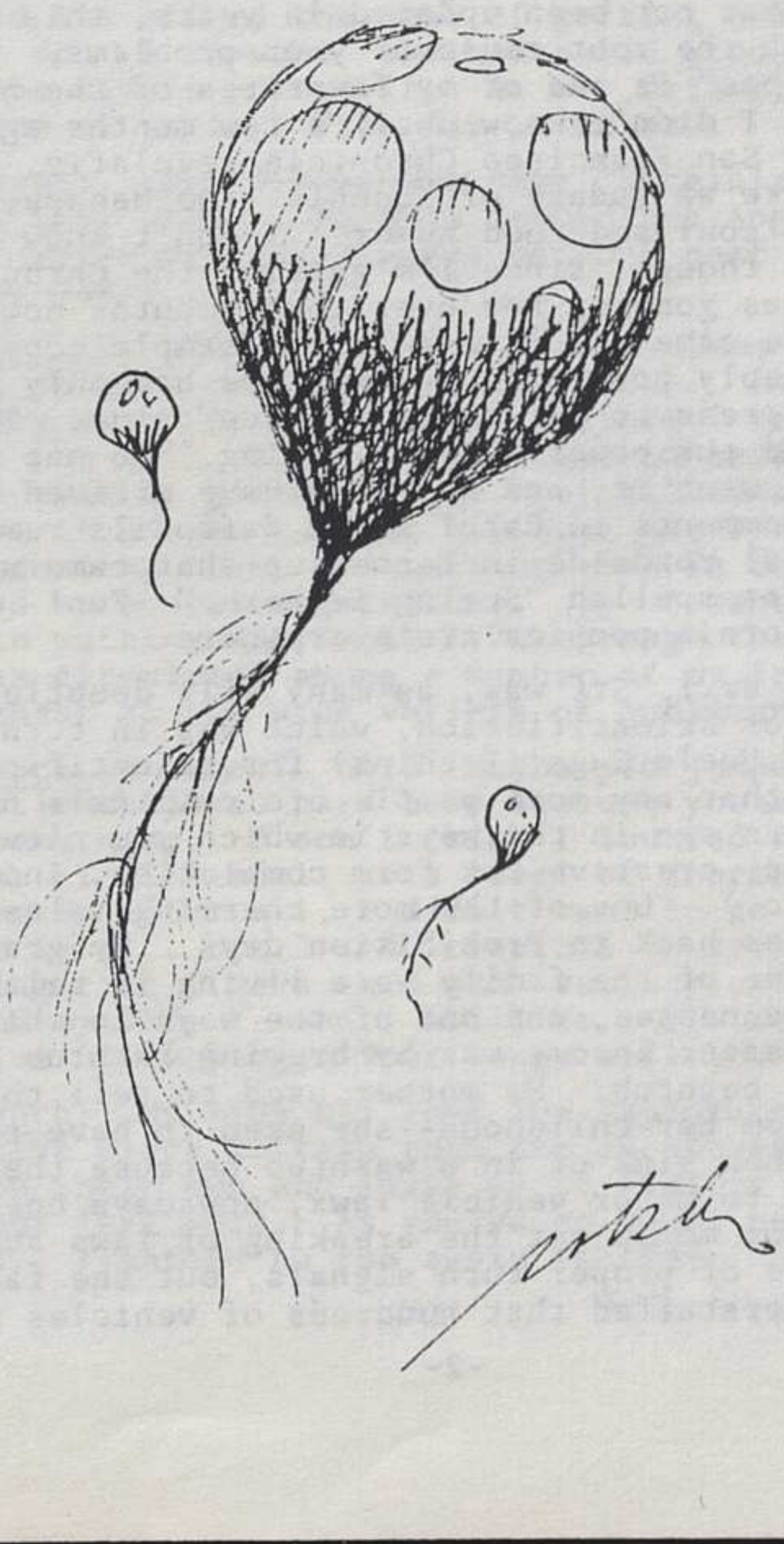
DOOR KNOB

April 1987



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roads with seriously out of date registration. In California license plates have a month sticker and a year sticker indicating when the registration has expired. One can get a 60 days extension for delays in getting one's smog certification together, but beyond that the police are entirely within their rights to pull you over and issue a ticket for out of date registration. In actual fact this rarely happens and the vehicles that are most pulled over, in my experience, are older delapidated vehicles. Inasmuch as this describes my own, I am very careful to keep my registration up to date. So it pisses me off when I see late model expensive cars with seriously out of date registration driving around with apparent impunity. Another state law here is that cars must have a license plate both front and rear. Again, this is apparently selectively enforced so that only old beat-up cars are picked on. A lady friend of mine driving a 25 year old car, whose front plate had, unbeknownst to her, fallen off was pulled over by the police a couple of years ago. When she pointed out that cars like fancy Corvettes and other sports cars which don't have a ready made place to mount a front plate drive around without being hassled, the officer made some lame excuse. She was unemployed at the time and could ill afford the cost of getting new plates, which they made her do. I thought she had solid grounds for a lawsuit myself, but she didn't pursue it. As our friend, Mr. William Danner, is fond of saying, "The law is an ass."

Dian Crayne: When I hear the name "Virginia Dare," I think of cheap wine that used to be sold around Los Angeles when I was young. || I remember "magic words of poof poof piffles," as spoken by Mary Jane...

Mike Gunderloy: Well, of course I know about the Philip K. Dick society, being a charter member and all. In fact I'm even more intimately aware of it than that, since I am the one who puts together the bulk mailing every time an issue is ready to go out. I do this by going over to Paul Williams' house and arranging them in proper bundles all over his living room floor, banding and counting them, and putting them in the No. 3 mail sacks required by postal regulations. || I want to thank you for once again putting FACTSHEET FIVE through the SAPS mailing. This issue has circulated among a number of my friends who were gassed and aghast at the wide variety of publications listed.

Nancy Rapp: A harem? Moi? Maybe you jumped on my comments about my relationships so hard here because you were giving up smoking, or something. I don't think I sounded as "cold" as you seem to think. I will admit to a level of shorthand in those passages because, after all, I didn't want to go into four-part harmony about it all, but I did conclude by saying, "I'm counting my blessings that I have this much variety and potential in this aspect of my life." And I still am. || Good luck in your efforts to give up smoking. Your lungs will thank you.

Nicki Lynch: My kids all love the Exploratorium and I love it as a surefire place to take them for an afternoon where they will go off on their own and leave me to explore by myself. || Thanks for your TAFF vote. As you've no doubt heard by now, I didn't get it. I intend to run again in 1989.

