



**CHALLENGER 5**

*Little 05*



# CHALLENGER

**no. 5**

winter issue 1996/1997

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an amateur publication devoted to science fiction, its fandom, or whatever strikes the interest of the editor, available for fanzine trade, letter of comment, idle request, sweet feminine smile, camouflaged threat, or five dollars (or much more if the mood strikes you)

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## *Challenger no. 5*

"Hey, it's **Night on Bald Mountain!**"

"No, it's the Louisiana Superdome!"

Well, *no*, dickweeds, it's **Guy H. Lillian III**, and this is **Challenger no. 5**, a.k.a.

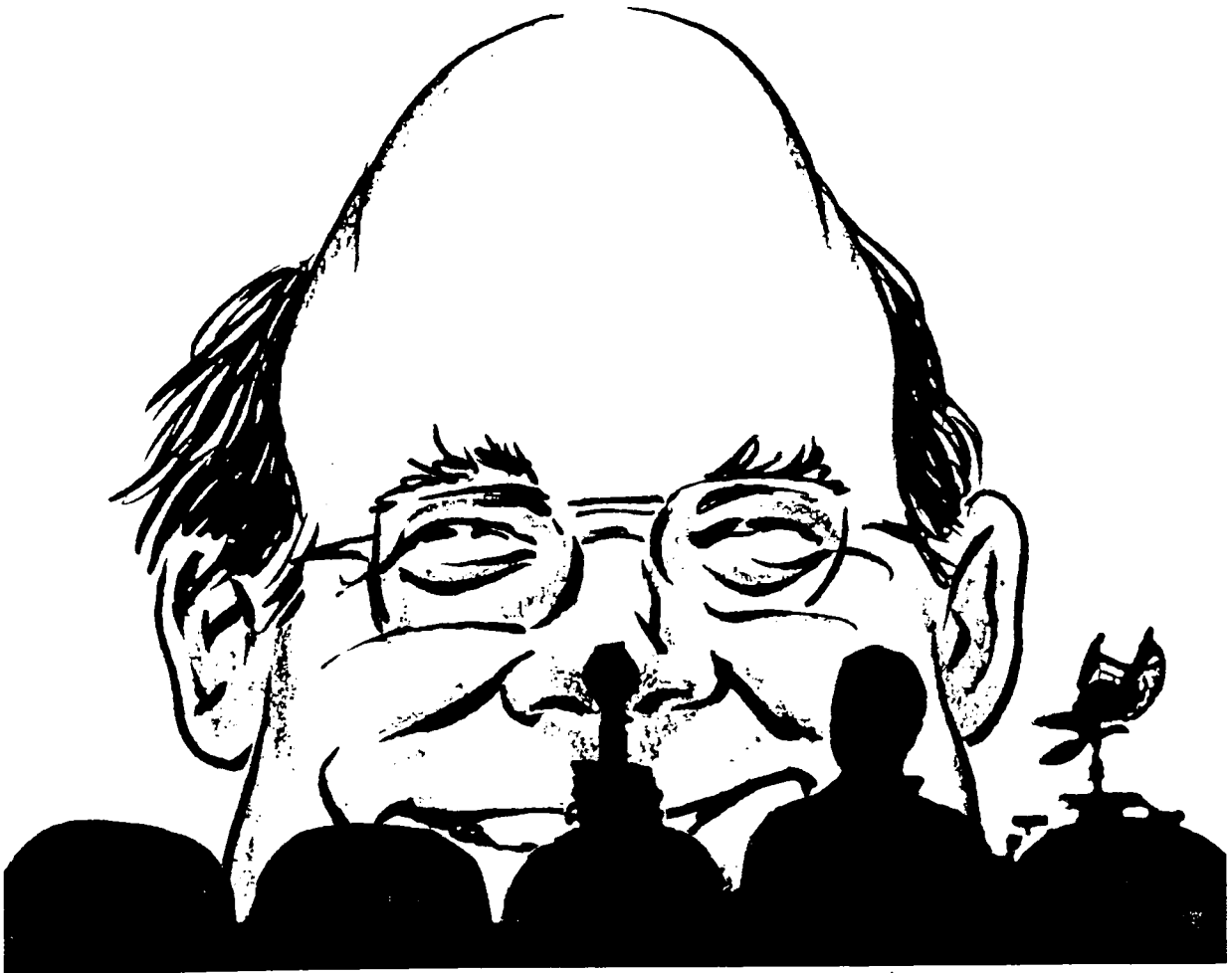
## **HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION**

since, as you'll see, this fifth issue of **Challenger** is constructed around my summer visit to L.A.Con III, the Los Angeles Worldcon, events leading up thereto and events following. It was an amazing trip, an interesting con, and I hope it helps me form an engaging zine.

My own contribs to this issue should speak for themselves, but I hope you'll forgive me if I follow up on my incredible conversation with Leslie Van Houten (see "Helter Skelter," thataway).

Tying matters into a neat little bow, not two days before, on November 15 I heard a speech by, and met **Vincent Bugliosi**. The prosecutor in the Charles Manson case. The author of **Helter Skelter**. The guy who sent Leslie Van Houten to prison.

Bugliosi (the "g" is silent) was in town to address the annual Italian-American Bar



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Association dinner, a heavyweight affair chockablock with judges (including the appellate judge who oversaw the Rose case) and fat cat lawyers. I only heard about his appearance by luck and only got a ticket by begging, but nevertheless I was there.

Bugliosi's speech didn't touch upon the Mansonites but merely recapitulated his bitter contempt for the O.J. Simpson prosecution. I bought a copy of **Outrage** for the occasion (along with a hardback of **Helter Skelter**) and the introduction contained everything he said. Most interesting, to me, was watching the hotel waiters watch Bugliosi ... particularly when he ardently denied racist feelings and then derided the jury as both biased and witless. The fact that I agreed with him didn't mean I wished he hadn't trod a little more softly. Also, that he'd watched the clock a little better: he yammered on so remorselessly that the hotel finally had to turn off the lights to get him silenced and the rest of us out of the room.

Bugliosi stuck around to sign books and pose for pictures. When I told him I'd interviewed Van Houten he was surprised and interested; when I told him I'd liked her he said he understood how that could happen. I wish I'd had the nerve to ask him if he opposed her parole, but ... I got the impression that the Manson case didn't arouse much passion in him anymore. In a way he echoed an impression I got from Leslie, that all that horror was *a long time past* ... and feelings had muted. At the last, when the only folks left were the son of a Louisiana Supreme Court Justice and myself, our chat revolved around **And the Sea will Tell**, my favorite Bugliosi tome and an outstanding primer for defense lawyers, and the idiocy of the L.A. district attorney's office. Leslie's parole didn't come up.

We walked Bugliosi – relaxed and friendly now – to the elevator, and the Justice's son, a bit of a playboy, invited the great prosecutor to the Gold Club, the French Quarter's best strip bar. Bugliosi demurred and I cringed. I'll have to tell Leslie about that. Her one post-visit letter was depressed again. She brushed off the idea of a book – perhaps resigned to life in prison. But maybe those laughing eyes can still laugh for real.

Now ... this issue.

*Photos* abound, dominating my worldcon report, which only makes sense: I may be able to draft murals of deathless prose, but when it comes to an actual picture, I ... well, photos will have to do. (I'm grateful, by the way, to the efficient, interested and pretty ladies of **Tom's Printing**, Metairie LA, for how well the halftones came out – an immeasurable improvement over last issue.)

In terms of *drawings*, my cover (also reduced by Tom's) is by **Mark Fults**, and depicts **Mary Ann van Hartesveldt**, one of my favorite people and one of the great ladies of the South. You may recall her penchant for bellydancing from **Chall** no. 1, where she was depicted at the craft by noble **Paul McCall**, of the superb pulpzine **Aces**. Paul also contributed to this issue, along with Kinko's employee **Bryan Norris** and **Dr. Craig Hilton**, who chimed in all the way from Perth. **Terry Jeeves** and **Alexis Gilliland** are new to my pages, plus **William Rotsler**, **Sheryl Birkhead**, and many others. Thanks to you all.

Figuring, no doubt wisely, that too much GHLIII will cause hallucinations and sterility in my readership, I've interwoven excellent articles and artwork by associates at appropriate places throughout. Among those writing for this issue are two sisters in Southern fandom, **JoAnn Montalbano** and **Binker Hughes**. **Gene Stewart** has advanced an interesting squib, and **Jerry Page** – the only s.f.er to win both of Southern fandom's awards, the *Rebel* for fan

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activity and the *Phoenix* for professional work -- proffers a terrific piece. You'll see Binker, Gene and Jerry in issue #6, along with Bill Legate and the **Challenger** staff's own call as ... The Perfect Woman.

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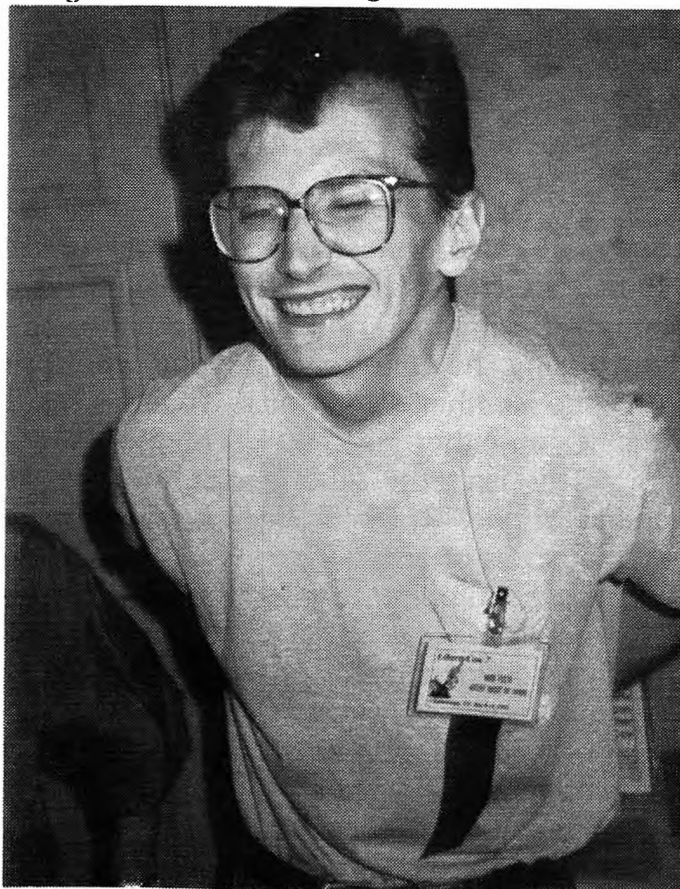
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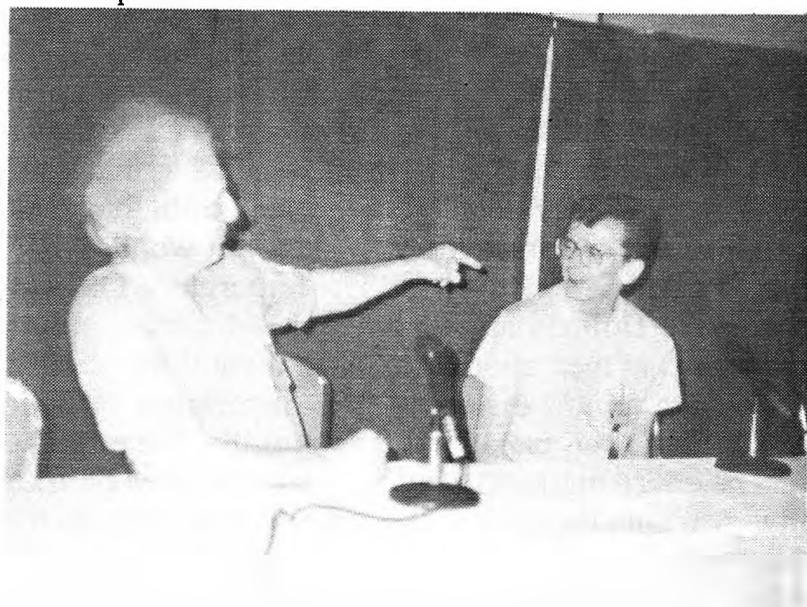
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*I've known JoAnn Montalbano more than half of her life -- yes, almost **eight** years. (I know what's good for me.) Active in theatre, a former employee of Harvard and the first female OE of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, she is wise beyond her years. Viz:*

## SCHOOL DAZE

*JoAnn Montalbano*

One of the most popular books of recent years has been **Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus**. While I haven't read it myself, its contents have become close enough to common knowledge for me to have a fairly good idea of its premise. I find it surprising, however, that anyone would need to write a whole *book* to explain this. Everyone is either a man or a woman, so surely we all know that depending on your gender, you either go to Boy School or Girl School.

This isn't the school with the chalkboard and monkey bars; this is the more ephemeral one. The one women teach to girls, and men teach to boys, on one level of consciousness or another.

A friend of mine, when both his girlfriend and I refused a napkin, asked us, "How is it women can eat pizza without getting greasy fingers?" I guess there's no way he could've known that it's one of those things you learn in Girl School. Eating tidily is very important to Girlness. Cleanliness of *everything* -- your house, your body, your mind -- is a Girl School prerequisite; you don't get out of Girl Kindergarten without Tidy 101. (Evidently, this is not a major subject in Boy School.) Thus our seemingly instinctual ability to actually *clean* something other than a car. Men will wash the dishes, and not wipe the counter. This is inexplicable to all women. The crumbs sit there, waving at you. Only a strong woman can let them sit there.

In Boy School, on the other hand, it seems they're taught to *enjoy* being dirty. Some of them even go out of their way to get REALLY dirty, by playing football in the mud and working on cars or "in the shop." Then they come in with huge satisfied grins -- I think their sense of accomplishment is tied directly to how dirty they get while they're doing it. (If I'm wrong, someone will tell me I'm sure.) Even when they have tidy professions, they talk about "getting down and dirty" to get things done. Until they make a lot of money -- that's when they "clean up." Coincidence? Makes you wonder ...

Because another major subject in Boy School must be The Importance Of Being Rich and/or Successful. This directive, like Tidiness for women, has lost a lot of ground with our generation, but nevertheless nags at men enough to make them think about it. It goes hand in hand with what girls are taught instead -- The Importance of Being Pretty. Rich men get pretty women -- they even make movies about it -- the inference being, one should be one of those. The entire marketing industry is predicated on these two classes, so they won't go quietly. After all, there's enough truth in each premise that none of us can just dismiss the ideas entirely.

Pretty, however, should not be confused with Cute. Obviously, Girl School did

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not approach this area in quite the same way as Boy School. If men had any idea how much they appreciate Cute, they wouldn't make that face when we say, "Isn't this *cute*?" As if a word had odor and "Cute" really stank. I think it's because few men realize Cute is more a concept than a physical characteristic. Cute will take you just as far as money, in case you haven't noticed, but then, it's harder to come by. On the other hand, men who eavesdropped on this class become Charming, and *they* can be dangerous. (This is something Girl School saves for second semester, evidently.)

This class can be electively combined with Pottery Appreciation, china collections, and other feminine tchotchke fetishes. In Boy School, I believe this is when they teach Watching Sports On TV And How to Enjoy It. This segues into Tough Guy Stuff, and Advanced Tools. There are myriad electives in each School -- other Boy School ones are Three Stooges 101, How To Fix Things With Motors, and Talk Audio Like A Pro. Girl School has Shopping Without Money, Ways With Macaroni & Cheese, and How to Relax With Textile Crafts.

No matter what we go on to do with our lives, what we learn in Girl and Boy School can't help but affect how we relate to each other, man to man, woman to woman, and across.

Perhaps realizing that might make it easier for us not to take it all too seriously. Some of those lessons come in really handy.

I hardly ever have to buy napkins, for example.

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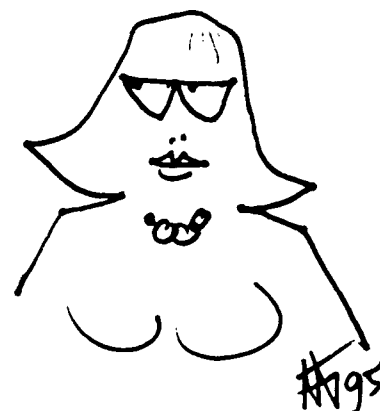
"I wonder how many sf fans bought **Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus** thinking it was a new Ray Bradbury novel."

Gary Brown

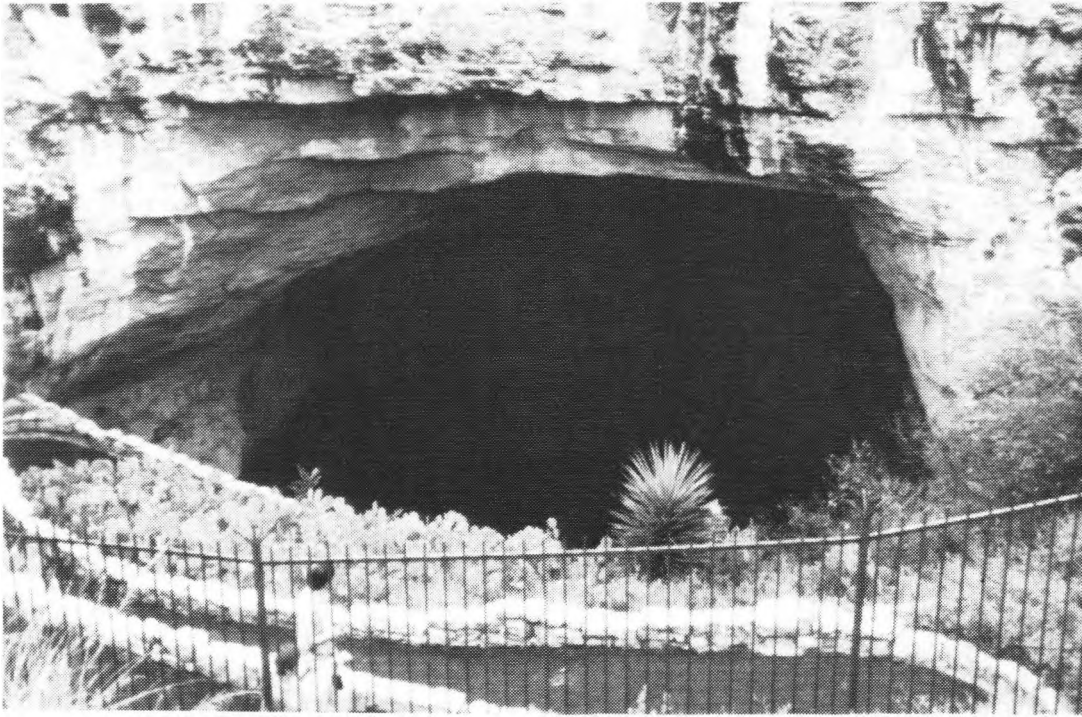
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YES!  
YES! NO!  
NO!  
Yes! NO!

MAYBE.  
MAYBE NOT.  
PERHAPS.  
POSSIBLY.  
WHO KNOWS?



## Winter '96/'97



"No vun esh-capes from Shtalagmite 17!"

When I was a boy my folks took me to Carlsbad Caverns. I remember the yawning pit of the entrance, and the bats pouring out of it at sunset, a spiralling living cyclone. I remember wandering through with my father, wearing his coat; it's a constant 56 degrees down there. I remember being awed.

I'd skipped the place on my last trip west; I kept a self-made promise this time. Up into the Guadalupe Mountains to the startling vista of New Mexico, viewed from a height. Through the light rain I walked down to the entrance -- and into the night.

It looms, vast and vaulted and black. The smell of bat guano is thick and sweet. The path winds steep and cuts back and cuts back and cuts back and you go *down* into the space within the earth, *down, down, down*, as the ceiling curves in above you and before you opens the grandest colonnade on Earth ... It still gets cool, and the jacket they warned you to bring is welcome. *Down, down*. Claustrophobia? The ceiling is a high arch, the rough walls far removed. There are places in Mammoth Caves I couldn't turn my head without knocking off my hat. This was like the Superdome.

*Down, down*, and around a bend in the path, past a sign telling me that without artificial light, I would now be in complete darkness. Awe as well as earth enveloped me, because formations began to appear -- stalactites, stalagmites ("let 'c' stand for ceiling, 'g' stand for ground"), columns -- common to limestone caves, and ever more spectacular here. Down, down, and back, back, back into the world beneath the ground, and now everytime I moved my head new wonders met my eyes.

Carlsbad is an testament to the imagination; a splendid act of *metaphor*. Jim White, the cave's first explorer, gave names to many of the marvels within it -- The Whale's Mouth, the Bashful Elephant, the Lion's Tail, the Sword of Damoclese, the Chinese Hat (that's not what I called it) -- but I saw shapes in the rocks, in the stalagmites and stalactites and columns and flows, shapes no one ever saw before. Shapes different from what I will see when I look again. Angels ... armies ... eagles ... even **The Joker!** I thought of New Orleans' late photographic genius Clarence John Laughlin and his ability to *see things* within random shapes of nature. He would have *danced* through Carlsbad.



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On and on and on and on ... into the King's Chamber and the Big Room, names given by Jim White. Colonnades and buttresses and angels and armies ... all mute rock, reflections all of the eternally creative human mind. I was told by the cute female ranger that my basic cathedral metaphor paraphrased Will Rogers: "*All the cathedrals in the world, and some of them, upside down.*"

I walked and walked for miles and miles, earning blisters that would speak to me of Carlsbad throughout worldcon. Only when the Caverns closed did I depart, in a state of utter exaltation. And later, I got to see the bats. Speaking of caves ...

# **UNDERGROUND DANGER**

*Binker Glock Hughes*

The others had already crossed the traverse and I looked at Dave, behind me, to see if he wanted to go first. He shook his head. It was a steeply sloped mud-slick ledge about three inches wide, but there was a decent handhold about a foot above it near the center and another about four feet farther along to the left – not that bad if you could reach the handholds, since, from the second one, you could get a foot back onto the upper ledge above the ravine, and soon regain walking passageway. All the same, it was tricky enough to make a non-climber want to see somebody else actually *use* the holds – how you shifted from one to the next, for instance – before trying it himself.

I shrugged. I grew up climbing limestone outcrops near my home, so a simple traverse like this one was no big deal. I just had to remember to make the changeover properly on the main handhold. I reached for it with my left, moving my left foot into place on the ledge. Then I moved my right foot onto the narrow slip of stone beside my left and started to change hands – and shifted my weight to my right foot a split-second too soon.

"*Oh, damn!*" I thought, as my right foot slid up and out from under me, dumping me backwards into the darkness below. "*Now they'll complain about bringing a girl along on the trip!*"

By then, I was almost down to the water, almost 30 feet below. Fortunately, I'd had judo training in "break-falls" and even more fortunately, I did one by reflex (I was too busy being disgusted at falling for it to be anything else) as I hit the stream that ran through the cave. Most fortunately of all, I was a foot or two *away* from a large, pointed rock formation that stood up out of the stream.

I sank about six feet with the force of my fall but, as my back was brushing the stream bed, my upward strokes began to have an effect. A moment later, I was surfacing and swimming toward the nearest "shore."

From in front of me, down the passage, I heard Phil shout, "What fell?" Clearly, he'd heard the splash.

"*I did,*" I shouted back.

The gleam of Dave's carbide lamp, approaching swiftly down the side of the ravine, indicated that he, too, had noticed my demise. The other three came flying back from ahead of us and climbed down as well, but I was already wringing myself out and rejoicing that the carbide in my lamp had been nearly spent, so there wasn't a major acetylene gas risk. Since my spare carbide was in watertight baby bottles, it was okay. I just felt like a total fool.

"Are you all right?" they asked.

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Of course I was – just embarrassed as hell that I should be the cause of prematurely ending this trip with out-of-town fellow cavers, chance-met at a conference in Southern Indiana.

Actually, I was outrageously lucky. The only real damage done was that all the party's cigarettes had been together in a plastic bag between my hardhat and its liner, so they were wet.

It could have been a lot worse – easily. If I'd fallen on that formation, I could have had a broken back and been paralyzed at a time I was moving Straight Down into that six feet of water. If I hadn't reflexively broken my fall, I could have hit that stream-bed hard enough for damage – it was neither smooth nor soft. It could have been one of the shallow places, instead of one of the deepest pools in the stream. Since my hardhat came off, I could have done a number on my head. And so on. There are lots of grisly possibilities from a 30-40 foot fall into a cave's stream.

We spent a few minutes reassuring ourselves, then headed out of the cave: me apologizing profusely and them apologizing right back, since they felt they should have waited to be sure we were all across the traverse before continuing, should have this or that in order to prevent it, and so on. It was only a while later that it occurred to any of us how lucky we'd been.

**Lots of people aren't that lucky.** Every year, cave rescue teams not only locate hundreds of lost kids but transport a lot of injured people out of caves, facing conditions that would make most paramedics scream and run. That's what this article's all about. I happen to know a bit about it since, joining the NSS (National Speleological Society) Safety Committee a year or so later, I ended up creating the Kentucky Cave Rescue Organization.

Three sorts of cave accidents are most common: people lost, or stranded due to inadequate light sources; people with injuries that, though limited, prevent them from making the return journey out of the cave; and people who attempt to do pitches requiring ropework with too little gear, capability, or common sense. The worst accidents tend to be in the third class: the injuries are usually worse and, if they needed ropes to traverse that section of the cave, the rescuers will need more elaborate rigs to get them out again.

Yet therein lies the real point: **If you use common sense, caving is safer than badminton – it's just that a lot of people don't use common sense.** Consider, for example, a party my ex-husband Steve and I extricated from a cave in this area. Steve and Carol and I had gone into the cave to acquaint her with caving – she got more of an introduction to it than she had reckoned on.

The cave in question had a decent entrance passage – uneven flooring but mostly high enough to stand – then had a steep but not vertical down-climb of 15-20 feet to a lower level. The main feature of this next level was a gash in the floor, about four feet wide and of varying depth (about 10 feet plus, as I recall). You negotiated this crack by sitting on one side and putting your feet on the other so you could inch sideways along it – there wasn't enough space to walk on either side of it and it was too wide to reliably straddle. Not long after it ended, there was another down-climb into the big main room from which all the interesting stuff opened out. I've never seen more than parts of the main room, since every time I was in there, we found some group of locals in trouble.

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We knew there was an unwise group ahead of us when we found a handline at the first down-climb -- tied to a large rock that anybody could see would come down at the first tug. We didn't find them, though, until we reached the climb down to the large main room.

This bunch was particularly unappealing. It consisted of two high-school-hero types, their girlfriends (whom they wanted to impress with their prowess by taking them into a cave), and a retarded boy of about their age -- apparently brought along as a foil to their splendor.

By the main room, the girls had realized it could be really tough to get back out again. They were scared and on the verge of tears. Equally, the retarded boy had decided he wasn't going any farther and the party's flashlights (the only light source they'd brought along) were failing. By the time we reached them, even the high-school-heroes were having second thoughts about it all, and the party had been immobile long enough to be getting chilled in



© Craig Helton '96

the high-humidity 55 degree temperature of the cave. They hadn't brought any food, had no hardhats, and were wearing clothes meant for a hot summer day, with shoes that had no more tread than the average slick sneakers-sole. The girls hailed us as rescuers (to their heroes' disgust), but even the boys had to admit they needed help.

Unfortunately, it wasn't that easy. The climb back to the level with the crack in the floor was only about eight to ten feet, but it was basically vertical and had few handholds. Somebody with Steve's six-foot height and arm strength could climb it easily, but you don't have to be as much shorter as I am not to be able to reach key holds. Further, there was no good place to rig a handline (the normal answer to such problems). That meant that to get out, almost everybody had to be boosted by others. Steve climbed down to them and helped people up,

while Carol and I stayed on the upper level to receive them. The girls came first and, though teary and shaky, were reassured enough at seeing other girls helping them that we got them along the crack and up the climb to the main upper passage (with our properly secured handline) without too much trouble.

Then came the retarded boy. Steve managed to get him up the climb from the main room but, when he saw the crack, he decided he wasn't going anywhere near it, much less along it to safety. The only way Carol and I managed to get him along it was to sit on either side of him so close he couldn't move and move Together so that he was shifted, like a sack of potatoes, between us. Not anybody's idea of a good time. Fortunately, although he resisted all along the crack, he bucked up when we reached the other end and needed little help to get up our handline to where the girls were shivering and starting to cry again. The need to keep him from freaking out distracted them -- as did the candy-bars we'd distributed

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among the group at intervals -- and before long, the two high-school-heroes were arriving, shepherded by Steve. We led them out of the cave, with a few well-chosen remarks about the right and wrong ways to approach such things and, by then, were so exhausted that we didn't try to see any more of the cave.

That's the normal pattern. People -- usually high school or college students -- find out where a well-known cave is and go to it as an Adventure. They don't think about light, they don't have hardhats or shoes with tread, and they don't know about cave conditions, about getting lost, or any of the rest of it. At most, they take a flimsy rope they don't know how to rig safely.

At the other end of the spectrum are the serious accidents, in which someone gets seriously hurt -- and most of them are due to comparable heedlessness. The people don't take common safety precautions of various sorts, or "shortcut" them because they're in a needless hurry. It almost always ends in calamity. Rather than talk about these serious injury cases, let me tell you one of the most unusual ropework-based rescue cases I know about -- which I later "immortalized" in song as "The Elkhorn Mountain Disaster."

At Old Timers' Reunion (OTR) every year, cavers gather from near and far -- and sometimes even go into nearby caves. In this particular year (in the '60s), a group decided to go to Elkhorn Mountain, which has, for that part of the world, a deep entrance pit. It's pretty trivial compared with caves in Alabama, much less Mexico, but more than deep enough to require entry and exit by rope. A guy asked to join them and they said Sure. He said he didn't own his own prusik slings -- the rope loops used in one technique of ascending (using knots that, under pressure, won't slide) -- and assumed they would understand that he'd never tried to prusik before. It never crossed their minds that anyone would go to a vertical cave with no ropework experience, so they took him along -- and lived to regret it.

The first anybody out at OTR knew about it was at 6 the next morning, when the local police came out to the campground and woke up the first people they found -- one of the organizers and some of the guys who'd been in on unintentional cave-swim (which is how I happened to hear about it -- from their bitching). They groaned, grabbed their gear, and went to the cave.

What had happened was as typical as it was annoying. Only as the party was about to prusik out had the tag-along mentioned that he had no idea how to prusik. The rest of the party were annoyed, but coped: they sent all but the beginner and one other out of the pit ahead and rigged a belay line down to the beginner so he wouldn't have to worry about falling. He'd been shown and taught by all who preceded him, so the guy who'd remained with him got him on the rope and sent him on his way.

Well, sort of. Prusiking is tiring business and about halfway up the 100 or so foot pitch, the guy decided he wasn't going any farther. It wasn't a question of taking a break and going on when rested -- he just flat wasn't going on any farther.

So *now* what do you do? The guy below him wanted out of the cave and they knew they'd have to get help, but they didn't want the idiot to fall and Really hurt himself while they were doing that.

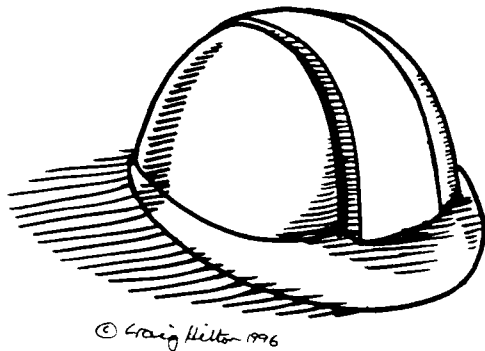
So it was that the rescuers from OTR found *both* ends of the rappel rope tied to different trees, along with the belay rope, when they reached the scene. The last-man-out had brought up the end of the rope with him (believe me, it can be a challenge to prusik *past*

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someone even with the more modern ascender techniques of today) and tied it off so that if the idiot fell off the ledge they'd talked him into reaching, he wouldn't go all the way down and kill himself.

With the additional personnel from OTR, they managed to drag the guy up to the surface where, so far from thanking them, he assumed they should buy him breakfast! Fat chance! If it hadn't been for their unwillingness to vandalize a perfectly good cave with his remains, all concerned would have been tempted to throw him back in -- *without* a rope. Idiots will be idiots.

It's quite true that experienced cavers also have accidents -- breaking limbs on uncertain footing, taking falls without the luck I had and so on -- but the majority of accidents happen to the inexperienced, inadequately equipped or prepared, who go into caves without understanding what they're up against. That's why I devoted the first of these articles to the sorts of things you should remember if you decide to go into a cave -- it's little enough to take sufficient light sources, wear proper clothing and gear, and have a general



sense of what you'll encounter, but it could make the difference between a good time and being a cave rescue statistic. So if you decide to try caving, dig up that earlier article [in **Challenger** no. 3] and read it from the viewpoint of a packing list. Then hunt up some experienced cavers to take you on your first trip. Believe me, it's a heck of a lot more palatable to help somebody *else* get out of a cave in one piece than to be the one who answers *What fell?* with "I did" -- if you're lucky enough to be conscious and able to answer. So take the routine precautions and then, *Good caving to you!*

---

## DEEPSOUTHCON '97

### DeepSouthCon 35

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June 6-8, 1997

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## ON THE GENRE JAG AGAIN

by E.R. Stewart

Writers, readers, and those others, the critics and academics, seem more concerned about genre these days than ever before. What is genre? And what does it matter? We should think about this, next time we read, write, or react.

At the start, please understand that the view expressed here are mine. While it's politically incorrect to accept responsibility for one's actions of late, in this context I'm afraid bucking the current is ineluctable. So feel free to disagree. It's okay. No one's counting hands.

Horror is writing down fears and dreads in hopes they won't come true, or at least can be diverted onto someone else. Science Fiction is writing down hopes and dreams in hopes they'll come true, at least someday. Mystery is writing down various versions of how we hope things are, at least mostly.

All genres are based on a hypothesis about reality. A writer offers fiction in hopes that it strikes readers as plausible, at least superficially or tangentially, and if readers accept it, the conjectures are to some extent confirmed. This reassures writers. They're getting it right, figuring things out nicely. And thus validated, they plow the same row ever longer, for the most part.

Agreed-upon reality changes, however, as each of us changes his minds, his

opinions, or his social groups. That's why old genre criteria no longer apply, except for devoted fans of the old checklists. If you like locked-room mysteries, for example, you had it good for a short time only, and must now mostly reminisce, or support special and narrow fanzines, discussion groups, or the like. Hard-boiled detectives are still with us, but some are softer-shelled, such as Parker's Spenser. In fantasy, one can still find plenty of Imaginary Worlds, and in science fiction one can prefer hard, soft, literary, gonzo, cyberpunk, steampunk, retro-punk and probably funky punk. In horror, splatter-punk was all the rave, until the ravers drooled too much and caused a draw-back.

This expansion and contraction of emphasis defines a living genre. It's like breathing. If a genre remains static too long, it ossifies and up and dies.

Interest must be maintained over a span of generations. In genre, one counts generations of writers, generations of readers, and generations of publications or publishing houses. Usually a generation of writers lasts longest. Writers become identified with a particular genre at the outset of their



careers, then keep on writing whether the genre survives or not, and regardless of the fortunes of individual publishing houses. Exceptions can be found for each category, but usually publishing houses last next-longest. In some cases, publishing houses span the decades, even the centuries, but for the most part they come and go, exchanging writers as flowers exchange pollen.

Alas, genres have proven, over the years, the most fragile. They rely on public whim, for one thing. Popularity rarely lasts longer than one or two major projects in an environment continually searching for the new, the different. Novelty wears off, leaving a core of devoted fans of each genre. Sometimes that core is not big enough to sustain the genre, and its practitioners move on, its publications wither and decay. At other times, the core remains flexible enough in its tastes to accept new wrinkles on old themes, new approaches, while still maintaining the good old stuff. This lets new blood infuse the lucky genre, lending new leases on life. And with each new incarnation, a genre gains a deeper sense of history. This allows the earlier workers in the field to enjoy elder status. They can give lectures, sign autographs, and otherwise hobnob with their generation, or those who appreciate its work.

Science fiction has proven durable, profitable, and adaptable. The most popular and profitable movies of all time are of the science fiction genre, for example. This could be due to its essential hopefulness. As award-winning writer Harlan Ellison has said, science fiction, even dystopian, is hopeful because it says we'll be here tomorrow -- we may be living like cockroaches, but we'll be here.

Horror, on the other hand, deals with dread. Its central message is, the world will eventually get us all. Monster's gotta eat.

We're all going to die, many horribly. Stephen King's gleeful ooga-booga startlements testify to how fun fright can be, and his books sell better than more reassuring fare.

Mystery, in a multi-ring circus of balancing acts, and how to handle it. Noir emphasizes the negative, the dark and threatening aspects of Things as They Are. Hard-boiled champions the guy with a code in a lawless world; this sort of hero brings local order to general chaos, at least for a few moments.

