, you still have that Border Highway to contend with. Pedestrian fatalities were common along that stretch of road. Day and night, the traffic was usually speeding by at a pretty clip. The police report on one such mentioned the victim was thrown sixty feet from the point of impact, and then described the state of the body in some detail.

You know that expression, "My heart was in my throat"?

It's tough to avoid becoming jaded in the news racket. For one thing, you tend to hear the tacky jokes that accompany any public tragedy while they're still raw, fresh and steaming.

I remember Marge Althof coming back from a story on an amusement park which had been opened by a couple of sleazy local entrepreneurs, and where a young maintenance crewman had just been run over while walking the roller coaster.

"Hey, you heard the latest?" Marge asked.

"No, Marge, tell us."

"Sheriff says the kid was a junkie."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. There were track marks all over his arms."

"Uh huh."

"You know, I hate to go to that place anyway."

"Uh huh. Why's that, Marge?"

"Costs you an arm and a leg."

One time, the ambulance showed up to cart off a woman's body from the local Y, and the officer in charge was a Lieutenant John Lanahan, notoriously tight-lipped in passing any details to the press. However, I talked to a reporter from the *El Paso Times* and discovered an old urban legend had, so to speak, resurfaced.

"I heard the victim got a vibrator lodged in the rectum," she said, "and it set off a nervous seizure so bad it killed her."

"Aha," I said. "I knew Lanahan was sitting on something."

In my experience, by the time we got to the scene, any really grisly details had been covered up, at least with a sheet. In fact, the only time I felt queasy covering a story was when I attended a slide show by a

surgeon with the British Army in Northern Ireland, a seemingly endless parade of exit wounds and bodies turned to well-done hamburger by car bombs. Bodies we saw up close tended to be either pristine or, even if turned to jelly like the private plane crash victim, well covered.

The odd trivial detail could still hit you like a thunderbolt, though. Even if I showed up after the fact, as I did at the scene where a boy had turned his bicycle into the path of a pickup truck.

The boy was gone, but the bike was still there, looking a little the worse for wear. So I went over to examine the truck.

You ever drive through a mud puddle at a pretty good clip? And later when you get out and look at the spots on your car, you can see where the droplets started off with a nice round head as they hit and then left a little trail behind them, that's how fast you were driving through the spray you kicked up?

That's what the little spots on the side of the driver's pickup resembled.

I guess the worst accident I ever covered was a two-car head-on collision at the intersection of Loop 375 and North Loop Road, way the heck out to the lower valley. An eighty-year-old man driving his wife somewhere or other turned into the path of a carload of teenagers. His visibility certainly wasn't limited; aside from the stop signs at each corner, nothing but cotton and chile fields stretched out in all directions. Just another old guy who should have turned in his keys a decade or two earlier, probably.

When we got to the scene, the victims were still being loaded into their transports. One of the young guys was screaming his head off in pain from inside an ambulance. After a while of on-again, off-again moaning and shrieking, I found myself thinking, Christ, can't they at least give him something to *shut him up*?

The old woman had already been put into an ambulance — "She's a goner," one of the EMTs confided to me — but the old man was still lying on the gurney. One harried EMT, sweat beading his brow and his sandy mustache, looking desperately for a pair of idle hands, spotted me standing by.

"Hey," he said, "give me a hand with this one?"

So I closed my note pad, put it in my pocket, and lifted one end of the gurney and helped carry it to the back of a waiting ambulance and load it in.

The old guy had a respirator over the lower half of his face, so he wasn't being very talkative. His eyes could have told you about a world of pain and guilt, though, if they'd a mind to.

— Richard Brandt



the COSMOPOLITAN BOY

I loved New York. I know that sounds incredible today, but boy, those Staten Island ferry rides at sunset really got to me – and for only a nickell! Being a true New Yorker, I was securely embalmed in the smug belief that I was living in the rightful center of the known universe. London, Paris, San Francisco – merely (sneer, sneer) “interesting.” If anyone had told me then that I would some day wind up in Maryland, I would’ve laughed in his impudent face. But then came the time when it suddenly dawned on me that everyone I knew – including me! – had been mugged and/or burglarized at least once, and that it was time to Move On. Starting in 1975 I went through a four-state shuffle that eventually saw me in Baltimore, where I had many Growth Experiences (including two burglaries and an attempted arson).

Nowadays I’m out in the tranquil suburbs of Randallstown. I walk the dog, mow the lawn, rake the leaves, shovel the snow, and scrape the deer shit off my soles before putting on my shoes. But even in the midst of rotting in this semi-rural Walden trap, there are still times when I get these flashes of nostalgia for Manhattan, borough of my birth and first thirty-three years of life. Usually right after a Woody Allen movie.

I realize you can’t go home again. Most of my childhood neighborhood, Yorkville, has disappeared under the wrecking ball of upscale urban development, most of the original inhabitants muscled out of their buildings through a variety of sleazy ploys. (I doubt if

I could even afford a broom closet on East 93rd Street now.) But even real estate leeches can’t deprive me of my youthful city memories, those childhood adventures amid concrete and asphalt – which seemed so *natural!* – in the shadow of the immense and castle-like structure of Rupert’s Knickerbocker Brewery, with its beer barrel clock chiming out the hours, all surrounded by the heavy iron fence that would later impale one of my best friends, Eddie Leonard, right through the digastric anterior. (He survived, but did have trouble eating.) Then there were the nightly tugboat sounds from the East River, plus the availability of Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, all the mummies and dinosaur bones in the Natural History Museum. So many things within walking distance!

Even so, childhood has particular drawbacks, one of them being the Big Kids, or Predators. They’re out there in Oklahoma, Bangkok, Glen Ellen – anywhere you can think of – giving someone little the “Indian burn.” In the cities it gets worse because often the predators organize and form gangs; in my old neighborhood in the 1950s we actually had the Sharks and the Jets.

At least according to the graffiti – I was never actually acquainted with a Shark or a Jet, but I *was* getting beat up a lot by the Comanche Dragons, older guys in black leather jackets, duck’s ass haircuts, and thick, heavy buckled garrison belts – handy for wrapping around a fist when punching a victim in the stomach.

I had a number of ways of relating to the Comanche Dragons when it was unavoidable, mainly playing the fool and joking my way out, or running like hell. But when my particular Dragon nemesis, the rat-faced Pete Stoter, eventually cornered me on the third floor landing of a friend's apartment building, I had nowhere to run and he wasn't up for any laughs.

We circled each other, Pete enjoying it. "Where ya goin', shitface?" he inquired, giving me the preliminary violent shove. We circled; another shove. "Aw, c'mon, Pete, lemme alone, will ya?" Another shove, and then a harder one, and I was getting more frightened. And then, suddenly, this golden, *beatific* realization: we had rotated enough so that Stoter's back was facing the *top* of the staircase leading *down* to the second floor. I gave a shove of my own, *hard*.

I will treasure the next few seconds forever. It was as if he had wings, a flying thing, descending every few steps only to soar up again, free. He bounced all the way down and landed with a meaty thud. I think there were a few cartwheels, too. (I replay this memory in slo mo when I'm low.) But I knew I couldn't stand there and savor things. Within seconds, I had levitated two floors and was pounding on my friend's door: "*Bob! Bob! Open the door Bob!!*"

Bob Krolak was one of my best friends. I knew him from the days when we used to work on a four-page hectographed newszine, *The Yorkville Youth Center Globe*. Bob was over six feet high and two hundred pounds by the time he was thirteen, and in personality was sort of a Dan Steffan kind of guy. He had a sick sense of humor! He also introduced me to the writings of Leslie Charteris, Rex Stout and Richard Matheson, as well as to *F&SF* and *Playboy*. And we were total fanatics when it came to *Pogo* and the sacred E.C. comics.

We joked around and played records and talked about the prozines. I had forgotten about Pete Stoter. Finally it came time to leave. Bob glanced out the window. "Uh, Steve, you better take a look at this." Below us on the street, slouched on a car opposite Bob's door, were Pete Stoter and three other Comanche Dragons. They saw us and began waving fists and middle fingers.

Well. A dilemma. We didn't quite know what to do, so we got some balloons, filled them with tap water, and hurled them out the window—*when in doubt!* But this just seemed to exacerbate the situation. It was getting late for supper and I really had to go. What to do?

We went up to the roof. Between Bob's building and the next four buildings was a gap ten feet wide and six stories deep.

Fortunately Bob knew where he could find a twelve-foot plank....

I have little memory of crawling across that plank, but feel a few twinks of recognition when I watch Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. I ran across the four rooftops, went down a fire escape to an alley, climbed a fence, and went home. ("*What did you do today, Steve?*" "*Oh, nuthin'.*")

Now, I have no qualms about airplanes and even think I'd enjoy parachuting if I was ever crazy enough to try it, but to this day I get a bit queasy when looking down from tall buildings. It almost verges on a phobia when I let it, and yet I don't think walking that plank was alone responsible for this particular quirk in my personality. I realized this when I first started thinking about doing this article; there were five instances in my childhood where I either witnessed someone falling to their death, or knew someone who fell. It seems weird — or maybe just part of growing up in Manhattan.

I was just ten when Anthony Bednoze fell from a roof. He was one of the first Big Kid bullies I knew; he would give me frequent Indian burns while describing horrendous and imaginative tortures—usually involving crocodiles. Worse, he had a vicious cocker spaniel called Blackie that he trained to sic on little kids. How we hated that damned fleabag! So an instant neighborhood legend was started the day Anthony was loaded on the ambulance as we all stood around watching — "Blackie, Blackie!" he cried.

Mr. Stein, our fifth-grade art teacher, drank whiskey and smoked cigars in class. I thought he had some style. One day he walked into the supply room and never came out. After ten minutes we all began to get nervous. After fifteen minutes, somebody walked up to the door and knocked. No answer — maybe Mr. Stein had a heart attack! Finally someone worked up nerve to look inside. That was when we discovered that the supply room had a window. It was open.

Jimmy McLaughlin was twenty-seven, epileptic, and our next door neighbor, along with his parents. I didn't know Jimmy that well, but really liked his mother, "Auntie," who looked like an 85-pound wizened spider monkey, chain-smoked Camels, and filled me with tea at every opportunity. Both his parents were elderly and from Ireland and looked on Jimmy's epilepsy as a dark and shameful secret; he never got the medical treatment he needed. One day Jimmy got undressed for a bath. As the water ran, he felt a bit of dizziness, opened the window, and sat on the ledge. Just then his mother opened the door....

I have difficulty in relating this next one because I've grown up enough to feel a sense of decency—and a sense of shame for my youthful mindset—but in the 1950s it was considered desirable for us young New York snots to be completely callous and shuck all those normal human feelings that evolution has striven to provide us over the course of millions of years. To achieve this exalted and stultified lack of grace was to be a "Rock"; if you were a Rock, you were Real Cool. In reading the papers, I get the feeling that this teenage mindset is not yet passé.

I was thirteen years old and eating an ice cream cone as I walked down 75th Street towards First Avenue on my school lunch break. Suddenly, behind me, I heard a horrible sound. A mere eight feet in back of me lay the body of a suicide. It was obvious he had landed on his head.

"Tsk," I said to myself, "how gauche!" Then I continued on walking and finished my cone. A rock never cries, an island feels no pain.

What a horrendous mindset! I think even as I donned that warped mental armor, it troubled me. (I certainly felt some pangs of recognition when the Paul Simon song came out years later.) But unfortunately I wasn't alone in my "rockhood"; growing up on the East Side, in a mostly poor and working class neighborhood, acquainted me with violence and death, sometimes firsthand. This was our attitude: on one hand there was Reality, a big scowling fucker with a truncheon, and on the other hand there was Justice, that little biddy scurrying thing just on the edge of vision—occasionally it twitched, but that was about all. (And has this picture really changed?) So it was best to develop those callouses; certain feelings could literally be a drag. I used to think that our little pocket of life that bred that mindset was a New York aberration. I used to think—stefnal optimist!—that this kind of thing would fade out in the March of Civilization, but today I think of the state of cities and even towns everywhere, here and around the world, and how there is a spiraling avalanche of young empathy-stunted Rocks, growing more numerous in each generation. *Civilization ho!*, and I realize that—by comparison—my New York experiences were a pure idyll. Depressing, isn't it?

As a falling anecdote, this is, I suppose, a Classic of some kind, inasmuch as it involves the Empire State Building. I was seventeen and working as a machinist at Kelly's Wire Dies, located on the 22nd and 23rd floors of the Empire State Building. It was a summer job and I worked on six machines of three different types, becoming rather good at it, much to my own

surprise, and even capable of doing simple repair work when one of them broke down. (My bosses begged me not to go on to art school.)

Two of my machines faced a large window, and one day as I knelt to oil a gear chain, I happened to glance up just in time to see a body flash by, arms flailing, all in a fraction of a second, almost a subliminal happening—so fast, in fact, that I spent the remainder of the day wondering if that split-second vision had been some form of hallucination. But of course it wasn't.

And by that time I had fortunately outgrown that stupid "Rock" business: Ouch!

All that may account for my near-phobic reaction to building heights, but at that time, after escaping Pete Stoter, my main fear was of being turned into raw hamburger in the next few days. Stoter went to the same school that I did and there was no way to avoid him. Eventually he caught me alone in Home Room and proceeded to whale the tar out of me. More out of reflex than anything else, I swung the lunch bag I was carrying; it connected with the side of his head. Suddenly Stoter emitted a high-pitched scream and reeled back, a geyser of blood spraying out of his ear in six-inch spurts. Shrieking hysterically, Stoter ran from the room. I was nearly in shock but still puzzled enough to look in my lunch bag. Inside was the can of tomato juice and the very sharp can opener my mother had packed for me.

The next two weeks were a nightmare. Stoter had disappeared and I kept expecting the cops to come for me. On the other hand, jail might've been preferable to Comanche Dragon vengeance! But when Stoter did finally show up, I was amazed to find him shaking my hand, his ear swathed in bandages. I was a real Rock, he explained, and besides *he had been able to miss two weeks of school!* From then on, I was cool with the Comanche Dragons and they never bothered me again.

Unfortunately, this privileged immunity didn't extend to my younger brother, Jeff. Two years later the Dragons caught him in Central Park and beat him with chains. He managed to escape by wriggling into a drainage pipe. This experience energized Jeff and changed his whole life. He worked out with weights for four hours every day for a year until, at the end of the period, he picked up eighty pounds and looked something like Charles Atlas—very lumpy. But Jeff was satisfied, so I guess our experiences with a gang had a happy ending.

No pain, no gain!

— Steve Stiles

SHOCK HORROR PROBE!

By Dave Langford



Outdated technology has a bizarre and lingering charm. For space reasons I finally had to give away the monstrous old mimeo spattered with my life's blood (after the terrible Battle of Chapter 1 of the TAFF Report) and repaired with bits from a 1979 Hugo trophy ... but I can't bring myself to part with the smaller chunks of obsolescence like old slide rules.

Remember slide rules? And the 1950s *Astounding SF* cover for Murray Leinster's "The Pirates of Ersatz," showing a kerchiefed space-pirate swarming through the airlock with a slide rule sinisterly clenched between his teeth? Ah, nostalgia: the big scientific rule with the log-log scales, the miniature circular one and – best of all – the telescopic helical model that squeezed out an extra decimal place of accuracy by wrapping a five-foot-long scale around a cylinder...

For those wondering what proto-yuppies used to carry before cellphones and electronic personal organizers, the Langford collection has the answer: the Swiss Precision Mechanical Pocket Calculator. Actually it was made in Liechtenstein, but for sales purposes the words "Customs Union with Switzerland" establish the jeweled Swissness of the enterprise. It's a matte-black tube, looking rather like an expensive camera lens with hordes of adjustable slides and a handle on the end. You set up figures on the slides and ... *add them* ... by a mere turn of the handle. Subtract by turning the handle the other way! Multiply by turning it ... yes, you're ahead of me there.

There are also some nifty facilities for shifting decimal places: as Erich von Däniken might have

phrased it, it's hard to believe such things were known to the primitive, cave-dwelling craftsmen of 1966. One imagines technofans of those pre-Internet days rushing each other breathlessly excited postcards about how with appropriate tweaks the miniature Babbage Engine could be persuaded to extract square roots.