Leigh Edmonds: As you must have noticed, I didn't get into engaging G.M. Carr in debate about my feelings that a nation has an obligation to look after its poor. The reason I didn't get into it is precisely because she is a "conservative" and has been for many years and because of that engaging her in such debate is fruitless because she has had her mind made up, perhaps longer than either you or I have been alive. I liked what you said about the poor as a market and a channel through which money can pass through the society and back into the hands of the capitalist class where it is once again turned into production--after the skimming off of profits, of course--and thus keeps the cycle going, whereas the production of military goods simply deadends the money into useless piles of hardware and only benefits a relatively few, hign paid individuals who produce the goods. I look forward to whatever she might say about my questioning her about the circular logic of her statement that "The arms race ...increases the production of goods for military use." Anyway, to continue, like you I regard those who call themselves conservatives as the political enemy. Years of Reagan in this country and Thatcher over in Britain have provided a tragic, if pointed, illustration of where their economic policies lead. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer and the middle class tends to disappear. Unfortunately the conservative political philosophy has a heartless anti-people orientation that protects the richer classes and hassles the middle and lower economic classes by threatening to send their work to third world countries unless they agree to wage cuts and other concessions in a desperate cycle to keep their jobs at all. Conservative MBAs are the true enemy of the people here and elsewhere, because they don't view the culture as a whole, but only as a sponge out of which to squeeze more profits for the few and the whole be damned. The result is an endless deterioration of the standard of living for the working classes. In this country we have what's known as the Consumer Price Index which is an average of the costs of basic goods and services. It's based on prices in 1967 and in the figures just released for February 1987 is running at 348.5% of those figures. In other words, it costs nearly 3½ times as much now to get by as it did in 1967 in absolute dollars. Now in 1967 I was making $7,000 per year and according to this formula I should be making $24,395 per year just to be breaking even. At my last job I was making $18,000 per year. And so it goes. If this trend continues, we have class warfare to look ahead to, and not just divided along racial lines as we all now get to share in this growing disparity. According to figures I read recently, some 85% of new job creation in this country is in jobs paying under $10,000 per year. That's your workers in fast food restaurants, etc. There is currently a lot of talk of raising the minimum wage, which has been $3.35 per hour since 1981, to something like $4.85 to $5.00 per hour. You can bet the fat cats who run MacDonalds are lobbying hard to try and turn back this one. I regard myself as basically a socialist, too, in that I believe a culture has an obligation to try to provide work for all its members who want to and are able to hold a job and to hold welfare/dole programs to a minimum to the truly needy. I believe it's all right for some people to earn somewhat more than other people. But I think it's a crime that there are privileged people who makes millions a year off the hard labor of people who have to work for shit wages because that's all the rich make available to them. How about that, Gertrude? || If indeed