Literary fiction has many schools, salons, klatches, and cliques. Some form around a single writer or work, others swarm some special sensibility or technique. Usually less is more to this genre's many sub-genres, when it comes to sales. The more an example of literary fiction sells, the less important it is generally perceived to be, on the theory that only the elite, prepared audience could truly appreciate a fine work of litfic, so popularity equates somehow with lower common denominator appeal. This leads litterateurs into unusual poses and places their fiction under odd constraints. Some schools, for example, eschew plot. Others focus entirely upon creating an artifice of words, as if the writing is an object that needs no audience, no communication to be "valid."

And yes, those within the genres I've mentioned will no doubt complain at my portrayal, assessment, or tone. That's okay, such complaints keep the discussion going, and might even provide some of us a chance to change our thinking.

There are other genres, and they can be mixed, any and all contributing an element here, an aspect there. In point of fact, a genre these days is more likely to be a market category than an actual organically-developed literary genre. For the merchants'



## *Challenger no. 5*

convenience our fiction is labeled, usually according to some unwritten list of common elements. While this is generally fair enough, it's often terribly misleading in particular instances. Where does a book such as William S. Burroughs' **Naked Lunch** belong, for example? In listing that book's elements, one discovers that virtually every genre is adequately represented, and quite a few new ones probably developed, as well. Such books are often not really categorized, or are tossed into mock genres designed for just such misfits.

Mainstream is one such odd-lot category. With its overtones of middle-of-the-road conservative values, this term is perhaps an irony at best. The mainstream is, after all, that part of the general flow where the majority can be found. Majority rule simply doesn't work in discerning one genre from another.

Science fiction fans refer to all fiction not of the s.f. genre as "mundane." It's not a put-down. Well, not always. It does carry a sneery connotation, though, as if anything not s.f. lacks imagination or something. To s.f. fans, this might be true.

Women's fiction is an attempt to label fiction supposedly written mostly by women, mostly for female readers, and bought, read, and discussed mostly by women. A feminist point of view isn't necessary, but might help.

In response, perhaps predictably, men's fiction has arisen.

Other special interest groups, from Afram and the Abused, crave and often demand their own genre of fiction. These aren't actually genres, for the most part, because they are created not by the gradual accumulation of like-spirited fictions, but by fiat, by proclamation, or by clamor.

Defining a genre, then seeking to fill it up with examples, is a grab-bag approach that goes against the nature of most writers.

Such politically-correct groupings and studies define prejudices more often than they identify genres. A recent book of popular scholarship, for example, asserted that Mark Twain's **Huckleberry Finn** was a Black novel, a work of "Negro consciousness." and that, in fact, the character Huck was nothing more or less than an African-American child, implicitly if never quite explicitly. While the book supports its thesis with many examples and anecdotes, ultimately the argument fails simply because, in fact, Sam Clemens was not Afram and had no such genre into which he might have chosen to thrust his work. That Twain's work remains pertinent and proves free of bigotry shows that writer's belief in the individual and his dislike of categorical thinking of any kind, be it racial, social or theological.

However, such special interest groups will crop up, and each will cite those writings perceived to be most in accord with its ideas. It's just human nature, and we shouldn't take such groupings all that seriously. Nor should we dismiss them. They serve what purpose we can find for them.

In a stricter sense, however, genre develops without a plan. Genre isn't on purpose. It serves no outside master or creed. When writing serves an outside goal, it becomes a polemic and is not art but politics. At best writing placed in harness is artifice, intended to bring about something outside itself. Art is self-defined and self-constrained, so genre, when considered in terms of art, must share those attributes or risk losing itself in the fray of controversy or argument.

A given genre is simply the sum of the natural attributes by which we recognize it. The word "genre" is related to "gender" and is at once as easy and as difficult to discern, to define. List what makes male differ from female, or vice versa, and you'll begin to see how difficult it is to eliminate

ascribe, or even isolate traits.

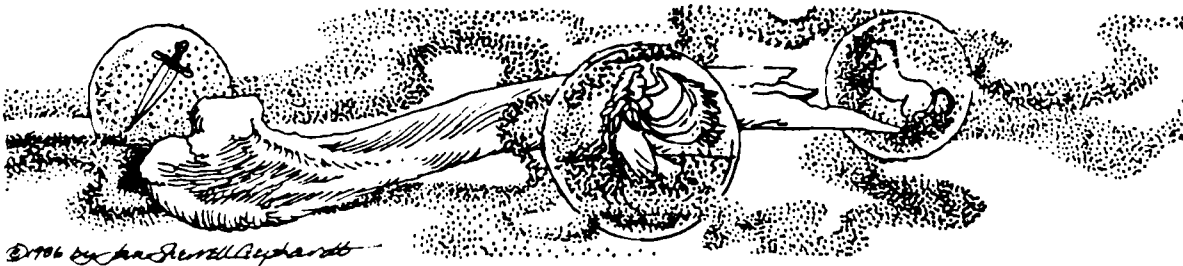
Thus science fiction was once known as "that whiz-bang stuff" and those who never read it thought in terms of rocketships, bug-eyed monsters, brass-brassiered damsels in distress, and invasions from Mars. All of which once held true, in the pulp era, for a few magazine issues or so. In one era and out the other, one might say, except that such notions stuck in mundane heads.

A taint of the juvenile still afflicts science fiction, and rightfully so, as very little serious, mature work is done in the genre. That's because it's easier to sell adolescent adventure to teen males than advertise writing that's literate both in a literary and a scientific sense. Think how small the market

will disappoint many, alarm a few, and leave most in at least some doubt. Far better to recycle the Arthurian, Wagnerian, Celtic, Norse or Campbellian myths; that way, everyone's happy, at least financially.

There is much truth to this kind of gripe. A genre, after all, encourages complacency. It resists change. It votes a straight ticket. It offers the mental and emotional haven of familiarity in exchange for a little curiosity, a bit of risk.

We all change, however. Some of us outgrow one genre and find ourselves enjoying another. Some outgrow genres considerations altogether. A few even arrange the books on their shelves in only two categories, Fiction and Nonfiction, and



for that kind of book would be. Hell, one would have to know literature *and* science just to be able to read it at all well. Nah, far better to keep pumping the hormonal conquest power fantasies, mock heroism, and epic grandeur in an eggshell of fragile egoboost.

The same sort of criticism can be leveled against the fantasy genre, which is as much a collection of sub-genres and market categories as science fiction. It's simply easier to write, sell, and for that matter read familiar material. Elves, dragons, and magic quests, being basic to the genre, meet general expectations. Original work that challenges old forms, glosses, or conventions

even that might strike them as superfluous and probably a delusion.

So each genre reflects us all in a particular way. genres change along with us. They're smaller reflections of society. Some are rigid, some ephemeral. Some evolve, others fossilize. There are militants, rebels, and reformers. There are apologists and fanatics and poor lost souls among the genres.

Realize all this, and the next time you find yourself on the genre jag again you might be able to pull up short, slow down, and ask yourself why it matters, this question of genre.

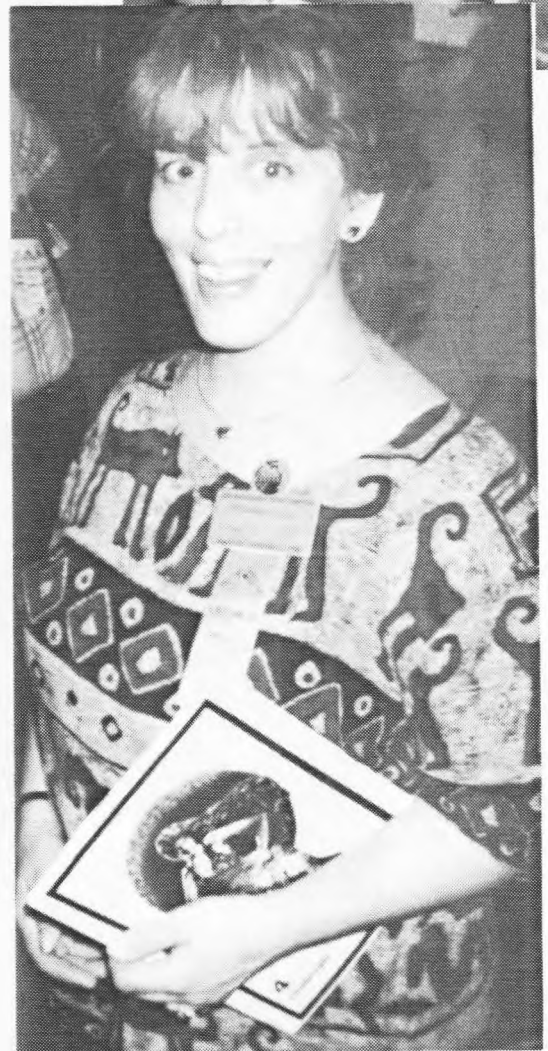
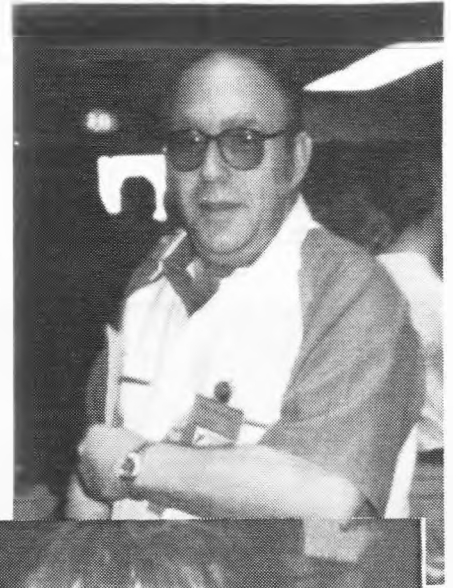
*Challenger no. 5*

# L.A.con III

Anaheim California - Aug 29 - Sept 2, 1996

Finally ... after Carlsbad, after White Sands, after days of desert driving, I reached the outskirts of Disneyland ... and the 1996 World Science Fiction Convention.

Member number 777 went through the 1996 worldcon with aching feet -- the legacy of Carlsbad -- and camera at ready. I didn't see enough of the convention -- I missed most of the media events -- but what I saw, I brought away with me, and here it is.



*Upper right: Mike Resnick. Below: B'rer Fox and the foxy Michelle Lyons.*

*Winter '96/'97*

*L.A.Con enjoyed Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, right, a Lensman wedding, below, and a gathering of eagles, a.k.a. Julie Schwartz, '46 L.A.Con chair Walt Daughtery and Forry Ackerman.*



*Challenger no. 5*



*Chairman **Glyer** awaits!*

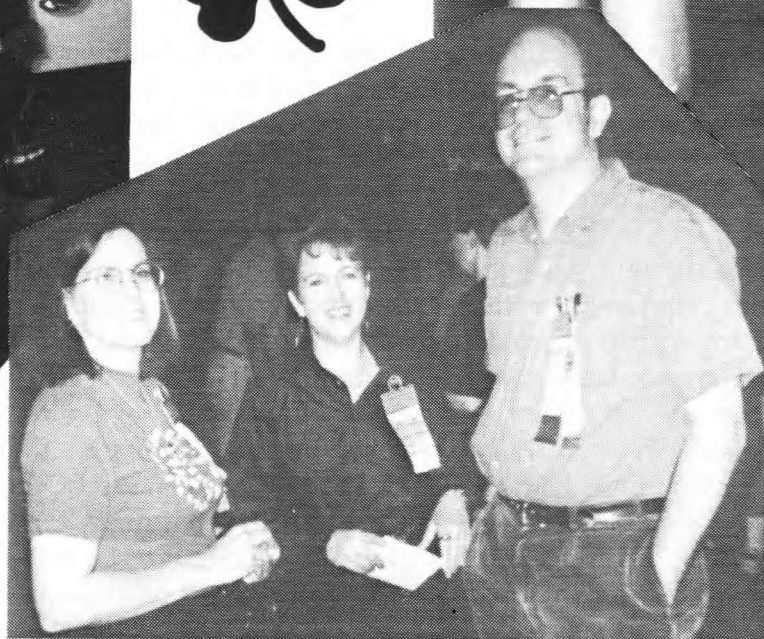


*A robot from  
**The Phantom Empire***



*"You have been judged!"*

***Nicki & Dick Lynch flank  
Eve Ackerman***



## Winter '96/'97

The **EXHIBIT HALL** was the center of L.A.Con III, and it was wondrous indeed. Prominent among the displays were the robots – **Gort**; the **Lost in Space** scene stealer; **Robbie** (his voice was Martin Milner); even one of the clanking clods from Gene Autry's unspeakable **Phantom Empire**. Loads of movie props were also on show, fitting the con's film emphasis, and **Gary Louie** had again mounted one of his magnificent displays of the **Hugo Award** down through the years. (Speaking of movies and the Hugos ... but I haven't the heart to describe the L.A.Con Hugo, just yet.)

An overheard remark: "Arlene, I saw you on **Sci-Fi Buzz!**" Indeed the Sci-Fi Channel was evident all week, although when I finally watched their coverage, I didn't see myself and the host/narrator was one of those slimy hip cool cynical chowderbrains the X generation seems to produce in the same quality and quantity as *lint*.

For instance, I saw them hanging all over **Harlan Ellison**, filming as he harangued his autograph line to "stop busting his chops." Though watching my money like there was something to watch, I sprung for his hardback **Edgeworks**, just for his autograph. **Gary & Corlis Robe** were easy to find – they worked the autograph line all convention long.

**Quinn Yarbro** was also there, a restful tonic at her huckster room post throughout. I remember nothing I discussed with my "fannish mama"; just the sense of relief whenever I wandered into her purview. What else are mamas for?

**Julie Schwartz** showed up, thank God. He was Himself throughout the convention, which is plenty to insure a happy worldcon, and in company of some other senior s.f.ers, provided the following playlet:

Julie: "I'm Jules Verne."

SaM Moscovitz: "I'm H.G. Wells."

4E Ackerman (in squeaky voice): "And I'm Mary Shelley. I wrote **Frankenstein** and he never wrote back!"

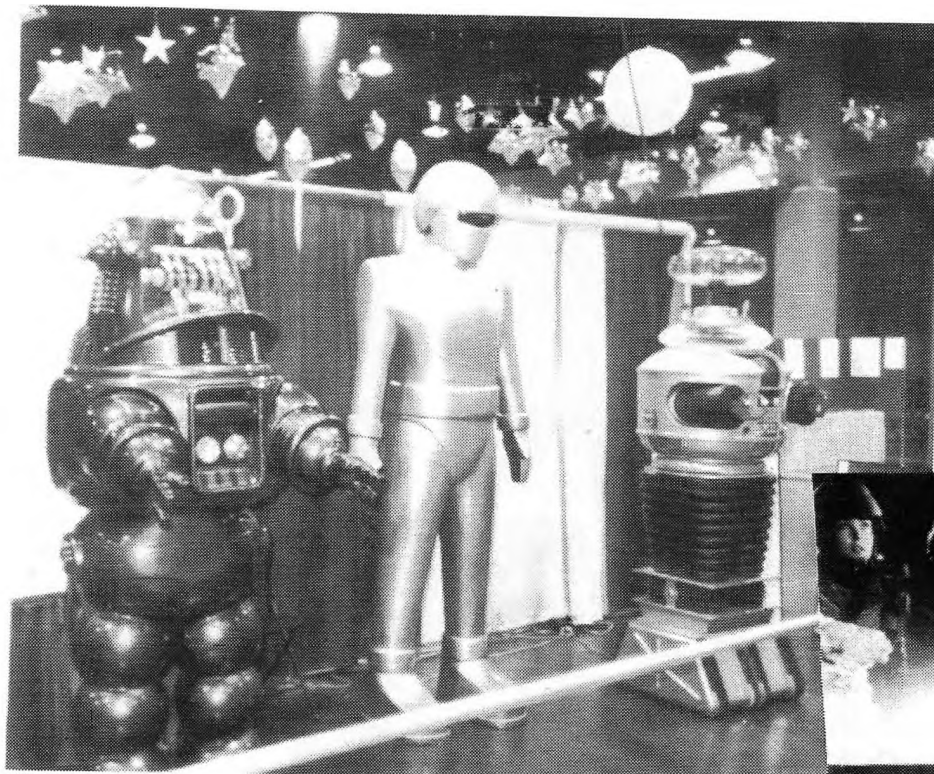
Walt Daugherty: "But she's on the program!" (Huh?)

At the Hilton, I ran into **Eve Ackerman**, cool under pressure, and **Ruth Judkowitz**, who was aghast at my plans to visit Simon Rodia's magnificent **Watts Towers**. Since she, a seasoned resident of Los Angeles, couldn't escort me, I'd decided to head into gang territory where the Towers stand on my own. I'm a lawyer, I assured her; the Crips and Bloods wouldn't *dare* bother me.

Don't know how fannish it was, but **Bill Warren** and **Buzz Dixon** were on a panel dealing with **Jack the Ripper**, along with a silent **Marv Wolfman**. I was happy to hear little speculation from these worthies about the Prince of Denmark or whoever as a possible Ripper; the panelists agreed with both me and the FBI that the Ripper was probably an unknown freak, totally without interest outside of his grisly hobby. "Know the artist through the artwork," they said, and I wondered what they'd think of one of my post-convention plans. Warren was a welcome meeting. I miss his movie expertise in my apa life. He told me that **Don Gluter** had mentioned my teenage LOCs during *his* panel, which was nice.

My most *suave* moment of the convention came early, when I bumped into **Connie Willis**. "Excuse me, Miss Cherryh," I said. For the rest of the convention I hoped I'd run into the great lady so I could say, "Sorry about that ... Lois."

*Challenger no. 5*

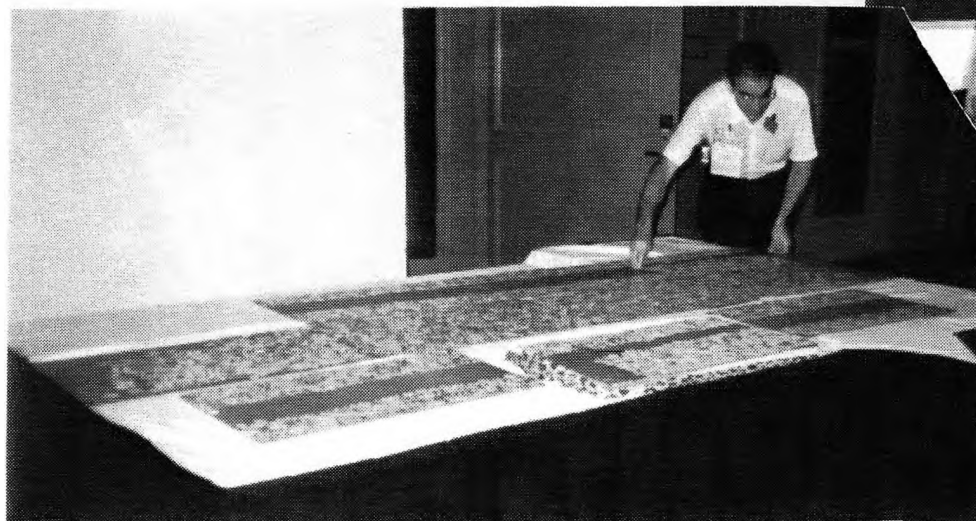


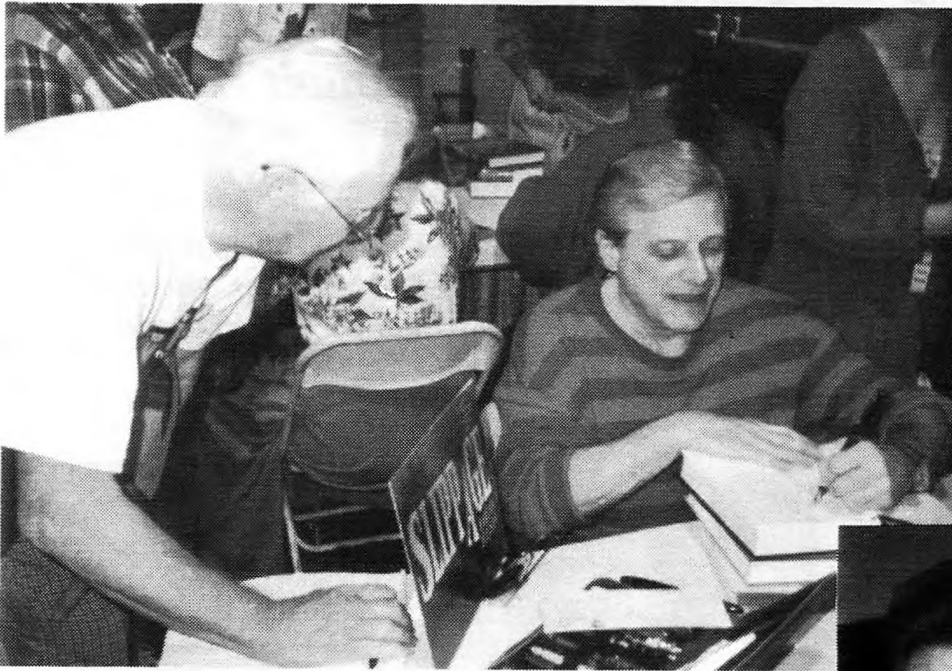
*The LACon Exhibit Hall ...*

*Our mechanical pals Robbie, Gort, and the star of Lost in Space steal the show.*



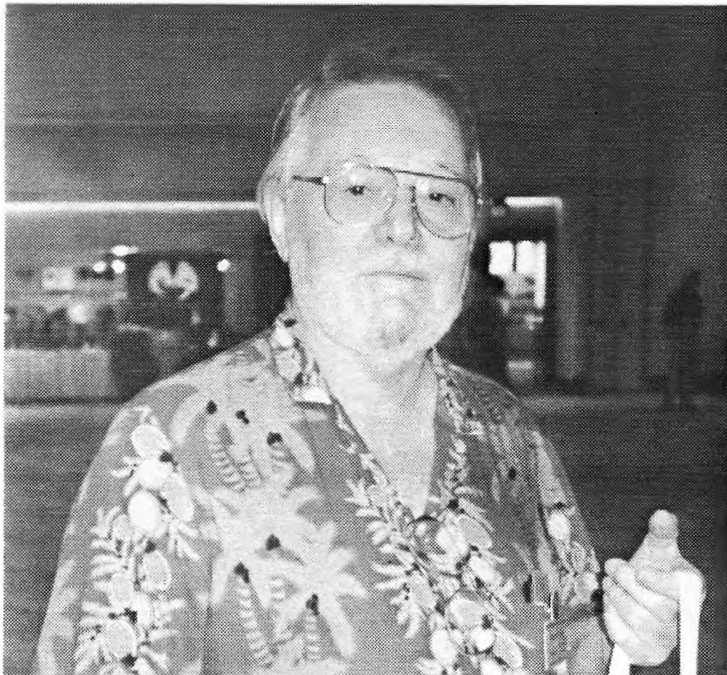
*Right: Nice costume, soldier, but without drop suits, it ain't Starship Troopers. Below: "Filthy Pierre" Strauss sets up a monster jigsaw.*





*Dave Kyle asks Harlan Ellison about **The Prince of Sleep**. Right: media guests **Dick Moore**, **Fred Olen Ray** (director of the J.J. North masterpiece, **Attack of the 60-Foot Centerfold**), and the great **Roger Corman**.*

## FACES



*Left: a classic Hawaiian shirt, and **William Rotsler** within it.*



*Challenger no. 5*

*The  
Challenger  
Tribute*



**INGE  
GLASS**

...

*Attending her second worldcon, Inge's intelligence and charm and friendliness delighted everyone who met her. Her convention included a visit to the Ackermansion, and she swears she'll be in from Germany for LoneStarCon ... with her husband.*



## bRAdburY

I was searching for a Julie Schwartz panel when I peeked into a meeting room and turned the entire week around. On the dais, sitting alone, speaking without notes, was **Ray Bradbury**.

The world of science fiction regards Ray Bradbury as its Poetic Spirit; he stands practically alone as science fiction's Wordsmith. His selfconscious artistry has erected a wall of suspicion between him and the engineers, technonuts and physicists; at ConFederation ten years he smashed that wall flat with his rousing evangelical GoH sermon. In the next two hours my whole week -- engloomed by money worries -- swivelled 180°, and if his extemporaneous talk didn't seem particularly cohesive, the sound bites I recorded form a portrait of the artist as an exalted man.

"I fell in love with metaphors," he said, talking about the genesis of his art, and I thought of Fred Chappell's wonderful artistic obsession. "I chose the stars."

He held up a **Newsweek**, its lead story headlined "The Martian Chronicles." Since the fossilized microbes he turned up his phone has been ringing off the hook. "Life on Mars?" he mused, recalling the splendid conclusion to his epochal collection/novel. "We're there." "We are fortunate to be here as witnesses to the miraculous. Life is a fabulous mechanism.

"We live in ignorance therefore we have to perpetuate ourselves." Furthermore, he went on, "we're *responsible*."

"I *make you* responsible so that when we leave we leave a better world."

And what did he mean by that? "You become yourself," he said, "You do what you

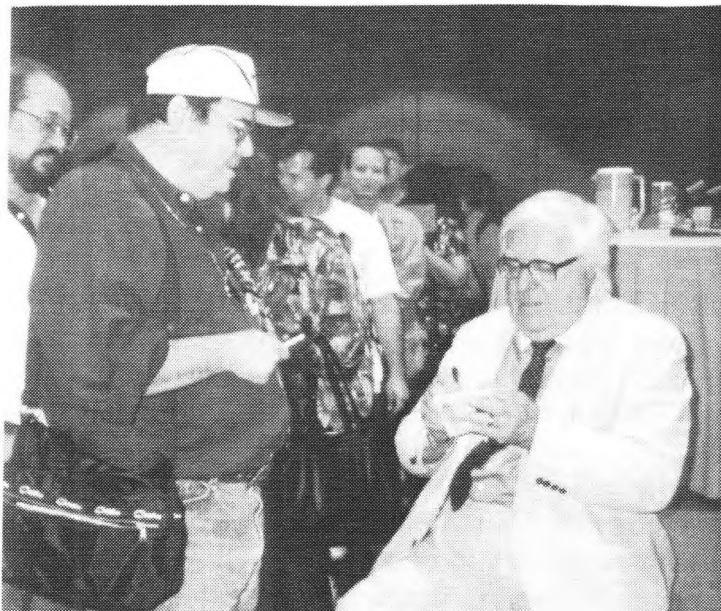


need to do: you *create* yourself," he said, recalling his 19 year old self.

"We must do more things to make us feel good about being human," he said, and encouraged us to "Stop watching local TV. It's all *negative*." And, in words I'd recall if not quote concerning one of my post-convention visits, he said, "We have to accept our evil self. We must push our good side forward."

And what is mankind's good side? Outer space. Though "the damn space shuttle is a bore. To hell with it ... Our destiny is the Moon, Mars and beyond. Purpose of space travel is to live forever."

## Challenger no. 5



Sometimes he despairs. Life nowadays is "Fahrenheit 451 come true. You don't have to burn the books because nobody's reading them." But he does go on. He's written a new script of **Fahrenheit** for Mel Gibson. "Maybe **Martian Chronicles** can be done right," he mused. Disney is working on **The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit**. He has a new book coming out with 22 short stories, **Quicker than the Eye**. "The Muse does whatever it wants to do," he shrugged. "Surprise is everything."

And he told a funny story about meeting the magician Blackstone, and was done. "Let people know what you love," he said. "Give love and tell love in this negative world."

How much is *that* worth to hear?

Julie wandered in -- his panel had been canceled. He asked me to follow them, and he and Ray were off on a slow jaunt about the convention.

My friend Inge -- you'll read about her shortly -- and I followed them. It was, to be obvious, a very special privilege. Through the Exhibit Hall they wandered. About them you could see reactions spread -- eyes widen -- whispers inform. "*Ray Bradbury*" Hands grabbed for the closest copies of **The Martian Chronicles** or **Dandelion Wine**, and with joyful shyness the hands and the shining faces pressed forward. Julie's brow furrowed; Bradbury is 76 now and slower than his original agent (a boyish 81). But Ray would not be deterred, and happily he met and obliged his people. Leaving a wake of exultation behind him. "Ray Bradbury! Wow!"



Opposite: A guy from Ohio meets a man from the Bronx -- Bradbury and Schwartz.

Ray Bradbury. Wow.

Above: Ray obliges a fanboy, a.k.a. GHLIII, and below: artist meets art.

## BUZZ ON

I approached the dais and see if the man in the blue coat who was fiddling around up there was who I thought it was. It was. At that time he was almost unnoticed in the huge ballroom. I remarked to him, "You guys made my 20th birthday very special," earning a patient smile, and sat down.

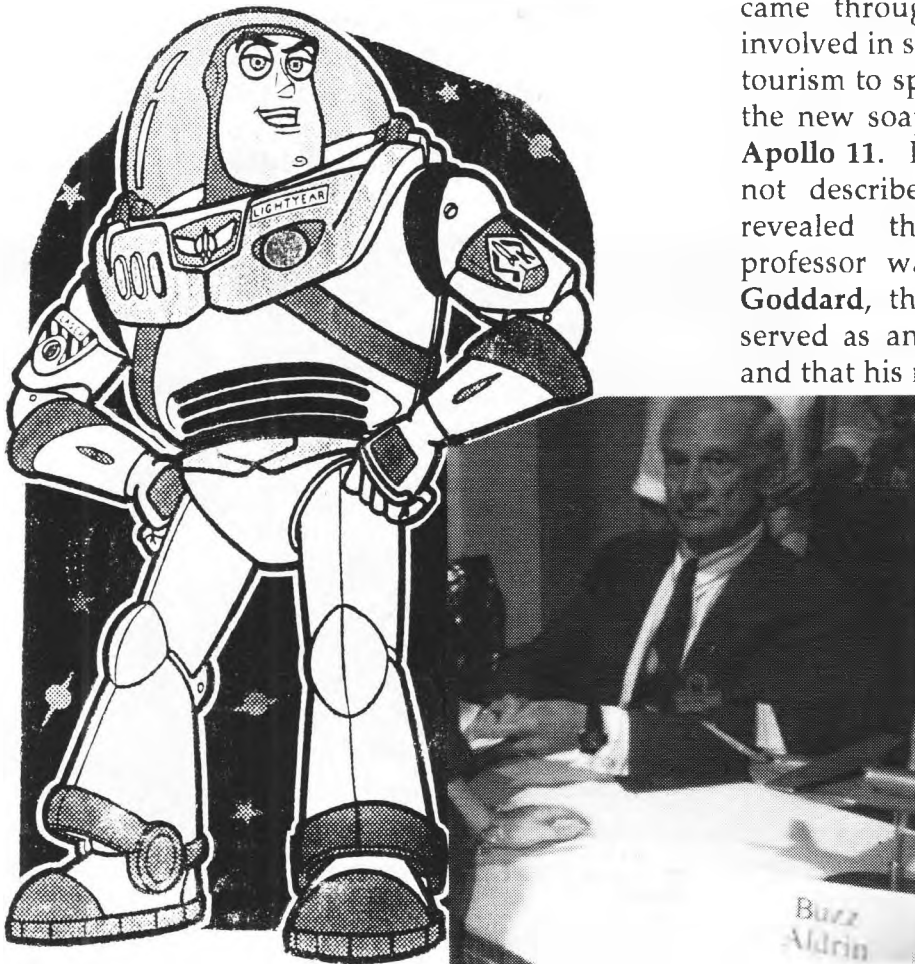
He held up a *Toy Story* doll. His first words to the worldcon were, "My name is **Buzz Lightyear** and I came in peace!" The crowd went berserk. I mean, there are 11 of these guys in the world, 11 men who have set foot on another planet. *This* was one we all know and remember ... the one of the famous photograph (reproduced opposite). *This* was **Buzz Aldrin**. *The second man on the moon*.

Alas, his speech to L.A.Con was awful. He rambled, succumbed to fluster, lost his way in sentences. Through his mortifying confusion some details of his supremely fascinating life

came through. I gathered he was involved in some sort of project to bring tourism to space, is technical adviser to the new soap *Cape* and the TV movie *Apollo 11*. He mentioned -- but could not describe -- visiting the *Titanic*, revealed that his father's physics professor was a guy named **Robert Goddard**, that Edwin Aldrin Sr. later served as an aide to **Billy Mitchell** -- and that his mother's maiden name was

**Moon**. He went into some detail about *Encounter with Tiber*, the s.f. novel he'd written with **John Barnes**, and how he just happened to have hundreds of copies for sale and autograph available. (Didn't get one. Wish I had.)

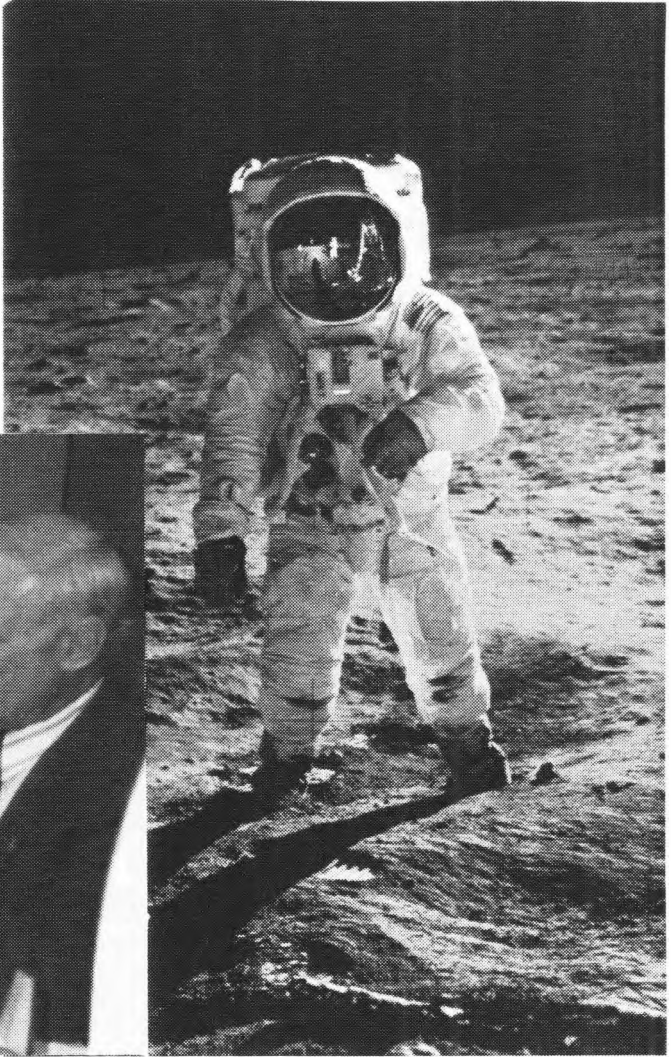
Someone asked if he'd been given a moon rock. Not yet, he said, but "Maybe someday we'll get a piece of the rock."