Onward to the next exhibit. The phrenological bust on our mantelpiece is suspected to be a modern replica. "You wouldn't have got it for £25 if it was *real*," sneered lovable design expert Abigail Frost. Hazel christened it Oliver after the great Oliver Wendell Holmes, who put the boot into the phrenologists with a knockabout lecture featured in his *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*. "At last comes along a case which is apparently a *settler*, for there is a little brain with vast and varied powers – a case like that of Byron, for instance. Then comes out the grand reserve-reason which covers everything and renders it simply impossible ever to corner a Phrenologist. 'It is not the size alone, but the *quality* of an organ, which determines its degree of power.'"

According to Oliver the most prominent bump on my head seems to indicate Acquisitiveness – presumably in the sense of Unsuccessful Acquisitiveness as far as money is concerned, but since it's a movable lump (a cyst or some such) I can always push it up a bit towards Sublimity. Now there's glory for you.

The collection's place of honor goes to the Ediswan High-Voltage Healing Box, vintage 1933, enabling you to commit high-frequency healing in the privacy of your own home. Its case is covered in imitation leather and

opens to show a nostalgic vista of bakelite, with intriguing knobs (one indicating cosmopolitan ambitions, since it switches between 100-125 and 200-250 volt supplies), a socketed handle that pulls out on a lead, and strange glass electrodes held by clips in the velvet-lined lid.

What you evidently do is to slot your favorite electrode into the handle's socket, turn on, and press it relentlessly against the Afflicted Part. I have offered this opportunity to scores of fan friends, who dived under tables and out of windows in a gently diplomatic way. A fleeing Martin Hoare was actually seen to move *away from* his beermug. The lonely experimenter thus had to test the device on himself.

Switching on produces a hellish racket from what is presumably an induction coil inside, and twiddling the Intensity knob then leads to an eerie violet glow in the glass electrode and a prickle of tiny sparks where it touches the aforesaid Afflicted Part. This fizzy sensation, accompanied by a paralyzing reek of ozone, must have persuaded users that jolly beneficial things were happening. Hazel was less convinced: "Stop! Stop! It's going to do something awful!"

Clearly 1930s punters were not so timorous, and the Edison Swan Electric Co. Ltd. (Ediswan House, 23/25 Constitution Hill, Birmingham) did good business in those days. The Box comes with a whole catalogue full of tempting offers – thirty-four specialist electrodes to cover all medical contingencies. My basic kit has only the bare essentials, alas: the puny four-shilling Surface Electrode, ending in a flattened glass bulb "for use on any part of the face, body or limbs"; the appropriately-shaped Rake, "very effective for Falling Hair, Dandruff, restoring natural color and invigorating the hair growing system generally" ("At last, that explains the famous Langford thatch," muttered jealous and thin-on-top Chris Priest); the Metal Saturator, a chromed tube that bypasses the usual route through gas-filled glass to zap the patient directly with "a very strong current which gives powerful tonic effects"; ... and, most fearsome and science-fictional of all, the Fulguration Electrode.

This, undoubtedly a favorite implement in Gene Wolfe's guild of torturers, uses the principle of electric discharge from a sharp point to generate showers of vicious little sparks "of strength sufficient to deal with corns, warts and similar growths." Like Bumps of Acquisitiveness? Having tested this very briefly on a handy wart and uttered a few loud opinions, I've come to suspect that "similar growths" may include fingers.

Luxury extras begin with the Roller Electrode, ideal for use on those special occasions when the Surface Electrode sticks and jerks in its passage over terrifiedly sweating or carbonized flesh. The Double Eye Elec-

trode has twin cups allowing both eyes to be simultaneously convulsed ("excellent tonic effects on the eyeball and optic nerves"). Particularly elaborate is the Ediswan Ozone Inhaler at a hefty thirty-five shillings: "a mixture of pure Ozone and Pine Vapor is driven right to the back of the nose and down into the lungs," which sounds fairly, er, breathtaking.

And some of the specialist electrodes I'd rather not go into, or indeed vice-versa: it is left as an exercise for the reader to imagine the Nasal, Urethral, Vaginal, Rectal, Prostatic and Dental Cavity models plying their trade. Excitingly, the Rectal model comes in four different sizes to suit individual tastes. Not for nothing did I keep remembering a long-ago *New Scientist* headline competition entry: ALTERNATIVE HEALER USED BARBED ELECTRIC ENDOSCOPE – SHOCK HORROR PROBE.

A four-page Chart of Instructions explains how the Ediswan Box will cure everything from Abscess to Warts, including Alcohol and Drug Habits ("Apply over liver, solar plexus and to the spine. For Cocaine users a mild current applied to arms, legs and soles of feet, until the skin is reddened.") and continuing through Brain Fag, Deafness, Dropsy, Female Troubles, Hardening of the Arteries, Obesity and Stiff Neck. Cynics might wonder why the magic current, so good at making boils, goiter, piles and warts shrink quietly away, has an entirely opposite effect when applied to Breast Development or Impotence.

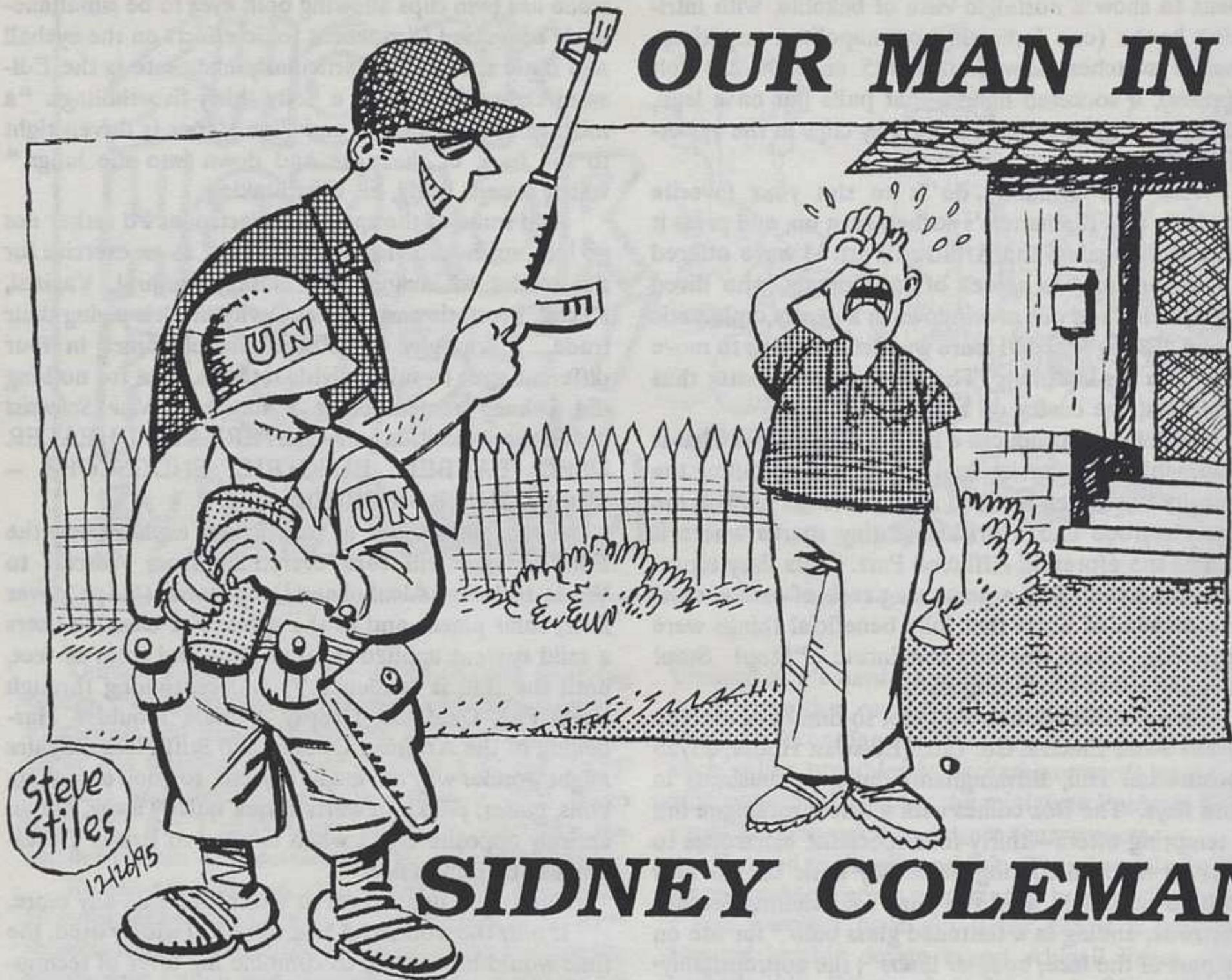
Funny you don't seem to see this on sale any more.

If only the wonderful Box were still widely used, the time would have come to combine my litter of technologies like a problem-solving hero in *Analog*. Elaborate slide-rule calculations would ascertain the phrenological location of the Bump of Fannishness. This, I estimate, must lie in the general region which on Oliver is labelled: "Sublimity ... Grandeur ... Sense of the Terrific." (Paul Kincaid used these words as an apazine title for some while, to general bafflement.) It would only remain to have a special electrode designed, purpose-built to blast powerfully energizing voltages at inspirational frequencies directly into a withered or ailing Node of Fannishness – and *then* maybe we'd see a few of those overdue TAFF reports published.

Even if that approach is too ambitious, persuasively cranking up the voltage on the existing Urethral and Rectal probes might still be worth a try. Could such probing alternative therapy restore TAFF's bygone glories? Early experiments with an anonymous guinea-pig code-named "Rob Hansen" have yielded significantly encouraging results. Tomorrow the world.

– Dave Langford

OUR MAN IN



SIDNEY COLEMAN

We were wandering around the Solano Avenue Stroll, an annual street fair here, when I noticed that on practically every block there was a sidewalk booth with a chiropractor offering free spinal examinations.

The night before, I had been reading about the Swamis Vivekananda and Yogananda and the introduction of Hinduism to America. Suddenly, in a flash of inspiration, I realized there were two disciplines that shared a common spine. Patanjali met Palmer: I had discovered chiropractic yoga.

Why was it so difficult to get the serpent of Kundalini to rise beyond the fourth chakra? Because its way was blocked by subluxations! A lifetime of renunciation does no good if your spine is out of balance.

Even the traditional Spiritual Quest narrative fits smoothly into the new framework. For example, the first meeting with the guru: "At a loss for what to do, I decided to visit the Solano Avenue Stroll. At the intersection with Peralta Street, a tall thin man wearing a white lab coat was seated at a table. He seemed lost

in contemplation of a model of the human spine in front of him, but as I passed his table, he looked up and our eyes locked. Suddenly, without a word, he leapt from behind the table, seized me from behind, threw me to the ground, and gently but firmly pressed the heel of his left foot into the small of my back. At that moment, I knew Perfect Bliss."

I was hoping to work this stuff into a story outline I'm working on about a gang of holistic terrorists who attempt to blow up the Food and Drug Administration. Unfortunately, they construct their ANFO bomb on homeopathic principles and it fizzles. I can't quite see yet how to incorporate the new material, though. I'll let you know if there's any progress.

From *The Secret Books of the WPA Writers Project*:

The interstate highway now passes through Indiana and Illinois, traversing some of the flattest territory in the nation. It has been said of this geography, "You could see a hundred miles in every direction, if only

there was something worth looking at."

A favorite sport of the more adventurous natives is called "spoofing." In the dark of night, a section of Illinois landscape is exchanged with one in Indiana. If nobody notices any difference, the spoof is considered a success. The perpetrators say to each other, "That was a good spoof!", chortle heartily, and slap their thighs. (When especially large sections of landscape are involved, they may substitute, "That was a grand spoof!")

It is widely believed in the region that, as a result of a long sequence of nineteenth-century spoofs, the entire town of Effingham, Illinois, was moved to its present location from its original one, where it was a suburb of Terre Haute, Indiana. Local historians claim that this is a myth, but one must remember that continental drift was also ridiculed when it was first proposed.

Coming Next Week: Our much loved annual art-historical lecture! The 1995 lecture will be "Transmission and Transformation of the Use of Gold Leaf in Christian Religious Art," or, "How to Get from Ravenna to Padova by Way of Constantinople," or, "Gilt by Association." During the question session, the speaker will be prepared to perform his famous imitation of the Warburg Institute (the building).

[Reading the papers in recent months, I felt deprived. All the way cool paranoid apocalyptic paramilitary groups were in distant Idaho or Oklahoma. So I put one among the wealthy polo-playing preppies of Boston's North Shore:]

The Dossier on the Marblehead Militia

The Marblehead Militia teaches that the United States Government will be replaced by the New World Order on April 19, 1999. The first act of the new government will be to make the cocktail hour illegal. All over America, UN troops (backed up by jackbooted BATF agents) will descend from black helicopters to confiscate silver martini shakers. This will begin the Tribulations prophesied in Revelations.

Members are inducted into the Marblehead Militia wearing special ceremonial clothing. They recite an oath that begins, "These Sperry Topsiders signify that I will keep my footing in the storms that will overcome our nation. These lime-green Sansabelt slacks signify that I am willing to show my true colors to all. This alligator emblem near my heart signifies my ferocity and determination in confronting our enemies." Militiamen wearing their ceremonial costumes are frequently observed in North Shore gathering places.

The leader of the Marblehead Militia is known as "Bunny from Beverly Farms." He gives incendiary speeches in which he denies the legitimacy of the federal government, which he refers to as "the NO-KOG," the Not Our Kind Occupation Government.

The activities of the Myopia Hunt Club are suspected to be a cover for paramilitary training by the Marblehead Militia, but to date we have been unable to confirm this.

[From a hike at Great Basin National Park:]

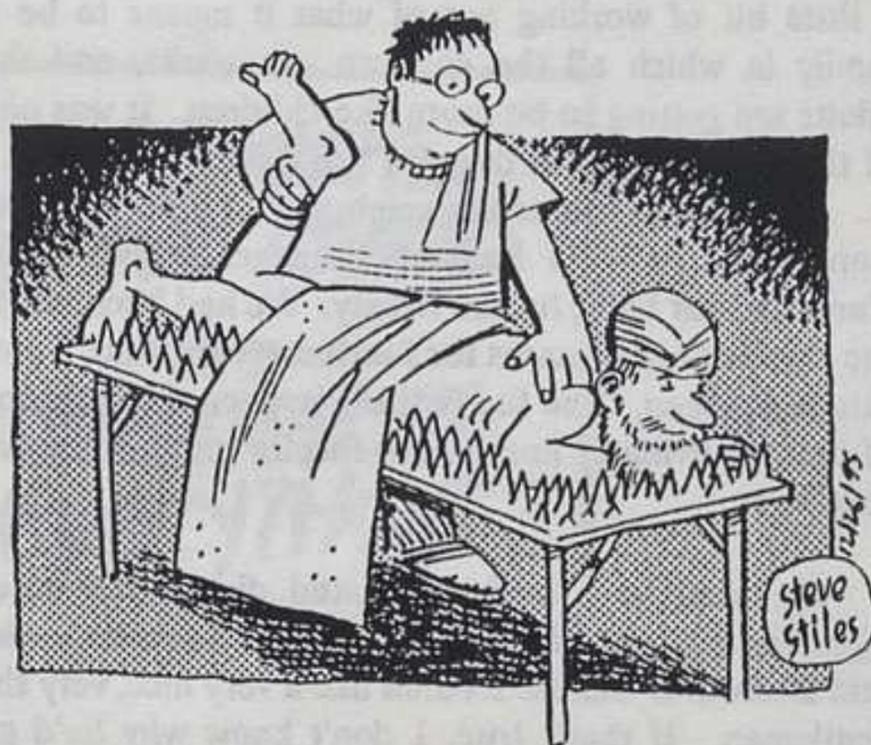
The Fable Every Part Of Which Is True

Bristlecone pines are among the longest-lived of living things, and the longest-lived of bristlecone pines grow in places where there are barely enough nutrients to survive. These impoverished pines grow very slowly; their wood is so hard and dense that when they die, after four thousand years or so, their trunks do not decay but rather erode, like stones.