you and Valma do ever get to the Bay Area I would be more than happy to take you to some of those restaurants with nonsmoking areas because that's where I like to eat myself. In San Francisco and in Berkeley, at least, it's mandated by law that such sections be established and maintained. Here in Sonoma County, legislation is nonexistent on this score. I always ask to be seated away from smokers when I eat out, which isn't that often, and if smokers are subsequently seated adjacent to me, I will ask the waiter if he could seat them elsewhere and if that doesn't happen, I will not leave a tip. I will also fan smoke back in the direction of the smokers if I have anything, like a newspaper, to do it with.

G.M. Carr: I get a lot of junk mail and most of it has to do with various sweepstakes, drawings and the like with prices up to $10,000,000, this latter naturally payable over a number of years. While my chances of having Ed McMahon show up at my door with my first check are, admittedly, slight, I still send them all back in just to see what might happen. Naturally, because of this activity on my part, I get a lot of stuff from people who want me to pay entry fees to enter their contests. These I either throw away or, if they come with business reply envelopes, send back with notes to remove me from their mailing list (which never happens). I got the solicitation for the mini-piano that you sent away for and it ended up in the trash. I also get solicitations to subscribe to magazines about contests and to buy books to supposedly teach me systems to increase my chances in these contests or in the lottery. As to the lottery, I buy an occasional scratch off ticket and play various Lotto numbers every week. I get the occasional small prize on the scratch off tickets which I generally reinvest in more tickets. In the Lotto drawings, I've won $5 one time so far. But I continue to do it since it's inexpensive and fun. And you never know... || California has that mandatory seat belt law, too, which makes me a criminal right off the top. I will tend to wear them on long trips, but find it a pain in the neck to have to constantly belt and unbelt on short trips, even though statistics allegedly say that short trips are the most dangerous.

Elinor Busby: I don't really know "what happened" to Greg Shaw except that he apparently is employed in the music business in Southern California. I have been sending him TRAP DOOR for the past four issues in hopes of getting a rise out of him, as I have from so many long disappeared fans, but he has not responded and is scheduled to be deleted the next time I revise my mailing list. His address is P.O. Box 7112, Burbank CA 91510, if you want to try contacting him yourself. || You're quite right that $1,600 is poor pay for a legal secretary. Much of that can be chalked up to living in Sonoma County, where employers maintain a convenient fiction that it costs less to live. (Actually, only rent is cheaper and that's relative to San Francisco not the country as a whole.) In San Francisco I could have made $2,000 or more, but then I would have had to subject myself to painful commuting experiences unless I wanted to move down there, which I didn't and don't. I hope never to have to be a legal secretary again; it's a mug's game. || Elmer Perdue was originally from Wyoming, I believe, not from Montana.

Meg Stull: Thank you for your description of the area you live in. Yes, "rural" is a better description for it than "depressed," and it sounds a lot like some of the more rural areas of California, and even more like Tennessee outside of the few larger cities and towns. As to your comment, "Why should doing nothing pay more than doing something?" in response to my remarks about "schlepping burgers," I quite agree with you. I think schlepping burgers should pay more than being on welfare, and it's a sad commentary on the economic realities of this culture that it doesn't. See my comments to Leigh Edmonds for more. || I've been unemployed since December 18th and it's now March 30th. Of course I haven't been totally unemployed because I've had a variety of temporary jobs through various agencies. This has been interesting because it's provided me an opportunity to learn several other word processing systems besides WordStar and has exposed me to a wide variety of employment situations. I spent a week substituting for a word processor at a mortgage company churning out form letters (on Leading Edge software, Wrai & Carol) to people who were behind in the payments on their apartment complexes and office buildings. I've also gotten to organize a huge mailing list for a direct mail solicitation to thousands of people using Multimate software. I used WordStar 2000 to type up several chapters of a fast food chain's manager's manual (a very amusing document, I must say). I've done MailMerge work for an advertising agency and general word processing for a geotechnical firm. Everyone has been happy with my work and I've garnered some good references through doing it. However, I'm more than ready to go back to work. I keep remembering, however, that it took me four months to get my last fulltime job, and so I'm being patient. Hopefully by the time the next mailing comes around this will all be a thing of the past. I've been fortunate throughout this period, financially, that I had a reasonable level of savings, got four weeks vacation and severance pay, got a healthy tax refund, and know how to Live Cheap from my years of experience on The Farm. That and supportive friends has seen me through.