### *Challenger no. 5*

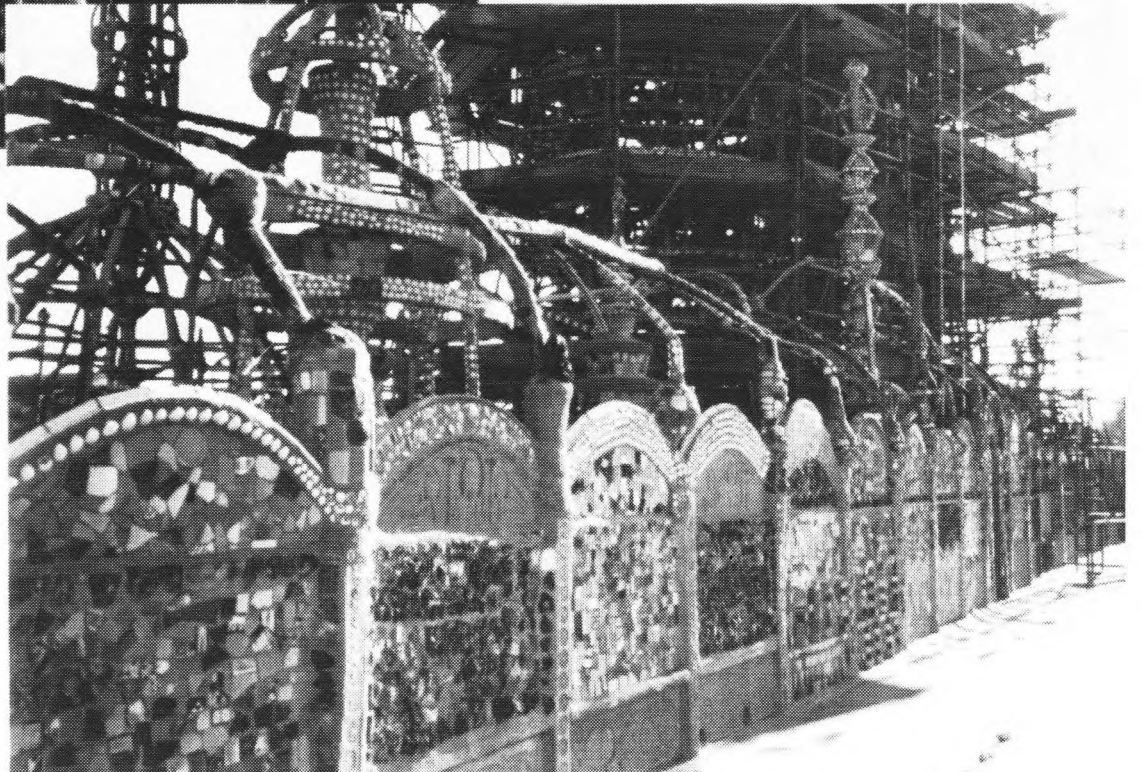
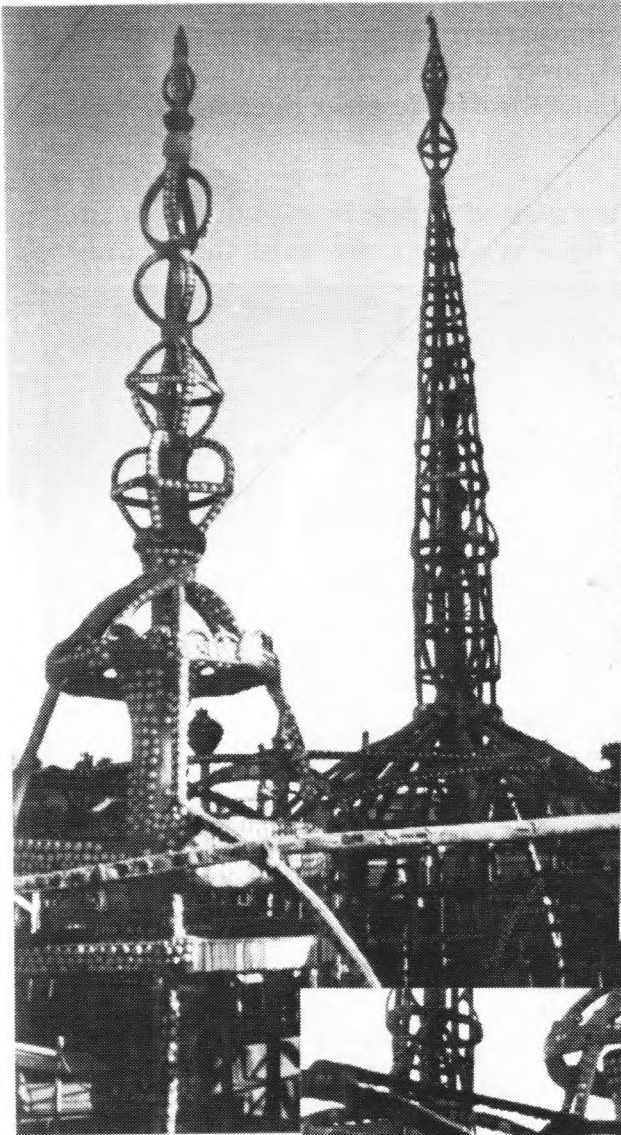
It was for all of us a memory trip. My 20th birthday, 20 July 1969. The ultimate achievement of my parents' era, the moment of transcendence for that generation of engineers (I'm projecting here; GHLJr. was a fine engineer) that no one, yet, understands. But we all remember (at least those of us who didn't lose the decade as we lived it, ref. Van Houten, *supra*).

I always thought Aldrin had extraordinary eyes. They seemed to peer *through* things to an invisible verity beneath. Of the astronaut corps, he was always the most thoughtful, philosophical. While Aldrin lamented, on history's behalf, the fact that NASA chose two of its most taciturn hotshots for its most epic moment, I had no complaints. We all remember his ironically powerful, and powerfully ironic, first words on the moon. In response to Armstrong's "Magnificent, isn't it?", Aldrin nodded, "Magnificent desolation." Alas, so little of that power came through as Buzz met the worldcon, but ... we remember. As long as human beings look to the sky, we'll remember.



Later on, as he was autographing -- goodfellow **Pat Molloy** secured one for me, although Buzz declined to write "Happy 20th birthday" -- **Corlis Robe** (shown here) bade me fetch Aldrin a diet coke. I pushed through the line, apologizing all the way, and did so. Via a soft drink, Guy H. Lillian III touched the moon.

# WATTS TOWERS



*One man,  
without  
training  
or plan,  
took his  
Imagination  
and made  
it material*

*in his  
back yard*

## The Towers

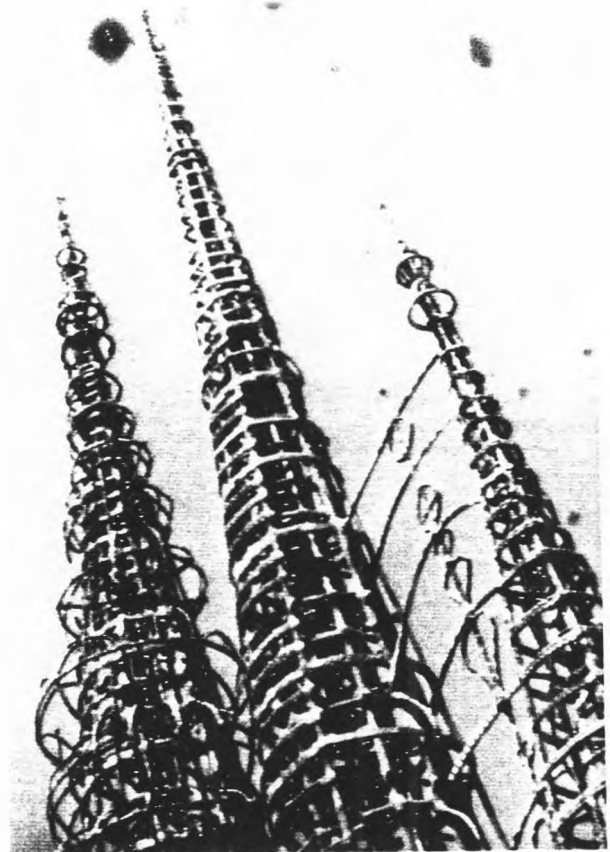
"22 to 405 to 110 to Watts ..." I muttered, over and over again. It was my route from Anaheim into the heart of L.A. It was early – 6-something. I freely admit that the only reason I hit the road that early was to avoid the area's reputation for gangs. At that ungodly hour, I figured, the Crips and the Bloods would be unconscious. Besides, I'm a lawyer; they wouldn't *dare* bother me, right?

My destination was the **Watts Towers**, Simon Rodia's incredible backyard creation, indescribable really ... the little Italian immigrant, no education, settles in barren Watts and begins to sculpt a masterpiece unique and glorious out of steel and mortar and tile and broken milk of magnesia and 7-Up bottles ... *tying* the steel together, never welding, never rivetting ... over 30 years. And what he left behind was amazing, a land-locked ship of discovery into the land of Imagination, masts *104 feet high* at their peak, a work of engineering genius and aesthetic heart that has withstood earthquakes, philistines, riots ... one of the Great Places of the world, one of the Great Little Moments of Mankind. Around 108th, 109th Streets ... follow the signs ...

### *Scaffolding!*

My senses reeled. Damn it! The last time I was in Los Angeles, more than five years ago, Ruth Judkowitz and I had gone by the Towers, and then – *as now* – they had been swathed in girders and platforms and covered with workers reinforcing them against ... whatever. Since then they'd been opened, but now – closed again! "Next year," one of the workmen promised. "We'll be finished by next year!"

I wasn't *exactly* heartbroken. Though the three main structures were covered in wood, the rest of the phantasmagoria was open, if behind a fence, and it was still exhilarating. Rodia's creative act was asymmetrical, unfinished, rough – but witty and exuberant and bright. The wall he created about his masterwork is a delight in itself. I tarried to photograph what I could, to remember the naked Towers I'd seen on my first trip there, 17 years ago, and to dream of the next time I'd stand before the Watts Towers, and wonder.

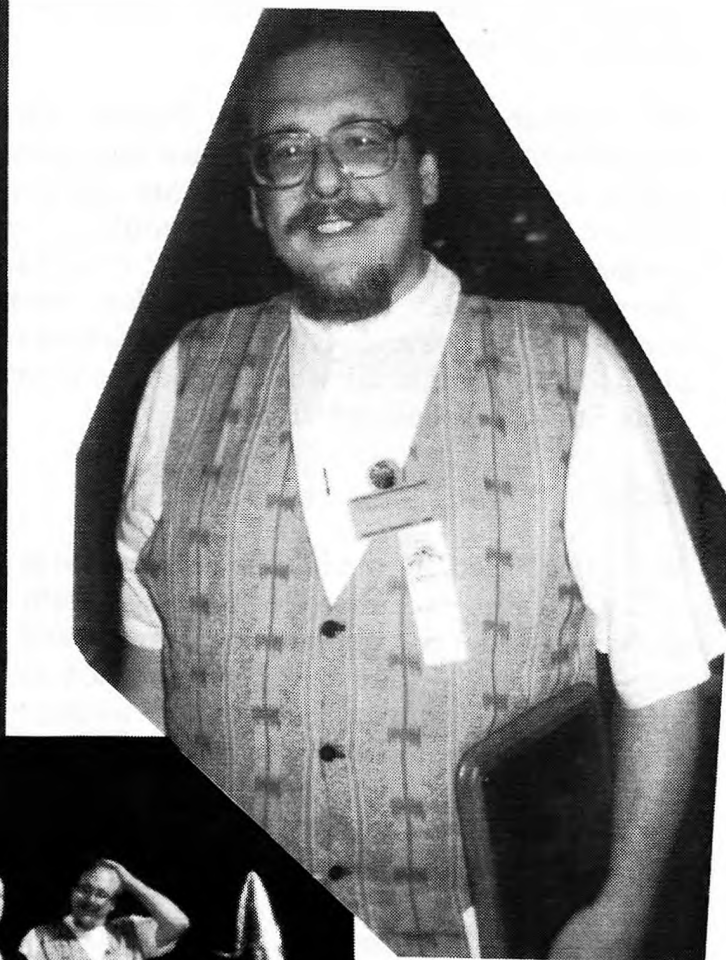


*The Towers, 1979*

*Winter '96/'97*



*Janice Gelb earned her bouquets creating a nifty Hugo ceremony.*



*David Feintuch, from Challenger's Hope to Challenger's photopage.*



*The Hugo winners. Let's see that macarena!*

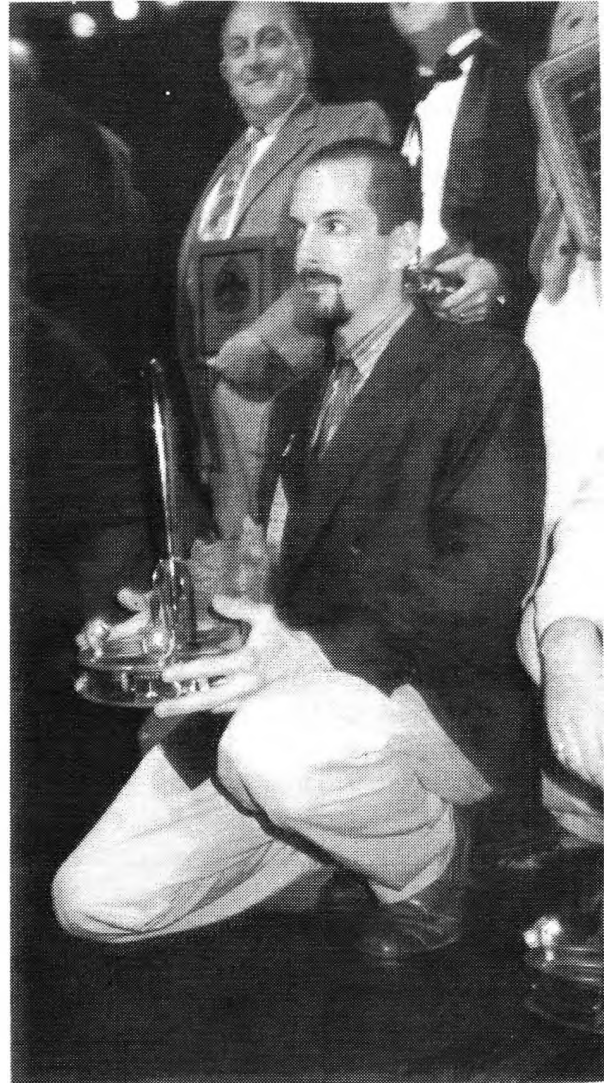
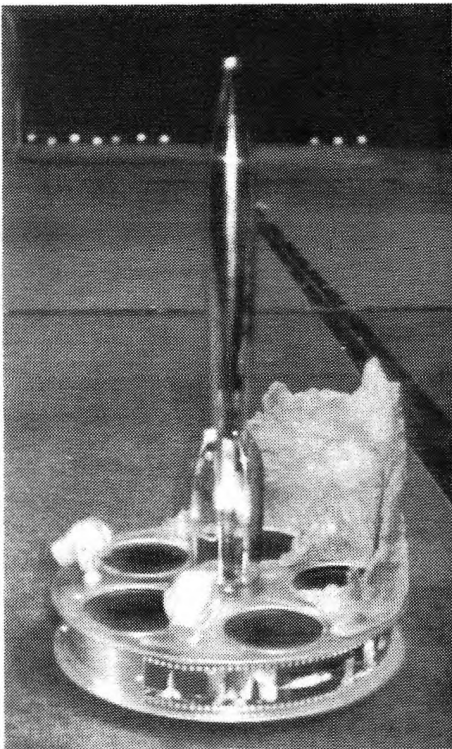


## HUGO TIME

And here came the convention's ultimate event ... the **HUGO AWARDS**.

When I'd first arrived at L.A.Con III, Drew Sanders had described their award: the rocket sitting on a film can, decorated with a film strip depicting great s.f. scenes, movable, workable kleigs spotlighting the rocket, a plastic backdrop *a la* **Destination Moon**. I laughed. What a kidder. But he *wasn't* kidding. Jeez, what silly-looking things.

**Lois Connie Cherryh Willis** was a funny, charming hostess. So was **Marjii Ellers**, presenting the **First Fandom** awards in 1/4 the time it usually takes **Dave Kyle**. The Japanese Seiun awards went to **Fall of Hyperion** and a Stephen Baxter story. The Campbell Award for best new writer went to **David Feintuch**, and I cheered: later, he laughed when I told him why. After all, he writes books with **Challenger** in the title!



*Neal Stephenson somehow tolerates  
being honored for **The Diamond Age**.*

*Words fail to describe the splendid  
tackiness of the L.A. Con Hugo.*

## Winter '96/'97

So here's who won.

*Fanzine:* **Ansible**, \*yawn\*. Martin Tudor accepted the trophy, which I discovered later D&N Lynch missed by 8 mere votes. Pretty impressive, considering that **Ansible** is a one-sheeter that can go forth for negligible printing costs and 32 cents a voter. Contrast that with a zine of epic length like **Mimosa** and you can see its automatic advantage. Will **Challenger** ever get that far? Perhaps when the Bird of Paradise flies out of my ass.

*Semiprozine:* **Locus**. \*fidget\* Charlie Brown's back on track. In 15 years or so Andy Porter might win another one.

*Artist:* **Bob Eggleton** won, and his excitement energized the entire evening. "This is so cool!"

*Original art:* **The World Beneath** by James Gurney. His **Dinotopia** had also won before, but I couldn't object; I voted for this winner. The virtue of this now-defunct Hugo category was that it opened our honors to new people and new accomplishments. I can't imagine why fandom was so jealous and ungenerous as to snuff it out. Comments, anyone?

*Fan Writer:* Dave Langford. \*yawn once more\* Yes, he's grand. But there are other grand people who have never been recognized. Langford's acceptor revealed that Dave has been thinking of withdrawing his name from this competition. I believe he should. After all, he's made his point.

*Fan Artist:* Rotsler. \*doze\* His work is the essence of fannishness, and he should have won more Hugos earlier. On home turf this year, his was an inevitable win. Fandom has awakened to the energy and excellence of Joe Mayhew and Ian Gunn, bringing them nominations; now I hope it opens its eyes enough to bring them Hugos.

*Editor:* Dozois again. \*snore\* We should revive the Best Magazine category.

*Non-Fiction:* John Clute for the **Illustrated Encyclopedia**. At least he was new.

*Drama:* The crowd pleaser of the evening, "The Coming of Shadows" from **Babylon 5**. Wild the celebration as a TV show finally broke the **Star Trek/Twilight Zone** mold.

*Short story:* "The Lincoln Train" by Maureen MacHugh. The author of **China Mountain Zhang**, a popular nominee of some years back, came through.

*Novelette:* "Think Like a Dinosaur" by James Patrick Kelly. I thought the story a bit of a "Cold Equations" rehash, but why be picky. At least he too had never won before.

*Novella:* "The Death of Captain Future" by Allen Steele. This story could have been stronger but I liked the concept and the **IASFM** cover ... and Steele's a good dude.

*Novel:* **The Diamond Age** by Neal Stephenson. I would have preferred Steve Baxter's **The Time Ships**, but wide mainstream notice and victory in the **Locus** poll took the surprise out of the "Big Hugo." The author loped forward, thin, intense, unsmiling, central casting's concept of a literary genius. Stephenson's book enjoys a solid mainstream reputation, and he exhibited a welcome dry wit. Nevertheless, he also came off as an arrogant, gloomy, ungracious *schmo*. Sorry to *bother you* with our stupid Hugo, Neal!

But hey: Look at all the *new* Hugo winners. Rare oh rare is the convention that hails talent never before recognized by the worldcon; these results showed that L.A.Con III members read the nominees and actually paid attention. I told Mike Glyer that he should be happy -- he'd put on an effective convention ... and *spread the wealth*.

# NOTHING UP HER SLEEVES -- BUT BRAINS

Jerry Page

Lay people -- as we finger flingers like to call those wonderfully blessed with little or no knowledge of the Art of Prestidigitation, without whom there would be no paying audience for us -- often get strange ideas into their heads about how magic is performed. Some of these strange ideas are useful to the magician, such as the idea that the hand is quicker than the eye. of the most persistent ideas about how magicians do what they do, is the belief that magicians are constantly shoving things up their sleeves.

Sleeving, as it is called, is a difficult art that requires much practice and a lot more thought: hiding something up your sleeve may be easier than figuring out a use for it once it's there. Yes, I admit that magicians sometimes resort to that sort of thing but probably not at the times you might think, and certainly not in the way you expect. Sleeving requires a small solid object that can be thrown, or will drop of its own weight. Or else some mechanical means of getting an object in and out of place. I personally despair of ever mastering it: there are better places to conceal things. Not that I would ever conceal anything from an audience. Oh no. But if I did ...

Betsy Gregg, a.k.a. the beautiful and



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charming Elizabeth A. Saunders (who edited the fantasy anthology **When the Black Lotus Blooms**), is one magician I know who used sleeving regularly and effectively. This was back in the days when Betsy was the partner of Tom Allen and they were famous as bar magicians at a Peachtree Street watering hole. Betsy never sleeved, either. So how did she use it so effectively? She made it a point to always perform in low-cut gowns that left her arms bare. Patrons, she has told me more than once, were always amazed to see a beautiful woman performing card tricks when she obviously had no sleeves to resort to.

As mentioned, sleeving is most useful with objects that have a touch more mass than palm-sized squares of cardboard. I should think a marble would do nicely. But card magicians find that audiences always suspect their sleeves. This may have something to do with a notorious gizmo called the Hold-out, which was marketed by gambling supply houses starting sometime in the 19th Century. It is a device which straps to the arm and, using a spring mechanism, can extend a metal arm back and forth. The arm can indeed clip a card, allowing a less-than-honest gambler to feed cards from his sleeve to his hand. I've never used one so I might be wrong but it has always struck me as a particularly clumsy and obvious way of doing it, especially when there are so many easily mastered ways that do not call for strapping a half-pound of evidence to your left forearm. After all, one of the major ideas of cheating at gambling is to get away clean, with all the bones in your hands and forearms as whole as they were when you went in.

Magicians, however, do not let good things go unexploited and the fact that people expect cards to be up their sleeves means they'll assure you that's possible -- especially when it isn't. There's even a famous card routine where the magician holds a packet of cards in his left hand and transfers them one at a time to his right, supposedly by sending them up one sleeve and down the other, even though (surprise!) that isn't how it's done. Betsy never performed a trick that called for sleeving, but the paying customers were still impressed that she wore none.

I suspect the men at least were just delighted to have an excuse to gaze at Betsy's bare shoulders. But this is a fine example of how stage magic truly works: by psychology. In proving that she couldn't possibly have anything up her sleeves, which had nothing to do with the tricks in the first place, Betsy was also making tricks seem, in the minds of her audience, much more difficult than they were.

I never saw Betsy and Tom at the bar where they became celebrities, but I did meet Betsy after she had given up magic and became just as adept in the computer field. Magic was one of the interests we had in common (another was fantasy and science fiction, which we both read and collected avidly). A couple of times at anniversary parties for the Science Fiction and Mystery Book Shop in Atlanta, Betsy, Tom Allen and I dug out our magic gear and performed.

Betsy and Tom were famous for their fire-eating act. The secret of fire-eating is that there is no secret. (This is also the secret to walking barefoot on glass, and is the reason I do neither of those stunts.) The fire is real and you use chemicals to keep the flames going. Performers who insist on featuring fire-eating as a regular part of their act can ingest enough of the chemicals to shorten their lives.

They can still be seen eating fire in the background of a carnival midway scene in a Tim Conway movie ... I forget which one. As magicians, they did other things than fire-eating, including stage illusions. Betsy tells a story about a harrowing experience she had rehearsing a

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suspension illusion.

A small interruption for a technical explanation, and I'll get back to the story: a suspension is an illusion where the subject (in the main a beautiful woman) is suspended in midair, often with just the back of her neck resting on an object: the back of a chair, the point of a sword. Levitations differ from suspensions in that they involve the subject moving vertically. In a suspension the subject does not rise.

Betsy was rehearsing the routine with two dancers. Tom had business elsewhere and was not present. The mechanism that permits the trick to work is a clever harness arrangement that supports the essential areas of the performer's body. It is quite small and designed to be easily concealed under brief costumes, giving the illusion that there is no real support. Well, there's not a lot. And what there is, isn't designed to be comfortable for prolonged periods.

The trick usually begins with the assistant stretching out on a board between two objects, say, a couple of chairs. The board is pulled away. The woman remains stretched out, chair backs under her neck and ankles, just long enough for a reaction from the audience -- usually a gasp -- and then the support is whipped away from her ankles and there she is, suspended in mid-air by obviously supernatural means, only the back of her neck touching anything.

Clever person that you are, you've probably figured out that the harness locks onto the suspension mechanism by a cleverly engineered device, and you're right. But consider this: the only point of contact for the woman is the back of her neck. All her weight, for the duration of the suspension, is, in effect, concentrated at that point. The harness offers no support for her legs at all.

The two dancers managed to get Betsy onto the suspension, but when they tried to lift her off, they discovered they were not strong enough to lift her and release the locking mechanism at the same time. Betsy was trapped, locked into the mechanism for two hours or so until Tom arrived, because he was strong enough to free her.

If you've concluded from this that it's the beautiful assistants and not the magicians who do all the work in magic, you're not too far from wrong. But there are serious problems which arise when a man who weighs 180 pounds tries out the average suspension illusion; or when a six foot tall man attempts to squeeze himself into the hiding area of a sawing-in-half illusion. Magicians who have subjected themselves to the discomfort of performing their own suspensions and levitations, such as David Copperfield, have my respect and admiration. Even so, the assistants are often the unsung greats of the magic field, and the best of them should be regarded not as assistants but as partners -- as Tom acknowledged Betsy to be.

Betsy and Tom were bar magicians. their job was to draw customers who were looking for a good time to the bar where they performed, to maintain an overall party atmosphere, and to sell a lot of drinks. The fire-eating was their signature trick, but they also did small close-up tricks, mostly with cards because cards and coins are the simplest and easiest pieces of equipment to carry around with you.

And Betsy wore low-cut gowns so everyone could see there was nothing up her sleeves.

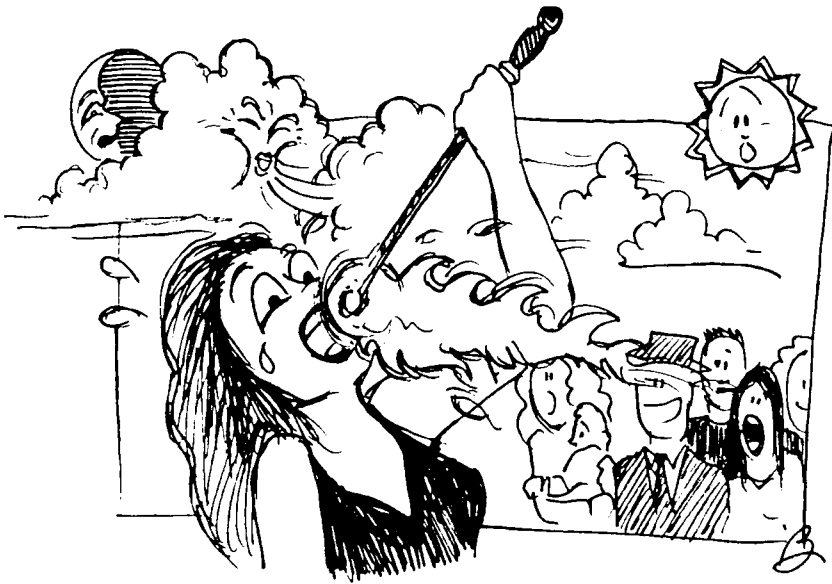
After they retired and Betsy went into the computer field, she and Tom still got together occasionally to perform. They worked a couple of times at the S.F. & Mystery Book Store, to help Mark Stevens, the owner, celebrate the store's anniversary. I performed there with them, though we had separate acts.

Betsy's best card routine was a brilliant piece of cleverness called "Out of This World"

which was invented by a genius named Paul Curry, who released it to the field around 1941. The effect is simple. You hand someone a deck of cards and the said someone, looking only at the backs of the cards, proceeds to put all the red cards in one pile and all the black cards in another.

Betsy is wonderful at performing this marvel. Although she can project her voice with the best of them (she's also a singer though particularly shy about doing solo performances for her friends), she is soft-spoken and her audience finds itself concentrating on her every word -- which is to say, concentrating on the trick itself. Her personality is charming and shy -- she genuinely is afflicted with severe stage-fright -- and all of this just makes her that much more effective.

Jame Riley, her boyfriend, had never seen her perform the fire-eating and probably had no idea what it really entailed, though he had heard enough stories by then to suspect it was not



something he would like. Fire-eating was to climax the S.F. & Mystery Book Shop birthday bash. It was a blustery November Sunday, as I recall.

Tables were set out in front of the store and we worked outside. I was especially nervous because I was performing a trick I'd never performed publicly before. You see, "Out of This World" was my best trick, too, but because she was so nervous about performing again, Betsy had insisted she didn't want to try anything she wasn't sure of. So she made me go out and learn something new. It was also a psychic card routine, where

volunteers divided a deck, passed around the cards and at last turned a block of cards over and shuffled them upside down into the deck. My job was to let them know, without seeing the deck, how many cards they had turned over. The method (created by Simon Aronson, a magician from Chicago) was clever and simple but required a level of concentration I don't ordinarily attempt in a show. Somehow I pulled it off without looking too bad, but I missed my old faithful, "Out of This World." Only when I saw Betsy do it did I realize that she was right. She was so much better than I am.

The fire-eating was saved for last. Most fire-eaters, when they meet another performer, announce early in the conversation whether it's appropriate or not, that they never teach the art. It's that dangerous and, most of them admit, stupid. It gets you a lot of attention but it damages your health. Betsy once told me that she learned it not by being taught but by watching what Tom did. Then one day she filled her mouth with flammable fluid and set fire to it. After that,

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Tom didn't seem to see much point in trying to discourage her.

As they started, the wind was building up. Wind is a problem anytime you work outdoors with fire. A few years ago there was a case in Atlanta where an escape artist was performing a routine straight-jacket escape while suspended above the pavement of a parking lot outside a nightclub. The point of the escape is to get out of the straight-jacket during a carefully measured period of time. To make it seem more dramatic than it really is, instead of using a watch to time themselves, most escape artists time the trick by burning through the rope they're suspended by. Carefully prepared, it gives you the same amount of time every performance. It's a dramatic touch and, because most escape artists are bright people, they won't do an escape unless they know beforehand they can get out of it in much less time than it takes to burn through the rope. If the wind isn't up. There was a hurricane that evening battering the Carolina coast and the wind in Atlanta was indeed up. The fire burned through the rope much more quickly than the escape artist was prepared for and he fell onto the pavement suffering brain damage as a result.

There are those who claim that if you are going to set fire to the contents of your mouth and exhale said contents into the air, you've already suffered some sort of brain damage -- though of course that can't possibly be the case with our lovely and super-intelligent Betsy. She and Tom began their act and Tom went first. He took a swig of lighter fluid, lit his torch and breathed the fumes at it. Dragon's Breath. Very impressive. Two pros doing a routine they'd done before, doing it very well and making no mistakes.

At one point Betsy tilted her head back and put the flaming torch down into her mouth from overhead. This is a common enough routine. Not to encourage you to try any of this foolishness, but the principles of fire-eating are pretty much those of snuffing out a candle by wetting your thumb and forefinger and pinching the wick. You know what part of the flame is dangerous and what part isn't. You don't mess with the parts that are.

It's like lying on a bed of nails. This looks impressive but as long as the nails are of a uniform length, it's rather easy. It's much safer than lying on the point of one nail. Exhaling flames away from face is not the hard part. And it's the noxious fumes of the chemicals that hurt you.

But as she tilted her face back, the wind shifted on Betsy. The flames that should have gone straight out, licked her chin.

Again, this is a fairly routine happenstance in fire-eating circles and the professional fire-eater, as Betsy was, expects it occasionally. The procedure is to get some Vitamin E cream on the burned place quickly before it blisters.

Only Betsy had forgotten to bring the Vitamin E cream.

The performance delighted the audience. They were suitably impressed and gave Tom and Betsy a big and deserved round of applause. Betsy was absolutely lovely and stayed that way until the blisters appeared. Jame immediately informed her that her days as a fire-eater were officially over.

So far as I know, she hasn't even performed card tricks since then. I miss that. I miss her smile. I miss the skillful movement of her fingers as she manipulates the cards. I miss that soft, lilting voice, and most of all, I miss that charming half-shy, half-devil look in her eye as she fools you. The Dragon's Breath may be gone, but I'll bet the light in the eye is still there.

*Always wanted a date with the Homecoming Queen.*

## **HEALTER SKELTER**

The place is awash in flies. The California State Institute for Women in Frontera (south of Corona, south of L.A.) is across the highway from a stockyard. Out of doors, you smell shit all the time, and inside or out, you constantly shoo away flies. Certainly that was so in early September, 1996, short days after the worldcon, when I went there to visit Leslie Van Houten.

In August of 1969, while I was waiting for St. Louiscon and just before Hurricane Camille ripped up nearby Biloxi, Leslie was a member of Charles Manson's so-called hippy cult in southern California. She had come out of a classic middle American life – class treasurer, prom queen – into the wonderful world of dope, where she met Bobby Beausoliel and through him, Manson. Two weeks before her 20th birthday, Leslie had tagged along when Charlie had driven Tex Watson and Patricia Krenwinkel – who had spent a busy evening at Roman Polanski's house two nights before – to the L.A. home of a nice couple named Leno and Rosemary LaBianca. Manson surprised and bound the LaBiancas himself, then sent in his troops.

Since then, Leslie has always called Rosemary "Mrs. LaBianca," a gesture of – respect, I guess. She believes the lady was already dead when Tex came to get her where she stood, "staring into an empty room." Commanded by Manson to "make sure everyone got their hands dirty," Watson handed her the knife and told her to "do something." In the tape I have from A&E's **Biography** she says, "And then I stabbed Mrs. LaBianca in the lower back ... sixteen times."

In Leno's blood Krenwinkel wrote

"something witchy," as instructed, on the refrigerator. Misspelling a word, she wrote, "Healter Skelter." Then the three invaders had a shower and made sandwiches in the kitchen.

After all was said and done, Leslie was convicted in three different trials of first degree murder, and at one time faced death in the gas chamber. That sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by an unconnected Supreme Court case. Under California law Van Houten has been frequently brought up for parole, but always, refused.

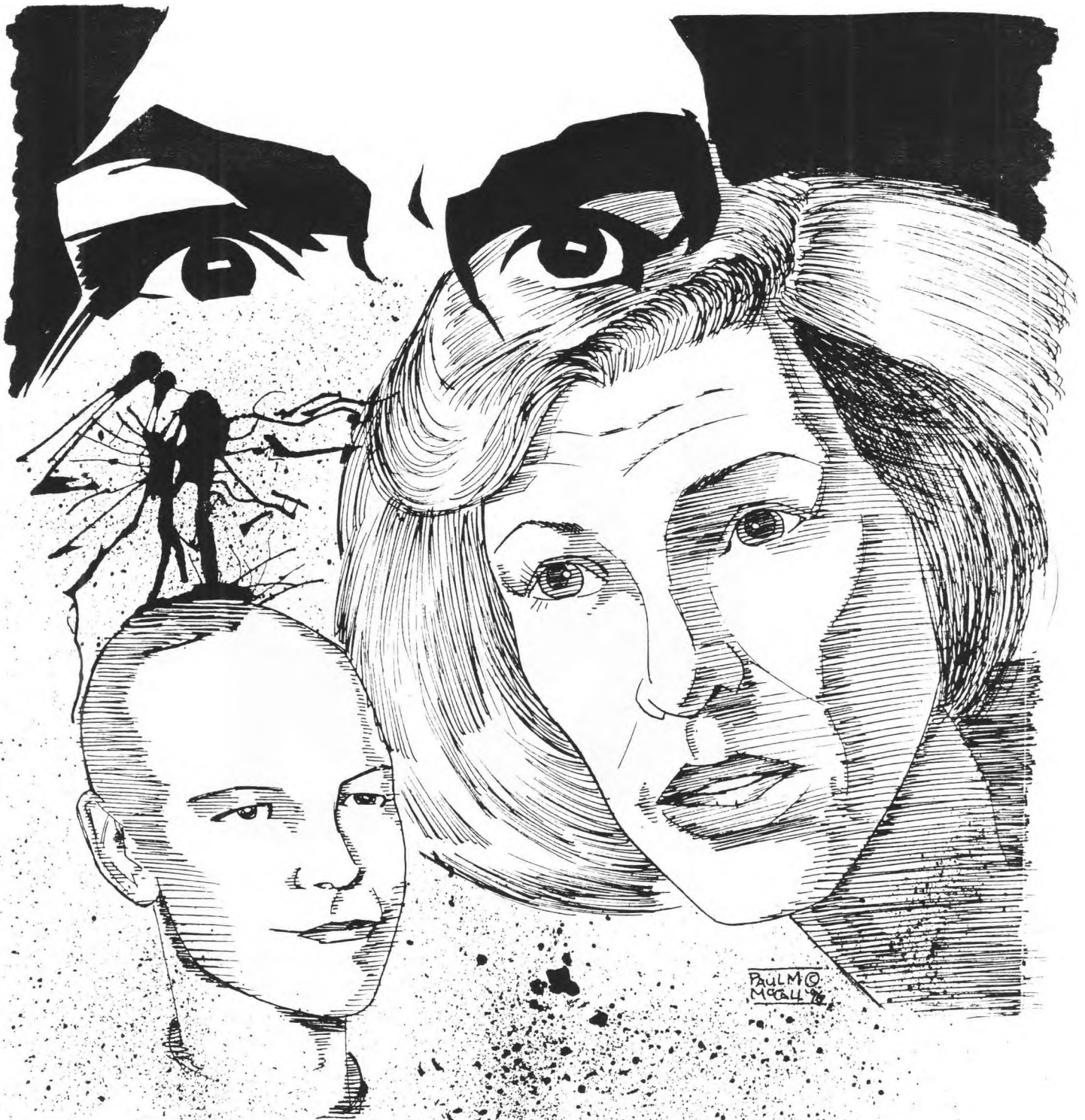
Many years passed.