Bristlecone pines in richer environments grow more rapidly, and their wood is soft and light. When botanists take cores to determine their histories, they fail, because the inner wood has rotted away.

There are men who would make a parable of this, and there are other men so stupid as to believe them. We live in dark times.

— Sidney Coleman





There's been a lot of water under our particular bridge since I last wrote. First we went up to Victoria, B.C., to see our new granddaughter, Ysabel. That was great; I sympathize, though, with a family (mine) that has me for paterfamilias. Shortly after we returned, India's mother died. We scraped some money together, rented a fairly large car, and drove to Texas, collecting all four of our children along the way (including Peter, who flew down from B.C. to join us). We drove straight though, switching drivers, and the round trip was 3,700 miles.

Except for the somber reality of the funeral right in the middle of it, it was a Good Thing; we all got to do a little bit of working out of what it means to be a family in which all the children are adults, and the adults are getting to be more like children. It was one of those "blessings in disguise" that you hear about.

A few weeks later we celebrated "Free At Last, Lord God, Free At Last of Teenagers Day" when Veronica, our baby, turned twenty. We had been under the cloud of teenageness for fourteen years, since Peter turned thirteen. The funny thing is, even though none of them is living at home now, they're more expensive than ever.

We went to a business-related dinner the other night and India was introduced to Clint Eastwood. She said afterwards that he seemed like a very nice, very shy gentleman. If that's true, I don't know why he'd go around making up stories about people.

He claimed to remember me, from a visit I made to

a movie location once. According to his entirely bogus memory (you know that he is very old), I ate a whole lot in the lunch tent. What a liar!

Actually, I don't think he remembered me at all, even though I've met him several times and written stories about his local land deals; I was kind of disappointed that I'd made such a negligible impression. When I see him on the screen, I've caught myself thinking, "That guy knows who I am." But he doesn't. Did you ever read "The Moviegoer" by Walker Percy? Eastwood has that glow that Percy's character sees in famous people. He's standing there glowing, and you lose the ability to speak and you realize you are quite small, you didn't shave close enough, you're covered with lint and you're twitching.

I spent one Saturday recently recuperating from the previous day, when a doctor ran a fiber optic tube with a headlight and probably a windshield wiper up into my colon and displayed it on a video screen for a roomful of strangers. Fortunately, I had cleaned up the place the day before and there was nothing embarrassing on view, but the whole experience was exhausting — he couldn't get the tube past this one kink, so he tried with three different scopes in two different labs. I'd planned a leisurely morning watching my guts on TV in his office, and all of a sudden there I was in the danged hospital again, where the equipment was allegedly better. "Does anybody here know about the myth of Sisyphus?" the doctor asked as he tried once more to round the stubborn bend. I guess I did. He said he

felt like Sisyphus. Me, I felt like the new guy at San Quentin. No cancer, though.

We saw President Clinton in September '95; we really did. He came to Monterey to dedicate the new California State University at Monterey Bay campus, which occupies part of what used to be Fort Ord, and we were part of the crowd of 15,000 that listened to his speech. He still delivers a great speech, even if he doesn't deliver anything else. His face was very pink (pinker than any of the local officials sitting on the platform with him), but we think it was makeup (although for a second I imagined it was radiation burns from the UFO coverup at Roswell, New Mexico).

Afterwards, driving home, we got stopped in a jam so the presidential motorcade could go by, and we saw that, too. Then when we got to Marina we parked alongside the new Marina Municipal Airport (formerly part of Fort Ord) and watched his helicopter take off. The airport is within walking distance (though a long walk) of our house, which means the President of the United States was, too.

It doesn't get any better than this.

One day in a fit of bored whimsy at work I changed the title card on a file cabinet to say "O-Z" following the literary rumor that L. Frank Baum named the Land of Oz because he saw that on a file cabinet. That was about five years ago. Last time I looked, it was still there.

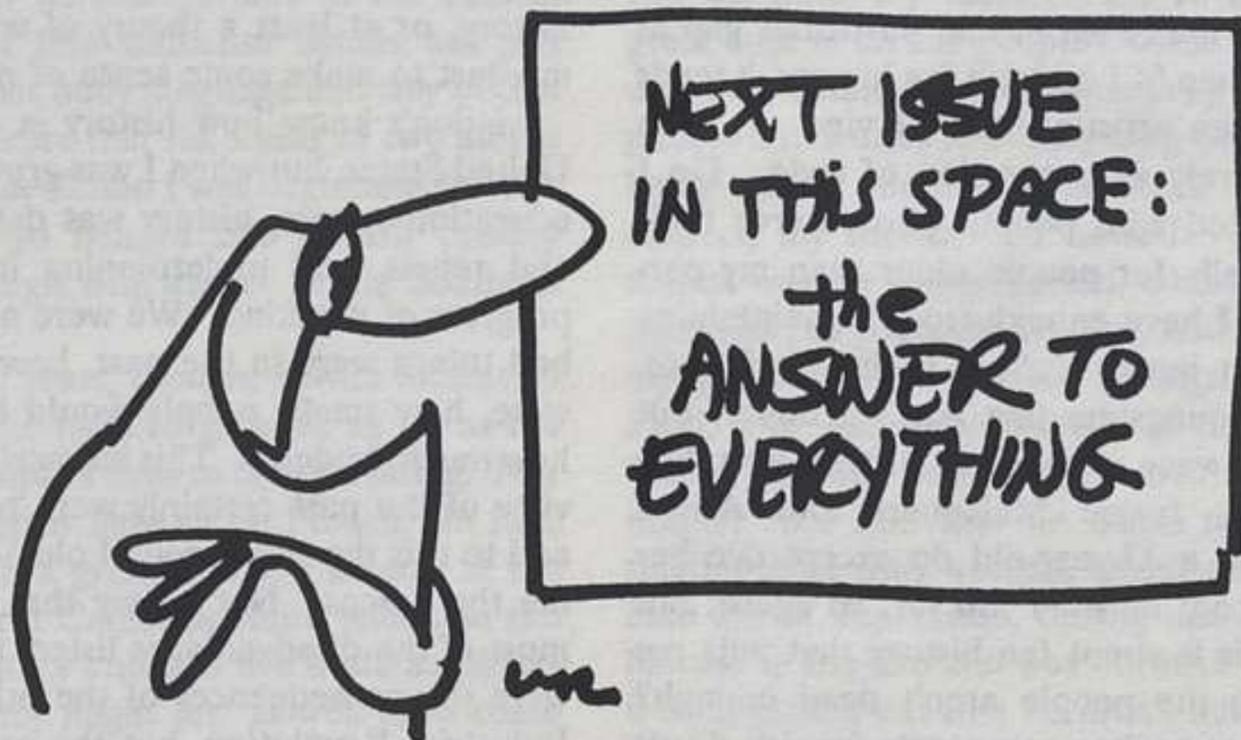
I think I'm hallucinating. We just got back from another 2,300-mile round trip to Victoria, B.C., Canada

(in kilometers, 20 zillion), by car. We spent three days there, on the occasion of our oldest son, Peter, graduating from the University of Victoria. He majored in English, even though I warned him not to. We had quality time with Peter and his wife (Diane, whom we love) and our two grandchildren (Luther and Ysabel, whom we also love), and then we left Victoria yesterday morning at 8 a.m. and arrived here this morning at about 5:30 a.m., driving straight through. Casson (the son formerly known as Paul) helped with the driving, and Laura and Veronica also went along. I think it was an interesting trip, though most of it (along with the entire states of Washington and Oregon) is a blur right now. I published my Web page from a motel room in Everett, Washington, on Thursday morning, and from Peter's apartment on Friday and Saturday, and that was an interesting experiment that I hope never to repeat.

E-mail, basically, just gives me a chance to be rude to a lot more people at a much faster rate. And the people I'm rude to, by not answering their messages, are always the ones I really care about. Because I'm a reporter and my e-mail address used to be printed in the paper regularly, I get a lot of short notes from people I don't know, asking little questions, and I respond to them immediately because they're easy to deal with and I want to get them off my screen.

Meanwhile, there are the occasional notes from people I love and cherish, and I always leave them hanging there in the list intending to get to them when I have time to answer carefully and intelligently. And then weeks go by and I'm apologizing again.

—Calvin Demmon



THE (SCIENCE) FICTION OF HISTORY BY CHRISTINA LAKE



Unlike Joseph Nicholas, I don't have any carefully thought-out theory of history, be it Marxist, Mormon or merely masturbatory. (Haven't you heard of that one? Well, far be it from me to fill in that particular gap in your education.) When/if I criticize fan history, it tends to be purely from an artistic point of view or, even more shallowly, merely as a question of style. Do I want to be associated with people who reserve their admiration uncritically for people older than my parents? I think not. I have enough trouble maintaining a young and vibrant image without such associations. (It's all right for youngsters like Andy Hooper, but faced with a new wave of young British fans like Bridget Hardcastle, Jackie McRobert and Alison Freebairn, what can a 37-year-old do except dye her hair and listen to cool music?) So far, so ageist, but image aside, what is it about fan history that puts me off? Is it because the people aren't dead enough? Does history only start when someone's fannish deeds

happened in the twelfth century? Or is it because deep down I don't believe that fandom is real history? So, perhaps after all, I *do* need to develop a theory of history, or at least a theory of what history means to me, just to make some sense of my own attitudes.

I don't know how history is or was taught in the United States, but when I was growing up in the British education system, history was dates and battles, kings and rebels, and underpinning it all a belief in the progress of mankind. We were always being told how bad things were in the past, how many diseases there were, how smelly people would have been, how cold, how much drudgery. This indoctrination into a negative view of the past certainly went back to junior school, and to this day going round old Victorian houses gives me the creeps. Not to say that the past didn't have most of the disadvantages listed, though some of them were the consequences of the otherwise much lauded Industrial Revolution, but the assumption was always

that our lifestyle was superior in every respect and the pinnacle of civilization. (Obviously even school teachers hadn't started having environmental guilt back in '60s/'70s Britain.)

Contrary to popular wisdom, the catalogue of dates and famous people didn't put me off history. In fact, history was one of my favorite subjects at school, bolstered by a largely unremitting diet of historical novels which left me knowing more about Roman emperors and Tudor sexual politics than I did about current affairs. There was no doubt in my mind that history was something that happened a long time ago. The past was dull (mundane, I might almost have said, had I been a fan at the time), the past was exotic. Proof positive of the strength of my views at the time was that I chose to study Renaissance history on my own, rather than the course on modern history (pah!) being offered by the school.

At university I did study modern French history as part of my degree, but I guess that was all right because it was about France, not my own country. I also did a medieval French course which introduced me to a book by a historian named Huizinga which described daily life in fifteenth century Europe, dwelling with particular attention on charnel houses, gibbets, and other forms of obsession with death. This was the first piece of social history I had found interesting, not so much for the gory details as the attempt to get into the mind-set of people so different from ourselves. Not that I dropped overnight my interest in the big names of history – I still preferred Eleanor of Aquitaine and Louis XI to Jehan laboring in the field – but gradually I began to understand that the details of ordinary people's lives could be more remarkable than the succession of kings. For one course I read the book Montaigne based on the inquisitors' notes on a twelfth century community of heretic Cathars in the French Pyrenees, which went into immense details not just about belief systems but body language and way of life. It was not any coincidence that for a year or two all the characters in the science fiction I was beginning to write at that time tended to behave like twelfth century French peasants (though with rather exotic Southern French names!).

It was to be many years, though, before I came to realize that you did not have to go back as far as the twelfth century for people's lives to be interesting. Nor did the people necessarily have to be French. In fact, they could be living in a grimy London suburb at the turn of the century or a Cambridgeshire village in the middle of the last century and still live a life so different from mine that they might just as well have come from Babylon 5's Mars colony. The trigger for this new

interest? Well, I did mention the Mormons earlier, so it should come as no surprise that what I'm talking about is family history.

Now, if there is anything more obsessive and anally retentive than sf fandom, it must surely be family history. Family historians spend all their time straining their eyes over microfiche copies of lists just to try and distinguish between one person of the same name who is their ancestor and another who isn't. Their idea of a fun day out is a trip to a churchyard to read the gravestones. They produce little magazines reviewing new indices and commenting on the opening times of various repositories. And since I was being ageist earlier, I might as well add that most of them are over sixty and obviously preparing to meet half the ancestors they are so eagerly researching.

Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that it was my father who started me on the family history trail. In the course of his endless quests to provide my mother with a birth certificate (she was born in what was then Ceylon), he picked up a few certificates for the rest of the family, possibly in the mistaken belief that this would improve her claims to being British. In fact, on one side of her family, my mother does come from that bedrock of British stock, the agricultural laborer (abbreviated to Ag Lab by all true family historians), but on the other side she proved to be descended from Austro-Hungarian emigres and rather dubious Indian army officers. (For years my mother claimed that my brother's rather un-English coloring was Hungarian, but the more you look at him, the more you wonder if there is any truth in the allegation of Indian blood in the family.)

Of course, the fun thing about family history is not the lists, but the stories. The lists are just the framework, the means to discovering the people who know. For example, my research led to my rediscovering a great aunt in an old people's home in Derbyshire. She was only related to the family by marriage, but had photos and stories about my long-dead great uncles and knew more about my mother's childhood than, I suspect, my mother did herself. Another source of stories was my uncle Gerald, who told me things that my father, as youngest brother, had never known about my grandmother's ill-fated siblings. The gory story of Fred, who was invalided out of the navy in the First World War with suspected tuberculosis. Apparently his mother told him that he could not have any sexual relationships with women, which caused Fred to have mad fits of depression, during one of which he threw himself in the fire and was burnt to death. (Ironically, it then turned out that he didn't have TB after all, but bronchitis.) Then there was his sister Flo, the tall,

elegant woman in the family photos (all the more remarkable next to the rather dumpy figures of my grandmother and great grandmother) who was terrorized by this same mother into staying at home to look after her, finally escaped on a holiday to Scotland with her young man, only to be involved in a car accident. Flo developed a foot injury which in her shocked state after the accident turned to septicemia and she died.

Needless to say, the good family historian would check out all these stories. Purchase death certificates to peruse the cause of death, check the dates, look for newspaper reports or wills. (You don't need to be wealthy to have a will or probate deposited in Somerset House. One of the humble artisanal Lakes had a will that told me that he died in New York City. I have yet to find out what he was doing over there.) There is plenty of evidence around, particularly when dealing with people who died this century. But somehow I never like buying the death certificates. I prefer the moments of birth and marriage, where I can imagine my ancestors perpetually at twenty-eight on the verge of a new life. I prefer to think of my great grandmother Kezia Cornwell, born just one hundred years before me, as a girl in her Cambridgeshire village, or marrying the diminutive poulterer Frederick Bobby, rather than as the older Kezia dying prematurely of cancer, soon to be replaced in her husband's affections by a new wife from New Zealand.

The best evidence, though, is in writing. Aunt Flo is rumored to have kept a diary, but it's never come to light. I have one letter from my mother's mother, written when the family was in Egypt, that makes me wish I had known her properly. There are a few literary works from the bohemian Indo-Hungarian side of the family. I have very little else. Most of my ancestors remain a set of names and salient dates, rediscovered, if I'm lucky, once every ten years by the census enumerators who paused briefly to write down their occupations and which of their children are still at home before passing on to the next household. The further you go back, the more tenuous the structure, the less hope of learning anything about their lives, the more the hobby comes to resemble stamp collecting.

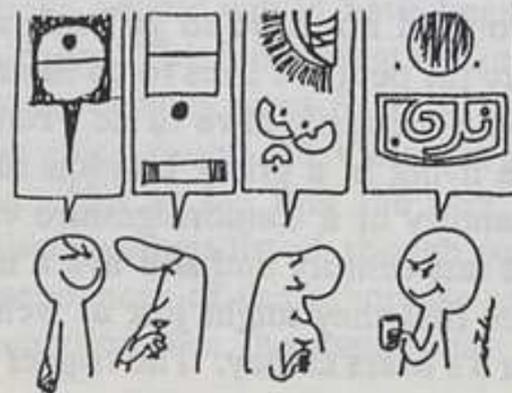
So, just imagine if your ancestor had been a fan. Our children's children (well, probably not mine, since I'm not planning to have any) will be on to a bonanza. Who needs letters when you can have apa contributions, articles, and whole runs of fanzines? Apas in particular I can see as a great future source of social history. All those contributions, much derided now, that say nothing except what happened to the cat and how you missed your bus to work, will become snapshots of daily life in the late twentieth century. The diary zine will provide

an anecdotal counterbalance to the history of the great and famous, the already well-documented public history of our times, offering a history of the ordinary people, written not for posterity but for their friends.