---That's it for mailing comments. Those who received no comment may rest assured that their publication was read and enjoyed, but nothing leapt out of their pages to cause me to set fingers to typer in these pages. (And then there was Art Rapp, whose publication was too illegible to leap out at anyone. C'mon, Art, please get it together.)

AMSTRAD WORD PROCESSORS are on sale through May 2nd at Sears For $400 complete (keyboard, screen/drive and printer) and I'm faunchingly wistful. Wistful because I don't have an extra $400 right now and Sears won't take any of my cards and I don't have or of theirs. Faunchingly because despite what I said last issue about being glad to have this new typewriter, what I really want -- and it's getting to be more insistently "need" -- is word processing equipment, be that a "dedicated" word processor like the Amstrad or an IBM compatible (which is what I really would prefer). In my current unemployed condition, this definitely doesn't appear to be in the cards, unless I suddenly win some lottery money. Even after I get work again, it's going to be a while before I build up my reserves. And at first, it's going to be paying down on the credit cards whose balances have bloated to help keep me afloat during these times.

This, too, shall pass -- "this" being my state of unemploy-

ment. I hope to look back, not too far in the future, on this time in my life as the final stage of my "poverty period" to be followed forthwith by a time of plenty. Obviously, it appears to me, doing office work is not the way I want to support myself the rest of my working life. Lately I've been casting about, assessing what it is I like to do and am reasonably good at, and trying to shape a career around that, or at least tend in that direction as much as possible.

So naturally I think about editing and writing,those being two things I like to do, a lot, but which I've never been in the position of making my living from on a fulltime basis. As I may have said in these pages before, there's not much work of that sort in Sonoma County and what there is tends to pay poorly. I've checked it out. Since I don't have start up capital to do a magazine with good circulation -- and to me, my ideal job would be editing a magazine that was something like a cross between TRAP DOOR and WHOLE EARTH REVIEW (formerly COEVOLUTION QUARTERLY) -- the next thing to look at is writing.

I don't know that I could get into writing science fiction. But my last efforts at fiction at all, except for faan fiction, were when I was in my mid-teens, in my neofan days. I think I may be a slightly better word crafter in general than I was then, and I know if I was in a position to focus my efforts -- as opposed to the catch-as-catch-can nature of doing these apa zines -- I could refine my act considerably. I think that I have the makings of a book about The Farm in me -- portions of it have appeared in these and other pages -- and I need the organizational and storage facilities offering by word process/ to be able to develop this in any reasonable way.

Having worked on such equipment, albeit mostly in an office work context, and having seen and experienced its possibilities for a writner, I just cannot see doing it effectively on a typewriter anymore.

It's frustrating to see this clear vision of what I'd like to be doing and not be able to jump immediately into it. But I am getting clearer that writing is what I want to do for livelihood, and I just need to keep holding that clearly and trying to bring it about.

Meanwhile, Amstrads are on sale at Sears through May 2nd...

RECENT MOVIES I've seen have been varied, to say the least.

"Stand By Me" has to be one of my favorite movies of the past six months. It's based on a story by Stephen King, which should commend it to fannish interests at least passingly. The four boys who are the main characters are very well played and there is good pacing throughout. If you thought it was a movie for kids, reconsider and don't miss it. "Crocodile Dundee" had a somewhat predictable plot but nonetheless I found it appealing. I saw "Little Shop of Horrors"with a couple of my older kids and thought it was shallow and kind of stupidly gross, but I love the special effects. I nominated "Peggy Sue Got Married" for the Hugo and was disappointed that Kathleen Turner didn't get an Oscar for her role there. And, no matter what you do, don't miss "She's Gotta Have It," now out at your local video store. This low-budget, black and white, erotic comedy cum documentary in the cinema-verite style...is hot stuff and not to be missed. Sincerely...

See you in July!

Robert