In 1994 ABC's **Turning Point** interviewed Leslie and the other two "Manson girls," Pat Krenwinkel and Susan Atkins. It was the 25th anniversary of the crimes. The quarter century had made good use of Van Houten. Once cute, if monumentally vapid, the woman had become *beautiful*. Beauty grows out of cute, given years and character. The years were evident; the character, from what she said, fascinated me. Because Leslie Van Houten looked to be a clear and true example of principles I hold dear: *rehabilitation and redemption*.

I'd been talking about such principles with Eddie, the serial rapist I'd defended and with/about whom I was



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planning a book. Using Eddie as a rationale, I wrote Leslie a letter at the address given me by the California authorities.

No excuses for this. I value my youth in the '60s. I kept away from drugs, thank Christ, but that didn't stop me from witnessing and experiencing the social upheaval of those great and terrible days. And here was Van Houten, a woman my age (a month and three days younger) who had shared the times, and in a perverse way, *made* the times. What could she tell me?

It took a while, but she replied to my letter. My feelings upon receiving that envelope were *wary* ... and so was her letter. She wasn't clear what I wanted of her. But a few more exchanges made my motives more obvious, at least to me. I may have begun our corre-

spondence interested in Eddie, but actually, I was curious about *her*.

When I told her Eddie's story – a story I'll recount in these pages, someday – she called it "compelling," and compared it to the works of the great crime novelist, Jim Thompson. "Very haunting, actually." She said she hoped my book would be sympathetic to Eddie – not to his unforgivable crimes, of course, but wouldn't simply treat him as "a scumbag." Sounds like someone who doesn't want to

be thought of that way, either.

Her subsequent letters were thoughtful, if not chatty, and lonely, and sad. Her Christmas card seemed emblematic of her existence: a rabbit, alone in the snow.

In the spring, knowing I would be in the area for worldcon, I broached the idea of a summer visit. I was worried she'd think me nervy or nutty, but she gave her assent, and had the prison send me the appropriate applications. She

wrote on the back of a xeroxed note which apparently went out to all the people who write to her. She was soon due – again – before the parole board, she said, and asked for our written support. I wrote back and wished her the best. Time passed, and though I got my okay from the prison authorities for my visit, I heard nothing

about the parole hearing and nothing from Leslie.

When I called to set up a final date – the Friday following worldcon – the jail told me that, as always, the parole board had turned her down. Her own letter came just before I left New Orleans. It warned me not to wear jeans or "kaki" (the guards might think I was a female prisoner on hormones trying to escape), nor carry so much as a pen. She apologized for taking so long to answer. Time, she said,



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was beginning to flow together ... "the days weeks months years." Sometimes she just lost track. It was a letter that sang with profound despair.

I went out west.

Want to get the real goods on a woman? Find out what other women think of her. The night before my visit, back in Rosamond, the tiny desert town where my grandmother's family lives, I'd called a friend of a cousin's wife. This lady had done a year in Corona and knew all three of Charlie's Angels. They were the senior residents. Patricia Krenwinkel, she said, was a good gal, fully adapted to life behind barbed wire; she taught firefighting at the prison and was widely liked. Susan Atkins, the little one, was physically fit and took lots of conjugal visits. Leslie? Full of herself. Stand-offish, self-centered, and condescending to short-termers. A princess. A *snob*. Not what I expected.

So I walked into the California Institute for Women not knowing what I would find. Leslie's face on the TV screen had a kind of *nobility*. What else would it hold? Grim remorse? Gloom? Condescending arrogance?

How about, "big brown eyes"?

After gate hassle too trivial to describe I was buzzed into a cool cafeteria-type room, chairs arranged about very low

tables, boxed games on shelves, a painting of the prison on one wall: a backdrop for photos. They made me wait a few minutes. Then Leslie appeared, in blue jeans and sweat shirt, with a wide-eyed happy wave, and a *great* elastic smile.

Her brown hair was pulled back from graying roots; her fingers were slender and brown – and black ("been dyeing somebody's hair without gloves"). There was a birthmark on her forearm. More subjectively, she was *cute* – with *big* brown eyes, happy eyes, teasing eyes, and

she was animated, and limber, always in motion, twisting her arms and legs, flirtatiously flicking at flies when they buzzed near my head, leaning forward to talk, her laughing eyes mere inches from mine. I saw not a trace of despair, nor an inkling of obsessed remorse. No, she was exciting, teasing, *impish* –

almost teenaged in her foxy vivacity. Simply told, the woman was *sexy*.

An involuntary smile of delight and flattery grew on my lips. I was at instant ease. A warm, flirtatious lady projects irresistible vibes. But I forced myself to remember that I was in a *prison* with a *convict* to satisfy serious curiosity and talk. So: we talked.

Right off the bat we talked about Eddie's m.s. One typo she had found "creepy," and she asked me to call it to the agent's attention. For "mirror" Eddie had



written (or the typist had typed) "mirrow" and that, she thought, read like nasty mockery of Eddie's cleft lip. Eddie writes a lot about that deformity (which he hid under a moustache), and Leslie didn't think anyone should laugh at it. Good point. When Leslie says something is "creepy," that something is *creepy*.

We talked about her parole. The California board is running out of reasons insofar as Leslie is concerned. Latest: the state's shrink had said he had "lingering doubts" that she'd "internalized her externals" ... which is to say, he'd seen the same regret and remorse that I had, but still thought she might be *acting*. How'd she feel about that? Shrugged. "I'm okay!" So much for depression.

Because I was interested, she told me about the state parole system. California utilizes a sentencing grid to determine just release dates – unlike Louisiana, which has no parole for first degree murder. Leslie pointed out that, with 27 years in the slammer, she was very near the top of the matrix. It takes different factors into account, including the circumstances of her crime.

I'd thought this a touchy subject. But Leslie spoke the name Manson first and held nothing back. Without hesitation she talked about questions that will always surround that night in *chez LaBianca*. Why did Manson choose *her* for their midnight crawl? From what I'd read, she'd been a *babysitter* in the cult. What made that King of Creeps think that she would make a willing assassin? Her complex answer told me she didn't really know. Maybe it had to do with her youth, she said, even though Charlie had younger girls at his beck and call. Maybe, she said, it was because Manson knew her parents would

come pick her up on a street corner if she called. Maybe, I thought, he saw something in her that I couldn't see. And maybe ... maybe she *volunteered* to go. I didn't ask. But she did bring up the central question. Why did she *do it*?

For this was not only an insanely notorious crime, it was a notoriously insane crime. I didn't understand it. I've read all the books, listened to all the interviews. But none – certainly not Bugliosi's weird incite-a-racial-war hypothesis – made human sense. And every human action, no matter how cracked and evil, somehow, to someone, makes human sense. Why did she *do it*?

Leslie's explanation, I'm afraid, smacked of pop psychology. Charlie, she said, was a classic *abusive father figure*. He convinced her that she was stupid, told Krenwinkel she was ugly, and in the manner of a thousand generations of abused children, they'd felt their stupidity and ugliness was *their* fault and so would do anything to make up for their failings and win daddy's approval. Thus the killings. Thus the courtroom antics. Thus the "X" she burned into her forehead during the trial, in imitation of Charlie's swastika. I scanned her face for the scar. She noticed but said nothing.

Leslie seemed thoroughly disgusted with Manson. Obviously, she now thinks the 20th Century anti-Christ is, was, and always was an undereducated big-talking asshole and buffoon. But she feels less hatred for Manson than simple contempt for a hypocritical blowhard. "He pretends he's in lockdown because he's so *bad*. Bullshit!" and she glanced towards the desk to see if the guards had heard her swear. "They keep him in p.c. (protective custody) because the other inmates want to

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kill him!"

Quite possible, but a little pat, her theory of abuse and response. An alternative explanation appealed to me. One strong impression I got was that Leslie enjoyed the communal experience: the *cult itself*. Maybe she *went* along to belong – but to the *group* more than its nutburger leader. The call of the group is always strong, irresistible if you have identity problems of your own. At one point, while we talked, Leslie shrugged off her former middle American existence as life "in a bubble," a phrase and a disillusionment straight out of 1969. The commune provided home, acceptance, identity – perverse though they were – and if someone is empty enough and desperate enough and weak enough, she could do *anything* to keep them. *Anything*.

Nothing has erased that gratitude and loyalty. Leslie disparaged Ed Sanders' book, **The Family**, I bet because of its wiseass treatment of its title subject. She has warm feeling for Krenwinkel and Atkins – they've been sharing therapy since that **Turning Point** – and even argued for the sincerity of Tex Watson's religious conversion. "If he's faking it," she said, "he's been faking it for 25 years." (She disagreed with John Douglas' **Mind Hunter**, which theorized that Watson – bigger, stronger, smarter, handsomer and crazier than Manson – had challenged Charlie for leadership of their cadre, and thus driven him to blood his hounds. Never saw that, she declared, and responded to my comment that we outsiders knew less about her old beau than any of the rest of them with, "Tex is a very private person.")

In any event, we don't know enough about the supporting cast in the Manson saga. They've been demonized

and caricatured – Cathey Paine's portrayal of Leslie in the movie of **Helter Skelter** should be smeared with mustard and eaten for lunch – but they have never been understood. What turned these allegedly ordinary people to Charlie's service? Drugs? Leslie clearly felt dope had started her up "that crooked way." "First weed, then 'ludes, acid ..." (I told her she was lucky in one respect; she'd missed crack cocaine.) But again, that seems *too easy* an answer. Drug use may constitute rebellion – though Leslie didn't figure that, since she kept her doping secret – but there are adolescent snits and then there's Tate/LaBianca.

Another prisoner walked past. Leslie threw her a wink.

I asked about my fellow barrister, the pitiable Ronald Hughes, who died during the trial. Vincent Bugliosi suggests in **Helter Skelter** that Manson ordered him murdered, but Leslie doubted Charlie had anything to do with it. Ron was so anxious to join the Family lifestyle, she said, that she could see him taking acid and falling into a flash flood – which is how he died. Leslie's former husband, whom she'd met from jail, was arrested with aerial maps of the prison and a female guard's uniform – but she said the schmuck was incapable of bagging groceries efficiently, let alone helping her escape. "I was cleared on that!" she insisted, and I didn't press.

Bugliosi? She hates his guts. Check out **Helter Skelter** and note the pride the prosecutor took in winning a death penalty against her, in particular. Hypocrite and fraud! During the first trial, she claimed, Bugliosi kept leaning over and assuring the girls that capital punishment was about to be overturned ... as it was. His fervor to send her to the gas

chamber was mere posturing, flummery for fame. Talking about him was the only time she showed real anger: she *hates* the L.A. district attorney's office – even the O.J. prosecutors, whom she's never known.

She told a story about her later nemesis, prosecutor Stephen Kay, a "brittle" man who's opposed her parole for decades. She'd delighted in teasing him during the trial. She'd imitate a fly, "Bzzzzzzzzzz," until he glanced her way. Then she'd clap her hands: "Gotcha!" Still giggled about that. I did too, despite knowing what Kay probably had in front of him: crime scene photos of Leno LaBianca with a fork in his gut.

You see how my mind could become seriously mushed. You see, I never forgot to whom I was talking, but to whom I was talking was *terrific*. She was respons-

ive, she was interested, she was funny ... she had me enraptured. At least twice I found myself staring into those big brown eyes, and shaking my head in disbelief. "I don't *believe* this," I said. "Me neither," she replied.

The lady drew me forth, and got *me* to talk. Though she has a rather *\*ahem\** skeptical view of lawyers (she went to her last parole hearing without one), she listened with interest when I proffered my thoughts on her case. For instance, the

first word out of my mouth had *I* been her lawyer would have been "Severance!" -- to get her away from the other defendants. Manson made her fire the attorney who tried it. And she should never have received the death penalty, even though she welcomed it at the time (the gas chamber freed her from confronting her guilt, she said). Louisiana statutes say it's mitigating when a murderer is under the mental domination of another. Citing the doctrine of "specific intent," necessary for a

first degree conviction, I wondered if she'd *had* that intent. "But I knew people would die when we went out that night," she pointed out. Yeah, but she had to be *urged to act* ... literally seized by the shoulders, handed a knife, pushed to her victim. I'd've argued that showed a lack of intent to kill Rosemary La-

Bianca – although it's doubtful how well such legalistic hair-splitting would stand up against 16 stab wounds.

I worried afterwards that I'd overstepped. Leslie has been mentally reliving that hellish night over and over and over and over for 27 years. She has accepted responsibility and on that acceptance built her rehabilitation. Interference with that process would be unforgivable.

We hit on books. As she had in her

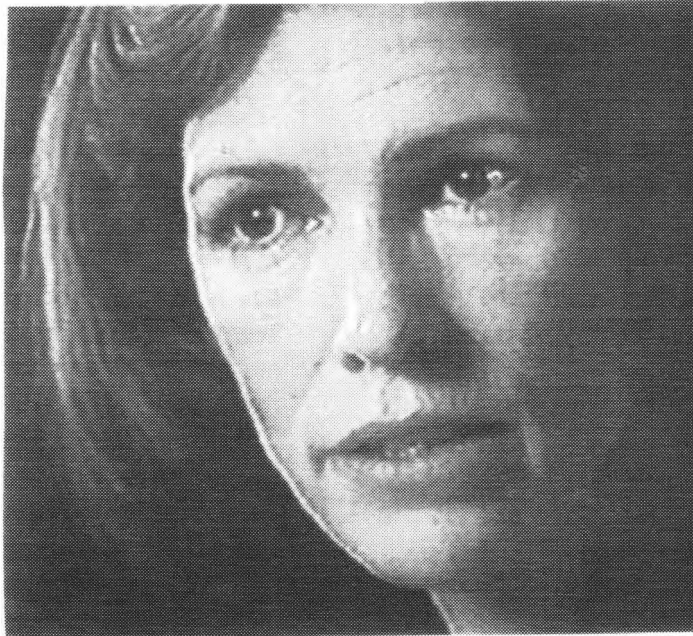


## Challenger no. 5

letters, she praised Jim Thompson (**The Killer Inside Me**) with genuine enthusiasm. That led me to expound on Phil Dick, another genius who never got his just recognition during his life. She loved **Bladerunner**, but hadn't read the novel. She's not into s.f.; she knew **Stranger in a Strange Land**, of course, but was surprised to learn that Robert A. Heinlein was ramrod military. Another wry shake of her head. "We were so young when we read that." In a way those were the saddest words she said all day.

I was young once, too, and so up jumped People's Park. I launch into my Park rap whenever I'm with someone I want to touch, or who's really touched me. I went into it with her: the tiny mother trying to cross a police line with her two toddlers, and the three cops who stopped her. The

KNOW sign, and the tear gas. The crewcut National Guardsman who took off his gasmask and stared into the face of his screaming officer "as if he were speaking Martian." I really do think she needed to hear this: Leslie has her '60s and I had mine; they weren't that far apart and they were as different as night and day. The Park was what 1969 and its hippy counterculture were *really* all about. "I wish you'd been there," I told her, meaning it, *meaning it*. "My God, I wish you'd been there."



But now I wonder. The gentle creative anarchy of People's Park was met with savage establishment brutality. How convincing could an argument against violence be if the enemy has burned out your throat with tear gas, and your parents' generation has met such atrocity – as it did – with witless approval? Who's to say it wasn't just such betrayal that sent Leslie on that horrible mission? To some, blood should be repaid with blood and hatred with hatred. Why should she reject Charles Manson if our parents would so mindlessly massacre us for Ronald Reagan's pleasure?

God, the '60s.

Leslie mentioned that she was freaked by "gruesome" **Silence of the Lambs**.

Loved the last line, though. She'd seen it on the tube. That's how she's seen life in the last quarter-century,

through TV: regular TV; "I don't have cable." But she's seen enough to make a few calls.

This, she says, is a sick society (and when Leslie says "sick" ...). We have a giddy fascination with crime, she said, we *enjoy* it too much. Ted Bundy's execution, for instance, became a repulsive street party. Behind her walls Leslie had heard little about Bundy. She'd also never heard of shock rock's "Marilyn Manson." Know what she doesn't remember? The moon landing, a month before Tate. But she

remembers the JFK assassination, of course – I told her my next stop was Dallas. Simultaneously we named the schoolmates who'd told us about it. Talk about captivation with crime ... that's almost the ultimate example. Almost.

Want a surprise? Van Houten thinks prison sentences are too lenient. She really does look down on short-termers, because she thinks they're not learning any lessons from being jailed, not really trying to change. You're in prison for a reason, she said. Doing a few months, you're going to concentrate on *doing the few months*. She had pride in her fellow lifers; they were the ones who did things there, and they were the ones, she implied, who *were* facing themselves and trying to change.

Her own therapy is longterm and ongoing – and is not yet finished. That's why she wasn't upset at having her parole refused: she still has important psychiatric ground to cover, she still has work to do. In shrink jargon, she's trying to learn to mourn – for herself, for the last 30 years, and for Rosemary LaBianca and all the people who loved and miss her.

More like it, I thought. Here was the Leslie I'd read in my letters and seen on the tube, the serious woman struggling back from damnation, her lips dusted with sulphur, her fingers daubed not with hair dye but innocent blood, fighting with authority earned at the cost of her soul for – no other term – *the good*.

I bought her numerous cups of coffee out of a vending machine (she wouldn't – couldn't – touch the money herself). I followed her out to the yard – yes, she looked nice – so she could have a smoke, until the heat and the flies drove us back. She had to ask permission to use the

bathroom. Asking seemed second nature.

We talked about the mail she receives. Some of her correspondents are ghouls who want her autograph – to *sell*. I offered a lawyerly letter telling them to flake off, but she seemed to enjoy her duel of wits with such sleazebags. (I asked her to forbid me to sell her letters to me, and she intoned, "*I forbid you*," those big brown eyes laughing.) I asked her if kids, teens, ever wrote to her, and she told me about an angry girl who'd said Manson was right on. She *had* to respond to that girl, Leslie said, but wasn't sure how.

I had an idea of how, but was reluctant to broach it. I didn't want her to think I'd sought her out to *sell* something. "This is *not* why I came here," I insisted. "Do you believe me?" "I believe you," she said. "*Do you believe me?*" "*I believe you*," she repeated, eyes wide. She should write a book. She should focus her intelligence and encapsulate her experience and write her story. Had a title suggestion for her: **The Empty Room**. (And Eddie's agent, but that's another story.)

I was there for three hours, and finally – I'm sure she was tired – she got me to say adieu. Her day to come included a therapy session and (right away) a tuna fish sandwich. Mine would be the first of three days of hard desert driving. She gave me a chaste hug, and – unforgettably – twisted her nimble body around the sign at the guard's desk. The sign read **NO PRISONERS ALLOWED BEYOND THIS POINT**. Eyes sparkling, she grinned, waved, said "Have a safe trip home," and I floated out the door through which she may never pass.

At the moment, I wasn't hitting on all cylinders. Literally: my Geo had a loose spark plug wire.



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It was two days later, and in the middle of Texas, before I began to recover my wits -- and lawyerly cynicism. I began to argue against my "Leslie high." All the good deeds, the quilts for the homeless, the Christmas carols in September, the remedial reading classes, the N.A. meetings, the constant therapy ... weren't they all a bit *much*? After all, reminded I to myself, all prison inmates are manipulators, and for women -- here comes trouble -- it's basic instinct. Combine those factors and you have a person who knows what you want to hear and knows what to let you see. That's how she *survives*. That's how she hopes to *escape*.

She was playing you for a chump, GHILIII, I told myself; you're a dumb male sap. That was why I'd woken up the last two mornings thrilled and happy. It was just that fundamental: those big brown eyes *do* stay with you.

So do questions, though. Should Van Houten be released? It could happen, now that she's reached the top of the parole grid; nothing keeps her inside but politics and the public's long memory for terror. But *should* she be let go? Were her regret, rehabilitation, remorse real? Had she truly *internalized her externals*? The tapes said yes. The letters said yes. The living person said yes, but with a grin that said many other things. You know ... I never saw tears, even when she spoke about Rosemary LaBianca, and her voice broke. *I never saw tears*. What did that mean? Was she lying? Had she simply cried herself dry? Is it fair to expect tears every single time she talks about that night so long, long ago? What about her pride in her fellow lifers, as people who had faced what needed to be faced, even if what needed to be faced was unspeakable? That was real, I was sure of that. Didn't

that say yes, loudly, truly?

Leslie gave an interview in the early 1970s. You can date the tape by her hairdo -- a helmet cut with bangs -- and the unlined face it framed. She told the tale of the Family and its crimes in a voice I'd describe as baffled. At the end, she recounted Manson's wacko fantasy of The Hole, the underground kingdom where the Family would wait out the black-white revolution he called Helter Skelter. "So after the crimes," she said, "we went into the desert to look for The Hole."

Then she was silent, gazing away, into space and memory and ... whatever. I wonder what she saw out there. The Hole, maybe. Maybe her Empty Room. Maybe 30 years of waste and loss, and all the pain she'd joined in. Maybe Hell. After a long moment, and just for an instant, those big brown eyes shifted back, staring into and through the camera. *Horrified*.

I do know this. I'd been in the presence of a person unique, historic ... tragic, terrible ... and wonderful. If I was being fooled I was being *really* fooled, but part of the pleasure and part of the danger of meeting a magician is not knowing when or whether. And a woman, but a woman deserves faith.



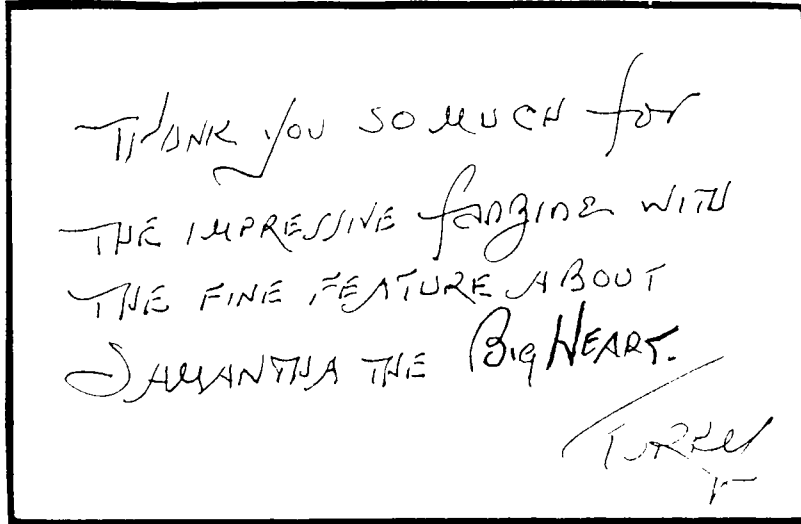
## THE "AL" SIDE

*As far as I know, Alan Hutchinson has never been a green lawyer. But oh, how he understands.*



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# EPISTLES



Forrest J Ackerman \* 2495 Glendower Ave. \* Hollywood CA 90027

**WAHFles:** Camille Cazedessus, Carolyn Clowes, Brad Foster, Richard E. Geis, Steve Green, Craig Hilton, Kim Huett, Linda Krawecke, Dick Lynch, Bill Mallardi, Charlotte Proctor, Julius Schwartz, Pat & Roger Sims, Robert Sirignano, Charlie Williams. Thanks for listening.

**David A. Drake**  
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Chapel Hill NC 27514

This is an anecdote, not support for Sgt. Guano's behavior (is that really his name? Surely not).

*All the names in my lawyer articles are pseudonyms, but please don't call me Shirley.*

The sister of a friend of mine was a police sergeant in Chicago. She was shifted to light duty at the lockup because of an injury and on her first night was the only person on duty there when a patrol brought in a dozen hookers from a regular sweep.

This would have been a lot more problem than it was except that the girls

themselves took charges of the formalities; they'd all been in repeatedly. They found the record books, bags and lockers for their personal effects, and even assigned themselves cells.

The thing that the (female, remember) sergeant still shuddered about, though, was the girl who handed over the .25 ACP automatic she carried in a plastic bag in her vagina.

And yes, she had a yeast infection.

*Well, off to a righteous start...*

**Richard Freeman**  
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Enjoyed reading **Challenger**, especially James Hogan's piece on AIDS. It was a good overview of Peter Duesberg's work, though there were a few inaccuracies ... as there always are ... but you'd have to read Duesberg's 500+ page book to pick up on that, and it is likely that the piece might lead me to do that.

Certainly everything I've known about AIDS has been proved to be wrong at least 3 or

4 times now, so that the disease seems to have been invented by the folks at Firesign Theatre, just to show us, yet again, that everything we know is wrong. I don't know if Duesberg is right in his theories that heavy drug usage is the cause of AIDS ... there are too many still alive & healthy rock'n'roll musicians for me to accept his theory completely ... but that the virologists might be wrong in thinking HIV causes AIDS is definitely a possibility. My own theory is that Disco causes AIDS, but I have no way of proving it, without killing off people!

As for Harry Moore, he would have made a nice footnote to H. Jackson's **Anatomy of Bibliomania**.

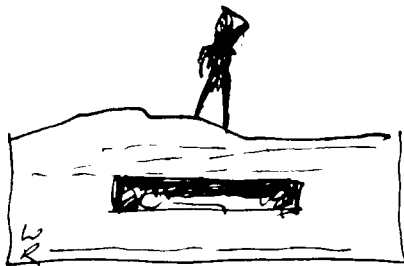
**Walt Willis**  
**32 Warren Road**  
**Donaghadee**  
**Northern Ireland BT21 0PD**

Congratulations on **Challenger #4!** It's really magnificent.

Dr. Stocker's memoirs of Harry B. Moore were fascinating and poignant. So were Jerry Proctor's memories of Bob Shaw, though less surprising. I would have expected Bob to be interested in guns, and thrift stores. What Jerry really wanted to find for him was a thrift shop specializing in used guns.

Your editorial was full of interest. I appreciated your appreciation of Christa McAuliffe ... "If she was of the common clay, then the common clay, then the common clay is shot through with diamonds" ... that was well said.

I was interested in your plans to come to



the L.A. worldcon, because I am sympathetically involved in the plans of your Pro Guest of Honour. In fact it was at one time considered as a possibility that I might attend as well, in place of James White's wife Peggy, so I take a personal interest in James' journey. I regret some times losing the opportunity to play James' wife at the Worldcon but the combination of deafness and restricted mobility which currently afflict me put it out of the question. I am currently suffering from the effects of a spinal stenosis which makes it very painful for me to walk. I am having an operation for it at the end of this month. Keep your fingers crossed for me.

Richard Dengrove's article on the Rosicrucians was interesting and would have been even more so if we knew more about his sources.

James Hogan's article about AIDS seems more important than one which should be confined to a fanzine.

It's a pity the article about Electrical Eggs doesn't anywhere explain just what electrical eggs are, because this sort of ignorance is responsible for most of the hostility encountered by Samanda's TAFF nomination. This you can see by the low vote she received from British fans, who simply didn't know anything about her. I am shocked by some of the remarks she quotes, allegedly from fanzine fans, but note that they are all attributed to contributors to Internet, which is not a fanzine.

Your article, "Hind Legs," I thought was brilliant, in the same way as the work of John Grisham, currently billed as the "MOST POPULAR AUTHOR IN THE WORLD." Does it never occur to you to follow his example into the big time?

*Often ... though I must say you seem to like Grisham's work a lot more than I do. He editorializes too much; he gives the reader no choices to make for himself. That's a sure sign of the hack. Admittedly, I'm only going by **The Chamber**, which I obviously disliked, and the movies made from his novels, so perhaps I*

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*should read more before I vow to run him out of  
Jefferson Parish Drug Court.*

**Jerry A. Kaufman**  
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Seattle WA 98125

I very much enjoyed the cover and other artwork by Victory [Victoria White]. I like this sort of lush, romantic, idealized drawing, and Victory is quite skilled at it. It's not the sort of thing we get or solicit for **Mainstream**, so I'm glad there's a zine that will publish it and give me the chance to see it.

I wondered whether Richard Dengrove ever joined the Rosicrucians, or what other reason he had to write the article. Does he do a lot of exploring in arcana and esoterica himself, or is he more of an armchair explorer? I myself enjoy this sort of thing; witness my subscriptions to **Gnosis** and **Green Egg**, for example. In the article, he says he reads books given to his father by a patient. Has he gone further, himself? By the way, I don't know if this was Richard's understanding, or whether it was H. Spencer Lewis', but San Jose is not in Southern California, being in the south end of the San Francisco Bay. That's more central or even, by stretching things, northern.

*So you're asking Richard, "Do you know the way  
to San --" All right: I'll stop.*

I've read about Peter Duesberg before, but I think James Hogan goes into more detail than any other source I know. (Of course, I've missed far more issues of **Spin** than I've read, and they used to run a monthly AIDS column that championed him. And I'm sure many other magazines discussed him.) He almost persuaded me, but ... I still can't help wondering why I should believe one man when so many disagree. Maybe all those other doctors and scientists are working from the wrong paradigm. I wouldn't bet on it, but I'm willing to hear more on the subject.

Interesting interview with Samanda Jeude. I was glad to hear more about her history in fandom and to get more information about her disability and how it led to Electrical

Eggs, about which I previously knew little. Regarding TAFF and her experiences with it. I was struck by her statement, "I knew nothing about TAFF, why should I run for it?" As a long-time fannish participant as fanzine writer and publisher, convention hound and fan fund supporter, I would have asked her the same thing if she'd told me the above.

I found your account of your appearance in appellate court to be the most interesting article in the zine. In part, this was because it was the most personal piece in the issue. We got to sweat and strain right along with you. In another part, it's because I find law of interest in



the way apparently minute differences in interpretation lead to such different results as well as the way justice falls so differently on different people (especially different races and classes of people). I want to read more.

So, to the quiet strings of the Scud Mountain Boys (they sit oddly in the catalog of Sub Pop, the original home of grunge), I bid you adieu.

Terry Jeeves  
56 Red Scar Drive  
Scarborough YO12 5RQ  
U.K.

Many thanks for the massive issue of **Challenger**. How your produce (and mail) such a huge zine has me in awe -- and envy.

*And me in poverty!*

I must confess ignorance over Harry B. Moore -- I never heard of him I'm afraid -- but I loved the idea of the "prayer-rug project." He certainly sounded a character.

Glad to see you rubbishing the parents of that 7-year-old who crashed trying to fly across the USA. No kid that age would have had the push and personal drive to go into such a project without *considerable* (overwhelming?) parental pressure. A pity Mom wasn't aboard as well.

*No, the pity is that Jessica Dubroff didn't stay on the ground.*

Re your comments on sundry law items, one USA law actively got right up my nose -- the TV screening/coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial -- no I *didn't* watch it, but the idea of such a horrible murder trial being used as a media entertainment is revolting to say the least.

I was tickled at the Rosicrucian bit. Yonks ago (c. 1935) a friend of mine (aged about 12) wrote a response to one of their ads. He showed me the literature describing the escalating series of "inner circles" and the increasing costs. He ignored all the followup mail in which they progressively reduced the costs of all this knowledge-giving. Barnum had it right -- you can fool some of the people all of the time.

Interesting article about your court case. I've often wondered how a lawyer feels about defending a client who is definitely guilty. It must give you quite a moral problem on some (all?) cases.

*The purpose of the American -- I really should say "western" -- legal system is to insure that all defendants receive "due process" -- a fair hearing. Part of due process is requiring that the*

*government prove guilt before subjecting a defendant to punishment. The manner in which proof is ascertained is through the judgment of a neutral -- supposedly -- factfinding body, through presentation of evidence by the state and argument over what that evidence proves by both sides. A*

*defense lawyer has to keep in mind that he does not decide what the evidence proves. His duty is to argue it in the best interests of his client. The real question, you see, is **not** whether the defendant did it. The question is whether the state can prove it. Not to revive an old unpleasantness with you and our other British friends, but we kinda fought a **revolution** over the accountability of the state, and I like to think defense lawyers are simply carrying forward that spirit. (Isn't that better than simply admitting I'll say **anything** for the money?)*

**Fred Herman**  
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Forest Hills NY 11375

Sorry it's taken me so long to respond to **Challenger** 4, I've been (and still am) desperately trying to plow through enough 20th century American fiction to be able to sit in front of three professors for three hours in September and somehow convince them I belong in their field. Other considerations like, um, food have been right out.

You make some damn good points about "the myth of the mundanes," though the cultural differences are real and important; we do, after all, "share a dream most people don't: the distant, impersonal future." But certainly, when it comes right down to it, there are a lot more "mundanes" than fen who end up as worldshakers, and there are times when the percentage of pinheads in fandom doesn't seem much lower than that in any other group (such as that big set labeled "People I Have Met").

Sadly I can't quite agree with you that most people are okay, but that may be due to the coincidences of my own childhood and the hostility, real or imagined, I constantly perceive

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outside the door of my apartment (at least in this city, not to feed any stereotypes about New York). It may just be me -- heck, I hope it is! -- but I can't help thinking that however decent people could be, their environments (and I include myself here) tend to bend them all out of shape. As I think Melville put it, "I love humanity for what it could be, but I hate it for what it is!"

Hence all those rapists, at one extreme. Your comments about these last, by the way, should be engraved somewhere. (As far as the nature of humanity is concerned -- please! Talk me out of it!)

*The Watts Towers (scaffolded or not). Julie Schwartz. The works (and voice) of Alfred Bester. Bradbury. Lafferty. Jimmy Connors at the U.S. Open, 1978, and Wimbledon, 1982. Jackson Pollack. "Jupiter" in **The Planets**. "Every Little Thing She Does is Magic." The second sentence in the Declaration of Independence. Van Gogh. The Hubble. **On the Waterfront**. Miss April, 1967. That Bell Telephone commercial about the guy in the wheelchair putting a canoe rack on his van. The way we instinctively cheer a birth. Nanci Griffith. Poetry. "That Evening Sun." So many pages in Phil Dick I can't think of them all, but for sure the last scene in **Our Friends from Frolix 8**. The idea that Christ might be real. Olivier's movie of **Henry V**. The Hensel parents. **Mary Ann van Hartesveldt**. **People's Park**. Kerri Strug. Christa McAuliffe. "These are the fragments I've shored against my ruins"; there are more out there.*

**SaM Moscowitz**  
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**Newark NJ 07107**

Just a bit of appreciation for **Challenger #4**, which in addition to being handsomely produced has a high level of interest throughout. I found "Harry Browning Moore" possessed especial fascination for me for that individual's retreat from science fiction activities following the close of the New Orleans World Science Fiction Convention in 1951 was particularly mystifying.

The letters I have from Moore before the Nolacon display an overwhelming enthusiasm for science fiction. After the Nolacon there are no letters. Prior to the convention in a letter to me dated January 29, 1951, Moore asked me if he should cancel the Nolacon in case war should break out. I advised him not to.

He kept fervently pressing me to sell him the original manuscript of **The Immortal Storm** and I at first stalled him, then decided against it. Actually, the original manuscript, if it survives at all, probably remains in Langley Searles' possession.

Moore received his greatest Pre-Nolacon fame at the 1948 World Convention held in Toronto. It was there that he made the winning bid for the Virgil Finlay cover for the June, 1948 issue of **Famous Fantastic Mysteries** illustrating "The Devil's Spoon" by Theodora Du Bois at \$70. This was the highest price paid for any item at any World Convention auction up to that point. He did not have enough money with him to pay for it, so after the general auction a separate auction was held of books he had purchased prior to the Finlay item. He gained \$17.50 for them, which apparently was enough to put him over the top.

In a letter to me Moore said that almost all the fans who had pressured him to bid for the Nolacon had deserted him and that apparently they expected him to put on the convention alone.

A committee was appointed at the Nolacon to review its finances and how to disburse its profits. The committee consisted of myself, Wilson Tucker, Harry Moore and E.E. Evans. There was a profit of \$325 of which \$150 was to be forwarded to the next convention in Chicago, \$50 to the Fantasy veterans Association and \$125 to the Nolacon sponsors. I got the impression that Harry Moore was dissatisfied with the arrangement.

*I wish I knew more about the first Nolacon. Apparently it was a stunning social success and an incredible organizational disaster ... do we sense a pattern here? Certainly that early*

## Winter '96/'97

*worldcon produced more than its share of great fannish stories: the party in room 770 ... the epic meeting of Tucker and Hoffman ...*

*When I met Lee Hoffman, she showed me her photos from the con. My response was mixed.*

*The pictures were pure delight, but all I could feel was blinding agony ... that I hadn't known about them early enough to seek reprint permission for the Nolacon II souvenir book.*

**Lloyd Penney**  
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CANADA M9C 2B2  
(416) 626-6199 (COA!)

Articles like the one about Harry Moore belong in a fannish archive to keep track of our legendary figures. A website like that maintained by the Timebinders will do fine, but it should also be paper archived so that all of us can access it. I just shook my head about the number of old pulps that were ruined or lost, or trashed by a family who just refused to understand the value of what they were tossing, financial, sentimental or otherwise.