Which brings me on, just slightly, to a theory. All the quintessentially fannish writing, representing the pinnacle of our culture, will become less and less meaningful as the years pass by. Already some newcomers don't see what is so important about the fan writing of the '50s. Eventually, perhaps, the works of D. West and Greg Pickersgill will go the same way (though there is a certain gritty realism to West's life in Yorkshire that might survive unscathed), while lesser writers with no great interest in talking about fandom will be quoted and anthologized. The truth is, our fandom is likely to be even more of a minority interest after our deaths than it is now, so that its traditions will be stripped away as meaningless arcania, while the remaining work will be mined for its relevance to the mainstream of life in the latest twentieth century. Or else our best fanzines will simply be kept as a memento of the stranger eccentricities of the last family member to commit thoughts to paper before its demise as a plentiful source of recording material.

In the end, what I want from fannish history is not tributes to the greats of the past, but something more akin to oral history that reflects the fabric of our life in and out of fandom. When Lilian Edwards and I were planning *TimeBytes* (the Intersection fanthology) I had in my head as a model a book published by the BBC called *The Nineties, Personal Recollections of the 20th Century*, which took a thematic look at the lives of people born ninety years ago. It concentrated on ordinary experiences which had become extraordinary because so few of their generation were left to remember them. I don't know what will be remembered from our generation – probably a great confusion of things. But it would be nice to think that fan history could be more than a celebration of our best in-jokes, but something that will tell people years away from us how it feels to live right now, in the 1990s. That would be science fictional history to me.

– Christina Lake





GARY HUBBARD

A long time ago, when I was a very young fan, I read a review in a fanzine of a book called *The Universal Baseball League*. It was a story about a lonely middle-aged bachelor who creates a rich inner life for himself based on a fantasy baseball league. The story wasn't SF, but it impressed the guy who pubbed that fanzine to include it in his mag. And it impressed me, too. I never actually got around to reading the story, you understand, and I don't even remember who the author was; but no matter. What does matter is that this story — a tale of alienation and the isolation of modern urban life — sounded like a really attractive way of life to me, and I swore to myself to fashion my whole adult life after the protagonist of that book.

Unfortunately, I wasn't quite able to pull it off. In the years that followed, I made some friends and even got married. So the life of a self-absorbed, middle-aged bachelor that I so yearned for was never to be mine. Not completely, anyway. I mean I am pretty self-absorbed and I have created a rich fantasy life for myself here in the basement where I am now. A fantasy life, I might hasten to add, that has nothing to do with baseball. I mean, the guy in the book had his tastes and I have mine ("sua cuique voluptas"). But life calls me away from my private little world more than I would like, and I am often slow to answer its summons.

This is my latest elaborate excuse as to why it has taken me so long to get around to responding to *Trap Door*, but it also illustrates, I think, how through fandom our lives can be profoundly influenced by people we never meet (needless to say, this experience

is not limited to fandom). I'm sure that unknown fanned who reviewed *The Universal Baseball League* had no idea that he had inadvertently set the tone for some stranger's entire life.

I'm not sure whether Redd Boggs or Charles Burbee ever said or did anything to influence my life on the scale of the above example. I never met either of them, but who knows. I'm not a self-made man but, rather, a mosaic of everything I've ever read. And I've read a lot of fanzines over the years, so it's possible (if not probable) that I've picked up some thought or other from either or both of these gents and pawned it off as one of my own. So I was saddened to hear of their passing.

The memorial selections (or "feistschrift" as we say in the librarian trade) that you put together for them were pretty good. It's wonderful how Redd could write so interestingly about stuff that you wouldn't think would be all that interesting. Reading about his collection of stenciling tools reminded me of how fascinated fanzines used to be by the methods of their own production. Long ago, when I was a very young fan, zines were full of the arcana of mimeography: stencils, corflu, lettering guides, stylii, etc. I think there were even a few people around who still silk-screened. {My own all-time favorite fannish reproduction method is multi-color ditto.} All that was swept away when they started opening the Jiffy Prints. And now there's even talk of abandoning print altogether for floppy disks or even a general exodus of fandom to the Internet. But wait!

I've currently got this temporary job at Western Michigan University's Regional History Archives where I'm making electronic files from old university office

records. Most of this stuff is either typed or photocopied, but the other day I was going through a bunch of files from 1964 when I came across a bundle wrapped in kraft paper. When I opened it up, I found four carefully folded mimeograph stencils. Apparently back in the '60s, at least some of the university's paperwork was still being generated by mimeography. The content of what was cut into these stencils is pretty unimportant, but more to the point is that these babies are just as fresh as the day they were cut. In and of themselves, fanzines are pretty ephemeral things—but the technology that was traditionally used to produce them was pretty durable, wasn't it? It remains to be seen how much the electronic revolution will change fandom, but I don't think on-line fanzines will be practical until you can take them into the bathroom with you.

Ed Burbee's oration for his father was quite charming. I particularly liked the line, "He liked talking, writing, reading books, wooing the ladies, listening to music, gambling, and drinking beer, and not much more." Not all of those things are to my tastes, mind you, but in general that sounds like a way of life worth emulating—which I just might. In fandom, our lives can be profoundly influenced by people we never meet.

A friend of mine was a dispatcher at a local trucking company, and together we used to hang out with the drivers a lot. There was a joke then current that went: "Why do cowboys wear baseball caps and sneakers? So you won't mistake them for truck drivers." My thanks to Dale Speirs for giving us a different perspective on this issue. Actually, the notion that there are still cowboys out there wrangling cattle sounds a little anachronistic in this day and age, at least here in Kalamazoo. But that's gotten me to thinking about those Gene Autry movies that were made back in the '30s. Frequently, Gene's adventures would take place in a setting that was a combination of the Old West and Modern Times (aka the Great Depression). So he got a chance to chase the bad guys in a plane or a car as well as on horseback. Sometimes they even threw in a death ray or two—ever see *The Phantom Empire*? These were low budget movies, and I suppose the reason they did this was that it was cheaper than trying to create a convincing look for a historical period, or the writers (or somebody) may have thought these cowboy stories needed to be brought up to date to keep the kiddies' interest. It's also possible that in the '30s the western United States really was a pastiche of different technologies. (You live out there, Robert, so you tell me.) *{I didn't move to Southern California from Cleveland, Ohio, until 1951, so I only have those old movies to go by, too. I do recall that in Cleveland in the '40s there were still horse-drawn wagons delivering milk,*

produce, etc., and I'd assume that in The West there would have been even more horses.} (2203 Amherst, Kalamazoo, MI 49008)

HARRY WARNER JR.

The splendid cover may mystify a few of the younger fans on your mailing list, but it causes me to wonder if a hush-hush fannish project, limited to a few fans aware of the criticism they would endure if word got out, should be created to put the Watermelon Story onto paper in the most complete and accurate form that consensus could manage. I don't think it was ever published in a fanzine back in the era when it wouldn't have been considered a particularly offensive example of racism. Should it remain only in the memories of a gradually decreasing number of elderly fans when it's been so often mentioned in fanzines of the past? *{The Watermelon Story itself is fairly short—so short that perhaps half of the actual text appears on last issue's cover—but what made it memorable was the several hours of build-up Charlie would give before, reluctantly, relating it. But if anyone reading this feels moved to attempt to capture the essence of one of Charlie's tellings along with relating the story itself, I'd be happy to consider it for publication.}*

Bill Rotsler might be horrified to know that I used to go Elmer Perdue one better. I would rush around Hagerstown to take photographs of important buildings or rows of homes that I knew were about to be demolished, so in some later year I could look at the photographs and remember just how they used to look. I gave it up only when advancing age persuaded me that it was increasingly unlikely that I would live long enough to forget such things. I'm not sure if Bill realizes that Elmer had at one time the goal of walking along every block in the entire Los Angeles area. I never heard how close he came to completing his goal.

Every three or four months, an apparently vanished fan manages to turn up in some fanzine or other's letter section. I'm very happy to see that John Baxter has done it for you. I had no idea that he was living in France at present. His anecdote about the politician who parked his mistress in his car's trunk compartment sounds like something out of a short story by John Collier or Saki. *{This issue I'm happy to bring back Ron Bennett and Arthur Jean Cox—but of course both gentlemen will probably object they were never gone.}*

Gary Hubbard's long conreport is the finest of its sort I've seen in the past couple of years. But I couldn't help contrasting his problem with creating a speech with my experience a quarter-century ago when I was fan guest of honor at the first Boston worldcon. Gary was troubled by the question of what to write and speak

about. That was the least of my problems. I wrote two speeches one day shortly before the con and took them both with me because I couldn't decide which I wanted to give. My trouble came after the con when I received the LP set containing the entire Hugo award banquet ceremonies. I was unable to persuade myself to listen to myself in case my delivery was so terrible that I would suffer a major engram or something worse. It was more than twenty years before I finally played those records and discovered I hadn't sounded too bad except for talking too fast.

Abrupt readjustment of concepts of ranch life must have taken place among many fans in recent weeks, after they read Dale Speirs' description of how it was on his father's spread. Even those of us who read a lot of western novels and watch many cowboy movies aren't accustomed to think of round-up participants as wearing sunglasses or disposable paper dust masks. It's just as well that John Wayne will never read Dale's article.

Someday someone will publish an anthology of fanzine material about physical problems, hospital care, and related matters. Paul Williams' essay demands a place of honor in such a compilation. It is also another of the many recent fanzine pieces that make me realize how far medical science has progressed since I've been in the world. Paul's chances of surviving such a major fall with no serious lasting effects would have been infinitely smaller a half-century or more ago. If it had happened early in the century, I suppose the surgeon would have cut the hole in his skull to relieve the pressure, but most of the other resources applied to his treatment didn't exist yet. I've had various falls in my life, two of which resulted in broken bones. All memory of the fall in which I suffered a broken acetabulum vanished and never returned; I'm not even sure if I was hit by an auto or slipped on ice. But just last winter, I fell heavily on an icy patch in front of my home, felt sure I'd broken my hip because of how I landed, and somehow escaped anything worse than a long-playing bruise. That fall's memory was clear and detailed; I can still see how the blacktop seemed to rise up slantwise towards my right side. Does the brain know when a broken bone has occurred and erase the memory of it while leaving it intact for a similar fall that breaks nothing. What other explanation can there be? (423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740)

RON BENNETT

Many thanks for *Trap Door* No. 16, which, with the passing of Redd Boggs and Charles Burbee, both close friends, can't have been an easy issue to put together. What can one say, other than that one can have an inkling of what you feel and can sympathize, particularly

with the recent passing over here of both Bob Shaw and Ethel Lindsay. Ethel, especially, was close. I used to drop in on her when she was a nursing sister at the Royal Eye Hospital in Surrey and I was living in Belgium and was en route to or from visiting family up here in Yorkshire. The last time I saw her was at the Glasgow Worldcon just a year ago when she was helping out in the dealers' room at Andy Porter's table.

The masters of home brew in British fandom have to be Norman Shorrocks and Phil Rogers, both long time convention attendees. Norman produces wine under his own label, *Chateau Shorrocks*, whilst Phil, who for a time was living in what you'd term a trailer, produced his wine under the label *Cara-Vin*.

The Las Vegas con was called *Corflu*? Wonder what a con in Northern Ionia...? But a nice report by Gary Hubbard. Felt as though I were actually there. Remembering the old theory that L.A. is spreading eastward at a rate of several zillion miles every twenty-three seconds, or whatever, I'd imagine that the framework around Fremont Street has been commissioned by the Los Angeles city fathers to create a suburban mall. Boulder City, here we come.

I've not been to Barbados, but Gary's not the only one who can't get enthusiastic about holiday shopping. For the past few years I've holidayed regularly in Paphos, Cyprus. *Excellent* shopping facilities. Quality clothing at roughly a half to two-thirds of U.K. prices. *Marvelous* leather belts, wallets, shoes, bags, brief cases. And then there's the porcelain. Etc., etc. But a decent bookshop? Forget it. There used to be a place which acted as a kind of lending library. Half price back on return. The proprietor got a little annoyed with me when he realized that I wasn't returning the books. Anyway, he's long gone. Now there are only new *remaindered* U.S. paperbacks available on the racks of corner block food markets. At C£5 a throw. That's some £7.50 sterling or about two bits over eleven dollars. That's too much.

I suffered the same sort of non-enthusiasm when I returned to Singapore for a visit a few years back, arriving twenty years to the day when I'd left after having lived there for three highly enjoyable years. *Wonderful* shopping opportunities, particularly as Singapore is a duty-free island. There's not only an extensive range of clothing but also cameras and electrical goods, batiks, jewelry, jade (not recommended unless you're an expert), wood carvings, pewter.... Selangor pewter... *fantastic*. But there's definitely something lacking deep within me. Possibly an absence of *soul*. Where did I spend my shopping hours? That's right... searching out the second-hand book stores in Katong, Bukit Timah, Holland Village, and

along the Bras Basah Road.

Yeh, I'd forgotten that you'd been over here on TAFF. (which means that you probably met Norman Shorrock and Phil Rogers). {*Only Phil, who I met briefly at Contrivance.*} Possibly I hadn't wanted to remember too much about 1989. Not my favorite year. I'm afraid that I didn't attend the Eastercon that year (which probably improved it for you). At that time I was driving to and fro two or three times a week visiting Rachel, my teen-age daughter, who was seriously ill in a special unit in a Birmingham hospital.

Yes, I remember that discussion, way back in the mid-'50s, about whether it was preferable for a fan to have contributed to different fanzines before producing one himself; but this arose, I think, because at the time most U.K. fan-editors had indeed done just that. Worthies like John Berry, Mal Ashworth and George Locke all emerged during this period. But, really, I'm sure that it was simply coincidence. There were sufficient examples of people who came out with pretty good zines without ever having written for the fanzines of others. I'm tempted to mention *Space Diversions* (Norman Shorrock), *Orion* (Paul Enever and later Ella Parker), Ethel Lindsay's *Scottishe* and *Camber* (Alan Dodd, who I seem to remember took it over from a Welsh fan whose name I sadly forget but who, I think, also hadn't contributed elsewhere). {*Fred Robinson edited the first two issues.*} Either side of the argument is littered with generalizations.

Er... This Leigh Edmonds statement... "that what most fanzine fans want to convey to the future is..." Am I missing something? I didn't know that fanzine fans, either most or any, ever considered conveying anything to the future. I thought the idea was to put out a fanzine or write for one in order to entertain (possibly also, at times, to inform) a readership.

Good gracious! You have a letter here from William Danner. Surely not *the* William Danner? This is the first time I've seen Bill's name in print for what? At least a quarter of a century and yet I'm reminded of him at some time of every single week. And have been reminded of him during every single week of those twenty-five years. Every time I see an advert, in a store, on an advertising placard, on TV, wherever, that boasts "Up to 35% cheaper" or "Up to 20% extra," or whatever, I think of Bill and chuckle inwardly.

And Shelby Vick! It's all too much for a li'l old country boy living on the edge of the snowbound North Yorkshire Moors. Ray Nelson, Jean Young, Jim Caughran, William Rotsler.... Just the mention of these golden names. My cup runneth over and all that. A great issue. (32 Harlow Park Crescent, Harrogate, N. Yorkshire HG2 0AW, U.K.)

SHELBY VICK

Harry Bell did a great cover. I'm sure I've met that guy holding the trap door open somewhere before. Considering his grim look, maybe it was in a nightmare.

It's easy to understand the great delay for this issue, with all the tragedies that hit fandom – and most of them were really close to home for you. I can add nothing to the great memorials you carried, from comments from LeeH to Jim Harmon to Ed Burbee to all the things you and others said – I can only agree that fandom abruptly is missing a huge slice of its wisdom, humor and vitality.

My first thought about the Redd Boggs column was that it was one of his best. Then I thought back and realized – no, not one of his best, just another bit of his excellence. I most appreciated his bit about lettering, because I used to be proud of my collection. Of course, there was a difference; I was running a mimeograph business for several years, but I didn't accumulate as many as Redd did, even though I had quite a few. I also collected typewriters. I had one that had gothic sans serif type, one with an 18-inch carriage (so I could put a stencil in longways), one with script type, an IBM special with proportional spacing (back before the Selectric) as well as several with just the usual pica or elite type. I even had access to a typer with 24-point gothic sans serif type; I could use it most any time I needed to, but I couldn't talk them into letting me buy it. The one thing I faunched for but could never find was a typer with micro-elite type.

"Memories of Elmer" and the bit about Al Ashley make it obvious that we've got to have not just *The Incomplete Burbee* but *The Complete Burbee*. {*One more volume in addition to the two already published could accomplish this.*}

Muchly amused by Gary Hubbard's "The Cracked Eye." He saw the Vegas we've missed. Never been down Fremont Street. Never been inside a nightclub. In fact, the only time we've seen anything of Vegas in our several trips there, other than hotel rooms, was either in a restaurant or at some of the slots. Never found my muse there, much less a muse as interesting as those of Gary's. (But that should be singular; the second one wasn't a muse, was it? *Was it?*)

Dale Speirs' writings brought back to me the feel of a lasso in my hand, the feel of a horse vibrating beneath a leather saddle, the sounds of hooves pounding the earth – and I've never done any of that!

Paul Williams made my head hurt with his recounting of his bike accident. Good piece. As far as gaps in memory are concerned, my life is full of them – and I never went over the handlebars of my bike.

Gordon Eklund mentions that he never had polio.

I did, but I was out of school several years before it occurred. (If I remember right, I was 27.) They first thought I had spinal meningitis, which is fatal. I never had time to worry about the diagnosis; I was too busy reassuring my Mom everything would be all right. By the time I had a chance to really consider the diagnosis, they had already put me in the hospital for extensive testing and found out it was polio. My polio, luckily, was a mild case. Worst thing about it was the painkillers; they kept me too groggy to read, much less write letters. One advantage, though, to my hospital stay: Before I went to the hospital, I hated shots. In the hospital I got so many of them that I got used to it. And some of the needles were to get blood—many of them, in fact. Made me think they were raising baby vampires in the lab.

Rotsler's remembrance of Perdue and his collection of memorized streets and their locale reminded me of a tale rich brown once told me. As I remember, it was something he picked up when he was a cabby. Seems he spoke to someone who had tried to be a cab driver in London, and found out what it takes. To begin with, there's a one-year course you take first. You have to learn every street in London—and it has many that are short ones, many whose names are similar, etc. You have to learn their numbering system—and from what rich said, it really isn't a system; like Topsy, it Just Grew. Then you go before a board to be tested. They give you your location and the location of your fare; you are to tell them the shortest way to get from Here to There, regardless of its complexity. Many don't make it the first time. No surprise there. (627 Barton Ave., Springfield, FL 32404)

GEORGE FLYNN

I never met Redd Boggs, and my encounters with Burbee, Bob Shaw and Ethel Lindsay were of the most glancing sort. Still, it certainly has been a depressing year. You know, I don't think I've ever actually heard the Watermelon Story, though certainly I recall lots of allusions to it—and it seems that even those who did hear it don't recall it well. I wonder how much other, less famous fannish lore may be in the same sort of half-remembered limbo and in danger of being lost?

Speaking of lost things, Redd's column reminds me that I haven't used a mimeo since sometime in the '80s, and never owned one. I still have a box with a few stencils in it (and even know where it is), though I doubt the stencils are much good anymore. But where the hell *did* I put my stylus...?

Myself, I carry only two pens and a pencil in my shirt pocket, along with a small notebooks/address book and whichever pair of my reading/distance glasses I'm

not wearing at the moment. Yeah, it's annoying how people who *don't* carry pens always seem to find occasions to borrow them from you. (I wrote the preceding sentence yesterday. At a meeting last night, two people borrowed my pen within half an hour. I had to explain why I was giggling....)

Gary Hubbard's view of Corflu Vegas is marvelously bizarre—almost as much as the con itself.

Dale Speirs: Umm, if a section is a mile on a side, then a quarter-section is a *half-mile square* (though a quarter of a square mile). (P. O. Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Station, Cambridge, MA 02142)

BRIDGET HARDCASTLE

What is Burbee's watermelon story? How can you taunt and intrigue us with small details and then not tell the story? (Unless it is something Every Fan Knows except me.) {No.} Is it anything to do with the text visible through the trap door on the front cover? {Yes, that's part of it.} I'll probably find out it's just a really poor pun now, and be disappointed. {No, but perhaps for other reasons.}

Redd Boggs' column evocatively opened up a whole new world of mimeo styluses and technology to me. I can appreciate a lot better what fanzine editors of the past had to contend with and why fanzines turned out looking the way they do.

Michael Waite is right; there is far too much in the letter column to reply to as much as you'd like. Maybe you should hold a *Trap Door Con*, where we'd all get to meet up and talk to each other! Corflu *Trap Door*, anyone? {In a way, all Corflus already are.} (13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX, U.K.)

KEN FORMAN

This whole thing about the graying of fandom has gotten way out of hand! I order all you oldpharts to cease this aging bit. Your tribute to Redd Boggs in the editorial only made me more sorry about his passing. (I felt a similar sorrow when I read about Bob Shaw and Ethel Lindsay.) Then, of course, Redd's own *Penseroso* followed; I didn't know whether to cheer or cry. Instead, I chose to smile when he started talking about *The Things We Fan By*. His description of the lettering guides reminded me that there was a fandom •before• computers and DTPers. Somehow the tools we now use to commit fanac don't have romantic names. Apple, Packard Bell, Epson, Xerox—they somehow lack the character and dreams inspired by brand names like Speed-O-Print, Gestetner, A. B. Dick or Rex Rotary. I just can't see myself calling Tom Springer and asking to borrow his Arial MT Condensed Light font for the title of a column. It just doesn't have

the right feel about it. *{I dunno, Meyer, I can see wanting to have a specific font for a heading – it's the contemporary equivalent of the right lettering guide.}*

Gary Hubbard's *Cracked Eye* column was the best Corflu report I've read. It's kind of interesting to read someone else's take on my home town. "What kind of hotel is this that it doesn't show skin flicks?" I know Gary didn't stay at any of our sleazier hotels, but it seems like he forgot he was in Sin City. Had I known he was looking for porn, I would gladly have shown him some of my favorite places for fun.

The part about Beatrice the Muse was pure genius. She can "inspire" me any time she wants.

Gary seemed surprised to find *The Book of Mormon* in his room. The Mormon Trail used to go through the middle of Las Vegas – right in front of the convention hotel. At the last Silvercon, I was with Joe and Gay Haldeman when they checked in. Their hotel room had a Gideon Bible, *The Book of Mormon* and a Buddhist manifesto. I love this city. (7215 Nordic Lights Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89119-0335)

JIM HARMON

A book could be written about the life and thoughts of Redd Boggs, but I seem to be out of words concerning his sudden death. It was not unexpected. No doubt all his friends were concerned about that huge rupture Redd carried around more than fifteen years that I know of. He kept assuring Barbara and me that the doctors had told him it was *not* life-threatening, and that he had no priority for having it fixed. I thought the doctors must be mad. I had heard of small ruptures that could not be seen by others strangling and killing people. Now I must conclude that Redd was not telling us the truth, only something to placate our concern and have us leave him alone about it. Perhaps it was impossible to repair ten years ago and more. I suspect Redd knew the situation might lead to his death, and was fatalistically resigned to it. I don't think he deliberately set out to commit suicide in this protracted, painful and unattractive manner. If Redd had wanted to kill himself, he would have taken some time to think it out thoroughly and then arranged a practical, efficient and low-cost way of doing it.

I was also sorry to read of the passing of Charles Burbee. I did not know him well, but I recall meeting him on several occasions, often in the company of Kris Neville. He never was interested in being friends with me. He always treated me as a "wet-nosed kid" (I was in my late twenties or early thirties) or maybe someone he just plain thought was a fool. But he was a legend to me before I ever met him, and I was happy just to see him (like Mount Rushmore) and to hear the pearls

of wisdom fall from his lips (although I don't recall him saying anything as memorable as his writings). For such a talented communicator (if for a selective audience), it must have been hell not to be able to communicate by speech or writing. I would like to think that somewhere Redd and Burbee and Elmer Perdue and Bob Bloch and so many others are having one hell of a fan session at a hotel where an SF convention goes on for eternity. I'd like to think so, but it seems too much a wishful fantasy. These people are gone, and we shall not see their like again.

Elmer Perdue was also someone I knew. Again, I knew him through Neville mostly. Although I wasn't of his age or mind set, he always seemed cordial to me. In short, I think he liked me. Elmer was a character and knew it. Stories about him can't hurt him now. To grasp his character, one had to go to his house on Baxter Street ("second steepest street in Los Angeles" – the first steepest, wherever, must have been occupied solely by daredevil acrobats). The house was a total mess, involving a collection of collections – left-handed objects, SF books and magazines, antique jazz 78s, etc., etc. There was disorder, but made worse by filth – dust, dirt, dog shit, puke, and the unmentionable and undefinable. When Neville mentioned to Elmer that I was collecting comic books (at a time when the first issue of *Batman* was worth \$100, not \$50,000) Elmer sent word that he had some old comics he would sell me: the first five *Batman* issues tied together with shoe laces by some long-ago kid for \$100. It was a bargain, but considering the damage done by the lacing, not a steal at that time. Still, I phoned Perdue and said I'd buy the comics. He then told me all the troubles of his life, and said that if he sold me the comics he would only have the money (which he said he would only spend on drink), and then he would have nothing at all. "Sorry to bother you," I said.

Barbara knew Elmer since she was a teenager and looked upon him as an uncle – although I am sure Elmer had some less pure thoughts about her. But thoughts they remained only. She once deposited with him an antique radio-phonograph (which also made recordings), a Packard-Bell. In his will Elmer returned the device (which is in our dining room today). We went to his dirty old house the day his brother was removing the late Perdue's possessions. The brother was the mirror-image of Elmer – a teetotaler, a good businessman, and devoid of Elmer's wit and charm. I made the brother an offer of \$100 for a drawing that had long been on display: a composite drawing by a number of '30s cartoonists like Chester Gould, Milton Caniff and Chic Young. Like everything else in the house, it was dirty, streaked, water-damaged. Bruce Pelz was there to collect some fanzines left him and

commented that it was a fair offer, but the brother declined. It may have just eventually been junked. So far as I know, nobody ever found the first five issues of *Batman* shoelaced together. (634 S. Orchard Drive, Burbank, CA 91506)

LINDA (BURBEE) MARKSTROM

Elmer Perdue was always very kind to me, and I do remember thinking that he was a very lonely person. He was definitely an unusual individual but never anything but a gentleman in my presence.

I went to his house once to play poker. Every clock in the house was a "backwards" clock. He had a collection of such clocks. His house was on a very steep hill, and he had no back yard to speak of. When you opened the back door, there was no place to step out except into thin air. The hill dropped straight down from the back of his house. (15836 Cobblestone Rd., La Mirada, CA 90638)

F. M. BUSBY

Your ordering of the Elmerian vignettes follows well, and as always Burb had an unerring eye for eccentricities. Mr. Perdue did indeed have strangeness. Just after our '59 mini-Westercon, he was here for dinner and the evening, during which beer figured. At one point Elinor left on an errand. A bit later, Elmer paused in what he was saying; when he resumed, a subtly but noticeably different personality was speaking.

I don't know where he thought he was or who he was talking to, let alone about what, and it soon came clear that no answer of mine affected what he said next. After fifteen or twenty minutes he paused again, his head moved slightly, and Elmer was back. He may well have picked up right where he left off; I'm not certain either way. When Elinor returned a little later, he was tracking perfectly okay.

My best guess is that Elmer was toxed up to where he hit the hallucinating point. I'd seen the personality shift thing before with a couple of other people, so it wasn't a total shock — and at least Elmer's alter ego didn't start off with "Ah'm gone kill you!" Still, not your average natterfest. (2852-14th Ave. West, Seattle, WA 98119)

ARTHUR JEAN COX

I read *Trap Door* No. 16 with an interest touched with a sense of the uncanny. The experience for me was like strolling through an unfamiliar neighborhood and coming unexpectedly upon places and scenes where I had grown up. To give one instance: Burbee, in his "Memories of Elmer," mentions "a fan girl named Audrey Clinton" in a way which (I'm sorry to say) I

found rather unpleasant. I knew Audrey fairly well at one time. Actually, I knew her before I knew her because she and her mother, a Mrs. Seidel, were friends and coworkers of my stepmother, who often discussed them at the dinner table. And, ridiculously independent of that connection, I later knew her as Audrey Seidel, a member of the LASFS — my family and science fiction were two separate worlds that never dreamt of each other's existence, and yet she bridged them. And still later, I knew her as Audrey Clinton, the wife of my friend Eddie Clinton. After some years she and Eddie separated and she disappeared from the local scene. I ran into her in New York City in the 1960s, and saw her at the World Convention in Cleveland in 1966; but I haven't heard of her now in thirty years, and hadn't seen her name in print until just now in Burbee's piece on Elmer Perdue. I suppose she's still alive.

I was delighted with Redd's column and with the reminiscences of him by Len Moffatt, Lee Hoffman, Jim Harmon and yourself. I was also glad to see the letters from Walt Willis and Harry Warner Jr. — I don't see many fanzines these days and wasn't sure they were still in circulation. And I roared with laughter — well, anyway, I laughed out loud — at Burbee's account of his conversation with Al Ashley. (1528 Winona Blvd. #11, Los Angeles, CA 90027)

JIM CAUGHRAN

I never met Boggs, but really appreciate his work. Your issue, with Burbee, Boggs and Perdue memorials, really struck the grief buttons. I'd never properly mourned Perdue, and Burbee's anecdotes brought a lot back.

Burbee's article made me remember the sexual play that he and Elmer did most of the time. From Perdue's penis problems, I see now that he teased Perdue. I remember one evening in which he was telling a story, and came back several times to knocking on Elmer's door and being greeted by a naked Perdue. At each additional telling, the visible member grew, until it was between Elmer's knees, at his ankles, dragging on the floor.

Rotsler asked in FAPA some years ago, "Can anyone imagine a work of any substance being written with a ball-point pen?" I can't, and I'm surprised Boggs used them. I hate ball-point pens irrationally. They always seem to freeze up when you need them, and some still put out too much ink every so often (and the globs smear). I don't write as legibly with one; they slide too easily. The writing looks less "clean" than something written with a pencil, fluid-ink pen or felt-nib. But if I don't have my security pencil — an automatic, 0.5-millimeter pencil with eraser — in my pocket, I feel naked. (24 Prestwick Crescent, Willowdale, Ont. M2H 1M9, Canada)

RAY NELSON

The Boggs and Burbee reprints reminded me most forcefully of something I had almost forgotten: namely, how little fannish writing has to do with science-fiction and how much it has to do with arrogance. Funny I never noticed that back when Boggs and Burbee were Ghods. Funny I laughed as loud as the next guy as I gleefully illustrated articles in much the same vein as these. Boggs is so superior to the other soldiers, Burbee so superior to Elmer Perdue and Al Ashley. Now I can't help but wonder what would have happened to me if I had lived in the same town as Burbee instead of in an obscure little town in northern Michigan. Would Burbee have chronicled my bungled teen-age sex life, my pretensions to devout Christianity, my humiliations at the hands of high school sports heroes, my chronic sexual impotence? Would he have exposed me in front of all fandom as the total nerd I was? I think about that and still laugh at this stuff, but now it's the laughter of heartfelt relief. *{I lived in the same area as Burbee, a teenager with my own hangups, and it never happened to me.}* (333 Ramona Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530-3739)

MURRAY MOORE

I was particularly interested to read about Boggs' mimeography tools. I have accumulated a modest sampling. I have considered hanging my red and white, one and three-quarter by one and three-quarter by three inch Gestetner corflu box on a string around my neck the next time I attend a gathering of fanzine fans. I would produce the bottle, unscrew and remove its top, and invite selected fen to smell its contents. Hoohaw! *{I wonder if Gestetner corflu smells different than the ancient bottle of Sure-Rite Stencil Correction Fluid I keep in my desk? I just took a tiny huff; it's only about a quarter full, but the odor is still pungent.}*

I must work out what to say. "Smell?" could create the wrong impression, a comment by me about the person I am addressing, rather than an invitation from me. "Sniff this" is clear, but lacks ceremony. My present idea is to adopt Lauren Bacall's lines to Humphrey Bogart in the movie *To Have and Have Not*: "You know how to smell corflu, Jophan, don't you. Just flare your nostrils, and inhale."