Parents drive their kids crazy as they grow up, especially when they're trying to figure out what they're going to do for a living: that is, if the kids have enough grey cells to think that far ahead. Mom and Dad tend to nag towards one particular occupation (usually theirs), and the kids' natural reaction is to shy away. When the kids make their decision about their future, there's usually no approval. "Fine, if that's what you want to do with your life, but what are you going to do to make a living?" I think my folks wanted me to be a welder or a mechanic, or like my father, a carpenter. Yvonne wanted to be a lawyer, but her parents wanted her to be a hairdresser, of all things. She's neither, but is now a senior accounting clerk. Still, she's also a tailor, like her mother. Some parents make following in their footsteps an ordeal, while others make it appealing and easy.

Even after the article on the Rosicrucians, they're still a mystery, except that

they seem to be the best known of the various mystic or secret organizations. One thing I didn't know is that Wicca arose from their numbers. Seeing how fannish Wicca is for many, I'd wonder how many fans and Wiccans know that?

The interview with Samanda [Jeude] was illuminating, about how destructive some fans can be, and about how they can misuse the Internet.

In this, there's several mentions of **Lan's Lantern** ... is Lan pubbing again?

*I didn't see George Lascowski at L.A.Con, nor have I seen a **Lantern** since founding **Challenger**. Hmm.*

**Henry L. Welch**  
1525 16th Ave  
Grafton WI 53024

Thanks for **Challenger** #4 and the comments about **The Knarley Knews**. The editorial presence is an unconscious thing for me since I do very little culling in the LOCs.

I look forward to your Eddie editorial. I find your insights into the legal system quite interesting because I sometimes feel that lawyers use a logic that is foreign to the rest of us. This probably stems from my ignorance of legal definition and precedent. The whole O.J. thing is a problem with the media and not really the legal system. Had the jury and the other participants been able to go about their business quietly then I think a guilty verdict would have been much more likely.

James Hogan's AIDS article is fascinating. I'm not very familiar with the literature and the science of the subject to know whether to believe him. However, my gut reaction from listening to others who pay more attention (a HIV positive hemophiliac) I think the article and its conclusions are sound. The more I read the more it sounds like HIV is just taking advantage of a compromised immune system which is what AIDS is all about. I had, however, not realized that the definition of AIDS was continually being broadened to



## Challenger no. 5

include questionable situations. I'm going to pass the article on to others who have more knowledge and see what they think.

Nola Frame-Gray's comments about caving are very interesting in that she might make a natural caver. As someone who has introduced 100s of novices to caving I've noted with some amusement how unprepared many of them would be for survival on their own. Most of the novices never spend much time looking left or right much less back up or down. Many of them could not find a non-rectangular side passage if it came up and bit them. In fact they all tend to think very two-dimensionally which most interesting caves are not. A common leader trait is controlled amnesia. After guiding the group (usually one leader in front and one at the rear, as a minimum) the leaders suddenly forget how to get out. Most of the novices would rather not volunteer to find the way out (this is a good way to find who might make a good leader) since it involves the risk of being wrong. If the cave has had one or more junctions or level changes then most of the novices probably could not find the exit in the two hours or so of light left in their carbide lamps. Those with flashlights might get an extra hour. Since Nola seems to naturally pay attention to the idea that universe looks different from different angles and that it is 3-D she appears to be a natural for underground exploration. This assumes that claustrophobia is not an issue.

I look forward to seeing **Challenger #5** sometime in the future.

*Wait no longer. Nice to meet you & Letha at  
L.A.Con!*

**George Flynn**  
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**Cambridge MA 02142**

I really don't think that using the term "mundane" necessarily implies contempt. Many fans simply use it as a neutral designation to refer to those-who-are-not-fans.

You write that the Original Artwork

Hugo is "the only break we get from the endless parade of Michael Whelan awards." Look again: Whelan hasn't won a Hugo since 1992 -- when he won two of them, *including* Original Artwork.

**Joy V. Smith**  
**3403 Providence Road**  
**Lakeland FL 33810**

Thanks for the spring-summer issue of **Challenger**, another huge and well-done one, she said with awe.

Excellent editorial! I especially liked your examination of the term, "mundanes," also tolerance and ordinary people. And you made a good point about people adapting. I never thought about it in that context before. However, I am sorry that [Richard] Speck is having so much fun in prison. How did he get that cocaine, video camera, and sex-change (or whatever) operation?!

*Don't worry about Speck's fun continuing. For the past five or six years he's been beyond all concepts of a good time ... except the worms'.*

I found the article on AIDS fascinating and enlightening. How incredible it is that myths can be so easily perpetuated in this day and age despite science and the media, considered the repositories of truth. (Well, I did, and a lot of people do.)

The Samanda Jeude interview was also fascinating and a little depressing because the intolerance of people that you expect more of is more depressing than the intolerance of those of whom you say with a sneer, "Well, that figures."

Your trial reports are interesting and eye-opening (and a pleasure to read because you're a good writer. I loved your closing paragraphs), though I probably won't read the rape report [*about the onetime GHLIII client, Eddie*]. Rape and child molestation, among other things, I cannot understand. Hurting people and animals, mentally and physically, is wrong. I've heard the excuses/reasons, including a lot of P.C. B.S. I've also read about and seen people who turned their lives around, including a woman (horribly abused by her parents), who said, "I had more love than they had hate." (I

can't find the source right now for more exact data, but I read it recently.)

I have always been curious about the percentage of people who continue doing what their parents (and peers) did and those who don't. (Sort of like hazing/initiations. You'd think that people wouldn't want others to suffer the way they did ...)

I like your back cover piece too. By the way, have I ever told you about my puppy, Xena (the Warrior Princess), an Australian Shepherd/Boxer cross with bi-color eyes? She's graduated from Beginning and Senior Puppy Kindergarten and earned her AKC Canine Good Citizen certificate on her first try. (I just took the test for the practice.)



Teddy Harvia  
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Hurst TX 76054-2307

The photographs and art you published

in the latest **Challenger** reveal an interesting picture. Your copier obliterated with a black stripe of toner the face of Ricia Mainhardt in the photo intended to reveal her true looks. The photo of Samantha Jeude's tattoos shows more skin than skin art, seemingly contradicting the image she is trying to project with her words.

The cartoon character holding the Hugo rocket must not be a first-time winner. Hands trembling with anticipation fulfilled can vibrate the most inanimate of phallic symbols.

And is Peggy Ranson's drawing of Leda and the swan a before or after shot?

**Harry Cameron Andruschak**

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**andruschak@aol.com**

Received **Challenger** #4 a while ago. I am not back on-line with a new e-mail address. I am pleased to see Richard Dengrove writing for more fanzines than his own **Jomp-Jr**, and his analytical insight is a joy to read. I never sent away for any of that Rosicrucian stuff advertised in the s.f. magazines because I had already been well educated from reading Doctor Isaac Asimov, and even at that age I saw no essential difference between the occult like the AMORC and organized religions like Christian churches.

I cannot honestly say I am pleased to see James Hogan's pseudo-science in your magazine, but I must accept the fact that this sort of thing is now becoming common in fanzines. After all, **The Proper Boskonian** had a serious article regarding the Face on Mars.

*Somebody correct me, but I don't think Stanley Robinson once mentioned that amusing optical illusion in his Mars trilogy. Nor the smiley face crater which figured so cleverly in Watchmen. Nor, of course, the allegedly Martian allegedly bacterial alleged fossils that have raised hopes this year.*

But that is *another* lesson I learned from Isaac Asimov. That when a writer drags in Galileo, as Hogan did, it is crap I don't need to waste more time on it. The Galileo trial makes a great straw dummy to knock the stuffing out of,

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although more and more fans are using Clarke's Law as an update.

Meanwhile, back to the war on drugs ... have we won it yet? "Hind Legs" [was] no surprise to me. The WAR! on drugs has resulted in a wholesale corruption of the police as far as the 4th and 6th Amendments go. I mentioned in my last letter how just about everyone in AA and NA could tell stories of police planting evidence, ignoring procedures, and so on. So no surprise to me. Nor to any of those sitting on the O.J. jury.

As for the 10th anniversary of the **Challenger** explosion, all I can wonder if how many people remember what the *primary* cargo was. Not the publicity stunt of Christa, but the very real cargo in the shuttle hold. Probably only those who remember that this 20 July will be the 20th anniversary of the Viking Lander One touchdown on Mars. Which is damned few. About the same as those who know that January 1986 also saw the flyby of Uranus by Voyager Two. Talk about forgotten anniversaries ...

**Alex Slate**  
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**San Antonio TX 78239-4022**

I'm not sure that the term "mundane" is disappearing from the fannish lexicon, but then I haven't been too intimately involved with fandom the past year or so. But then I really only considered myself a "faan" for a relatively short time. Basically, I don't think I was ever particularly ostracized from "normal;" society as a kid. Though I tended to run to portly, I was never greatly overweight. I was short, but not overly so. In high school, I was quite skinny since I lost weight for wrestling. I was not involved in fandom at all, then. I dated, though my girlfriend was two years older and had gone to a different high school. As a result another friend helped me find a date to the prom and this friend was one of the more popular girls in school.

As a result, I never felt any sort of contempt for mundanes. Fandom was just sort

of an additional club.

*I've been thinking about what I wrote about fannish resentment of mundanes last time, and remembering incidents which would bear it out. The snotty yuppie supervisor at the state Supreme Court who sneered about fandom during a job interview. The Knoxville TV crew which edited a news feature about a DeepSouthCon to make Toni Weisskopf and George Wells look ridiculous. The ballplayers who shared the hotel at the 1980 Boston worldcon and ordered their kids to stay away from us weirdos. The house dick[head]s at St. Louiscon. And of course, years of family bafflement at this silly, time-wasting, unprofitable and expensive hobby. Such intolerance is annoying, but it's our own self-destructive paranoid ideation to assume someone from outside our genre will behave as obnoxiously as the worst cases. You had the right attitude.*

I will reserve any thoughts I have about "Eddie" until I read your article. I don't hold much expectation that I will find him a sympathetic character. I am of the general feeling that abuse by others does not justify our abusing others. Revenge or actions against our attackers is one thing, transferring that to the innocent is another.

*Of course I agree. You'll see when my "Eddie" piece finally sees print -- not this time, possibly next -- that no one ever claimed "justification" for his acts; they were criminal, monumentally harmful, atrocious. But society must understand what happens in a criminal act in order to most justly deal with the criminal. Also, this enables the victim -- ... but I'll go into that rap in context.*

Regarding Leslie Van Houten, Manson and Richard Speck: you can read my thoughts about capital punishment in **PhiloSFy**. I'm sorry, but remorse or horror over her actions does not make up for Ms. Van Houten's actions. Insanity is no defense! Remorse is neither! *If a person acts without conscious volition, under an irresistible impulse, or without the ability to tell right from wrong, is it just to hold them fully responsible for what they do? And in deciding*

*what we are to do with a miscreant, doesn't it make sense -- isn't it just -- to examine their mental state at the time and see if they've recovered social sanity since?*

Richard Speck's case to me seems to show how badly we've let our concern for others' "rights" get carried away. I am not a great believer in prisoners' rights. The Constitution states that we shall not deprive someone of their life or liberties except by due process. Someone convicted of assault or murder has had their due process. I save my concern for the honest, hard-working poor who often have to live in conditions worse than what "we" allow in prisons.

To answer your particular question, I can understand the feelings that went into the Supreme Court decision, but no it was not worth the price.

Interesting article [on AIDS] by Jim Hogan. I can somewhat agree with what he is saying, but retroviruses as a class are a scary thing. I recommend the book **The Hot Zone** to everyone. Informative and well-written.

I very much enjoyed the insight into Samanda Jeude. I have never met her, though I have been somewhat aware of the Electrical Eggs. I applaud Ms. Jeude for not only her work in this area, but for her attitude toward life in general.

*Nice meeting you too at the worldcon! Sorry I didn't get a photo.*

**David Schlosser**  
**2041 N Street**  
**Eureka CA 95501**

In general it is bad science to dismiss a new theory out of hand (which isn't to say that it isn't done) but if said new theory doesn't fit the established facts then it's discredited before it begins. Does Duesberg's theory fit that category? Not having done any serious independent research into either it or the establishment position I can't say.

But there are some points in James Hogan's article that give me pause because they don't seem to fit the facts as I know them.

Firstly the panic about HIV spreading by toilet seats, airborne droplets, etc. was just that--panic. Certainly nobody I know in the medical community ever treated it as being anywhere near as communicable as, say, hepatitis. (And this dates back to the early '80s when it was first hitting the headlines.) It's been pretty well-established for a number of years now that HIV is a pretty fussy critter that doesn't survive well outside of the host.

Second, to say that AIDS is not a new condition is misleading. To the extent that HIV = AIDS, it is a new disease. It's only the secondary infections, which ultimately are the cause of death, that have been around. Speaking of secondary infections, the phrase "... which was said to destroy the 'T-helper cells'..." implies a lack of faith in that position, as progressively lower levels of T-cells are a consistent finding as AIDS progresses. Something that, to my knowledge, does not occur is the other conditions are not associated with HIV. Also, if something wasn't actively depleting these cells, why would someone start showing the secondary infections years after stopping the behavior that would, presumably, be causing the immunosuppression? (And yes, that does refer to someone I knew.)

While dementia or "wasting disease" themselves should not be considered diagnostic for AIDS, the fact is that some of the secondary infections will have those effects.

"...[H]emophiliacs were immunosuppressed by the repeated infusion of foreign protein; blood recipients were already sick for varying reasons ..." Here's where I have some serious disagreement. Both where I am now and in my last job we've had numerous patients who have received large infusions of various products for various reasons (burn patients, anemias, chemo/radiation treatments, clotting problems, etc.) over various periods of time without developing AIDS or any of the infections associated with it. Two of the most famous examples of blood transmission are associated with single surgeries rather than long-

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term transfusions. While this form of transmission is a small enough percentage that it may not blow Duesberg's theory out of the water, it is -- in my view -- a serious chink in its armor.

That "overly sensitive" ELISA test for HIV is used as the initial screen in testing for HIV. If that comes up positive on a patient's sample the test then gets repeated with a more specific test. Only if that second test is positive would a positive result get reported to the doctor/patient. (As Hogan said though, when that test was used to screen donor blood, the more expensive confirmation was omitted and the unit simply discarded.) By the way, that's out of date on how they test for HIV in donor blood. For about a year now there has been a test available to test directly for the virus. It's been in use in blood banks since spring.

Is Duesberg right and everyone else wrong? Certainly possible. And he certainly doesn't deserve scorn for wanting to go with a different line of investigation. Still, there are weak points in his position that I can see with the naked eye, so I'm not ready to write off the infectious agent explanation yet.

**James Hogan**  
Pensacola FL

You mentioned that you had a certain amount of response and questions regarding [my] AIDS article. For those who would like to learn more about that side of the picture -- and of the stupefying level of propaganda and censorship that the public has been subjected to -- I can't do better than recommend Peter Duesberg's new book. It's entitled **Inventing the AIDS Virus**, published by Regnery Publishing.

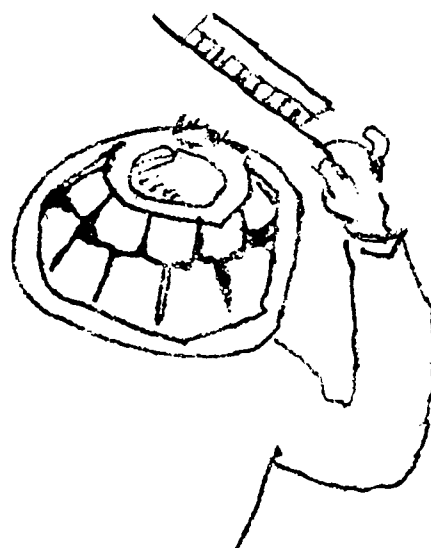
**Fred Chappell**  
c/o UNC-G English Department  
Greensboro NC 27412

Thanks for the new **Challenger**, another neat and highly readable issue. You're very conscientious with the zine and it's a pleasure to go through it, remembering old times.

Though I don't need to remember Kent

State and Viet Nam the war. My involvement with the protests of those days stays fresh in my mind. And painful.

But your remarks about **Show Boat** triggered another reminiscence. Couple of years back I was at some cultural do or other out in Arkansas and one of the guests was William Warfield, he who sang "Ol' Man River" in the James Whale film of the musical.



Wonderful chap: genial, funny, and of course monstrously talented. Anyway, just to show off a bit he sang "Ol' Man River."

In German. -- It loses something in translation. In fact, everyone felt a little weird -- except Mr. Warfield, just as confident and cheerful as breakfast cereal waiting for its milk.

He also told this story about Leontyne Price, to whom he once was married. She was walking in Manhattan and had to pass a construction site. She spotted it ahead of her on the sidewalk, this beautiful and voluptuous woman, and wondered what kind of trash talk she'd have to put up with. But they let her get well past before one of the guys says, "Whoa! There must be a recess in heaven. There goes one of the angels now." She walks on till she gets some safe distance off, turns around, and

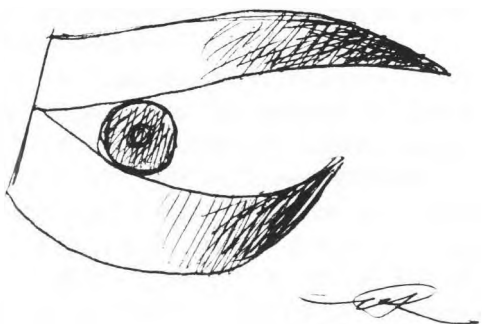
declares: "Well, that was actually *cute*." Gave'em a smile, broke'em up into bitsy fragments.

Mr. Warfield was 70+ years when he sang and raconted. I envied him everything, even his years.

**Alexis A. Gilliland**  
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I found your account of Rose's appeal ["Hind Legs"] rather hard to read, not because it was poorly written, but because the systemic (and maybe systematic) injustice made me so angry I kept putting it down. From your account, it would appear that the white women living with the Black drug dealer, Rose, Elizabeth and Susan, were the targets from the beginning, not because they were involved with drugs, but because they had given offense by shacking up with Blacks. Since miscegenation is no longer illegal, the cops went after them on the drugs charge. Probably the cops would have been satisfied with inflicting the strip search -- a major humiliation for the women -- but as long as they were at it, they took whatever they could get. As you point out, only the women were strip searched, because the cops weren't interested in the men, and only Rose was arrested, because the others were clean.

Yeah, America's drug laws are unjust, and yeah, the War on Drugs is eroding the Bill



of Rights. One of these days some fool is going to demonstrate how tough he can get on crime by calling for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment so as to legalize torture. "Incarceration costs money, but torture will be cheap!" Till then, you go on fighting the good fight. Asking yourself if the laws are just is optional; you can't change them, and thinking about the subject can be depressing.

Speaking of injustice segues naturally to the O.J. Simpson verdict. My initial reaction was, well, the man had bought himself a reasonable doubt; his money got him off. In that sense the case was about class rather than race. On reflection, though, it would appear that O.J. was (a) guilty as charged, and (b) framed by the LAPD's Mark Fuhrman. The evidence for (b) is circumstantial, namely that Mr. Fuhrman found the one glove at the scene, while the other glove was found in O.J.'s apartment, where no other bloody clothes were found. One could imagine O.J. discarding *both* gloves at the crime scene, so as to avoid smearing blood on his white Bronco, or one could imagine him putting the bloody gloves with the rest of the bloody stuff, for later disposal. One has difficulty imagining him leaving one glove at the crime scene and the other glove in his living room. It is much easier to imagine Fuhrman finding two gloves, and planting one of them where it would do the most good.

In the circumstances, he mused, how would I have voted? O.J. is clearly guilty, but it is very probable that he had *also* been framed. Most police frameups go unchallenged, because the defense doesn't have the resources, so the question becomes: What is the best interest of society? Punishing the police for corrupt behavior, or punishing a murderer? Probably it would depend on the murderer and the police. Given O.J. on the one hand, and Fuhrman on the other, I think making O.J. walk might have been the lesser of two evils.

*Gerald Posner, author of the best analysis of the JFK assassination, **Case Closed**, has a fine piece on the case in the 11/96 **Esquire**. Among his*

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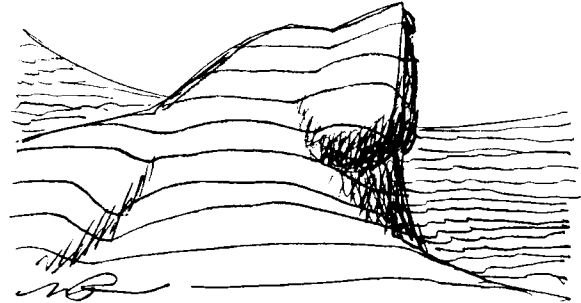
*points: Fuhrman found the second glove behind Simpson's guest house, near the spot where he vaulted the fence to sneak home. O.J. lost the first glove at the crime scene when Ron Goldman wrestled it off him. Fuhrman was the 16th cop on the scene; none of the prior 15 ever reported seeing more than one there. So I don't see why he would have or could have picked it up and/or planted it later. I also fail to see how the revulsion visited upon Fuhrman for his bad language could possibly amount to a reasonable doubt in the case against Simpson. When O.J. went free, justice was thwarted and America disgraced. Can the races just "get along"? One to one, sure. But championing criminality just to teach the white majority a lesson is contemptible idiocy and should be condemned as such.*

James Hogan's article on AIDS has the facts straight, but is somewhat confused in their interpretation. The "microbe" he wants to be infallibly identified is the HIV virus (of which there are several types), which targets a key element in the body's immune system, the helper T-cell. The immune system weakens over time, and below a certain point, the body is subject to opportunistic infections. However, Hogan then says, "AIDS' is not something new ... it's a collection of old diseases." Well, yes, sort of. AIDS is the acronym for Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome. When your immune system breaks down, bad things happen, and the HIV virus appears to be what causes the breakdown of your immune system. The virus has "a long incubation period," which means that years may pass before the immune system weakens to the point of failure. In some people, a very small minority, the HIV virus never does break down the immune system, and scientists are starting to ask why not?

*I understand the longtime companion of one the first dozen AIDS fatalities never developed HIV infection, and only recently have the bigdomes started to investigate his stubborn immunity. Why did they wait? Who were they worried they'd offend?*

The disease has been difficult to study, in part because to understand how the virus

worked, scientists had to understand in precise detail how the immune system worked. Inevitably, there was a lot of confusion and false



starts, a lot of publicity and a lot of high passion. First rate scientists have big egos, just like first rate athletes. And of course, the nature of the disease evoked a passionate response. The gay journalist who identified the bathhouses in San Francisco as a health hazard was denounced as a traitor to his community; gays didn't want to hear it. Hogan seems to think that all this confusion, the result of incomplete information and time pressure, is part of a deliberate plot. His assertion that HIV and AIDS are linked by nothing more than some fool scientist's arbitrary definition is simply wrong.

*Thanks for the cartoons, by the way.*

**Buck Coulson**

**2677W-500N**

**Hartford City IN 47348**

I never knew Harry Moore, so the anecdotes were interesting. I shouldn't think that Ben Butler's residence would be a mark of distinction for a New Orleans house; notoriety, perhaps. The "prayer-rug project" is great, whether it actually happened or not. Very fannish. I rather like the car bit, too, since Juanita and I are currently driving a 1978 Pontiac station wagon with, currently, 210,000 miles on it. (Since we bought it used, it might even have more than that, if the previous owner turned back the odometer.) I can well understand his treatment of now-valuable

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publications -- at the time, they very likely were *not* particularly valuable.

Glad to know Bob Shaw was a firearms enthusiast. I've fired one of Dean Grennell's semi-auto Uzis; we were visiting and he insisted on going out to a nearby gravel pit where he did his shooting. (Marvelous gun.) The surprise came later when Dean sent me a copy of the third edition of his **Pistol and Revolver Digest** and I found my photo in it. I hadn't known that he'd even taken the picture. (I'm shooting the revolver, not the Uzi.)

Dislike and contempt of mundanes is wrong; the word itself, despite the connotation, is useful. Calling them "normals" might be even more useful, of course, except that not all them are. I worked with mundanes all my life; liked some, disliked a few. They didn't have the same interests I did; their interests were, well, mundane. TV, church, family, work, cars, food. I was friendly in the workplace, but mostly I avoided them after work because I *wasn't* interested in any of those things. Including TV. I could *talk* about all of them; join in the general conversation and so on. But on my own, the hell with it. One woman co-worker told me once that I was her best friend in the office. Fine; I liked her and wished her well, but I didn't want to join any of her activities outside the office. (Which I guess made me unique among the male employees ...) *Fear of mundanes? Why, for God's sakes? Because they made fun of science fiction? (Not that many of them do, these days.) Anyway, who cares?*

In a similar vein, I'm going back to my 50th high school reunion. The attraction is that my school was so small that the reunions are for everyone who ever graduated. In my own class, there's nobody worth driving 70 miles and paying for a \$10 dinner in order to see. But there are a few others who might be there who are. (On my 40th reunion, my third grade teacher was there -- and remembered me. *That was a thrill.*) I doubt if anyone in my class ever picked up a book for pleasure. Mundanes. perfectly nice

people, mostly, but not my preferred companions.

*1997 will mark the 30th anniversary of my graduation from Ygnacio Valley High School in Concord, California, and I'm of different minds about whether I should attend the reunion. High school was **not** the best time of my life, just as it wasn't for most s.f.ers, but shyness wasn't my problem; rather, I fought the mean neuroses of teenagedom by being meaner and more neurotic than the people around me. Missed an awful lot hiding behind my shield, and I may go to the reunion just to see how things look through the holes life has poked in it.*

Rape. I just got copies of the newspaper stories about a former fan acquaintance of mine, who has just been convicted of child molesting. As it happens, we cut connections with him years back, because he was a blithering jackass, but his case might be instructive for fans. He was mostly deaf; could hear a little but not enough to matter. Never learned the deaf hand-alphabet, never got a hearing aid, which might or might not have helped, never learned to lip-read. Communication was by writing, though he could more or less talk in response. I suspect his "molesting" was mostly technical, and the kids -- brats, from what I've learned -- encouraged it. But he could *never* admit that anything he did or said or wrote was wrong. Everybody else was wrong. Years ago he got warned for pestering a young movie actress by sending her letters and books. Never would believe that she wasn't interested; it was other people who turned her against him. He doesn't really belong in jail, though he'll go there; I think he *does* belong in an asylum where he can't bother people who have better things to do than put up with him. He's not evil, but he is and was a godawful pest. *We* could cut connections because we live over 300 miles away; his neighbors couldn't, even when they got totally fed up. So some of them testified against him, and I can understand why. *So what did this guy do? Child molestation, like you imply, can take many forms, some more*



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*direct and harmful than others. Society needs to be clear on his actions -- and his motivations -- before it can justly deal with him.*

I'm in favor of the death penalty. Not for vengeance, but so at least *those* people won't kill anybody else. Sure, some find remorse; I don't think that most do. There is no way to render absolute justice -- since I'm an atheist, I don't believe even God will do it. You have to do the best you can, and too many murderers escape the death penalty as it is.

Haven't heard much about the Rosicrucians lately; they used to have ads in all the pulp magazines and some of the slicks. (I never answered any of them, never having believed in any occultism, from Christianity on down.)

Excellent and informative Jude interview. I've never given much to Eggs because I don't have much, but I rather admire Sam. Don't see her very often, but I try to go over and say hello whenever we're at the same con. During the day, she and I are both busy huckstering; at night she's usually busy talking to people and I'm looking for interesting neofans.

The last item in **Gordon of Khartoum**, by Lord Elton, is a quote from Gordon's **Khartoum Journals**, written a few weeks before his death: "The fact is that, if one analyzes human glory, it is composed of nine-tenths twaddle, perhaps ninety-nine hundredths twaddle." Which presumably includes his own, since he had already been a *cause celebre* when he wrote it.

Oddly enough, I think there was a larger percentage of women fanzine editors when I got into fandom in the 1950s. Lee Hoffman was a big name then, Juanita Wellons was editing, as was Lee Tremper, both in Indiana, there was an

all-female fan club in the U.S. and one in England, each publishing a club fanzine (one was **Femzine** and one was **Femzine** but I no longer remember which was which) and there were a few others. Juanita married me and I took over editing while Juanita published, Lee Tremper eventually dropped out of fandom, Lee Hoffman may or may not be still publishing **Science Fiction Five-Yearly** (because I don't know when the next issue is due -- is it now five years since the last one?) There is, however, a feminist convention now; Wiscon, in Madison WI. Juanita and I just got back from it a few days ago. Lots of women authors, including Betsy Curtis who is probably long-forgotten by fandom in general, a group of Australian women fans and authors including fanzine publisher Jean Weber, and generally feminist program items. (I'm allowed in, and on the program,

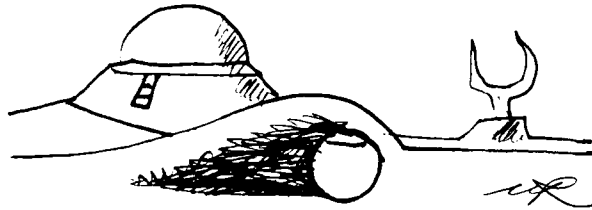
because of Juanita -- we were joint fan guests of the con 15 years ago.)

"Allowed in"???

It's impossible to eliminate world peace because we've never had

it. The large nations are at peace now, more or less, but there's war in Liberia, guerrilla war in Lebanon and Israel, and so on. You can't eliminate something that never happened in the first place. (Yes, I know that wasn't what Rodney Leighton meant ...)

As an NRA Life Member, I'm of two minds about gun registration. As long as the government doesn't use it for confiscation, I'm for it as a means of tracing stolen weapons. But with the general hoopla about the evils of guns these days, there's always the threat of confiscation. In the U.S., at least, there's a strong current of blaming the object rather than the owner. People want "safer" cars, but not stronger laws against reckless drivers. An individual misusing any tool blames the tool



when he gets hurt, and sues the company and now and then a jury says he's right. I have a general distrust of the public. If we get a public attitude that says a death in an auto accident is manslaughter, that manufacturers can't be sued when someone is hurt while using a tool improperly, then gun registration is a good idea.

Oh, it *does* matter how fast or how many copies sell, especially to bookstores and publishers. And readers have been trained to care about popularity rather than personal interest or quality. Mostly, fandom has avoided this sales technique, but the general public falls for it regularly.

**John Thiel**  
30 N. 19th Street  
Lafayette IN 47904

That's a fine informative article on the Rosicrucians in #4 by Richard Dengrove. Seldom have I seen them written about, and then ambiguously (as in "What is Posat?"; I think that was in *F&SF*) and the author goes into its history enough to be otherwise interesting.

I sent for the Rosicrucian literature a number of years back and found their advertising to have much of the essence of the thinking which they promoted. Hence the introduction to the organization, in a number of flyers and pamphlets, seemed worthwhile and I subscribed to their magazine. Curiously enough I only got three issues of the subscription I bought and when I inquired about it got a fourth and then no more. It seems strange for an organization like that to have a defect in the accounting and business services office.

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As I looked at the very handsome new **Challenger**, I was reminded of Alan White's **Delineator** of last decade. Physically it is similar, thick, white as fresh snow, good art including photos, controversial (um ... I blow my stack below), brashly adult with an easy un-self-

conscious ambiance. Like a good book, play or film, this is not the result of money but of writing and editing, of point of view. Yes, **Challenger**, Hugo looms in all his awesome glory!

*I'm dizzy from your compliments! Does anyone have a copy of **Delineator** that I could see?*

Three cheers for Victoria's intriguing cover. Why do beautiful women make great covers? Am I a sexist because I don't feel handsome men do? Has a fanzine ever tried to show a hunk? Will Victoria try? Stick to the ladies ...

*Chall's second cover was a well-built merman ... by Mark Fults, the same artist whose portrait of Mary Ann van Hartesveldt fronts this issue.*

Harry Browning Moore is a fascinating nut. As a retired pharmacist, I would, however, point out to your readers that Harry had method in his madness. [Note *Hamlet* quote, everybody. *That play is nothing but cliches!*] Phenolphthalein not only colors the urine but is the active ingredient of such commercial laxatives as Ex-Lax. It works but it is not concentrated enough to color things.

A shocking revelation about Schwartz! [That he was "Separated at Birth" from a bigot he resembles ... or who resembles him.] Funny.

The Bob Shaw memory is nice, about Fandom without being fannish.

The Leda and the Swan art in your editorial owes nothing to Da Vinci.

I wish your brother and sister-in-law *mazel tov* on the birth of their child, and sadly agree with you about the fate of some more publicized kids.

It is sad that Leslie Van Houten has necessarily had a terrible life, despite her recovery, but I cannot believe she does not dream dreams drenched still in blood. I doubt that any of us is free of some culpable act, but it is still a matter of degree, and often mercy and understanding may be applied. Some acts, however, are unforgivable, and justice cannot be tempered to allow for it. No one can bring the Tate girl back to life.

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*LaBianca. The Tate killings came a night before Leslie's midnight ride. But you bring up a fascinating question I should have asked Van Houten, had I been less gassed by the girl: What do you dream?*

Dengrove's Rosicrucian article is unexpected and interesting. Any of us old pulpsters recalls the inevitable Amroc advs, with the pyramid, the Hebrew letter, the eye and an air of ancient and infallible knowledge. To think, it turns out to be the usual man-made claptrap! Hope sunk again!

In another regard James Hogan writes, "Facts alone determine what is believed," which is applicable to phony philosophies as well as to phony science. And, my response to *him*, too quickly perhaps (but I shall continue reading -- isn't a computer great, jot it down as you react, and change it later if you are wrong!) is that Mr. Hogan is choosing whatever "facts" he likes. I completely and violently disagree with him. Unlike in his cloistered tower free of contamination by human beings, I had a pharmacy in the Bronx. There I had only occasional contact with AIDS patients, most of whom went to hospitals, but I did see some. Most were "just" junkies who had used contaminated needles. They were genuinely sick. Such things did and do exist and are not the fabrications of greedy drug companies (bad as they are). My son, who is (fortunately, non-promiscuously) gay (and I suspect this admission, although I have no problems with it, will curl Hogan's lip) has lost many, many friends to AIDS (through transmission of the disease physically in their own act of love, not through syringes). **The New York Times** almost daily has a litany of loss of some of our most creative young artists due to this genuine epidemic which Hogan obscenely mislabels "a collection of old diseases." The continent of Africa is ridden with the disease, and every witch doctor who can mix a powder claims to have a cure, and is promptly taken up, so desperate are the people.

Had he published it during the Middle Ages and the Black Death, Hogan would have sneered at any hint of epidemic and would have

pinned the cause on the shenanigans of some devil-worshipping minority.

I have now [finished] the article. Come on, Jim, wasn't old Galileo some kind of hot air artist [*no, that was Montgolfier*] with that "But it does move" shit? I mean, those bishops were learned men, huh?

I wish I knew Samanda. Her life is whatever the hell you want -- inspiring, funny, moving, exciting -- she was dealt a lousy hand to start and got by it all and even got tattooed! (At 72 I am finally growing a pony tail. Hi, Sam!) I wish her luck with that Hugo but it does not matter. All that does is that she is making the effort!

Guy, "Hind Legs" is a *wonderful* article! Believe me I am not sympathetic to people involved in pushing crack. I was robbed in my pharmacies seven times at gunpoint, mostly for crack money -- I only kept \$20 or \$30 in the

Sigh,  
a lettercol doesn't  
get much better than that!



register, knowing it would be adequate and they would get the hell out of the store. But your perseverance, even in what was regrettably a losing cause -- I am an innocent and had hoped for a win -- and your devotion to a principle gave me better insight. Stay with it and don't let the bastards like [dealer] Sam King scare you! (Easy to say, I know.)

Good LOCs and zine reports. I also like the faint whiff of New Orleans, a city Janet and I really loved, clinging to the zine. I'd love to try Brennan's for breakfast, but it is unlikely, to put

it mildly.

*Bring money! I blew \$100 for a party of two the last time I went there.*

Nick Certo, dealer and now publisher, sent me the dummy on a book of Hannes Bok drawings and sketches for which I did the intro. It looks great! It will be out very soon, the large size trade p/b, for either \$20 or \$25, and the h/c with an original sketch, only 40 copies, long since sold out at \$125. I also have some fiction in B&N books, Chaosium, some more to come, maybe a short play on the boards (after many years -- a triumphant return, uh, with a ten-minute play) so, gee! maybe around the time Samanda gets her Hugo, I'll get one, and have to come to Noo Awlins for the Con and *then* I can have breakfast at Brennan's!

**Murray Moore**  
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Here I sit, loosing **Challenger** 4 on a fine July 1, Canada Day, formerly Dominion Day. The United States must have liked the idea of a national holiday. July 1 was taken, so you and your fellow Americans adopted the next best date, July 4.

Whether familiarity truly breeds contempt, or it is the sophomore jinx, my second issue of **Challenger** [#4] wasn't quite as fine as my first issue (your third).