Even in death Burbee is making fan history. I predict that sooner, later, inevitably, during a lull in conversation at a room party, during the hesitation between a finished topic and a new topic, a fan will fill the silence with, "Take out your cock, Meyer, I want to look at it." I have prepared a response to that request, but I am keeping it to myself, for my use. I will reveal that my response is *not* "Sniff this." (377 Manly Street, Midland, Ont. L4R 3E2, Canada)

ALISON SCOTT

I was particularly taken with Redd Boggs' description of mimeo tools. I'm a fierce believer in the need to plan and design fanzines. Of course, this is rendered simple for me by modern word processors and a myriad of fonts. I wonder if I would have had the time and energy to use lettering guides and styluses? These traditional skills may soon be lost from our subculture — perhaps we should revive them with "stenciling bees" and the like? (42 Tower Hamlets Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4RH, U.K.)

CATHERINE MINTZ

Thank you for sending issue 16 of *Trap Door*, although it makes melancholy reading, filled as it is with eulogies, funeral orations and other memento mori. Also, I have a bone to pick posthumously with Redd Boggs, in that I doubt I'll ever hear another noon whistle without thinking, "There goes Hank Bissell!" Immortality can come in strange forms. (1810 S. Rittenhouse Sq. #1708, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5837)

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

My own friends have been dropping off like flies and I suppose that's what I get for always having had retro-tastes in fiction. It means I could only talk about books to geezers and geezettes who remembered when Haggard and Rohmer then pulp authors mattered to the "young." When I was in my twenties, I noticed a lot of my friends were in their fifties and sixties, and though some of them made it to their eighties or nineties, they're all gone now. Last year I lost my closest friend in the Seattle used book community, someone who though not rich herself always found a way to hire me to assist her with something or other when my writerly income fell below absurd and I needed rent monies. Gloria Martin's grandson founded Shakespeare & Martin in the 1970s; he was a skiffy fan and I obtained from him many wonderful books that I still own. He died young, in a motorcycle accident, and his grandmum Gloria ran the shop thereafter. For twenty years I hung out with her, hearing tales of "young communists" well before WWII, and of Seattle's beat community of the '50s, and now and then meeting through Gloria old artists and political radicals and old gay beatniks with Tales To Tell. I am not personally particularly friendly (at least not on the surface where for most people it most matters) so it was great to have this cultural giantess as my buddy, to assure me of the chance to meet cool people with whom to have cool conversations. There'll be no more of that now. Her funeral was attended by *hundreds* and news crews came from distant cities to report and

televise her death. Somehow I hadn't noticed she was *that* important, except to me. I couldn't stay for the death-festivities, however, as the overwhelming crowd was definitely not to my liking. People literally chased me to the door to find out why I was leaving. On my own account most people would've been glad to have me gone. But I was with her so much, people thought I should stay. Her passing still bums me out, though I suppose it's mostly for selfish reasons, since she lived the longest fullest life imaginable.

{*And from an earlier letter:*} I like *Trap Door* because it reminds me of the first fanzines I ever saw — partly because they're the same old contributors, but more than that is a, umm, Benchley-esque tone of whimsy completely lost in much of what remains in fanzine fandom today. But of course *Trap Door* is *not* exactly like the fanzines of my youth, because there was a bigger mix of neofans and yunkers in any crowd in those days. New blood kept the whole from being strictly a nostalgiafest for First Fandom lamenting 1936 (as *Trap Door* laments 1957). {*It does?*} To be a young fan meeting an old time science fiction fan and/or writer (in person or in the pages of fanzines), hearing humorous or surprising tales of "When I First Met John Campbell" or "Kornbluth and I were hanging out at ..." or "Lovecraft and I were looking for a place to get ice in Boston when ..." — hearing tales of days of old was the blessing of learning the history — it was a gift to a new and vital generation who listened, with our mouths fully agape, to the whole history of science fiction embodied in people we respected, love, admired — who called us yunkers by our first names and bothered to answer our letters and shared our enthusiasm for goofing off in fanzines.

Now it seems as though everyone is prematurely tottering about telling each other "remember when" with no neofans or yunkers listening in. And now *Trap Door* records the worry that there'll be nobody to mourn when the last Old Time Fan is dead. This sort of misery-based nostalgia I don't recall from the first fanzines I ever read — though maybe I just missed it and it was there — in the sad reminiscences of Stanley Weinbaum for example. But even the saddest things seemed to be about a history that was generally agreed to be communally important. {*Actually, the comment you refer to was meant to be whimsical.*} I used to go every week to H. Warner Munn's house for chocolate and apple pie, to hear him tell tales of all the great *Weird Tales* writers he knew from the 1920s onward. My heart still aches for those stories, for the best cups of chocolate I ever had. Those reminiscences were shared with a gleam and a twinkle, whereas so many fans today remember fandom's golden era with a mope and a tear. Including me. I cannot stand conventions anymore.

I miss the days when they were filled with authors and collectors of old books, whine, moan, grumble.

I dunno if I have ever been a full-fledged fan. I cared poop for DUFF or TAFF. The idea of a crowded Worldcon gave me the creeps; I can't recall that I ever voted for Hugos. At conventions I hung out with collectors of antiquarian horror, with writers young and old, not so much with the wholeheartedly fannish folk who frequently took pride in no longer reading anything but fanzines about fans who went smoooooth at each other as they got drunker and stupider and more convinced their slurred stories made sense. Most wholehearted fans seemed like dorks, and the ones who weren't dorks were high on drugs. I preferred intense conversations with sober writers and readers who needed mainly books to get high.

For a while I guess I vied with Harry Warner Jr. to produce the most, the longest LoCs. I wrote dozens every week to all and sundry, always multiple-page, in days when all I had was an ancient Remington Silent to type them on. But I had stopped being a devoted letterhack for about two years when I received in the mail, utterly unexpected, the Faan Award for Best Letterhack. I hadn't even known I'd been nominated. At the time, getting that award really annoyed me. I deserved it two years earlier, not later. Did this mean nobody even noticed I'd been quiet for two years? Had it taken all that time even to realize I'd *previously* spent years hacking away? The award at the time consisted of a diploma-like thingie, nothing witty; and I was sufficiently unimpressed to have received it without preamble that I scrolled it into my typewriter and hacked out a letter on the back! Sent it off to I've no recollection where. What a dumbshit I was that day. I'd love to have it now, framed and hanging on the wall alongside later professional awards.

One of my old letterhack jokes was a big thank-you for any fanzine with a cover that had art printed only one side, because I could rip the cover off and write a letter on the back. Of course I never did that. I saved even the dumbest crudzines. But I did that shtick face-to-face with Jerry Kaufman: "I was so pleased your latest ish had a cover printed on one side only so I could tear it off and type a letter on the back!" The look of stricken *belief* on Jerry's face — hurt puppy eyes, quivering lower lip, ears pressed flat in his poodle cut — I never used that one again.

My old letterhack energy is today more involved in the mail art community. I send out about forty pieces of mail-art a week, often more. My mailbox is always crammed full of mail art treasures coming back at me — collages, arty handmade books, fake postage stamps, documentation of exhibits. It's a fandom of a sort, with

Big Names mingling with neophytes, occasional gatherings, but mostly art-communication through the post. I started doing mail art in the 1970s but got more interested in fanzines, then in just writing fiction. But five or six years ago I started doing a lot of mail art again because a problem with my wrists meant I couldn't type all day. Mail arting is an utterly pointless waste of time, just like fandom, filled with people trying to build a sense of community on the basis of dada, surrealism and silliness. Slack lives on. (P. O. Box 20610, Seattle, WA 98102)

JOHN BERRY

Thank you very much for the latest *Trap Door* delivered this morning, which I read in its entirety before arising to face the day in a rather sad and reflective mood after reading it, a post-*Trap Door* condition. This is of course because of the reports of the sad demise of the BNFs who strode through the fannish stage, never forgetting their lines, always giving assured performances, always to be remembered. Names which adhered to me when I entered the fannish portals of Oblique House in mid-1954.

I believe the age of BNFs is passing, as fandom is changing. Fortunately with *Trap Door* you are maintaining the ooollddd fannish traditions, except of course that it is crisp and clean and physically attractive like all the modern fanzines, which it should be; but I still yearn for the old days, when fanzines were produced with considerable effort on venerable reproduction processes, using old envelopes, perhaps recycling more than once, not sealing envelopes, trying to deceive the post office with less than minimum postage, perchance even recycling postage stamps. Fanzines were produced by effort and enthusiasm, as *Trap Door* undoubtedly is. The joy was actually *producing* fanzines; egoboo, though delightful, was secondary. {Yes, but without it fanzines wither and die.} (4 Chilterns, S. Hatfield, Herts AL10 8JU, U.K.)

DOUGLAS BARBOUR

Deaths in the fannish family, and in your own (that latter a harsher reminder than the others perhaps of your own mortality, and even if you don't think it has it will hit and stay hitting hard for quite awhile; I know from experience. I wish you the best in dealing with the loss). Always hard to take, especially when they are close to you. I didn't know any of them, of course, but the memoirs are moving and deeply felt. It was a pleasure to read the last of Redd Boggs' columns, too. I am not so sure about Charles Burbee's "Memories of Elmer," which struck this outsider as one of those "you had to be there" things. Maybe it might sound great over a few beers at a con, but it only sounded forced and was anyway

a sad tale. The tone didn't feel right to me, but then I knew none of the participants. On the other hand, the feeling of family in some of the letters and in your own memories of both struck home. I was reminded that "groups" occur, and fandom is just one striking example of that, with many smaller groups within the large one. Frank O'Hara created one in New York when he was alive there, and there's a wonderful collection of memoirs published about five years after he died which fills one with a sense of how deeply he was missed by so many who had been brought together only by his desire that they not only be his friends but friends. (11655-72nd Ave., Edmonton, Alb. T6G 0B9, Canada)

MILT STEVENS

I notice both Redd Boggs and Charlie Burbee had given some thought as to what should be done with their remains. I've never really given much thought to what should be done with my own remains. Someone will have to take care of it or the smell will get pretty awful within a brief period. I could be noble and donate my remains to science, but frankly I've never liked science all that much. I could have my body cremated, packaged in 68 identical containers, and distributed through FAPA. That way I could continue cluttering up fandom even after I'm gone. And think of the procedural furor it might cause.

But what if I had scads and scads of money and wanted a really spectacular way of leaving this world? What could I do? I think my personal preference would involve renting the space shuttle. I'd use it to have my body transported to orbit. Then I'd have the body wrapped in magnesium foil and dumped earthward. For anyone who wanted a spectacular send-off, going out as a shooting star would be a hard act to beat. (6325 Keystone St., Simi Valley, CA 93063)

VICKI ROSENZWEIG

You have produced an excellent memorial issue. I hope you don't need to do another one anytime soon. I suppose this is a skill nobody really wants to have.

Gary Hubbard paints an excellent picture of Corflu Vegas. I was there, and it was like that. I didn't see all the things he saw, of course, and I never met my muse; but what I did see he got right. There is something very sad about casinos: they've taken something that could be a pleasant recreation, like a friendly poker game with people you know, and mechanized it.

Odd though "ask me about my brain injury" sounds, Paul does a good job of describing his and the recovery from it. I think everyone loses words on occasion, and most of us worry about it. I worry that it might be a sign of something major wrong — or just

another odd after-effect of a concussion I sustained a while back, like my inability to watch MTV – or that it might get worse, and eventually interfere with my ability to do editorial work. But I think it's probably part of the human condition.

I've always assumed that Californians discuss snowstorms the way New Yorkers talk about earthquakes: when there's a really huge one that makes the national news, with an odd mixture of sympathy, evil delight, and relief that at least we don't have *that* problem.

What impresses me is that Harry Warner Jr. keeps the fanzines he doesn't consider worth the trouble of opening. I open just about everything that shows up here, with the exception of the obvious junk mail (such as solicitations for charities that I don't choose to donate to). But if something isn't worth reading at least part of, it's certainly not worth keeping around, where it will use up shelf space and make it harder for me to find the things I *am* interested in.

John Baxter's letter provokes a question: if French law prohibits the press to reveal "embarrassing facts about public figures," does it define which facts would be embarrassing? Or do the newspapers have to pick up the phone and say something along the lines of "Mr. Chirac? We've heard a story about you, and want to know if it would be okay to print it"? I can envision a scenario in which, say, the fact that Minister X has an Algerian mistress may not be printed, because the law says the mention of a mistress is embarrassing, but it's okay to say that Minister Y has been fondling skunks during the working day, because that was too weird to be listed. This, in turn, leads to the image of an office in Brussels, defining EU-standard scandal. Then, I suppose, one of the member nations will insist that something be defined in a non-standard way so it will (or won't) be legal for distribution under those regulations, like Portuguese carrot jam, which the bureaucrats dealt with by declaring that carrots are a fruit. Or, I suppose, the various countries could just trade scandals, with French and British nationals bringing the latest newspapers across the Channel, so the French can hear what their government is up to and the British can see naked pictures of the Royal Family. (33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York, NY 10034)

JOHN BAXTER

I never met Redd Boggs but he left an indelible effect on my thinking in at least one way. Years ago, sometime in the early '60s, I guess, an acerbic editorial in one of his fanzines expressed his distaste for the science fiction magazines then on offer. "The best thing one can do for SF in these dark days," he wrote, more or less, "is to go round the newsstands putting the SF

magazines in the back." This was the time in which Ziff-Davis reigned supreme, so one could well understand his feelings; but I had never come across a fan – ah, such innocence! – who dared to attack the Holy Literature in such sweeping terms. "One wonders," he wound up, "whether it is at all worthwhile, standing here knee-deep in muck, holding aloft this feeble torch." In Australia, supporting SF, good or bad, was an act of blind faith. Boggs introduced me to the novel idea that one might have a view of one's own about the sacred texts. It's a revelation I've been exploring ever since.

The only person I knew at all among the recently deceased celebrated in *Trap Door* No. 16 was Bob Shaw. We had quite a bit of contact in the last year since I was writing the biography of Stanley Kubrick and Bob worked briefly on Stan's apparently never-to-be-filmed SF project, *A.I.*

After firing Brian Aldiss (on whose story "Super Toys Last All Summer Long" the film is distantly based), Kubrick – this is in the late '80s – asked Arthur Clarke if he'd care to write it. Clarke's response was of the "over my dead body" variety, but in a gesture of dubious generosity he nominated Bob. Bob was summoned to Castle Kubrick, Stan's fortified mansion in the Hertfordshire hinterland.

"I was very impressed," Bob said. "His car picked me up at the nearest railway station and took me to the house. There were these electrically-controlled gates. We ate in the kitchen, which was about the size of the average ballroom. He asked me, 'Do you like Chinese food?' I said, 'Yes.' He must have given some kind of invisible signal, because a door opened and a waiter came out and served us a Chinese banquet. I often wonder what would have happened if I'd said, 'No, I prefer Indian.' Maybe another door would have opened and an Indian would have come out."

Kubrick said he's been rethinking "Super Toys," in particular the character of an engineer of androids who had just launched a new product, a synthetic "serving man" with a computer brain. He told Bob over the wontons that he now believed this serving man was the key to the story. He offered him a six-week contract to work on the script.

Bob slaved over a treatment in which the serving man played a large part. Then it was back to Castle Kubrick. "It was the same thing: the station, the car, the meal. Then he said, 'Well, what have you got for me?' I read him out my treatment, but I could see his face getting gloomier and gloomier. Finally he stopped me and said, 'What's all this stuff about the butler?' I said, 'But we agreed that he was to be the main character.' Stanley said, 'No, no, he's peripheral. What else have you got?' Of course I didn't have anything.

"After that, our relationship deteriorated. I kept coming up with story lines but he didn't like any of them. In the middle of the six weeks, I went to a science fiction convention in Vancouver. I was the guest of honor, and it had been publicized everywhere. When I arrived back I got a letter from Warner Brothers' solicitors telling me I'd done an unforgivable thing by leaving the country while under contract. I fixed that up with Stanley, and offered to work a week or two longer to make it up. He kept asking me to write sample pages of script. But I couldn't write script without having a story, and I think he formed the opinion that I was a pretty useless sort of a bugger."

All this was much funnier, of course, in Bob's lugubrious Ulster growl, and would have been funnier still had he worked it into a fanzine piece — as he may well have done, I suppose, though if he did I never saw it. *{Nor I.} (18 rue de l'Odeon, 75006 Paris, France)*

PAMELA BOAL

How mean of Dale Speirs to debunk all those Hollywood-engendered cowboy images. Oh well, he does it in such an interesting way I have to forgive him. I was born and raised in London, but having an aunt married to a cow man (an employee on a farm who works with the cows, rather different from the American version) my own introduction to the bovine species came about at an early age. In fact, during my stay with that aunt when I was seven years old, I would help bring the herd in for early-morning milking and was entrusted with milking the five Guernseys in the herd, very much pre-milking machine days—an experience that few city children would have the chance to enjoy today.

I will indeed stay tuned for grandfather stories; I suspect they will be entertaining. The joy of watching a new life develop does not exactly compensate for final goodbyes but it does help and (as you write) it is evidence of the manner in which life has its own balance. Fandom has suffered so many losses these past few years but they are not losses because people like yourself, who knew these fans personally, are aware that your lives are enriched by that knowing. You share their memories, and reprint their written and artistic contributions as beacons for the new generation of fans they have made space for. *(4 Westfield Way, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 7EW, U.K.)*

BOYD RAEBURN

I enjoyed immensely the remembrances of Dale Speirs. Most generous of him to provide it to you when he probably could have sold it (and may yet, I hope, do so). I smiled at his remarks that baseball caps were free, being given away by farm implement dealers. I

have read that other farm suppliers (feed stores, etc.) were similarly generous. Contrast that with today where persons pay large sums for garments bearing the logos of breweries and other commercial enterprises. They pay big money to be free walking commercials.

In relating Elmer Perdue's practice of memorizing streets, Rotsler comments, "To me, that's the weirdest 'hobby' I know." I have an even weirder one for you, Bill: the British hobby of "trainspotting" (not to be confused with the film of the same name.) While this was, I gather, a boy's hobby, some carried it on to adulthood. The way it worked, as I understand it, was that the trainspotter would take up a position where trains would pass at a low speed and write down the serial number of the locomotive. I know not whether the number was associated in the notes with other details of the train, but that was it. Also, I understand, trainspotters would sometimes exchange serial numbers. I think that for a weird hobby this easily beats memorizing streets. *(189 Maxome Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2M 3L1, Canada)*

DAVID REDD

Is Leigh Edmonds serious about fanzines needing trufan readers to remain "fanzines"? You could say the same about novels—at least, all those century-old novels which now can only be read with enjoyment by century-old readers. The rest of us have to struggle so hard we don't bother. It happens to Shakespeare; look at the sheer hard work needed to appreciate what he actually wrote, now that the language of the King James Bible is passing from use. The thought of fanzines becoming only accessible to students of "popular" culture in future is rather depressing, although the thought of someone earning a PhD trying to decipher ancient Walt Willis jokes does amuse me. Anyway, I think I see what Leigh meant, but not what he meant by it. *(48 Cardigan Road, Haverfordwest, Pems. SA61 2QN, U.K.)*

MIKE DECKINGER

I have had very limited experience attending funerals. It's a mixed blessing. On the one hand I haven't had to bear witness to the loss of a loved one; on the other, when the time finally does come (both my parents are in their 80's) I would be totally unprepared and ill-equipped to vent my grief. Most of my relatives have lived many long years and then passed on in locales too distant for me to attend.

Reading Redd Boggs' column, I was struck by the fact that I too had maintained some contact with Ron Haydock. He had a brief stint in fandom in the '60s before going on to forming a rock band and appearing in several of Ray Dennis Steckler's ultra-cheapie films.

Haydock was run down by a truck while hitchhiking.

I had not known that Corflu had a tradition of locking the guest of honor in his room Saturday night. I'm pleased that this is a recent tradition. I was the first Corflu guest of honor when it was held at the Claremont in Oakland. Terry Carr drew my name from a hat countless times. He thought I would not be there, dipped in, and plucked out my name again. He repeated the maneuver. Me again. I was only able to attend the first day, so another guest was selected. Had the practice of detaining the GoH been in force at that time, then I could well have been stumbling through a GoH speech I was ill-prepared for the following day.

Seth Johnson! I knew him well. Where to begin? In the '50s he operated the Fanzine Clearing House, sending fanzine bundles to interested parties for \$1.00, through ads in the prozines funded by the N3F. (*I always think of the FCH as a distant precursor to Greg Pickersgill's estimable Memory Hole fanzine recycling project.*) We lived less than a mile apart at the time. I must have biked to his home three or four times. Seth was the ultimate corresponding fan. He fanatically wrote letters. The first time I visited him (this would have been in 1958 or 1959) he showed me around his home. "Here are some letters," he said, unearthing a pile from the dinner table. We entered another room. "Oh look, more letters," referencing a stack that must have bordered on a ream. Another room and—more letters. He used to buy a lightweight 3-pound paper that was barely readable and allowed him to cram a dozen sheets into an envelope at basic first class rates (about three cents at the time). Seth had an eccentrically naive approach to fandom. He didn't just invite ridicule; he actively campaigned for it. His best letters appeared in *Void*. He delivered ice cream during the summer and collected unemployment the rest of the year. He was a heavy smoker and drinker, and this led to his passing. (649—16th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94118)

PAUL SKELTON

You and your readers can certainly trust Bridget Hardcastle's affirmation that British expertise in the field of Excretion Management Technology now stands comparison with that of the U.S. In fact, I suspect there is now no basic difference between our Biological Output Gleaning tissue (or "BOG paper" as it is sometimes acronymsously known) and that available throughout the USA. Moreover, it is quite possible that in related fields good old Yankee know-how has in fact been not only matched, but positively outstripped. Nor need you take my word for this. Unimpeachable international corroboration can be had from both Susan Manchester and one Michael D. Glicksohn.

I would have expected such breaking of sanitary frontiers to have first been chanced upon at some high-tech location. The washrooms at Heathrow Airport, for example. Of course it wasn't at Heathrow that Cas and I met Mike and Susan at the start of their recent U.K. visit, so obviously I cannot say with any certainty that these facilities are not in fact at the cutting edge in this regard. Manchester Airport's old Terminal 1 facilities (into which the cheaper and chintzier transatlantic operators fly) could boost nothing more adventurous than a 24-flavor condom machine that, among other things, offered you a slightly better than 4% chance of acquiring a curry-flavored condom. Seasoned international travelers though they were, our guests were as amazed as I at this particular instance of mankind's ingenuity. Generally a curry is hot and spicy. One could even go so far as to describe it as "burning." That which delivers a hot, spicy, burning sensation when placed into a mouth would certainly cause a similar sensation when placed into any other moist orifice. One can just see this poor nerd who cannot understand his lack of "success" with women. "You don't have to worry," he tells them. "I've got this curry-flavored condom."

But no. It was in the small Yorkshire town of Hebden Bridge that we saw the future, or rather in that town's public convenience. Well, three of us did. Cas, she of the steely bladder, stayed in the car. We walked across and down the road aways, then Mike and I bore right into the gents while Susan went widdershins, as it were, into the distaff side of the building. Having solved our immediate problem, Mike and I looked around for washing facilities and were baffled by their apparent absence. No wash basins at all. Odd. Closer inspection, however, revealed a large stainless steel panel inset with three steel buttons. Above the left one was the word "soap," above the central one "water," and above the right "dryer." Below these buttons was a mysterious oval orifice, and stygian was the blackness within. we looked at it, and we looked at each other. The level of trust or stupidity required to thrust your hands into a mysterious orifice in a public convenience in the wilds of Yorkshire had obviously never entered the heads of those who'd built and furnished this place. Having thoughtlessly finished first, it was obviously down to me to boldly go ... I bravely thrust my left hand into the hole and pressed the left button with my right index finger, and felt a splodge of soap hit the backs of my curved fingers, having not been quite brave or thrusting enough. I pushed my hand in further and pressed again, more successfully. I soaped my hands and then extracted one to press a soapy finger on the strangely slippery middle button, and was rewarded with an unseen rush of water into which I plunged and

lathered and rinsed my hands. I then once more withdrew my now sopping wet right hand and gingerly pressed the third steely button to indeed be rewarded by the cessation of water and a blast of warm air. Relieved, again, I finally stepped aside and watched Mike go somewhat more confidently through all the same motions. Outside on the sidewalk, we waited for Susan to come back out and discussed at length our mutual incredulity at this strange device. When Susan finally emerged, she had about her an air of both amused and bemused amazement. "You had one too!" we both credit. "Yes!" she replied portentously, and there on the pavement did a mysterious psychic bonding take place.

Someone once said that given the choice of betraying his country or his friend, he hoped he'd have the courage to betray his country. Right here an extra level was added. There are countries and countrymen, then there are friends—then there are people who have been to the toilet in Hebden Bridge.

On the way back to the car Mike and Susan, straying onto some canal moorings, were attacked and sent fleeing by a pair of guard geese, but that's another story. Hebden Bridge is not a town to mess with. Back at the car, and out of breath, we were met by Cas' puzzled glare. "You were a long time?" "You had to have been there," I replied, beginning the task of nineteen-point-turning us out of the car park and heading off for Skipton Castle ("the best-preserved medieval castle in England"), which to this day none of us has ever seen.

Hebden Bridge will do that to you.

Trap Door does it to you too, or something similar. It extracts you from consensus reality and routes you down its own spur. No. 16 was literate and moving and was a most fitting memorial not only to those fans directly eulogized, but somehow also to those others mentioned who've also recently left us with such great sense of loss. Loss but not grief. Grief is somehow negative, and their lives have had such a positive effect on fandom that grief cannot get a toe-hold. All our lives were enriched by theirs. We all have to die, but they left such a mark that we can but give thanks that we were here and saw them go by.

I would, though, disagree with Lee Edmonds' remark that libraries are preserving fandom for the future. They are preserving fanzines, not fandom. Fanzines are the medium of our kind of fandom, but they are also the detritus of fandom and it is only as detritus that libraries preserve them. The living, breathing, ongoing interaction that is fanzine fandom can never be preserved in a library. The one thing that can preserve fanzine fandom for the future is fanzines

as a part of an ongoing fanzine fandom, and you are doing your part. (25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 5NW, U.K.)

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Many thanks for *Trap Door* No. 16—although, when confronted with such a substantial fanzine, I as usual (and by "usual" I mean almost every U.S. fanzine we receive) feel that anything I might say by way of response will be of either insufficient merit or inadequate length to merit more than a brief reference in the WAHF column of the next issue. The inevitable result of such a feeling, of course, is that no letter gets written at all. Instead, we just pub another of our own wishes and hope that it will intersect somewhat with the other editor's concerns. *{When I find myself in the same boat, I'll try to limit my comment to a few main points; or, like you, rely on our continuing amicable trade relations.}*

But here's a few comments, nevertheless.

Vince Clarke wonders, as he has on several previous occasions in this and other fanzines, "why [it isn't] possible for twenty or thirty or more fans even in these days to reconstruct and play in that marvelous playground of myth." But there is no impediment, physical or otherwise, to prevent any fan or group of fans from constructing any myth they desire; and thus his question misses the point. It is not that it is impossible for fans now to indulge in the kind of myth-making to which he refers; it is, surely, that *they no longer want to*—presumably because such myth-making does not meet their needs, and because the concerns of modern fans obviously lie elsewhere. Why should this be surprising? The myth-making to which Clarke is referring (and for which he expresses such nostalgia) was clearly a product of '50s fandom—a fandom which existed *forty years ago*. To pretend even by implication that what met fans' needs then ought to meet their needs today is bloody silly. Further, an argument that such myth-making is traditional (although at such a juncture one recalls Terry Carr's remark that anything done once in fandom is traditional) will fail because it ignores the lesson of anthropology that traditions survive only so long as they are useful. Fifties-style myth-making has not survived. Clearly, therefore, it is no longer useful. QED.

Which perhaps avoids answering the question of why the practice ceased to be useful—so here's one: it is no longer a proud and lonely thing to be a fan. As several of the contributors to your letter column acknowledge, science fiction—and particularly science fiction imagery—is these days all-pervasive, with the result that we no longer feel ourselves to be alone against the world. It's true that we're unlikely to feel much sense of commonality or community with the vast

mass of people who nowadays consume what they think of as science fiction, but (just to spell it out in laboriously tedious detail for those determined to miss it) that is not the point. It is that the themes and ideas which once provoked such laughter and contempt have now penetrated contemporary culture to such an extent that they are commonplace. For example, cinema box office success can often be measured by how many big space-ships are blown up. Forty years ago, we had to put up with cheapo black-and-white rubbish like *Earth Versus the Flying Saucers* and kid ourselves that we might one day get something better. Now, the same film is remade with state-of-the-art computer-generated effects as *Independence Day* and recoups its entire production costs in its *first weekend*. Why should we need invented myth to protect ourselves against the world when the world takes us that seriously? (15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London N15 4JU, U.K.)

A. VINÇ CLARKE

{Joseph sent a copy of the above to Vinç, who passed along to me a copy of his response:}

Thanks for the copy of your letter to *Trap Door*, the courtesy is very much appreciated. I wasn't aware that I'd raised the question of the desirability of old-type fandom all that often—maybe it's just a facet of boring old fartdom?—but I think your argument against a sort of revival is interesting. It's true, of course, that the old myth-making has vanished. Saying that it became too unwieldy because of the sheer size of the thing (*Fancy-clopedia II* in '59 was over 150 pages long), which is the first answer that comes to mind, is not really adequate.

You're right in that myth-making dwindled away during the '60s. This was partly because the BSFA passed through a period when fandom-for-fun was a dirty phrase, and in the States the Boondoggle intruded with crashing realism that separated friend from friend. But I find it hard to think that a (near) universal acceptance of science fiction had much to do with it. After all, although the '50s fans had their grounding in SF, it was only a background activity. I can't speak for everyone of course, but I'd stopped reading every SF zine and book I could lay my hands on by about '54 or '55. And it was a truism—and still is—that you can issue an SF fandom fanzine with hardly any reference to SF in it. It isn't and wasn't a factor as far back as I can remember.

Obviously, there was an element of “backs to the wall.” Any discrete group faced with that vast mass of people you mention is likely to bolster the egos of its members with anecdotal history, slang, etc., to mark out their independence from the mob. I thought of fandom as a playground where I could relax after the trials and

tribulations of the mundane world.

There is, of course, the argument which you are too polite to mention, that just as in the larger field of human affairs there's been the Age of Castles, the Age of Steam, the Age of Flight, etc., which bulked large in human consciousness for a few decades and then passed, so the Age of Fandom-for-Fun also became gray and obsolete. It may be true, and yet—small bands of enthusiasts refight the struggles of Puritans vs. Roundheads, there are Vintage Car Rallies, there's the Olympics, and other sorts of dips into past history. In spite of your helpful criticism, I'd still like to revisit the sort of stage-setting where I had so much pleasure. And I was young—or, at least, younger. Maybe there's still a chance—I hear a '90s fancyclopedia is being prepared.