I wish you would state where an article appeared previously, if it is not appearing for the first time. I particularly am interested in knowing where James Hogan's "AIDS Heresy and the New Bishops" appeared previously, if it did.

I read it a while ago. I can't argue with what I remember as his clear point that AIDS is not proving to be an epidemic. I define epidemic as the condition of people becoming infected at an exponential rate in a matter of days or weeks. I do wonder at his inference that his scientist friend is a Galileo in waiting.

I made a comment hook note to the

effect that paranoia is a thread in both Rich Dengrove's "The Rosicrucians" and Hogan's article.

I can't recall ever complaining that a fanzine's letter column was too long. I understand your response to Joe Green; Green, "I sincerely hope you don't get tired of putting out **Challenger**"; You, "Not while I get letters like this one!" Green's letter was one of several which I would have been extra pleased to have received were I **Challenger**'s editor.

Your own material adds muchly to the fanzine. If published on its own, it would constitute a better than average personalzine. I was particularly taken with your relating of your first argument before the appellate court. Your client was lucky in one respect. She was holding, so to speak, cocaine for her boy friend. Lucky, I say, because the boy friend could have been a marijuana dealer.

Your eye-opening interview of Samanda Jeude was the most interesting feature of **Challenger** 4.

TAFF works if the most fans get the guest they want, and the rest of us vicariously experience the visit via a trip report.

My eyebrows twitched when Samanda spoke of the fanzine "industry." Industry is one of the least appropriate words a person could pick to describe what I mean by fanzines. Are the fanzines nominated this year for the Best Fanzine Hugo the best of the "industry"?

Her choice of the word suggested to me that Samanda knows fanzines, but she doesn't know them as I know them.

"Jeude! Jeude! Jeude!" also was the most depressing reading in **Challenger** 4. The opposition to her candidacy which was over-the-top, rude, and unjustifiable was unfortunate.

Dan Steffan was the candidate wanted by the majority of the voters. As long as fanzine fans are the majority of the voters, a fanzine fan candidate -- Steffan is a triple threat, publishing, writing, and drawing -- will be the TAFF candidate.

I expect Steffan would have won, if the

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worst of the anti-Jeude reaction Samanda describes had not occurred. It didn't decide the election. It made the election distressing to Samanda, and generally unpleasant.

I didn't vote in that election -- I recently supported Martin Tudor -- but if I had, I would have supported Steffan.

*Clearly, my vote went to Jeude, whom I know and admire for her work for disabled congoers. I had no antagonism towards Steffan, whom I know as an accomplished cartoonist (though not as a fanzine publisher -- he doesn't send me **Blat!**). My opinion of the dogs who attacked Jeude simply because she wasn't their idea of a fan should be self-evident.*

Do not be misled by my comment at the top of this letter into thinking I am giving a thumb's down on **Challenger 4**. More accurately, the judges gave a series of six and seven points instead of seven and eights.

*In my opinion, **Chall 4** missed several qualities enjoyed by the first three issues, among them Linda Krawecke's power and wit and Dennis Dolbear's sardonic brilliance. I'm bustin' buns to get them back.*

*But who cares about my fanzine. Your letter was written on the back of your wife Mary Ellen's campaign flyer. (Which featured photos of the lovely lady and her lucky husband and kids.) She was running for a spot as a English Language Public School Trustee. Did she win? And ... where the bejassus is "Penetanguishene"?*

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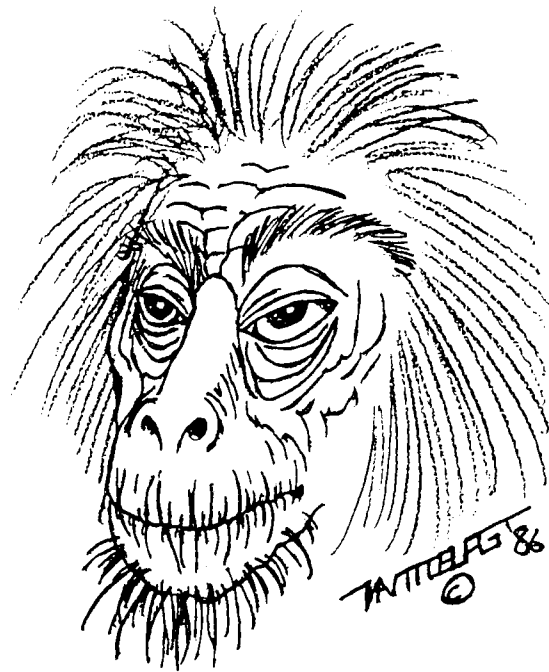
I regret I've been silent about your new fanzine. There doesn't seem to be much room in my current life to be an active fan. Not an active s.f. fan at least. And my activities as a "furry fan" tend to be professional, as a moderately successful dealer and mail order publisher. That only scratches the surface. What mainly preoccupies me of late is comics work.

The nice thing about comics is that it's

writing too. Just as opera is both music and fiction, comics are a mixed medium, combining words and art. In fact it's rather like directing film. Because of the sequential nature of it, there's a time-dimension to a comic book. The artist can write the script, direct the actors, move the camera, dress the stage, and even act the parts. It's a great deal of fun, though also a great deal of work, usually for low pay. But compared to doing a few fanzine covers a year, it's a wealth of opportunities and challenges.

I note we share an interest in the U.S. Civil War. I too enjoyed **Glory**, though **Gettysburg** seemed closer to the mid-19th century spirit. The scenes of fighting around Little Round Top were the most realistic and frightening combat footage I've seen in a fictional piece. Most films tend to turn war into a special effects extravaganza. It's easy to lose the sense that explosions and machine gun fire are real. But 500 guys charging at you only 100 feet away, with pistols and bayonets, *that's* real. Scary.

I have plans to do a Civil War comic, actually. I have to finish with my current series first, but that might be as soon as next year.



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Among my duties at the office these days is coordinating efforts to control workmen's compensation (WC) claims. Our insurance carriers are strongly encouraging us to become



a "certified drug-free workplace." In most states, such a certification immediately reduces premiums. In addition, the carriers claim large reductions in both the number and size of WC claims. We currently require all new employees to take a drug test before coming to work. Our carriers want us to take it to the next level, which is to test any employee who files a WC claim as well as to institute an employee assistance program and an educational program. I presume they are encouraging their other clients as well.

I think Roy Wood is overly concerned that American abandonment of its South Vietnamese allies proves that we do not honor our commitments. The 50,000 lives directly lost in that conflict constitutes a strong commitment in my book.

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"Has anyone been so crass as to tell you to stay away from their mailboxes?" Well, not in so many words. However, I consider lack of response to be the same thing. I am aware that a few people enjoy my writing but if everyone fails to say so occasionally, I begin to doubt that fact. But, to me, a failure to answer a letter, or write even thank you note for a zine, or a short response to an explanation of something which is confusing someone indicates to me that that person has no interest in hearing from me. And, if I receive an issue of a fanzine and send in a decent-length loc but get no further issues; that means the person or people behind that zine do not want me on their mailing list; reading their zine; locating their zine. There are about four or five faneds who have sent me one or more issues of their fanzine and then cut me off with neither warning nor explanation. There are about fifteen faneds who have failed to respond to letters, locs of their zine I obtained elsewhere, copies of my zines, copies of other people's zines. There are seven or nine people in fandom who have failed to respond to a letter or letters from me.

All of which may mean that they are all assholes, or I am. Or it may mean nothing. What it means to me is that these people do not want me in their mailbox in any form. In some cases ... that bothers me. I wonder what I did to these people to piss them off to the extent that they won't even send me a note. In some cases ... who cares? Not me.

*My response to locs and zines sent to Challenger is just that: Challenger ... its next issue. Nice commentary on "mundanes." I*

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used to find this term annoying when used within fandom but discussions in **Zero-G Lavatory** and **Thingymabob** showed me that people were not always being demeaning towards non-s.f. fans. In fact, it appears that, in Britain, the term is usually used in reference to those "fans" who do nothing but attend cons and get drunk. Regardless, it is always a rejection of someone by a person who feels superior to that person. Which is sort of sad and silly. But a fact of life. Immutable; never to be changed.

Very good dissertation on AIDS by James Hogan. I've seen similar articles in other small press zines, quite a few years ago. Lots of controversy in Canada currently since the feds apparently are not going to continue to pour millions of dollars into AIDS research once the last grant is used up.

Very good interview with Samanda Jeude. Perhaps ironically, I knew nothing about the lady but someone sent me a TAFF ballot and I thought the blurb was exceptionally good and funny and the "big tits" bit was done exactly right to get people to vote, which was, after all, the name of the game, without being offensive to anyone. Obviously not, according to the reactions. Jeez! Talk about intolerance! The only other thing I can ever recall about the gal is that in the one and only issue of **Wild Heirs** I received, Buck Coulson appeared to be pissed off at comments made by someone in previous issues about Sam. Yet, this interview had me wanting to go find out who this stalker fool is and hunt the bum up and make it so he could never threaten anyone again (you would defend me if I got caught, eh?); produced disgust for some "fans" and generated tears at one point. I wish her well.

"Hind Legs" was interesting. I'm afraid I couldn't generate any sympathy for Rose. Any woman dumb enough to stick some idiot's coke stash up her snatch, knowing full well that it might be found and if so she would go to prison, and then after it is found, to take the rap for him, is too dumb to feel sorry for. Where was the plea bargain, if she would testify against Sam? Apparently not available. Love, I

suppose. Hell, it happens everywhere. Way out here in the sticks, a neighbour of mine was growing and dealing pot and shacked up with this gal. Caught, she took the rap, spent a couple years in the can while he happily went along growing and dealing.

*My client Rose's dumb-ness, coupled with her genuine nice-ness, was one reason I felt strongly about her case. She'd been taken advantage of by her scumbag dealer boyfriend -- who undoubtedly kept her around to tote his stash and take the rap if they were busted -- and figuratively stomped on by the frustrated authorities, who used bad law to do so. Those manipulated by the instigators of crime to carry off their misdeeds are victims as well as accomplices.*

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Jerry Proctor's note about Bob Shaw is oddly put together. It is interesting to know that Bob enjoyed target shooting. I doubt, however, that he would have appreciated knowing that a remembrance of his life has been used as the vehicle for a political diatribe on gun control. As far as I can tell, assault weapons have three legitimate uses. One is for the military. As far as I know, the Democratic party does not advocate depriving the U.S. military of assault weapons. The second is target shooting. True, you can use assault weapons for this purpose, but if the goal is skilled recreation, I don't see why slingshots wouldn't serve the purpose, and save you the investment in ear protectors. (If the purpose is to develop a skill you intend to use off the target range, target shooting is no long the primary purpose, but a means to an end, and you should be selecting your weapon based on that end.) If, however, Jerry Proctor feels that target shooting with an assault rifle offers a satisfaction not provided by slingshot, bow, or pistol, I have a proposal: limit licenses for assault weapons to secure target ranges: the people who run the target range would own the weapons, be responsible for reporting any thefts,

and rent them to people who wanted to use them for target shooting. This will reduce the chances of the weapons being stolen from the target shooter and used by the thief to harm an innocent person. The third purpose is armed revolt. It seems fairly obvious that someone who is planning an armed uprising is no longer trying to change the local government by less violent means, and is going to be concerned with its laws only in terms of what they have to conceal until the designated hour.

Now that we've more or less gotten rid of the term "mundanes" (perhaps because fandom no longer seems so monolithic, or so beleaguered, that "non-fan" is so important a concept), how about going after some similar words that carry far more anger, like "goy" (harmless on the face, since the literal meaning is "person," but meaning "not one of us"), "Gentile" (whether used by Jew or Mormon), "infidel," and "damn yankee"?

*Or "redneck" or "racist" or that all-popular term in certain communities, "bitch." But "going after" words is just cosmetic political correctness. More productive to "go after" the attitude ... and since this is infinitely more difficult, requiring infinitely more understanding and patience, those who let themselves be obsessed by words don't normally show the dedication and wit and kindness to do it. As with the worse epithets, the racial and ethnic taunts that denote centuries of loathing, they're symptomatic of far deeper divisions that have to be healed with effort and empathy and example ... qualities for which the p.c. have never been famed.*

I was going to try to analyze James Hogan's article on AIDS, looking for the real facts in it (an assertion, in article without footnotes or a bibliography, that the people you're arguing with haven't offered adequate data is not convincing), and maybe even offering a few facts, but I was stopped by the reference to "flagrant homosexuals." No approach to healing should start from, or include, contempt for the people who have the disease.

*I was going to make a bad joke about gays who*

*didn't bathe, i.e. "flagrant homosexuals," but the issue is too serious for my stupid sense of humor. Could Hogan's -- actually Duesberg's -- point have been that any promiscuous and reckless lifestyle contributes to the destruction of the immune system? Does that bespeak contempt for gay people, which is of course unsupportable and unfair, or merely criticism of one traditional gay lifestyle?*

Nonetheless, I would like to ask Hogan how he explains the recent studies that show that, when people with AIDS are given a new combination of drugs, two things happen: they get healthier (fewer opportunistic infections, weight gain, increased strength) and the tests that had previously shown large amounts of HIV in their blood now can find no HIV. (Not everyone can tolerate the drugs, just as not everyone can tolerate chemotherapy for cancer, but in those who can, they do have this pair of effects.)

I hope you don't mind if I ask for a bit more editorial attention, and proofreading, in this fanzine. I have a feeling that a spelling checker has replaced a human eye in some places: for example, "low" appears for "loc" in Fred Herman's letter.

*And "been" somehow became "Oxen" at one point. My scanner had cows on the brain. Moving on, I've learned my lesson; this lettercol has been copied the old-fashioned way, letter by letter.*

More seriously, the interview with Samanda Jeude really needed an editor to look it over, rearrange some material (with her permission, of course), and call her back to get some more information. There are places where something seems to have fallen out in the production process, or where a connection that is clear to you hasn't been explained to the less-informed reader. For example, in the first paragraph Jeude, after commenting that her surname is Alsatian, goes "And then it became Yi-dee. We have no idea where we came from, we have a tendency to live forever unless we decide to die." One moment she seems to be talking about what part of the planet her recent ancestors lived in;



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the next, the phrasing suggests elves or vampires. On the next page, there is the sentence "Make sure they are capable of real people." I can guess at what that's supposed to say, but I spend 35 hours a week doing that sort of thing and being paid for it, and it's much pleasanter to be handed intact sentences that don't require guesswork. People talking ramble, but a printed interview, when the person reading it can't benefit from facial expression or tone of voice, and can't easily stop the speaker and ask for a clarification, should have more continuity.

There is no excuse for the person who said that they hoped Samanda would get stuck in the London Underground and die; that is as out of line, and as atypical of the fandom I know and love, as the person who said in print that he hoped Ted White would die of a drug overdose.

*For the record, I don't care how Ted White dies, but I've seen people o.d. and wouldn't wish it on anyone.*

Most fanzine fans aren't like that. I'm not on Usenet, and can't comment on events or statements there because I don't have enough information, but it seems fairly clear that part of what happened with Samanda's TAFF candidacy was a communications problem. Whatever else is true of fanzine fans, in general we respond to people we haven't met based on what they write. All I knew of Samanda at the time was that she did *Electrical Eggs* and had offered her poorly chosen platform that suggested we should vote for her because of her breasts, her tattoos, and the hint that her "Klingons" would beat us up if we didn't. Needless to say, I didn't really feel threatened, but I also didn't feel she was taking the whole thing seriously, or that she was doing women in fandom any good; when a woman wins a fan fund, it should be because she's an interesting person, not because of her breasts, just as I hope a man wouldn't expect to be chosen because he has big muscles or a cute butt.

*Or had seen Ted White naked, which I recall was one of the reasons Dan Steffan gave for voting for him. You seem to assert that feminism commanded Samanda to adopt a*

*humorlessness absolutely false to her nature, but the male candidate, because of his closer connection to fanzining's In Crowd, could voice whatever silliness he wanted. Where's the fairness in that?*

If someone, big name fan or no, threatened Samanda's life, and she took it seriously enough to drop fanzines, move, and change her phone number, I have two questions. Why didn't she turn the letters over to the police? and Why is she protecting him by not mentioning his name?

On to the letter column.

There are a couple of problems with having welfare recipients help out with routine tasks at schools. The major one is that, like most of [New York] Mayor Guiliani's plans for putting welfare recipients to work, it would not provide a decent salary (the person would still be below the poverty line) and the mayor's goal is to use the welfare recipients to replace teacher's aides who are making a living wage. Once the fried people's unemployment compensation has run out, you have some one who had a decent job and is now on welfare. (Yes, they have job skills, but the New York area economy is not in good enough shape that you can lay off large numbers of people and not expect to increase the total number of unemployed people.) Other problems include the fact that some people are on welfare because they can't hold down, or can't get, another job, perhaps because they're mentally ill or have criminal records. Parents are understandably nervous about having such people supervise their children.

I think decent Southerners need to accept that, at least for our lifetimes, the Confederate flag is too much associated with racial hatred to be used as a symbol for other things, just as all variants on the swastika (not just the exact form used by the Nazis) evoke such visceral fear and anger that they cannot be disassociated from Nazi Germany, even though some predate Nazism by centuries. There is a lot more to Southern history and culture than the Civil War and the battles of those four years.

Need I remind you that Washington, Jefferson and Patrick Henry were Virginians, or that Sequoia and Martin Luther King were from Georgia? Maybe if the celebrations of Southern heritage paid more attention to people other than white soldiers who fought for the Confederacy, people like George Washington Carver, Rosa Parks, and Eudora Welty, they'd be looked on with less suspicion by Blacks and Northerners.

*Seeing as Northerners have traditionally treated the South as a scapegoat for the entire nation's racial disgrace, and generally behaved towards the region with condescension, arrogance, ignorance and contempt, I doubt they'd ever look on us with anything but similar bigotry. (And the envy their decaying infrastructure saves for a superior climate, healthier economy, nicer people and more attractive landscape.) Besides, why should Southern s.f.ers jump through those p.c. hoops? Some fans, like the Coulsons, were active in the heyday of civil rights, but fandom itself -- nationwide -- generally remains as it's always been, a white, middle- or professional-class phenomenon. Are not black fans still rare, everywhere? Furthermore, can anyone recount an incident -- at any time -- when a black aficionado was made unwelcome at a Southern s.f. event, so the "suspicion" you mention could be justified, and so Southern fandom should pointedly venerate people who have nothing to do with science fiction, and who are ignored by fans everywhere else? In short, why should Southerners alone be expected to pay a universal debt?*

Actually, TV ratings count two numbers. One is the percentage of televisions in use that are tuned to a particular station (as Milton Stevens mentions), but the other is the total number of people watching a program (or who have their televisions tuned to it -- whether the people are watching, necking, or concentrating on their embroidery is anybody's guess). Yes, if most of the country is out playing ball or lying on the beach, the networks still want as many as possible of the people who are watching TV to

watch *their* shows, but the advertisers won't pay nearly as much for 50% of a million viewers as for 50% of 50 million. (Tracking both makes sense: it doesn't matter how good your show is, fewer people will watch if it's on at 4 a.m., but if everyone who is watching at that hour has tuned in to something else, the station wants to know and maybe even do something about it.)

I have mixed feelings about a British Corflu, but unlike Murray Moore, I don't think people would skip the con to go sightseeing. People who were so inclined wouldn't bother with Corflu at all: they'd schedule their London vacations at a time they found convenient. Few if any North American fans would fly to London just for the weekend, and if you spend a week or more, there's time to do some sightseeing and go to the con, as most people did with the Scottish Worldcon. I don't spend my whole trip in the con hotel no matter where Corflu is held; if I'm traveling anyway, there are usually things worth seeing in the area. Some people would probably find a British Corflu too expensive and stay home; others might decide to make it their vacation for the year, as some fans will build a vacation around a Worldcon.

There are those of us who suspect that drugs remain illegal in part because the current distributors are pressuring the government to keep their profits up -- the real money in the drug trade isn't going to the streetcorner dealer who is risking his life and freedom. Crime is also a growth industry for a lot of people who don't break the law: the more people who are sent to jail, the more prisons are needed, which immediately means construction jobs and nice, secure jobs for the guards.

*And there are those of us who believe drugs should remain illegal because they destroy people and gut society. I have evidence for that point of view; can you objectively support your perspective?*

It is true that nobody starts out knowing what a word like "fanac" means. On the other hand, someone who gets as upset as Brin-Marie [McLaughlin] describes at seeing a word that he

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doesn't recognize probably isn't in a mood to learn much of anything. If someone says "What does 'fanac' mean?" I'll tell them. If someone yells "What the hell is this 'fanac' shit? What's that word *mean*?" they're either under considerable stress anyway, and are best treated gently, or they have a very different approach to the world than I think of as fannish: it seems to me that one of the best things fans have in common is a great deal of curiosity about things. For such people, new ideas look more like toys than threats. We may not do much with them, but at least we enjoy them and share them around. In this case, though, it seems likely that the man who yelled at Brin for using fan jargon was under stress: running a convention does that to people, especially since running a con doesn't remove the responsibilities of one's paid job, or getting the laundry done. The whole incident seems unfortunate.

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I think I remember that Bob Shaw story with the "Colt .44 Magnum." Recognition like that ruins yours appreciation of a good story. You know, of course, that Smith & Wesson is now British-owned. Will Clint Eastwood have to change his spiel for the next Dirty Harry movie? "See here now! This revolver, old chap, is a .44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun made, which will leave you bloody well gobsmacked ..."

And the Royal Ulster Constabulary would be *exceedingly* interested, I am sure, in those pictures of BoSh with an Armalite.

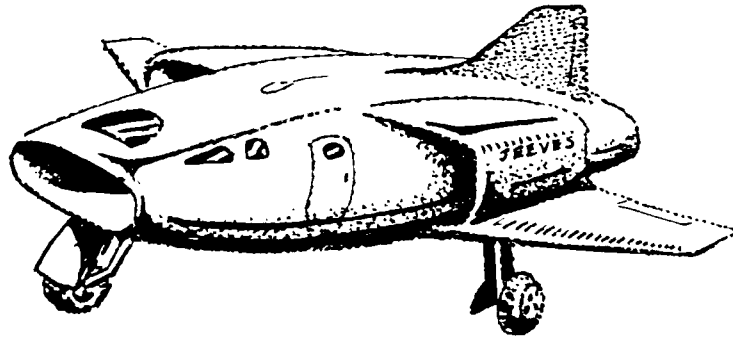
It looks as if you are going to have to do an obscene, illegal, and bizarre act with the reels of film for **Alien IV**. The projectionist will just love you. The movie will star Sigourney Weaver. Since at the end of **Alien**<sup>3</sup> Ripley experienced a close encounter of the fifth kind, in **Alien IV** she will be a *clone* of the original Ripley. Believe it or not!

*And no Newt. \*pfffft\* on Alien IV. The series ended with the Cameron film.*

Actually, what gets people bent out of shape is how much hostility is generated over such trivial things. "Their kind of fanzine" is so narrow a definition. One thinks of the convention of Super-8 movie buffs where one member swung his arm about the hall, taking in the hundred or so attendees, and proclaimed "Could the VCR people *ever* do anything like

this?" (Well, no, but not in the way he was thinking of it.) And so we found Kubla Khan to be more enjoyable and worth going to than Corflu, which this year was also in Nashville. (Sam [Jeude] was there, looking chipper enough.)

*I'm curious about the '96 Corflu. Nashville fans of my acquaintance -- with long & successful experience at coniving -- told me that they'd offered to help with the event and been completely ignored. I don't understand that attitude; were they missed?*



Yes, but we're getting to the point where the obituary columns in fanzines are getting longer and longer. The call now is for the faned to pub his ish before Alzheimer's sets in. Locs are full of querulous complaints about inadequate crutches and how one of the nurses at the nursing home stole the mimeo.

There was a Klan rally here a month or so ago. It was unusual in that it did not explode into violence, but then the anti-Klan activists kept their promise not to start fights. What usually happens is that a dozen or twenty Klansmen face several hundred or even thousand anti-Klan types. Then the anti-Klan types start smashing things, and the Klansmen slink away.

*Shortly after I moved back to Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1979, some pretentious and noisy New Yorkers calling themselves the Communist Worker's Party held a "Death to the Klan" rally at a black housing project. It was no big deal: a few posturing union honchos making speeches and singing old socialist anthems. Trouble was that members of the KKK got wind of the demonstration and drove in from the country. They didn't bring guitars: they brought automatic weapons. By the time they drove off, five CWPers lay dead. I watched a lot of the trial; it was a major impetus towards my going to law school, and a vital lesson in the ambiguity of defense work. The defense packed 12 pinheads onto the jury and made flag-waving arguments that had them completely bamboozled. The Klansmen went free. Detestable, I thought ... before I realized it was also brilliant. At the time, though, I was simply revolted, and I set my hat to leaving that lovely and stifling town as soon as possible. Point being, the Ku Klux Klan is never a laughing matter.*

Heinlein grumbles in **Grumbles from the Grave** that fans were plaguing him. It is entirely possible that one of them helped himself to that autographed copy of the Lensman issue of **Astounding**, figuring that after all he would never miss it, and resold it for big bucks ("Heinlein himself gave me this." Right) and it

ended up in Milton F. Stevens' hands. Finally an honest man restored it to its rightful owner.

Pugwash must be tiny tiny if Rodney Leighton cannot find a copy rate of less than 9 cents a page. I got my family newsletter photocopied for 7 cents per double-sided sheet.

Amusing plot, which since we never got to try it I can reveal; as I said, I produce a newsletter for my family, broadly defined, which goes out to about 160 cousins, brothers, aunt, niece, nephew, etc. When Corflu announced the FAAN Awards we figured this was a perfect nominee; it adhered magnificently to their standards. That is, it is full of talk about me and mine, and has nothing whatsoever about s.f. But, there was a conflicting event, and so we did not bother going.

Of course, the Christine Keeler affair was an attempt by British security (MI5) to blackmail the Soviet Naval Attache. John Profumo got caught in the web. A few years later MI5 was more successful and caught Oleg Lyalin, the local representative of the KGB assassination bureau. He gave them the name of 105 of his Soviet spy colleagues, who were disinvented. KGB chairman Andropov was so angry he ordered Lyalin killed if found.

Chess pieces on Paul Morphy's tomb? From the trip report in **The Knarley Knews** it seems that people put stones on Rabbi Lowe's tomb, he of the golem, in Praha. And whenever I go by, I have always found pennies on Edgar Cayce's headstone.

*Across from the Dakota in New York's Central Park is a place called Strawberry Fields, where John Lennon is commemorated with a circular plaque inscribed, "Imagine". People -- among them JoAnn Montalbano & myself -- leave coins there all the time. And remember the poignant close to **Schindler's List**.*

"[Some] familiar [fanzine] names are, and were, and remain missing." Well, [Andy] Hooper has been publishing **Apparatchik** but evidently you too are not worthy of receiving it. *Nor, according to her statement at L.A.Con, is Nicki Lynch. At least we're in good company.*

## Challenger no. 5

[Bill] Donaho has been silent for two years -- I think we may soon enough be looking at a **Habakkuk, Book 4**. Also, **Niekas** has been away -- it seems that the publisher gaffiated with all the manuscripts. You try and figure that out.

Ray Palmer actually published **Tarzan on Mars**? I was under the impression that ERB, Inc. had come forward with some heavy legal arguments to keep this from happening. Not to mention what they did to Philip Jose Farmer after he did **The Adventure of the Peerless Peer**. And now, so the rumor goes, they are bringing out new Tarzan and John Carter novels to extend their control of the characters ...

*Protecting such a valuable property makes sense to me. So, alas, does their taking a legal interest in the pastiching career of the ordinarily delightful Farmer, which extended over several pseudo-Tarzan novels, including **A Feast Unknown and Lord Tyger** (which contains the single most disgusting scene I've ever read in science fiction). I'd like some details on what happened.*

Danny Heap should realize that "the atrocious movies being made of '60s television shows" are being done because of nostalgia on the part of Boomer movie execs. It is so much easier to pitch a one-line idea than to sit down and actually think of something original to make into a movie.

*My favorite story along those lines had a writer holding up a photo of fat-lipped John Travolta and merely intoning the title: **American Gigolo**.*

*The movie eventually starred Richard Gere ... and I understand flopped so badly it was reissued under a different name.*

Since you were kind enough to send me a back issue of **Challenger** #3 I will afflict you with some delayed comments.

Vincent Bugliosi, perhaps annoyed that he was not considered prestigious enough to be on the Simpson Defense Dream Team, has written a book critical of the competence of the prosecutors: **Outrage: The Five Reasons O.J. Simpson Got Away with Murder** (W.W. Norton; ISBN 0-393-04050-X; \$25). He thought that the prosecutors failed to introduce some of their

best evidence.

There is a Warner Bros. cartoon featuring Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd where a truckload of hats overturns near the forest, blowing hats across the woods and onto their heads. They start assuming personalities appropriate to the hats they are wearing, changing as one hat is replaced by another. That is, if Bugliosi had been on the "Dream Team" and Alan Dershowitz had not, Bugliosi would have written **Reasonable Doubt** and Dershowitz would have written **Outrage**.

*Read about my meeting Bugliosi elsewhere. I admire the guy despite his obvious egomania; his **And the Sea Will Tell** is a primer for construction of a criminal defense. His predictions for the Manson girls, predicting squalid insanity for the*



*lot, turned out to be lightyears off base ... Has he ever admitted that he was wrong?*

Not that filing a civil case is any resolution. Consider the notorious Cullen Davis case, where Davis avoided a judgment by filing for bankruptcy, and the less Richard Minns case, where Minns avoided a \$60 million judgment awarded to his common-law wife by moving everything overseas.

After reading "Jim," I realize that we should have had you during the JGB incident. (A well-known writer, who charitably corresponds with convicts, referred one of his correspondents to us. The fellow demonstrated pretty well why he was on Death Row. A lot of people became frightened of him, and

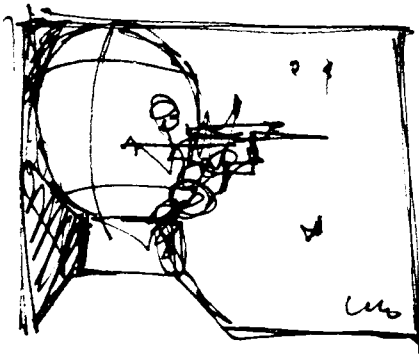
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complained. So we decided not to publish his letters. A lot of people complained about that, headed by the well-known writer.)

*Send him here.*

A little correction to **Dennis Dolbear's** funeral arrangements: Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots *never* met. (I think Elizabeth is buried in the tomb of her sister, Mary I.)

Whereas Wellington and Nelson did meet once in their lifetimes. The hero of the Nile and Copenhagen, on his way to Trafalgar, had to see the Secretary for War. An officer from India was also there, also delayed. Having been inundated with fans, Nelson put on his "trivial" face and chatted inanely for about half an hour. The other fellow having said



*something*, Nelson excused himself and asked the receptionist who the devil that Army chap out there was. Upon being told that that was Sir Arthur Wellesley, who beat the wogs at Assaye, he decided that here was someone who could understand a sensible conversation, and the future victor of Trafalgar proceeded to have a strategic discussion with the future victor of Waterloo.

One additional point about the Crater [at Petersburg, Virginia]; the Union divisional commander spent the battle in a bunker with a keg of whiskey. It is surprising that the assaulting troops did as well as they did. The U.S. Colored Troops could be argued to be quite good. You have to consider that they

were underpaid and scorned by their fellow soldiers. But they had *motivation*.

**Susan Zuege**

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Cedarburg WI 53012-3016**

Just a few comments concerning Rich Dengrove's article about witches. People believed in witches and magic long before the witch hunts began. In fact, these beliefs were so strong that in the ninth century the Church decreed that signing pacts with the Devil and flying through the air were impossible. Priests were instructed to preach that these ideas were false and occurred only in dreams. This decree became part of canon law. (**Out of the Cauldron**, Bernice Kohn.)

By the fifteenth century, however, the Church feared its power was threatened by dissatisfied splinter groups. The quickest way to stop dissenters and nonconformists was for the Church to charge them with heresy. By accusing these individuals of an act viewed with fear and superstition officials ensured little opposition to their tactics. So, in 1484 Pope Innocent VIII issued a papal letter ordering the Inquisition to execute witches, thus reversing the Church's previous decree. (**Black Magic, White Magic**, Gary Jennings).

Although religious factors led to the witch hunts, they were soon influenced by both greed and politics. It was rather easy to remove a political or personal rival and then claim his possessions by accusing him or a member of his family of witchcraft. After a witch was executed, his or her property was given to the accuser(s). Witch-finders also had a strong incentive to prove victims guilty since finders were paid a tidy sum for each person brought to trial.

So, to say that a belief in the reality of witches and magic was the cause of the witch hunts is to simplify matters to a great degree. It is more correct to say that it played a part in a complex bid for power by ambitious rivals. A very real threat for which many innocent people, including witches, were the ones who suffered.

## Challenger no. 5

Roger Waddington  
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U.K.

Many thanks for this massive shot of egoboo (on both counts; haven't seen a 100-pager in years); I must still count for something in fandom. Though it intrigues me, as to where my name was pulled from. There's mention of **Mimosa** among the reviews, and **Stet** in the lettercol, as two likely sources; but then, why should I question my good fortune?

*Thanks for calling Chall "good fortune." The Lynchi and Linda Krawecke referred me to your door.*

Mind you, I have to remove some notions right from the start. I'm not likely to come up with any stunning insights, or deathless prose; more a case of that computer acronym, WYSIWYG. Admittedly, being unemployed does open up oceans of time, but not much else; if you haven't any understanding to start with, it doesn't come by sitting around. Not that I've been doing much of that; been filling my time with local history pottering, afternoon walks, much reading (two public libraries within walking distance); in fact, if it wasn't for the money, finding work again would seem like a step backwards.

*Your sunny-side-up attitude is inspiring. As a depressive, I would never handle bad luck as well as you have. Hey, karma counts. The universe is listening. You'll be taking that step backwards sooner than soon.*

And there's the fellowship of science fiction; did you wonder how much we had in common. a rich (?) [*Strike one!*] successful (?) [*Strike two!*] lawyer [*Strike thr-* ... *Wait. I am a lawyer*] and a cheerful indigent; but then you mentioned **The Stars My Destination** as one of the best s.f. novels of all time. It's up there in my personal pantheon as well; not on any literary merit, just that it was one of the very first s.f. novels I read as a child, starting me off on a life-long obsession. Though one of these days, I'd like to find out just why it appeared

over here, in a British edition, under the more literary title of **Tiger! Tiger!**, from the poem by William Blake.

*That was, I understand, Alfie Bester's original title. What I'd like to know is why the London worldcon, in the year SMD was published, failed to give a Hugo for Best Novel. The saga of Gully Foyle would have won going, jumping, jaunting away. Nice new edition out from Vintage; I bought it for my brother for Christmas.*

Don't know quite how to formulate it and so give my name to one of the laws of fandom; but why is it for a first-time reader, and judging from the lettercol, that the issue of the fanzine before is just as interesting as the one you hold in your hand? Dennis Dolbear's trip report is a good example; I was going to plead for an offprint, but seeing it runs to 22 pages that might be too much to ask for.

I'm fascinated on two counts; one, that I've a permanent interest in books and articles written by visitors to Britain; quoting Robert Burns, "to see ourselves as others see us." (And "warts and all," to quote Oliver Cromwell.) The second is that like Pamela Boal, I can look back on my time in London with pleasure. It was where I went to work after leaving school here; I didn't know anybody, didn't even have any relatives there to lessen the impact; I just thought it would be a fun thing to do. While I'd be more doubtful about living there now -- the constant threat of terrorism, etc. -- it seems from the comments gathered as if Dennis found the same London I used to know, behind the more obvious tourist spots; and I'd have liked to renew my acquaintance.

*"Hint hint hint" ... okay, okay: a copy of #3, with Dennis' article, is in your hands.*

And from the comments on Harry B. Moore, I can thankfully say "There but for the grace of God ..." On personal circumstances; I was saved from myself in a two-up, two-down house (with my mother) where the opportunities for building up a floorboard-straining collection are limited. Not that I didn't have a go; during those London years, I was buying every s.f.

magazine on the market, others secondhand and piles of remaindered pbs, and bringing them all back to Norton; but I soon had to realise that was impossible. Oh, I've still got a pack-rat mentality; but tempering it by limited myself to what I'm most likely to read again. Must say, I treat mine better (reminded of the little slips increasingly pasted in library books over here, with words to the effect that "*If you must make comments, please write them here*"); what might appear in a sale catalogue as NM, or "one careful owner." Then again, mine is composed more of "unconsider'd trifles" (to give Shakespeare the glory); no first editions, no autographed copies, nothing that's likely to give it value. But it seems to me that the best way of passing any collection on, for the gratitude of future generations is to leave it to some responsible authority and note it in your will. Over here, we've got the Science Fiction Foundation, specifically dedicated to such; the USA seems to be more fragmented, but surely there are departments for media studies that would welcome the less famous collections?