Anyway, thanks for the input. Even if time *has* moved on—which it undoubtedly has—I have a hankering for Fandom Past. Not, you must understand, as anything more than for the playground it always was. Boring and obstinate, huh?

{I succumb now and then to the urge to reread old fanzines, and enjoy it; however, I'm certain a lot of what I like would be fairly incomprehensible (without extensive footnoting) to fans of more recent vintage (and also largely irrelevant). But I don't regard this irrelevancy as failure to maintain fandom's “heritage.” And while I value fandom's past, what's happening now interests me more. I think fannish myth-making is far from dead; it's just about different people and situations now.

{Vinç also sent a letter of comment on lastish:}

Ethel Lindsay was a fine fan, and always a source of wonderment. A tiny Scots woman, putting one in mind, even in her younger days, of a favorite maiden aunt, you half-expected her to be tucked away somewhere with cats and knitting and a romantic novel to read. Instead, she was all energy, all gritty determination, and always independent. She produced 82 issues of her main zine, *Scottishe* (pronounced Scotty-she), virtually on her own from December '54 to September '81. She was already a hospital Sister (a senior nurse) when she started fanning, and confessed to difficulty in keeping her two lives separate. In *Scottishe* No. 1 she wrote, “In hospital ... it is becoming increasingly difficult to hide my fannish tendencies, and I am resigning myself to being labeled eccentric.” Whatever difficulties she had, she triumphed over them, though, and continued in her two roles until her retirement. Extraordinary.

Boggs and Burbee I mourn from a distance—never met them, but their writings live on. When I was introduced to US fandom in the very early '50s, courtesy of Walt Willis who passed on some FAPA mailings, their writing impressed me enormously. Still does.

Interested in the bit in the Boggs column about shading plates, etc. During the last year I gave all of mine, with stencils and styli, to D. West, who wanted them. He's the best fan caricaturist in Britain, and has drawn some exceedingly good cartoons. Don't know quite what he's going to do with the stuff, though. As Redd says, the tide of time has practically washed out the old stencil cutting.

Gordon Eklund's thumbnail review of *Union City* reminded me that many years ago I had similar trouble with the milkman. I used to leave out a note of how many pints I wanted, and I started to find that someone had altered this. "1" would be altered to "10," for instance, or even "10,000." After some days of this I started to get a bit peeved, and one morning got up especially early and lurked in the hallways until a shadowy figure showed through the frosted glass panel of the front door. I flung it open – and there was the milkman's boy, looking guilty. I didn't do more than give him a very hard stare – no reaching for my gun and zapping him, or even making a hex sign – but the problem vanished. This was infinitely less dramatic than the film, but Reality is like that.

William Danner's piece on small commercial libraries brings back memories. Over here the major commercial library before the War was run by the pharmaceutical firm of Boots. You'd go into one of their shops and there, amongst the pills and potions, would be a few shelves of books, all in the Boots plain binding, no publisher mentioned. I was never a subscriber, but used to check them out for ex-library sales. I'm looking at one now – *Jorkens Has A Large Whiskey* by Lord Dunsany – and note that there's a slip inside: "To the Book-Lover Book-Buyer: This book may eventually be offered for sale at a real Bargain Price. If you would like us to reserve you a copy of this, please fill in the form below" No one took advantage of this particular gentlemanly sales pitch, but the thing fell into my hands anyway. Unless public libraries, they didn't rubber stamp half a dozen pages, either, just a small shield-shaped sticker on the front of the book. Alas, this was another effort which was strangled by the War. I haven't seen a commercial library in this country for years 'n years.

All the letters, with those old familiar names, much appreciated. (16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN, U.K.)

MOG DECARNIN

Reading the letter column, I was suddenly arrested by Gordon Eklund's line, "Ochs hanged himself in his sister's bathroom in the '70s." Now I could swear that a late '80s/early '90s Minicon had Phil Ochs as a music

GoH. Am I crazy? Okay, let me rephrase that. Have I conflated Ochs with some *other* "folkie" of the same era who might indeed have been that GoH? This is not a remote possibility, to segue into Paul Williams' piece on brain injury. Yes, it is sometimes hard to know where disease/injury begins and normal "duh-UH-uh" IQ discontinuities end. My sister has something that may or may not be MS. I think it helps when I tell her I have the exact same symptoms of early-onset goofballhood as she does (forgetting what you were doing in the midst of some autonomic nervous system type task and making some extraneous gesture dredged up from self random half-conscious passing thought instead, and so on). She can then see it as just part of the Miracle of Life (the segment subtitled "The Aging Process") instead of a grim warning of imminent breakdown.

At first I thought Leigh Edmonds' idea about the enchanted spectacles was great, but then I realized it really doesn't work that way. Any potential fan, though she may not get all the jokes and fannish references, will immediately recognize a great fanzine and wish to bind the subculture that produced it to her with hoops of steel, etc. My first fanzine exposure was to Denys Howard's *Wandering About from Place to Place Without Apparent Reason* and I was captivated. Years later I reproduced copies of it for a lesbian/gay panel audience.

Along similar though sadder lines, publishing their work is a great way to memorialize departed fen. Thank you for your words on Redd Boggs and Charles Burbee, and for their words that followed.

Dale Speirs' account is all too typical of what happens to rural childhood memories these days. We moved around a lot so I have no one "home" to lose, but I feel a pang whenever I think of the mall parking lot that now covers the site of the big old beautiful stone house, with its spreading lawns, my grandfather, father and uncle built with their own hands (they even built the road to it) in Coraopolis, PA, even though my actual memories of it are vague to say the least. I don't look forward to Dad's own rural place suffering that fate someday.

I have to take issue with Harry Warner Jr.'s *Inventing Champagne* quote: "Newspapers and magazines make mistakes . . . (but) their reports are often more reliable than the recollections of participants in events." Anyone who's been involved in or ever researched a news event knows reporters (or essayists) and editors can and will get anything, absolutely *anything*, wrong. They *can* be useful to establish dates sometimes, but even such simple factual items are frequently wrong. I remember being first puzzled, then aghast, to read in one of those encyclopedias of literary biography how Arthur Rimbaud's radical, rebellious lifestyle culminated

in his shooting fellow poet Paul Verlaine. How many "authorities" do you suppose read this before it went to press? You can't help wondering how it might have affected the entire entry had the writer gone back to his sources and realized that, oops, *Verlaine* shot *Rimbaud*.

Researching anything at all, past or current, will give you countless examples of reportorial error. Recently a friend sent me many priceless (to me) European articles and interviews to add to my Johnny Depp collection, from England, France, Spain and Italy, and the errors were at least as frequent and of the same genres as in American articles. I've made one or two of them myself, so I know how they happen from carelessness—and journalists suffer from the exact same misremembrances as event participants, to boot. The point about witnesses is well-taken; it's just that it should apply at least as much to reporters who, after all, usually get their accounts *from* witnesses in the first place. Since witnesses in fandom tend to *be* writers/faneds, my pet crab may be doubly significant in fandom. (*521 N. Sweetzer #1, West Hollywood, CA 90048*)

JOHN BANGSUND

John Baxter mentions putting fannish things behind him when he went to London in 1969. What memories that little statement brings back! Lee Harding, Leigh Edmonds and I drove to a convention in Sydney that year, and Harding insisted that we make a pilgrimage to Baxter's P.O. box—even touching it with reverence—in the belief that Baxter had gone and Australian fandom was bereft. "Ichabod," I said (and had to explain). We learnt later that John was still in Sydney that day, but it didn't matter. (*P. O. Box 5005, North Geelong 3215, Australia*)

JEAN YOUNG

The little piece by Jim Harmon was beautiful. It's odd that we were apparently Redd's two most regular and voluminous correspondents, but Jim and I have never met nor corresponded.

Fascinating piece by Dale Speirs. I especially liked the part about lassoing. The image of lassoing to a (rotten) fencepost "so one would see a cowboy chasing after not only the cow but the fence is just marvelous." Apparently my neighbor's cows got out one evening when I'd gone off to mail run, and all headed down the lane and up the road. Lucky for me they took that way instead of heading for the garden (or out to the alfalfa field). Why they did this I have no idea, unless they were following the path of the pickup truck that brought the extra feed/grain goodies every couple days. One day many years back, I looked out my west window upstairs and saw two pigs walking down my lane — "Maude and Ethel over for a visit, dear." I called my

then-neighbor at his home place and — sure enough — they were his. They always liked to come up here when they got out, about two miles — and they got out a lot.

Boyd Raeburn's letter (the Charles Platt part) reminds me how fandom (like any group, I suppose) has been full of such conflicting views of some people.

I know other people that Shelby Vick claim to control their dreams — that's what "lucid dreaming" is all about, isn't it? But I think that most of them are, in some sense, *in* their dreams. That's why the control is so important. Do you suppose writers or visual artists are more likely to dream "movies"? I always dream in color — sometimes subdued or somber colors (or lighting), but color. Shelby's dream of getting shot — the terrible physicality of it! I have experienced being killed a couple of times in dreams: as a teenager being shot in a stairwell in school by my school's headmaster, to whom I'd turned for protection; and about ten years ago (in my early 50s) being beheaded on a great stone boulder (kneeling in front of it) by some aboriginal group. Perhaps a hair less physical than Shelby's, but pretty grim all the same — and in color. (*RR 4, Box 47, 3302 Echo Valley Road, Decorah, IA 52101*)

PAUL WILLIAMS

My surprising and huge difficulty in writing a long-promised LoC on *Trap Door* No. 16 is requiring me to examine (once again) the nature of my relationship with fandom. I can write (rarely, but now and then) a comment to some other smartass on the Bob Dylan Internet mailing list I belong to (Breen on "Other Fandoms" in *Void* utterly vindicated and proven prophetic by world history). But I have tremendous resistance to speaking to the editor and readers of *Trap Door* from a future letter column because, um, I'm mysteriously and unreasonably self-conscious. Is it just because Ted will be reading and ready with a retort? Nah. It's just that for peculiar reasons all my own I take fandom too damn seriously, and so my comments on this excellent issue with its fascinating and moving accounts of the passing of Charles Burbee and Redd Boggs seem to me a piece of writing that requires of me the same level of concentration and energy I need to write a book about Neil Young and to edit and record the first-ever SF CD anthology (*Tell Me a Story: Science Fiction I*, coming soon). And my promises to myself regarding those big tasks and several others including the resurrection of my publishing company as a website etc. etc. come first.

Hey, it's not just that I've been too busy. It's that I've been too ridiculously self-conscious and earnest about what I imagine I'd have to require myself to say if I were to respond appropriately (in public) to *TD* 16.

Can you believe it? Well, you don't have to. But just consider the possibility, dear reader and editor, that some of us who never appear in your letter columns may suffer not from laziness or disinterest but from an acutely focused form of writer's block.

Anyway, God bless Redd Boggs. In the second issue of my fanzine *Within*, published days after I turned fourteen in June '62, I said, "The first zine to come in after I mailed out *Within* #1 was *Discord*, from Redd Boggs. The very fact that I enjoyed this zine is proof that I am fast becoming interested in fandom as something more than an adjunct to SF. The editor, Redd, has a beautiful prose style ..."

I hope that any biographer I may someday get will realize that reading *Discord* 17 was a turning point in my life, particularly my life as a writer and publisher. (P. O. Box 231155, Encinitas, CA 92023)

TOM PERRY

I'm disappointed in the outcome of Paul Williams' brain injury. When I read about it, I wanted him to survive, of course – but it did occur to me that maybe, just maybe, he would regress to the point of putting out another issue of *Within*. I had a long letter that amounted to a book review that Paul was going to run in that issue. Probably his fall off the bike was the last chance of that ever getting published. Still, the experience of having a contribution to *Lighthouse* published a quarter of a century after submitting it has inspired in me a kind of mad hope about this and others of my Lost Works. (2268 NW 37th Pl., Gainesville, FL 32605)

SID BIRCHBY

Trap Door No. 16 was, as usual, well up to the standards of its predecessors. Thanks indeed. It's sad to read of the passing of Redd Boggs and Charles Burbee, and as you rightly said, the loss of two long-time friends must have come as quite a shock. You have also suffered another blow, this one of a personal level – my deepest sympathy over the death of your father. Also, the news of Ethel Lindsay, too. A good person and a fine fan. I can still recall her excellent and meticulous reviews in *Scottishe* that must have encouraged many a tyro to redouble their efforts. Ethel was always the soul of charity.

I've been trying to write a letter for some months in order to express my feeling of loss of so many good friends in the fannish world. Wasn't it Donne who wrote that "No man is an island"? It's true, and especially we are diminished by the death of a true friend.

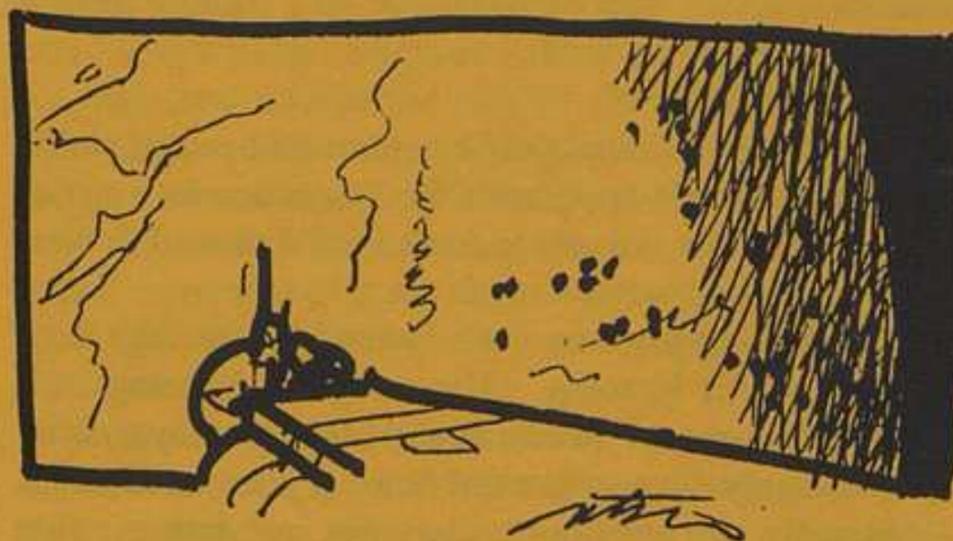
Recently, I've been visiting Croatia, that unhappy land among a swarm of unhappy fragments of the

former Yugoslavia. In earlier days, it was noted for its folk-singing. People came from far and wide, but not anymore. There are precious few singing nowadays, or at least as far as I heard. This agony and hatred is certainly not diminishing in the parts of the Balkans that are known to me. The very words "ethnic cleansing" are insults to civilization. Whether or not, we may not survive the last days of the 20th century. Maybe the new millennium will bring a fresh start, but I have my doubts.

On the whole, I'd better stay with fandom! (40 Parris Wood Ave., Didsbury, Manchester M20 5ND, U.K.)

... AND WE ALSO HEARD FROM

SHERYL BIRKHEAD, KEN CHESLIN, GARY DEINDORFER, MIKE GLICKSOHN, CHUCH HARRIS, IRWIN HIRSH, TERRY JEEVES, L. JIM KENNEDY, DAVE LANGFORD, ANDREW MAIN, WILLIAM MEYERS ("Thanks for keeping me on your mailing list. Your zine is quite a blast from the past."), LLOYD PENNEY, DEREK PICKLES ("Regarding Richard Newsome and Marilyn Monroe's attraction, must have been her pheromones as actors who worked with her say her B.O. would knock your hat off"), JOHN D. RICKETT, WILLIAM ROTSLER ("The bit that struck me the most was the muse section of Gary Hubbard's article. I loved it! He has the seed of a very good story there, maybe even a novel. Pure gold. Take out fandom, put in reality, go to town!"), KEN RUDOLPH, ANDY SAWYER, BO STENFORS, DAVID THAYER and HENRY WELCH. Many thanks to all!



R.I.P. SaM – 1920-1997

I met Sam Moskowitz only twice, at the '93 and '96 Worldcons. At the first, he inscribed my copy of *The Immortal Storm*: "A record of fandom's infamies recorded for posterity."

"Not excluding your own?" I asked. He nodded yes and looked rueful. I liked him for that.