*What about fanzines? I'm leaving my books to my brother's kids, but what will they care about the trunkful of wastepaper that is the GHLIII Press? Is there some depository where I can count on the stuff being preserved?*

I suspect that the dismissal of the outside world as "mundanes" is allied to another once-common attitude, that "It is a proud and lonely thing to be a Fan"; but who's mundane now, when science fiction, fact and fantasy have such a grip on the national consciousness? In fact, I'm groping my way towards a theory that we never have been lonely, that science fiction has always been well received by the general public. It would start with the scientific romances of Jules Verne, take in H.G. Wells in the Thirties, Heinlein and others from the mainstream can you get from that? Adding the Fifties, with (over here) John Wyndham's best-selling novels, **The Day of the Triffids** etc.; right up to **Star Wars**, **The X-Files** and **Independence Day**. In short, that the s.f. ghetto has been one

of our own making. Though as you point out, adolescent yearnings have a lot to do with it, the desire to prove yourself as different from the common herd, the ugly duckling that becomes a swan; but can we hold such an attitude now that we're responsible adults? (Well, most of us.)

An excellent summing-up by Jim Hogan on HIV and AIDS; more than the media have been able to give us. I'm not qualified to comment on the medical aspect (though since when has that stopped anybody?), but it's gone into my file as something else the media have seized on to forecast the end of life as we know it; but why are they always so eager? As an amateur historian, I like to trace the threat to civilisation back as far as the invention of Greek Fire; but in more modern times, it must have been the invention of the Cold War, with Russian world domination to scare us. That practically ended with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall; but then according to the media, we had to worry about Russian atomic bombs falling into the hands of terrorists. Following that it was the threat of world domination by Islam; and then, as Jim notes, the media eagerly picked up the worldwide threat of AIDS. They must have taken that as far as it could go; now the papers are filled with the threat of global warming, of the world as a vast desert, and raked with violent storms. We all have to die eventually; but why do we have to worry about dying before our time?

The other question is where do all the "experts" come from, that fill the pages of newspapers and TV channels, to explain just why we should be worried? For every new scare, these latter-day Jeremiahs seem to instantly pop up and collect their fee; and then, when it's no longer newsworthy, just as instantly disappear to be replaced by a new set of interpreters. Strikes me as the instant way to riches, if we could only anticipate the next scare story, bone up on it and find instant fame, the saviours of the airwaves ... Any ideas?

*I want AIDS defeated. I don't care how. I don't care who's offended. I just want innocents*



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*saved. Anything that gets in the way of the conquest of AIDS, be it medical politics or cultural paranoia or personal bigotry, is a crime against mankind.*

**Pamela Boal**  
**4 Westfield Way**  
**Charlton Heights**  
**Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW**  
**U.K.**

What a great ish. **Challenger 4** not only looks good but also has many of my favourite ingredients. Photographs and 34 pages of such varied and interesting letters, fans whom I only get to meet through he printed page have to be real, no editor is talented enough to make that lot up

Your personal anecdotes give fascinating insights into the American legal system. Along with so many zines yours makes us sad for the loss and glad for the life of Bob Shaw.

Jim Hogan's article deals with a subject matter that has been briefly aired on TV here. It was not given extensive media coverage but it was not laughed out of court as it seems to have been in America.

Here, here, your comments on mundanes. I have always felt sad when people I wish to get to know and feel sure I would like, turn out to be the type of person who can only feel good about themselves if they belittle other people. My first experience in fandom in the flesh (i.e. my first con) was so different, there the great attraction for me was the accepting nature of the fans I met, especially the one who genuinely had not noticed when talking to me, that I was sitting in a wheelchair. In the life of fandom though I suspect the derision of mundanes is comparatively recent and a reflection of the ever harsher competitive nature of society?

Gotta dash rather oddly my family expect me to turn up for the family get together celebrating Derek's and my forty years of wedded bliss. I know any excuse for a booze up!

**Mike McInerney**  
**83 Shakespeare Street**  
**Daly City CA 94014**

Thanks for sending **Challenger #4** (and 3.2.1). I am very impressed by the quality, layout, and sheer intimidating 100+-page size of it! I don't know how you can afford the cost of doing such a huge issue (must be more than \$1,000) but I hope I can continue receiving future copies as I've been enjoying them immensely.

The fanzine I sent you was titled **SF Film Fan #1**, not **Corflu Vegas**. I was surprised to see you call it "glum." I was thrilled to go to the con, but maybe I was sad at being able to stay such a short time. I guess I need to lighten up my writing style -- probably wish I had more sense of humor.

*Nothing wrong with your style or humor. I just misread you.*

There's not much to laugh at in the sad saga of Harry Moore. As fans get older this is I'm sure being repeated again and again. To me, a mundane person would be someone who has no concept of the value of old books, magazines, fanzines etc. and could just throw out or give away to people who don't care at all about them. Someone's lifetime of collecting down the drain -- it's a shame.

I don't use the word mundane as an insult, just to signify that the person referred to isn't a fan and most likely wouldn't understand what makes fandom fun. Who called Christa McAuliffe mundane? I'm sure all fans respect her memory and most Americans too. You are fighting a paper tiger, a phantom pejorative here.

I have no desire to meet, correspond or





## Challenger no. 5

I have to squeeze my body through some hole so small that I can't really see into it or walk through. I think I would force myself into the Great Pyramid's passage if I ever got to Egypt.

I'll try Gallatoire's and Breakfast at Brennan's. Got any other good tips?

*Too many to list! Have you ever seen George Alec Effinger's New Orleans restaurant guide, published in The Real Nolacon II Program Book in 1988?*

It must be impossible to hold a "private" pot party at a convention what with telltale fumes, etc. Has

there **ever** been a police raid on an s.f. con or club meeting?

Over a 30-year span one would think that some intolerant, uptight, or rigidly law-abiding citizen would have blown the whistle on some poor potsmoking fan or group. Maybe in retaliation for an insult or feud. Many years ago, there was a panel discussion at a Westercon about "Drugs in S.F. and Fandom." I was on the panel and lit a joint and passed it around, thereby

making many people paranoid and upset. That was long ago, of course I would **never** do that again. It made sense at the time (the '60s)!

I moved to San Francisco in January, 1969. When the People's Park riots broke out, I hitchhiked over to Berkeley two or three days straight to protest and march. Maybe we bumped shoulders at that time, eh? I remember flowers all over the fence and guns and some tear gas -- I took some pictures, too -- maybe I'll find them someday.

*When you do, don't forget me.*

Your photo pages are printed too dark, making the faces hard to see. They were better done in **Chall #2** and 3.

*Too true -- at worldcon Andy Hooper called the effect "chiaroscuro," but I call it "muddy." The fault lay with the halftones. Did this issue's come out better?*

I loved Dennis Dolbear's London report in **Chall #3**. Maybe he could do something similar about New Orleans. How can he remember all that detail? Must take good notes.

*Not a one. He just has an astonishingly good memory. You just visited the Crescent City -- Linda and you were utterly delightful -- read my writeup later.*



**Sheryl Birkhead**  
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Gaithersburg MD  
20882

Sounds as if Harry Moore was a character. My Chemistry stories are much tamer, e.g. having the department chairman *really* upset over smelling burnt almonds and finding

out I was creating poisons because I needed certain compounds to test my senior project -- or moving into the new Chemistry building and being told the hallway showers were there for our safety -- but be *darned* sure we needed them since the architect had neglected to out in drains and they delivered 50 gallons -- if it happened to be a false alarm we would be responsible for mopping every drop up.

The AIDS info is similar to the feline FeLV and FIV (there is also SIV, BIV, MIV), scrapie in sheep (and "mad cow disease" = BSE

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-- along with other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies). A lot has to do with an actual definition (and yes -- Koch's postulates) as well as NOT entering the tabloid press. NOTE -- SIV is the simian virus -- *but* within the last year at least one "chimp" (primate at least) infected with HIV about five years ago *has* shown signs of disease -- that in itself is a bit unsettling -- it implies HIV can, at least, cross the near-species line.

Samanda Jeude is ... Samanda. I hope someone is collecting the various anecdotes for a future collection. I hear about TAFF being for fanzine fans (but I didn't know that) and wonder if this is also "true" of DUFF, FFANZ (sp?), etc. To me "fan" means just that. I wanted to run for DUFF, but did my homework (\$ needed from my own pocket, temperament and so on) and decided it wasn't worth the potential pain, but I'm always amazed at the uhh ... to be charitable ... forcefulness of attacks within fandom. 'Nuff said.

Beautiful cover thish.

*I was asked to consider a DUFF run myself for 1997, and with regret decided ... no. I couldn't win and if I did I couldn't afford it. But 2001 remains ~~the greatest s.f. movie ever made~~ a thought ... and there is no place I'd rather visit on Earth than Hanging Rock. Speaking of Australia ...*

**Karen Pender-Gunn**  
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I just had to write and tell you how wonderful the interview with Samanda Jeude was. I wish I could meet this wonderful woman! The life, the vitality, the real person there on the page. As for the people who whined about the TAFF race -- maybe they should just go and sit in a little dark room with all their friends. Let's get a life here! After having won FFANZ back in 1993, Ian and I had people complaining that we shouldn't run for another fan fund race. It

wasn't fair they said -- okay, who said it wasn't fair and could I see a copy of these rules please. Ian and I ran for GUFF as a team and think we were good representatives of Australian fandom. We didn't throw up on anyone's couch or sleep with anybody's partner, we ate what was served up to us and had a jolly good time. Intersection was the first time I heard of Electrical Eggs and I was struck by what an excellent idea it was. Being only slightly disabled (I can't get up stairs) I realised in England how hard it was to get around. Australia is better with a little thought put into ramps and such. (Not in the library I work in though -- the person has to be let in through the security door downstairs then escorted through the staff area to the lift -- not good planning at all.) I wish Samanda all the very best and hope things turn out the very best they can for her. As the saying goes: don't let the turkeys get you down.

*Not a chance -- Sam's far too tough. I really enjoy Pinkette, by the way.*

**Ned Brooks**  
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Wow, 100 pages ... Nice cover, too. Is that you or [Dolbear] in the colophon?

Fascinating account of Harry Moore. I would have thought that *phenolphthalein* would have more serious effects than turning urine blue -- it's the active ingredient in ExLax.

If Hogan is right about HIV and AIDS, someone has certainly sold the world a bill of goods. I would like to hear the other side of the argument, but I'm not sure I am qualified to judge between them. I remember back in the '60s the local paper carried a medical column that insisted there was no such disease as rabies.

**Harry Warner, Jr.**  
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Jerry Proctor's fine article about Bob Shaw reminds me of something in the 1971 worldcon banquet recording ... Bob was a

## *Challenger no. 5*

specially imported fan guest in Boston via a fund separate from TAFF. He was asked to say something at the banquet and he managed to get out a few sentences in a subdued and almost uncertain tone of voice. Nobody who heard him that night could possibly have guessed that he would soon become the most-in-demand, funniest and successful speaker at conventions. It just goes to show once again how determination and practice can make a fellow succeed from modest beginnings in any form of fanac.

It's strange: I've been reading about Guy's correspondence with Leslie Van Houten for many months, and just now it has occurred to me that she could conceivably be related somehow to an elder fan. Raymond van Houten was very active in New York City area fandom during the 1930s and early 1940s. The name is certainly a rarely encountered one in the United States. He dropped completely out of sight a half-century ago and to the best of my knowledge nobody has detected any faint flickers of fanac from him since. I don't know if he had male children or brothers or other relatives from whom Leslie could conceivably be descended, or even if that is her maiden name.

*As t'is.*

So there is no such thing as AIDS. That will provide company for the Holocaust in the realm of fantasy.

I'm very happy to know all these facts about Samantha Jeude. But the interview leaves me with an Oliver-like urging for more. I'd like to know why she has had such serious problems with certain fans. Is her personality so abrasive that it inspires death threats from those who disagree with her? Certainly we haven't heard about such reactions to certain other fans who get themselves deeply involved in squabbles. Nobody has ever reacted violently when I expressed an opinion on a science fiction book or story. Or is she overreacting to criticism, imagining that it is dangerous to her personally? In short, her experiences in fandom seem entirely too different from those anyone else experiences in the field.

Ben Indick parrots the old fable about me loccing every issue of every fanzine I receive. It has never been true and it's even more ludicrous a belief in the 1990s when I'm achieving the loc response for a smaller percentage of the fanzines that arrive. And I thought I pointed out in the article on **Northern Exposure** that I'm not a "TV freak" in the usual connotation of a person who watches the tube many hours a day. I pointed out I confine my viewing to baseball and one regular series at a time, plus whatever time I find for using the VCR to play cassettes.

Maryland is among the states that have adopted plastic cards for giving away food. But this system can't control fraudulent use of the cards for cigarettes, beer and other items at stores that are willing to give them to customers with the cards. It also takes about three times as long to process payment with a card than it did with stamps.

Alexis Gilliland recites once again the ancient myth that Repeal reduced the problem of law enforcement involving alcohol. I wish he would contact any municipal police department or county sheriff's office or state police headquarters and compile facts and figures on how much more expensive drinking is to taxpayers today than it was during Prohibition: breaking up fights at taverns, investigating liquor store robberies, processing motor vehicle crashes (half or more of all of them), trying to prevent serious injury or death during domestic disputes who get along all right when sober and fight when drunk, nabbing under-age drinkers, investigating vandalism caused by drunk kids, writing reports on building fires, writing reports on building fires that started when a drunk fell into a stupor with a cigarette in his hand or a pot boiling on the stove, responding to protests by neighbors in the vicinity of drunk people partying late at night, and assorted other problems. A century or two in the future, I'm sure historians will identify Repeal as the worst mistake the United States made in the 20th century, not its wars which caused comparatively little death and destruction compared to the

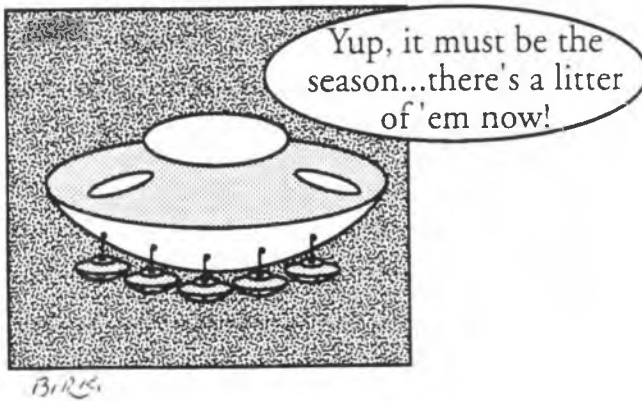
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effects of Repeal.

That judge's "I sentence you to death, and may God have mercy on your soul, and good luck" reminds me of something in Ben Hecht's autobiography. As a Chicago reporter, he was covering an execution by hanging. The murderer had the noose around his neck, was standing on the trap, and he was asked if he had anything to say. "Not at this time," he replied.

**Binker Hughes**  
5831 Hillside Drive  
Atlanta GA 30340-1721

Thanks to your putting in the earlier caving piece, I'm back in touch with an old



friend -- one **Leslie J. Turek**. One of the people involved in a zine she's connected with was reviewing the latest zines and sketched the pieces in **Challenger** in that review -- including the mention of writer, to wit: Binker Glock Hughes. Knowing there wasn't much chance of there being more than one Binker Glock (Hughes or not), she dropped me a line. We were fellow-sufferers at a Jerry's restaurant for a month or so after my camp-counseling job ran out and, as the only two college kids on the waitress crew, provided mutual support and craziness. During that time, she told me about the Tolkein books, although it was a while

before I found copies of them. We lost touch that summer, but apparently her recollections of having a fellow-sufferer are as favorable as mine and I am simply delighted to be back in touch with her. Did you know fanzines could reunite old buddies? Thanks!

**Gary Brown**  
P.O. Box 1501  
Bradenton FL 34206

What a truly stunning cover. Victoria White did marvelous work. Perhaps the only drawback is you lost some fine lines by the printing process you used. It would have been nice to see the full work (but I know you and your pocketbook have limitations).

What makes this zine stand out is your use of photographs. Keep it up.

The Harry Browning Moore story was fascinating and thanks for running it here. It reminds me that I need to make extensive plans for my collection of comic books, books and artwork once I'm gone. My children, of course, will inherit the collection and are happy to do what they want with it. However, there are some things I want them to take care of -- I don't want the books thrown out and if they don't want them, I want them to find a good home for them.

Which reminds me, I wonder if there are any businesses that find a home for collections of fans who have passed on and their families aren't interested in their books, toys, artwork, etc.? An estate broker for fans. Might turn into a good business.

Guy, Guy, Guy. It's **CAPA-alpha**. As a former member, you should be shamed into correcting it.

Terrific zine, bud. Good, solid writing and some fine illustrations, photos and graphics. Hope this proves worthy of many more issues.

**Rich Dengrove**  
2651 Arlington Drive #302  
Alexandria VA 22306

Things ain't what they seem to be in

## Challenger no. 5

**Challenger** no. 4. They never are with oral histories like Dr. Stocker's of Harry Moore. Oral history is never like written history; our mind subtle changes things. On the other hand, does oral history change things in its own right? It has affected us and the bare facts have not.

Happiness isn't what it seems to be either. Richard Speck might be happy drawn n'quartered. At any rate, he was happy in the slammer. Also, people like Christa McAuliffe and the Hensels can be happy being ordinary. Others can be happy being unconventional. With happiness, it's what's inside that counts.

AIDS may not be what it seems, according to James Hogan. In fact, it may not exist at all. I would not like to believe that the medical profession could be so remiss, but I know it can. And I came to the conclusion that some of the AIDS statistics were phony on my own. Of course, Hogan's case helps. He gives the best case so far that AIDS does not exist. The one by Dr. Duesberg I read was not quite as systematic.

However, Hogan should be careful. Not only are the statistics not quite what they appear to be; neither is the motivation. It takes more than naked self-interest to whip the public up into this hysteria. The AIDS scare is riding on the zeitgeist. On our neo-Puritan (or neo-Permissive?) way of thinking, where sex is suspect as a corrupt, adult preoccupation.

Many fans aren't what they seem to be either. Not the tolerant spirits we associate with fandom; not with the way they have treated Samanda Jeude. Who is only fighting for access for the handicapped.

Our justice system isn't what it appears to be either. The Fourth Amendment has practically been rendered meaningless. Certainly for Rose it has. However, your failure to convince the judges isn't the failure it seems either. For you, the Appeals people are human now, like the next man. And you know you did the right thing, as futile as it was.

Of course, the Rosicrucians, in my article, aren't what they seem to be. But then again who could ever be what they seem?

Are witches what they seem either? They seem very specific but some writers have pointed out that they are a much bigger topic. I think if Elizabeth Osborne goes back, she will see that I said a little something about witches in ancient Rome. However, Milton Stevens has gotten me on modern day Latin American witches.

**Steve Hughes**  
**195 North Mill Ct.**  
**Atlanta GA 30328**

This is a very nice zine but the James Hogan article is little short of outrageous! Who does this man think he is? To the best of my knowledge the gentleman is simply not qualified to have an opinion on the subject. Note: I do not say he's not *entitled* to have an opinion, we all are entitled to our opinions however stupid. My point is he's not qualified to understand the subject matter he's preaching about. There is a large, well-documented body of evidence that HIV causes AIDS. It's really not up for debate.

Hogan's arguments sound very much like those of the tobacco industry, who regularly trot out experts on the subject of nicotine's being addictive. There is one point he makes that I do agree with, but I think he's totally missed the point. The risk of HIV infection to non-drug using heterosexuals has been greatly exaggerated.

Not because there's no such thing as AIDS but because the people fighting it were (are) afraid it would not be taken seriously if the only people at risk were unpopular minorities. It's funny how eager we are to ignore danger if it's not aimed directly at us. Would we have made the major effort to contain AIDS if only drug users and homosexuals were at risk? I'd like to think so but I don't really believe it.

*And to close ... Chall covergirl Mary Ann van Hartsveldt toured Europe this summer with her husband Fred. Her "hey-I'm-back" letter deserves sharing.*

**Mary Ann van Hartesveldt**  
209 Oak Street  
Fort Valley GA 31030

The trip was great -- a once in a lifetime experience. But perhaps a month was too long. By the end we were saying, "Yeah, yeah. Nice statue. Nice painting. Can we sit down now?" It was *so good* to take a bath in my own tub and sleep in my own bed, with my own cat on the pillow.

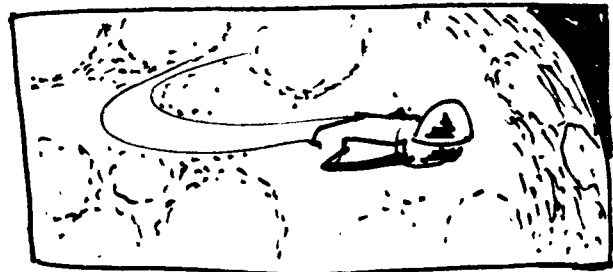
Here's one trip story: in the Louvre I fell in love with a larger than life sized marble carving of a wild boar, done in the 15th Century for one of the Medicis. I searched the gift shop for a copy, but all they had were outrageously expensive copies of the **Venus de Milo** and the **Winged Victory of Samothrace** and other very famous pieces. Much as I like them, I would rather have something less usual -- like my boar. Anyway, no luck. Then ten days later in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, there was a bronze copy of my boar. I went tearing down to the gift shop -- but no luck. Michaelangelo's **David**, Michaelangelo's **Pieta**, and other extremely well-known pieces only. Disappointed, I went on. Then, our last day in Florence we found it: a copy of my boar. It was in a very exclusive shop specializing in silver items, and it was solid silver. \$700. Fred, God bless him, offered to buy it for me, but I refused. It was so expensive because it was silver, and I just liked the art work. I cared nothing about it being silver. I resolved to look very carefully in museum catalogs and such, and keep hope that someday I would find it in bronze or pewter or something we could afford. Then in Rome, we made a wrong turn and found ourselves at a very exclusive art reproduction shop. The kind of place that keeps the door locked. If you want to go in you buzz and they look you over. If you look like their type they come and let you in. There, in their window, was my boar. Fred wouldn't even go in. He was sure it would be too expensive again and I would be disappointed. But I had to try. So I went in and asked them what the boar was made of. It was

silver-plated only, and cost exactly \$57. I started dancing around for joy. It's mine now and I love it, love it, love it. Fred bought more expensive things for me -- Venetian glass jewelry mostly -- but that boar is the perfect souvenir of this trip for me. What if we hadn't made that wrong turn? What if we *had* paid the \$700 in Florence, and then found it for \$57? I was so lucky it was almost enough to make me religious.

Now it turns out that a barbecue restaurant in Gray, Georgia, about 40 miles from Fort Valley, has taken that boar as its symbol. They have a life-sized bronze copy in their parking lot. They plan to start a national franchise, and sell copies of their symbol. So visitors to my home will see my beloved art work and say, "Been to Georgia Ribs, huh?"

My other favorite trip story has to do with a memorable meal in Brussels. I saw "*fruits de mer*" on the menu, and translated it correctly as "fruits of the sea." This will be like a seafood platter at Red Lobster, I thought. Wrong. They brought me a big platter of ice (the only ice I saw in Europe, by the way) with some boiled shrimp and a lot of oysters and many kinds of clams. All raw. Okay, I thought, time to summon up some sophistication and do as the Romans [*or Belgians*] do. So I squeezed my lemon wedge on them and they *writhed*. I swear to God they *cringed*. They were *alive*. It took all my willpower, but I ate them. I had paid big bucks (by my standards) for that meal and I would be damned if it went uneaten. Am I brave or what?

Now I better get back to work.





# THE FANZINE DUMP

One of my life's great fannish milestones was the 1972 DeepSouthCon. I was then almost two years into membership in SFPA, the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, but it was there that I *met* its membership, *en masse* and in person. There's no other way to say it: that convention made the rebel apa and Southern fandom ... *Home*.

In the past couple of years I've joined **general fanzine fandom**. It's a distinct subgroup of the overall genre, with its own arbitrary rules and would-be rulemakers, and it can be astonishingly and dishearteningly closed and jealous. But this was certainly not true of most of the people who congregated at the **Fan Lounge** in the Hilton during the 1996 World Science Fiction Convention. As I've never made it to a Corflu or Ditto or Toner, the specialty fanzine conventions, the room and the people were a revelation. Meeting the faces behind the fanzines ... it was an almost untrammelled high. Not Home yet, but ... let's jumble our metaphors and say *third base* is in sight.

**Donald Franson** of **Trash Barrel**, a nifty gentleman with a niftier hat. Young **Henry Welch** of **The Knarley Knews**. From his sense and solidity I'd thought he was 55 years old. **Benoit Girard** of **The Frozen Frog**, a sweet soul, and *zut alors*, what a grand accent. Southern Fandom's newest honcho, **Tom Feller**, whom of course I've known for years. Texas wild man **Alexander Slate**, of **PhiloSFy**. **Richard Brandt**, briefly a SFPAn, and the *extremely* impressive **Michelle Lyons**. (Later, Brandt and **Dick Lynch** relived the former's hilarious **Mimosa** article on **Manos - Hands of Fate**, the lowest point in the history of **MST3K**.)

TAFF winner **Martin Tudor** was there, whose **Empties** is almost always hilarious. **Andy Hooper**, publisher of **Apparatchik** and Hugo nominee, was there, a big big fellow in a nice suit and untied tennis shoes. Hooper and Tudor seemed wary, but all, of course, remained



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friendly. With **Dick & Nicki Lynch** and the **Kadens** I supped one night – one of the two non-pizza meals I ate during the con – and I joined them one time helping neat **Roxanne Smith** put names to faces in old worldcon banquet photos. I kept singing the Police song "Roxanne," and Dick kept whacking me on the shoulder.

**Len Bailes** was on hand, an historic pleasure for me. Steeped as I am in Southern fannish history, here was a living morsel therefrom. Len was one of rebel fandom's founders and his adventures as part of that magnificent crew was immortalized in cartoons by Joe Staton (later the creator of **E-Man** and a prominent comics artist). During a fanwriting panel later in the convention, Len recounted the story of his first crystal radio set, and metaphorized the incident into his discovery of fandom. He also mentioned the ease and inexpense of the Net, relative to fanzinedom's traditional distribution by post. The conclusion seemed inevitable and obvious: printed fanzines are an anachronism, doomed to the cultural slagheap of history.

I greeted **Teddy Harvia**, and met the great **Alexis Gilliland**, who gave me a bunch of cartoons for these lucky pages. I went to a fanzine panel featuring **Art Widner**, **Tudo** and **Hooper** which celebrated "the community of fanzines," and later, at a Boston party, met **The Proper Boskonian's** excellent editor, **Kenneth Knabbe**.

In short, the Fanzine Lounge was a wondrous place. I would often retire there to ogle the old Burbee fanzines displayed for sale, find and chat with another fanned, or just to watch the **Bolters** ... bolt. Someone had bought dozens of these idiotic devices and they were constantly on the jump. (I later sent a Bolter to my nephew Steve for his 4th birthday, labelling it "an educational toy." "Uhh ..." rejoined my brother, "just what is this thing supposed to teach?") I don't know if the Bolters will be back, but *I'll* see you there in San Antone.



A bolter. Beware.

Follows a list of fanzines these people and others have sent **Challenger** between our 4th issue and my purely arbitrary cutoff date of Thanksgiving ... and (*in italics*) the addresses of some who've remained silent. C'mon people! No ital next time!

**Abunai** / Jeffrey Deboo, 1442-A Walnut St. #64, Berkeley CA 94709 / \$4@, sub \$16.

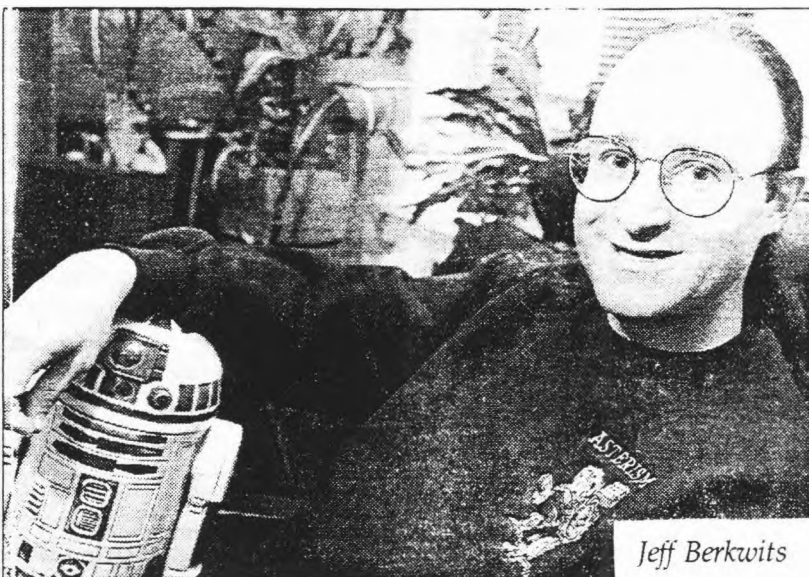
**Aces #6** / Paul McCall, 5801 W. Henry St., Indianapolis IN 46241 / Exquisite pulp-oriented zine, limited to 100 copies; color cover by the editor featuring the Shadow and the Spider. Paul also illustrates his ongoing reprint of John Bloodstone's **Tarzan on Mars**. Nice article on artist Bob Abbett, whose paintings adorned Ballantine's "authorized" Burroughs editions. One complaint: **Aces'** lettercol doesn't print correspondents' addresses. Other than that, it's a solid, richly entertaining enterprise.

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**Adventures in Crime & Space** no. 2.6 & 2.7 / Lori Wolf, 609-A West 6th St., Austin TX 78701 / [acs@eden.com](mailto:acs@eden.com) / Monthly newsletter from the specialty bookstore. News releases on new releases, signings and readings and other store events ... more evidence that Austin is the most civilized city west of New Orleans.

**Ansible** 105-112 / Dave Langford / U.S. Agent: Janice Murray, P.O. Box 75684, Seattle WA 98125-0684 / SAE or something witty. / The current and frequent Hugo winner imparts s.f. news and gossip with charm and wit. Usually delightful, two stories in later issues are disturbing: the "hoax virus" story attending the release of Stephen Baxter's interactive novel **Irina**, and the depressing news that the European TAFF fund was dissipated by the previous recipient (no surprise to those who read Bill Kunkel's letter in **Habakkuk**) and Martin Tudor had to attend L.A.Con on credit. Obviously, a major story, unresolved as of press time; **Ansible** is just as obviously the place to Stay Tuned.

**Asterism** nos. 4 & 5 / Jeff Berkwits, P.O. Box 6210, Evanston IL 60204 / e-mail: [jberkwit@nslsilus.org](mailto:jberkwit@nslsilus.org) / \$6/year. / Jeff's fourth set of s.f. music reviews includes an interview with composer Joel McNeely, and came with a reprint of the 6-23-96 **Chicago Tribune** story about the editor. I've purloined the accompanying picture, viz: #5 interviews Ellen Kushner, analyzes the music of Richard Bone, and reviews collections of movie themes as well as other s.f.nal euphony. Unique, original, professional.



Jeff Berkwits

**The Barnacle Tales** / C. Fairn Kennedy, Box Forty, 90 Shuter St., Toronto M5B 2K6 Canada / An elegant publication of Kennedy's Necessary Press, #24 of 50 copies, nicely produced on rich paper. Clever tales.

**Batteries Not Included** Vol. III #s 5,6,7 / Richard Freeman, 130 W. Limestone St., Yellow Springs OH 45387 / \$3@ / Fun publication about that most difficult of genres: smut. Retired pornstar Richard Pacheco is a frequent contributor; he pens one lead article in these three issues and figures prominently in Freeman's own hilarious account of his last night as a disc jockey. **BNI** doesn't seem to take itself or its depraved subject matter too seriously.

**The BEM & I** #s 2 & 3 / Bill Mallardi, P.O. Box 368, Akron OH 44309 / 1970 classics, a welcome gift from one of the classic "double-Bills." #2 features a remarkable report on St. Louiscon from Robert Bloch, spearing the con hotel. What's remarkable is that Bloch found nothing worse to grouse about than the dearth of men's rooms and the elevators, when the damned hotel tried to have

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the whole convention busted. Number 3 has a great article on Gettysburg; for Bill as for me, it seems, "a sense of wonder works as well in real life as in science fiction."

**Black Leather Times** Vol. 3, Vol. 5, both #6, & **CBLT Catalog #4** / Amelia G, 3 Calabar Ct., Gaithersburg MD 20877 / Sexy zines picked up at the N.O. Science Fiction & Fantasy Festival, replete with erotic vampires and such. Well-produced and appropriately raunchy, but after meeting Van Houten they seem more cute than dangerous.

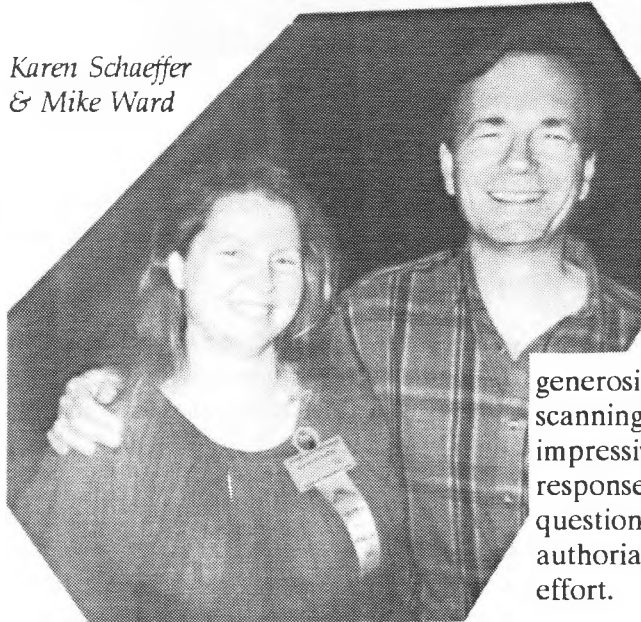
**The Bleary Eyes** vol. 5 / John Berry, 4, Chilterne, South Hatfield, Herts., AL 10 8 JU U.K. / A Superb compendium of fan writing by Berry and others from the 1950's, with contemporary ATom illos. Some irritating showthrough in the printing, but that only completes the illusion that Now is still Then.

**Casbah #3** / Tracy Benton, 3819 Monona Drive #19, Monona WI 53714 / "Trade, loc or nebulous praise." / March 1995 issue, but the latest I have. The title is spelled with a "z" on the inside. Cute **MST3K** cover, signalling the theme for the issue: the whole zine is set in theatres crowded with talky fans. There's good writing about notetaking for trivia in the movies and **RHPS**, but I hope Tracy will understand why my favorite article is Nicki Lynch's account of my own assay into "misting" at **Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom**. I too am surprised I didn't get us thrown out.

**Critical Wave** / Steve Green & Martin Tudor, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, West Midlands, B92 7LQ U.K. / 2 pounds 45 sub, U.K. only

**Cube** / Hope Kiefer c/o SF<sup>3</sup> / Box 1624, Madison WI 53701-1624 / [CubeNews@aol.com](mailto:CubeNews@aol.com). / SF<sup>3</sup> membership or the usual. / No sign of **Cube** since spring. What gives?

Karen Schaeffer  
& Mike Ward



**De Profundis** / Tim Merrigan, LASFS, 11513 Burbank Blvd., N. Hollywood CA 91601 / The LASFS clubzine probably ceased publication for the worldcon ... so what's keeping it now?

**The Double:Bill Symposium** / Bills Bowers & Mallardi, P.O. Box 368, Akron OH 44309 / Available for \$3 at the time, by Mallardi generosity now / The original classic, which I recall scanning with awe at the 1970 Nebula banquet. It's still impressive. As you well know, the zine consists of responses by a zillion professional writers to a questionnaire circulated by Lloyd Biggle, Jr. on various authorial topics. Historic, indispensable, it's an astonishing effort.

**Drongo** / 410 W. Willow Road, Prospect Heights IL

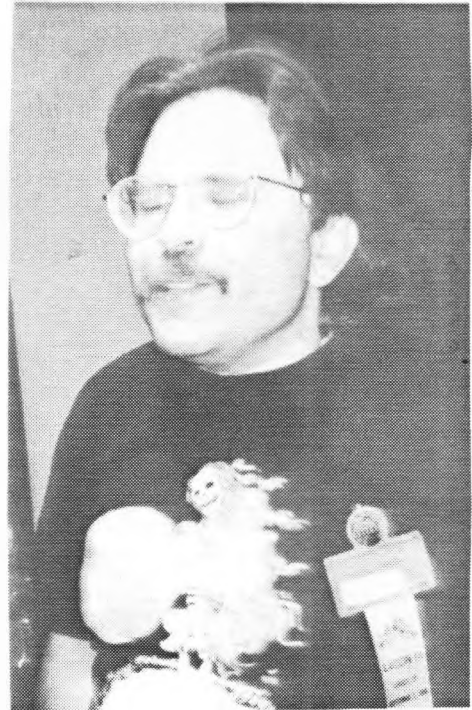
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60070-1250 / Newsletter of Australia's bid for the '99 worldcon. They won. A recipe for ANZAC cookies adds variety to the normal bidding package.

**DUFF Talk-About #2** / Pat & Roger Sims, 34 Creekwood Square, Cincinnati OH 45246-3811 / I see I named the wrong Down-Under-Fan-Fund winner last issue: Perry Middlemiss (a distant relation to Quatermass?) was the L.A.Con III delegate from kangaroo kountry. My name is somehow absent from the list of '96 voters, but as I might try for DUFF someday, I'll never miss again.

**Empties #17 & The Tudor Dynasty** / Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX U.K. (COA) / 5 pounds / Nifty fanzines from the TAFF ~~vietnam~~ winner. **The Tudor Dynasty** is an excellent compilation of Tudor fan writing, edited by Bernie Evans, which I hope will stay in print. **Empties** is just over half locs, but begins with news that makes TAFF seem unimportant: Martin's newly married. This page should bleed envious green when scratched. Speaking of green, Tudor suffered serious financial burns when the previous European TAFF winner wasted the 2700 pound fund -- reportedly due to emotional problems -- and contributions are definitely needed and welcome.

**ERB-dom #103** b/w **The Fantastic Collector #261** / Camille Cazedessus II, 1447 Main St., Baton Rouge LA 70802-4664 / \$24 for 6 issues US, \$25 Canada. No trades. / Caz reproduces the original "Normal Bean" printing of "Under the Moons of Mars," a Harold Lamb adventure, and an extremely obscure Epes Winthrop Sargent (what mother would name her child "Epes Winthrop Sargent"?) fantasy from 1907. **FC** is stapled in, to continue as an advertising section. (My vote in his poll: keep **ERB-dom** as a permanent name for this fanzine -- Louisiana's first Hugo winner!)



Len Bailes

**Erg Quarterly** 134, 135 / Terry Jeeves, 66 Red Scar Dr., Scarborough, N. Yorks. YO12 5RQ U.K. / The. / Terry contributed some nice fillos to this **Challenger**, especially appreciated since the fellow seems absolutely wracked with various ills. For Terry to publish any sort of zine was a victory for the invincible fannish spirit, that he kept his humor and his editorial acumen deserves a triumph. #135 has a nice review of **Chall #4**, and a very funny lead article on Gernsbackian inventions that didn't *quite* come to be.

**Fearfully Tremulous Tigers** 20 / Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London N15 4JU U.K. / A pound a copy / I always enjoy **FTT** -- whatever the initials are said to mean that issue. In addition to articles on Australia and an environmental protest at home, this issue presents a strong emphasis on America. Marjorie Thompson disses her winger Republican upbringing and Julian Hanna recounts his journey across the American southwest, wherein he witnesses a hideous "Red Indian" "giving of flesh" ceremony, drives cattle with genuine

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cowboys, goes into palpitations when he meets country people, and admires the Alamo, "at least ... one thing in American history that they can justifiably be proud of." Gee thanks.

**File 770:112-114** Mike Glycer, P.O. Box 1056, Sierra Madre CA 91025 / \$8/5 issues, \$15/10. / Mike used **770** to give us an over-the shoulder look at the assembly of a pretty righteous worldcon, and his chairman's-eye-view is fascinating. #114 contains the bad news about former NOLan Jo Clayton (she's ill) and the worse news about Redd Boggs. Short but strong lettercol.

**For the Clerisy/About Latvia #13** / Brant Kresovich, c/o Riga Business School, Skolas 11, LV-1010 Riga Latvia / <bbrant@rbs.edu.lv> / A downloaded e-mail zine I picked up at worldcon. I'm not

sure where Latvia is, but Brant makes a fun zine no matter where it comes from. Loved the Q&A exchange with a Seattle fan.



*Zut alors! Benoit Girard!*

**For Dickheads Only** / Dave Hyde c/o Ganymeadean Slime Mold Productions, P.O. Box 611, Kokomo IN 46903 / Hyde must've morphed back into Dr. Jekyll; haven't heard from him all year.

**FOSFAX #181-182** / Timothy Lane c/o FOSFA, P.O. Box 37281, Louisville KY 40233-7281 / \$3 or. / Clinton's electoral victory must be the season of the witch for FOSFAX's wingers; the editor's gone so nuts he joins in the psychotic assertion that Big Bill had Ron Brown murdered because he was going to betray Whitewater secrets. One hopes that the energetic and personable FOSFAXians recover their humor now that the election is past. Go ahead and impeach Clinton, boys -- it'd only make Al Gore President that much earlier! Anyway, there's much more to this epic publication than that; it may never win the Hugo for which it is perennially nominated, but I can think of a couple of other awards it merits. (Like Southern fandom's Rebel.)

**The Freethinker #5** / Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson MS 39236-3626 / CCWS74A@prodigy.com

The usual, but no subscriptions. / Good genzine from the President of the Southern Fandom Confederation and editor of its **Bulletin** (see *supra*). Futurist Dan Birrus' rules for the morrow, passed along at a hotel accountants' convention (in New Orleans -- where else would professional hoteliers gather for a good time?) provoke some thought, and there are lots of movie reviews and locs generated by the *last* issue's movie reviews. Nice bacover by John Martello.

**The Frozen Frog** / Benoit Girard, 1016 Guillaume-Boissat, Cap-Rouge Quebec G17 1Y9 Canada /

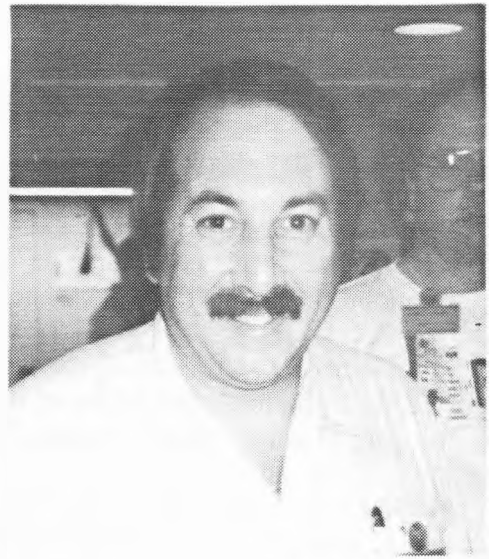
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*Benoit was a delight at L.A.Con. Here's to another FF soon.*

**Gegenschein** 73 & 74 / Eric Lindsay, 7 Nicoll Avenue, Ryde NSW 2112 Australia / eric@zen.maths.uts.edu.au / Trade. / Most of these issues consist of Eric's 1994 USA trip report, with many book reviews and some good locs. (Charles Broerman's take on Nancy Kress' "Beggars in Spain" is eye-opening, but I still like the novella.)

**Gradient** #14 / Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake NJ 07828-1023 / bobsabella@aol.com / My comic book past is showing, but my favorite part of this issue is Steve Carper's take on "Superman: the 5th Generation." Covering Big Blue's appearances in the media from Bud Collyer's radio version and the wonderful Fleischer cartoons to **Lois & Clark**, it's well thought out and written. I wonder what Carper thinks of the recent masterpiece **Kingdom Come**. Elsewhere, the editor explains his current and ongoing obsession with China.

**Have Bag Will Travel (TAFF Bulletin)** #s 1 & 2 / Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX U.K. / The first two parts of Martin's nifty TAFF report; I faunch for the completed version, available from Martin for 5 pounds. Considering the financial burden he was under (see **Ansible** review) Tudor shows astonishing spirit. These segments get Martin as far as Hoover Dam; since I saw him at L.A.Con I assume he didn't fall off.



*Elst Weinstein*

**Hissy Fit** 1994 / Margot Dame, P.O. Box 113, 4250 Fraser St., Vancouver BC V5V 4G1 Canada / 1994 premiere issue -- picked up at L.A.Con -- of a slick and impressive feminist zine themed around reproductive technology, from birth control to exogenesis, with a review of **The Handmaid's Tale** tossed in. Interesting and intelligent and probably incredibly expensive to produce; has there been a second issue?

**Ibid** 95 / Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck NJ 07666-2626 / Ben's Esoteric Order of Dagon zine, fronted by a good Gene Day cover illo of Pickman and his model. A fine report on a Lovecraftian gathering in New York and an interesting article about Clive Barker's fiction dominate.

**Ichthyoelectroanalgesia** #2 / Sean McLachlan, P.O. Box 1933, Columbia MO 65205-1933 / e-mail: c638125@showme.missouri.edu / \$2 @ or trade. / Say this fanzine's name three times fast. It's a nifty "travel/archaeology zine," with Master's candidate Sean's trip across Asia the featured report. Informative, not too technical, very readable and interesting. In addition to taking us on digs into the past, Sean reviews small press books and music on cassette.

**The Knarley Knews** #58-60 / Henry Welch, 1525 16th Ave., Grafton WI 53024-2017 / welch@warp.msos.edu / T.U. / Knarley's pub is eclectic and always engaging. #58 is rather short.

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detailing Letha Welch's new crafts business and Henry's quotations project (don't neglect Bester!) before surrendering the rest of its pages to a good lettercol. In the successor issue Knarl adds a trip report to Washington D.C. to the same mixture. #60 celebrates **TKK**'s tenth anniversary with the results of Knarley's poll on how fandom has changed in the last decade. Knarley produces a genuine and friendly fanzine; who else has been surprised by Welch's youth when they first met him?

**Memphen** #219-225/ Barbara & Tim Gatewood, P.O. Box 12921, Memphis TN 38182-0921 / Free to MSFA members, \$10/year sub, trade. / The "sorta-official" publication of the Memphis TN s.f. club, **Memphen** doesn't restrict itself to club activities, but prints reviews (a good one on Priest's **Book on the Edge of Forever**), con reports and listings, a welcome warning about "809" numbers (*never* call them back -- they're \$25/minute to the Virgin Islands) and occasional fiction. Much discussion of Memphis' Darrell Award. Good artwork by Tom Foster and others.

**Mimosa** #19 / Dick & Nicki Lynch, P.O. Box 1350, Germantown MD 20875 / Internet: lynch@access.digex.net / \$3 or. / The three-time Hugo winner's latest issue is D&N's most attractive production to date, with professional printing, a wraparound, halftoned Debbie Hughes cover, slick paper. The content is as usual, articles oriented towards fan history by people who are fan history themselves (Ackerman, Willis, Kyle, Vick, Warner, and the late Bob Shaw) plus Sharon Farber's med school series -- concentrating on **Star Trek** and *pon farr* this time -- and fun pieces by Ahrvid Engholm on Swedish fanspeak and Michael Burstein on being a Hugo nominee.

**Mobius Strip** / Alexandra Ceely, P.O. Box 3177, El Paso TX 79923 / 104426.531@CompuServe.com / Trade. / Monthly newsletter of the El Paso S.F. & Fantasy Alliance, dues \$15/year. My latest is the August issue. Heavy on convention announcements.

**MSFire** Vol. 2 Nos. 3 & 4 / Lloyd G. Daub, MSFS, P.O. Box 1637, Milwaukee WI 53201-1637 / \$1@ or a \$5 sub. / A new editor for the Milwaukee clubzine; Lisa Mason had to resign due to a new job. Again, Sue Burke (a new Clarion student) contributes cool story ideas. (The best can indeed be expressed in a couple of sentences, as in *A poor man with a new Zippo cigarette lighter is approached by a rich old lunatic in a bar: "I'll bet you \$10,000 against your little finger that your lighter won't light 20 times in a row."* Always wanted to see that **Hitchcock**.) A neat article about where to look for intelligent life (avoid New Orleans around Mardi Gras). And so forth. Go, MSFS, go!

**Muse 134** Spring-Summer & Winter 1996 / Stephen desJardins, 1711 Massachusetts Ave. NW #134, Washington DC 20036 / stevendj@cqi.com (**new**); sdj@sff.net (**new**) / \$1 or whim. / Intelligent perzine. Webtalk, dreamtalk, movietalk, political musings. Steve reprints Chris Reeve's DNC speech, which I agree was a persuasive argument for activist government.

**Nova Express** Vol. 4 No. 2 / Lawrence Person, P.O. Box 27231, Austin TX 78755-2231 / e-mail: lawrence@bga.com / 4/\$12 U.S.; 4/\$16 Canada & Mexico; 4/\$22 International. / Superb semiprozine. This issue's unique and fascinating themes are the works of Walter Jon Williams (great interview by Person and Dwight Brown) and the appeal of "Hong Kong Cinema," a.k.a. Chinese action films. I am awed. Excellent, thoughtful reviews and literary articles by Don Webb, Howard Waldrop, Person & others. Not much fannishness but lots of energy and wit.



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**The Nova Scotian Hermit** / Rodney Leighton, R.R. #3, Pugwash, Nova Scotia B0K 1L0 Canada / Trade. / "Book Two Chapter one." Rodney simultaneously announces a determination "to basically remove myself from Science Fiction Fandom" because of the disagreeable morals of many fans and plans for a third "Book" of his fanzine. Included with **TNSH**, clippings from the Pugwash paper about a fire at the local Nobel laureate's lodge.

*Obscure* / Jim Romensko, P.O. Box 1334, Milwaukee WI 53201 / *More obscure than ever.*

**Opuntia** 28, 28.1A-B, 29 / Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2E7 Canada / \$3@ or trade. / An alternate universe where telegrams took the place of zines ... a good thumbnail history of the early apas by Ken Faig Jr. ... *good* fanzine reviews; like mine, more descriptive than critical (which no one does well) ... Web explorations across national borders ... neat piece about the "fadazines" of the early 1900's ... Ian Gunn's "O! Puntia!" cover is priceless. I still don't understand Dale's remora-zine, **The Canadian Journal of Detournement**, which means I should simply accept it.

**PhiloSFy** #3 / Alexander R. Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge Rd., San Antonio TX 78239-4022 / \$1 but trade preferred. / I didn't get a photo of Alexander at L.A.Con, but he was there, all right, gregarious and wild. His perzine is thoughtful -- any zine so heavily concerned with **DEATH** had *better* be thoughtful -- with a heavy emphasis on Jewish law. "Next issue - war"! Oh boy! Fortunately, the rest of this pub is lighter in tone; Slate's informal guide to San Antonio will come in handy next summer.

**Pinkette** No. 15 d & e / Karen Pender-Gunn, P.O. Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia / k.pender-gunn@latrobe.edu.au / "The **Pink** You Have While You're Not Having a **Pink**." Cool personalzine, eclectic topics and inputs (Tibetan lamas to **Bananas in Pajamas**), and pages selected at random from Karen's GUFF trip diary. Can't wait to read the whole thing. (The middle pages of "e" are stapled in backwards. Alert **Ansible**.)



*Kenneth Knabbe*

**Proper Boskonian** 35, 37 / Kenneth Knabbe, NESFA, P.O. Box 809, Framingham MA 01701-0203 / NESFA membership + a \$16 subscription, \$3/issue or the usual. / Excellent and comprehensive publication from the Boston club, but better trust not *my* glowing words: Bob Devney heaps praise on **Challenger** no. 3 in #37. "Guy Lillian knows how to produce the pure quill." *Damn!* That's nice to hear! Anyway, in all seriousness, **PB** is excellent sercon work. A long but involving panel-by-panel analysis of Boskone by Evelyn Leeper (with "snapshots" of hall conversations recounted by Devney) leads to reviews by Mark Olson (he calls **The Diamond Age** a winner, and how right he was), lots of great fan art by Ian Gunn.

**Quipu** 6 / Vicki Rosenzeig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York NY 10034 / The usual "or quills suitable for use as pens." / Vicki's perzine opens with the best-informed musings I've read on the alleged Martian bacterial fossils, a Wiscon report (LeGuin was present -- I have a good 1970 story about

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LeGuin), and a butterfly exhibit at the Bronx Zoo. All very solemn, but I liked the read.

**The Reluctant Famulus #45 & 46** / Thomas D. Sadler, 422 W. Maple Ave., Adrian MI 49221-1627

Tom's experiments with column borders clutter the pages of #45. But the zine *reads* wonderfully. Ben Indick contributes a European trip report (Vienna! I'm waltzin'!), Sadler waxes eloquent on the Retro-Hugos (which excite him much more than the contemporary variety), reprints an ancient OMPA piece, reviews books, fanzines, prints locs, and so on. His mention of writer Anne Perry, who in her youth helped murder a girlfriend's mother, reminds me of Van Houten. #46 abandons the busy linework but is jammed full of entertaining stuff. I particularly liked the war memoirs of Terry Jeeves and Ken Cheslin.

**Riverside Quarterly Vol. 9 No. 3** / Leland Sapiro, P.O. Box 12085, San Antonio TX 78212 / \$2.50

@. / A beautiful lit'ry publication, well-written and immaculately produced, but the teensy print is for Lilliputians, not Lillians. To repeat: A beautiful lit'ry publication, well-written and immaculately produced, but the teensy print is for Lilliputians, not Lillians. Hahaha. Anyway, this is an old issue of the properly venerated zine, cramful of poetry, fiction, and exceptional essays -- Jim Harmon's on Robert Bloch and Brad Linaweaver linking Kafka & Lovecraft the most outstanding.

**The Rogue Raven 48, 49** / Frank Denton, 14654-8th Ave. S.W., Seattle WA 98166 / Trade. / #49 details trips taken to Reno and the Western Washington Fair (by the editor) and the Middle East (by Randy Mohr); the latter begins, "I have been to Arrakis; I have seen Dune." Next up for Mohr: Carlsbad Caverns, where he'll see no Button Quail, as did Frank at the Fair. My idea of a good perzine, **RR** has been a welcome visitor in my mailbox for many years.

**scopus:3007 #6** / Alexander J.L. Bouchard, P.O. Box 573, Hazel Park MI 48030-0573 / The or \$1.50. / ae019@detroit.freenet.org. / \$1.50 per. / Central to Bouchard's personalzine is his & Megan's west coast trip, which is funny and well done, detailing jaunts by Oakland's Jack London Square (familiar from my college days) and ConFrancisco, enduring an earthquake and food poisoning with wry humor. Some good reviews, a nice costuming column, L.A.Con plans.



*Martin Tudor, Lilian Edwards, Andy Hooper*

**Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin**  
Vol. 6 Nos. 5&6 / Tom Feller, Box 13626,  
Jackson MS 39236-3626 /  
CCWS74A@prodigy.com / SFC  
membership or the usual. / As President  
of the SFC, Tom is constitutionally  
required to publish these **Bulletins**, and he  
gives us comprehensive and entertaining  
zines. Lists and reports on the many  
Southern conventions, inventories of the  
region's multitudinous s.f. clubs,  
discussions of rebel fandom on the Web,  
good lettercols (including Brit and  
*Croatian* correspondents). Everybody

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show up at Feller's DeepSouthCon next June (6-8), details elsewhere, and tell him to keep up the good work.

**The Space Cadet Gazette** / R. Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Ave. #110, Vancouver BC V6J 1J1 Canada . graeme\_cameron@mindlink.bc.ca / Sept. '66 issue of one of the great Canadian pubs. Graeme reports on Ditto, prints another edition of the Shaw-esque "Ask Mr. Science," more reminiscences of World War I by his grandfather, tours Mayan ruins, tries to make sense of **Fire Maidens of Outer Space**. He admits making up the "rare Canadian films" discussed in his last issue.

**Splish Splash** Spring & Summer 1996 / Joy V. Smith, 3403 Providence Road, Lakeland FL 33809  
Both issues consist of short, double-spaced articles by Charmayne V. Smith about s.f. toys and collectibles. Remembering the playthings comic books have inspired, I'd like to see Charmayne research and report on this aspect of the field in more depth.

**Squee!** / Brin McLaughlin, 247 19th Ave 6, San Francisco CA 94121-2353 / boadicea@lunacity.com

**Stefantasy** #s 118 & 119 / William M. Danner, R.D. 1, Kennerdell PA 16374 / Wonderful zine published on an antique press on antique paper (with antique ink; a friend gave Bill some slick cover stock on which, indeed, the ink still smears). An ongoing subject is Bill's days in a steel mill (fans can make *anything* fannish). Great lettercol, despite tiny type and Danner's predilection for *not printing loccers' addresses*. Only his stature in fandom prevents utter condemnation for this editorial flaw. #119 features a neat piece by Whit Towers about his days at Ford and Danner's own natter about antique cars.

**Thyme** #109-110 / Alan Stewart, P.O. Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia / a.stewart@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au / The or \$A 3; subscription \$A 15. / The Australian S.F. News Magazine, May & July issues. Thorough in its news, reviews, con reports, fan gossip ... good letters, photos of various fans (imagine!); **Thyme** is a celebration of the fannish experience. I'm naming it on my San Antonio Hugo ballot.

**Trap Door** #16 / Robert Lichtman, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen CA 95442 / The u., Whim, \$4 / Superior zine in form and content, this issue opens with eloquent reminiscences of Charles Burbee and Redd Boggs and by the same two gents. Gary Hubbard's excellent Corflu report surely compensates for his disastrous (to believe him) Guest of Honor speech. Medical horror story by



Don Franson

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Paul Williams, a fine lettercol ... and beautiful headings. This is one of the handsomest zines I've seen this year.



*Knarley & Letha Welch*

philosophy of fanzining, i.e., constant homage to its ancient masters, one sees Arnie's point reading **WH #15.5**, memorializing Charles Burbee. It's probably '96's most poignant fannish publication.

*Xamixdat* / Neil Rest, 218 Pleasant St., Oak Park IL 60302 / Neil's coming South for Mardi Gras in '97; let's see a Carnival report, Neil!

*The Zero-G Lavatory* / Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland BC V0R 1S0 Canada / \$3, \$12/year, or. / Where was Scott this year?

**Zina** 1 / Barnaby Rapoport. P.O. Box 565, Storrs CT 06268 / "The usual, \$1, or issues 2, 12, 27, 28 and 41 of **Shade the Changing Man** (I think I have those). / Very enjoyable first personalzine. It won me over with its cover, basically a long quotation from Phil Dick's **Divine Invasion**, and I enjoyed Barnaby's nervous *newness*, which is the probable reason it seems the entire purpose of **Zina** is to celebrate Andy Hooper, who is constantly quoted, invoked, discussed, and paeaned. Solid movie reviews.

And speaking of reviews ...

### A Spot Review: Mars, **Blue** and Otherwise

I have seen the future and the future of science fiction, in **Blue Mars**, the magnificent conclusion to Kim Stanley Robinson's truly epic trilogy of Martian terraformation.

As with the earlier tones and tomes in the series, **Blue Mars** is a mind-stretching graduate

### *Challenger no. 5*

course in ... well, everything. Robinson is that rarest of *avises*, a true polymath, and his book reflects his interest and erudition in ... well, *everything*. After all, the conquest of an entire planet -- more than one; the rest of the solar system gets into the act in **Blue Mars** -- is an activity encompassing every discipline of the human race, and Robinson explores as many as he can. Of course, science is preeminent, geology (or more precisely, *areology*) and meteorology and biology and physics. But politics and government are involved, too, and the deep and exquisite and mutable and frightening and challenging empire of human personalities and relationships which forever drive them. Finally, **Blue Mars** recognizes that it is human stories that drive the scientific one, and that it is the changes wrought *in* people, rather than *by* them, that makes for compelling fiction.

That's why I believe the Mars series has been revolutionary for our genre: it has brought a new type of fiction to science fiction. This is a story cycle driven less by an epic plot than by epic characters, the greatest of which is Mars itself. Watching these characters interact -- person with person, and person with planet, itself mutable, itself changing -- is the joy of the book. You will not find here a plot one can summarize in a sentence, nor a story which stampedes from climax to climax. But you will find a saga of the birth of a new world, and a new people, and it's thrilling, deep-down, fundamentally thrilling, where *literature* lives.

Listen, always, for the voice of *John Boone*. Solid, basic, quintessentially American name; he walks in the path of other great names: John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, *Daniel Boone*. He dies in the first chapter of **Red Mars**, but returns in flashback for chapters in that book, and his perspective resonates throughout the series. For instance, there's an exquisite page in **Green Mars** where a character mulls over what Mars means to each of the vital characters, the original colonists. One sees greater opportunity for experiment, another -- a tragic man -- greater opportunity for power. For Boone, first man on Mars and the visionary who takes mankind there to stay, it means *greater opportunity for happiness*. This is awesome characterization. "Your love will lead us yonder at the last."

And let's not forget the real world, where the call of Mars has risen startlingly in the past few months. The possible fossibles (sorry) have drawn our racial eyes outwards to the red planet, renewing old dreams, sparking again the idea that *we are not alone* ... an idea *fundamentally* and *literally* "Earth-shaking." Even our uncertainty in the reality of Martian life has affected everything, because there is no way that question will find its final answer in most of our lifetimes. Truly, we will have a hope -- a real hope; a fundamental hope -- to last us literally *until*.

## FOR SALE

Columbia House videos of **The Twilight Zone!** \$10 each. Four b&w episodes per tape. Drop me a line for details. I've been copying my favorite episodes -- "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" of course, "Little Girl Lost," "The Lonely," "The Invaders," "When the Sky was Opened," "5 Characters in Search of an Exit" and so on -- and need the room!

## ON THE SPOT : BIG D

Dallas is a modern city; super-modern, *extra*-modern. Futuristic architecture looms above and around the small triangular common in its southwest corner, where stands a statue, apparently a honcho involved in the city founding. This plaza is named for him: **Dealey Plaza**.

Overlooking the plaza are county buildings, old-fashioned and tacky amidst the 21st century gloss soaring a few blocks over. Among them is the seven-story Dallas County Office Building, once the Texas State School Book Depository. Standing below the building I could see a box protruding from the sixth floor corner window. Parked by the front door was a 1963 era Lincoln convertible -- enormous car -- and a guy was offering some sort of ghoulish service. I paid my four dollars (for admission without guide tape), and rode to the Sixth Floor museum.

They've done a fine job up there. The wood and pipes have been left exposed, as they were the last time anyone thought of it as a place to store schoolbooks. There's a lacquered feel to the wood that must be new. The corner by the window is walled off by plastic, like Hannibal Lecter's cell. Within, boxes stencilled with the names of textbooks are stacked in the way they found them arranged: a sniper's nest.

I peered out. People below gazed up at me. It was an *ideal* shot: down the pipe. I could have hit the man with a shoe.

An Indian child -- lovely in her *sari* -- pranced noisily among the exhibits. I felt *angry*, resenting the relative lack of emotion in the people around me. That was arrogant -- but everyone looked so *young*; how could they remember what it was like to live through November 22, 1963? Everything rotten about this country in the years since seemed to begin then and there -- the cynicism, the division, the loathing. Sure, the bad things -- the schism over Vietnam, the loss of hope in race relations -- were brewing anyway. But we felt so much better before; we felt so much worse after.

Behind me a film of the funeral was showing, and there was that hideous drumbeat. *Boomp boomp boomp boompetta boomp boomp boomp boompetta boomp boomp boomp boompetta boomp boomp ba-doomp!* I'll hear that on my own death bed. I scanned the exhibits: they were well done. Last before the downward elevators was a stand for books where visitors were invited to leave their thoughts. Many entries were conspiracy-oriented. "Open the files." "LBJ did it." Two kids -- obviously -- had inscribed, "GO COWBOYS!" A young woman behind me refused her husband's invitation to sign: "I have nothing to say," she said. Well, I did.

I wrote about how old I was that day -- 14 -- and where I was -- Mira Loma High School, Sacramento, California. I mentioned the guy who told me what had happened -- Kurt Bischoff -- and how I flinched when we heard the priests' news when they came out of Parkland Memorial, and someone led Nancy Blake out of the library, in tears. I wrote that I'd had two days in the years since that were almost as bad -- Lennon and the **Challenger** -- but none worse. Disgusted with the gleeful conspiracy nonsense, recalling Leslie Van Houten's observation about a sick, obsessive society, I said it was time to let the man rest in peace.

Downstairs a guard spotted my cap: "Go Saints!" he shouted. I walked back to the sloping street. In a moment the big Lincoln barrelled down the street, the pitchman driving, some tourists in the back. *Boom!* Taped shot. *Boom!* Another. Pause. *Boom!* when they were in the fatal spot, six stripes down the road. I gawped. "You've got to be *fucking kidding!*"

An old man stood on a concrete structure by the infamous grassy knoll, propounding.

### *Challenger no. 5*

I walked up onto the slope. Before me was the graying picket fence, obviously the original. It'd be a tough shot from there, a difficult angle. The alleged bullet from the front would have actually come from the *side*. Never happened. I waited for a red light, stood in the street and peered up at the sixth floor window. I could have looked up Oswald's nose.

JFK was a dead man the moment they turned onto that street. Considering the Lincoln was going 11 mph and stopped just before the third shot -- that there was no bubble top -- that he was propped up by his back brace -- and how clear a field the sniper had -- he was a *perfect target*. A trained Marine wouldn't have needed a telescopic sight. Where the *hell* was the Secret Service? Somebody must have known! Somebody *must* have set this up. Somebody --

Oh brother. The place had gotten to *me*. Not for long, though. I've read Gerald Pozner's superb **Case Closed**, and know that *all* the credible, proven, established, objective, acoustic, forensic, whatever-have-you evidence tracks the gunshots that killed John F. Kennedy back to that sixth floor window in the Texas Schoolbook Depository. Lee Harvey Oswald was



in the right place and at the right time and had the right training and the right/wrong mind to murder the President of the United States, and there has been no sensible theory advanced, ever, to say that he did not.

Furthermore, it makes *moral* sense that there was no conspiracy. Far more dangerous and far more disturbing than any perfidious intrigue, by the CIA, Cuba, Mafia or Martians, is the truth that really did bring on the worst of the '60s and the disintegration of our comfortable joy: the loneliness and alienation of the solitary heart. Our hidden despair killed John F. Kennedy. The other suggested culprits offer solutions that are finally too easy to take. It's time to face the truth, and once and for all, let the man rest in peace.

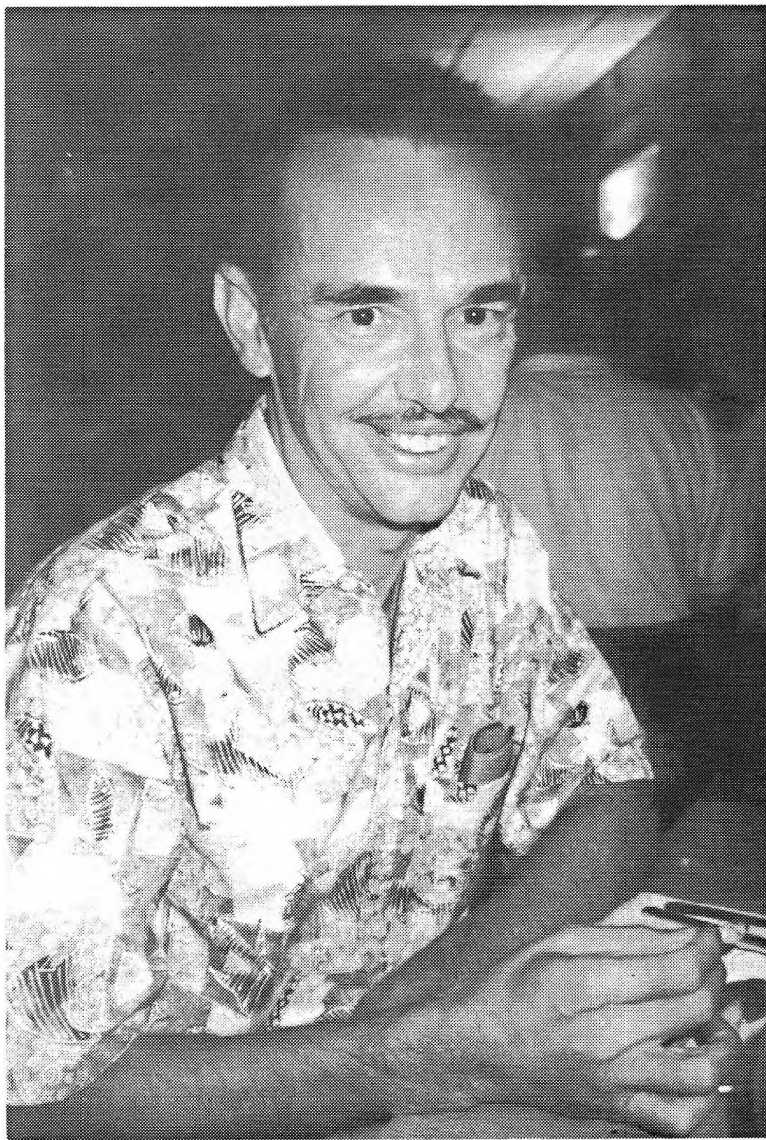
I sat in the grass on the knoll and wrote postcards to lady friends and -- for their future -- to my beloved nephews: "Guys," I said to them, "God bless you, be glad you missed it."

## MIKES AND LEE AND LINDA

Just before I left on my summer vacation west, part of the west came to visit me: **Mike Friedrich**.

Mike's name should be familiar if my name is: he and I met due to our mutual inhabitation of Julie Schwartz's letter columns in the DC Comics' superhero line. The year was ... jeez, 1964 or 1965. When we were boys.

At the time my family lived in the suburbs of San Francisco, a nice and very middle class burg called Walnut Creek. Mike's lived in Castro Valley, another bedroom community for SanFran (you *don't* call it "Frisco" ... and for all I know you *don't* call it "SanFran"), and it was inevitable, I suppose, that we call one another, chat, and eventually, meet. Knowing myself, it must have been Mike who made the first approach, but I definitely remember how I promised to identify myself to him. I'd meet him at the local Thrifty Drug, I told him, and I'd be carrying a copy of -- what *was* the book again? Oh yes, **The Caine Mutiny**.



Friedrich ... *not* the air conditioner!

I remember it vividly. Walked in the drugstore and waving at me instantly from the soda fountain -- they still had such things back then -- was this *very* tall, sweetly goofy-looking dude with ears that stood out like bat-wings and a terrific shock of black hair. One of the great friendships of my life had begun.

When Mike came to Nawlins just before the worldcon trip, all of this came back to me. His sexy sister Terri. That phone call that went beyond excitement: "How would you like to become a *pro*?" His Northern California Comic Convention II, on July 6, 1966, after which we were supposed to meet Julius Schwartz in San Francisco, and instead met a distracted woman driver at an intersection, and several interesting doctors, nurses, and hospital orderlies. How I was on the phone with Mike when he opened his acceptance letter from the University of Santa Clara, how I showed him around 1969 Berkeley. That marvelous and hilarious evening when Mike tapped my shoulder in a movie theatre and asked if I wanted to



meet one of the world's great comic book letterhacks. "I don't mean me," he said. I dashed outside and there was **Irene Vartanoff**. And of course, our dissimilar careers in the comics industry, which, side by side with **Lee Marrs**, the genius behind my all-time favorite underground, **Pudge**, he sustains through Star\*Reach Productions.

He's a little greyer now, and I am much fatter and balder. But aw man ... his visit made this city jump again.

Old friend and new friend, August to October, my summer vacation was bracketed by visits from the west coast. Shortly after I made my way home from Carlsbad, the worldcon, my family, Van Houten, and Dallas, **Mike & Linda McInerney** came to town.

Mike, as you know, is an established fanzine fan and first-rate LOCsmith. When I heard that he was I arranged a rather special welcome: as the plane came in bearing Mike and his wife Linda, not one but two full-arch rainbows shone in the exquisite evening above New Orleans. It was celestial phenomenon of the most magnificent sort ... but not the last.

Mike and Linda and I went out one evening – to Bruning's, as I had with Friedrich and Lee. I then took the charming couple on a cook's tour of the city, driving past my own apartment house (where they met my neighbor Cindy) and the regal Garden District home of author Anne Rice.

On Linda's request, we were on our way to give them a look at Nawlins' famous Tipitina's when *the moon disappeared*. I had to pull my well-travelled Geo Metro to the side to watch, as Earth's eternal companion clouded and faded and vanished into shadow.

Of course, it was only a lunar eclipse, but as with the rainbows that heralded their arrival, it was the most spectacular such event I could ever remember. When I arrange shows for my guests they are shows to write home about.

We talked, we told stories, we drove around and we laughed. Linda and Mike were models of grace and patience. A grand time. I hope my memories are reflected in theirs, because I had a marvelous time. Again I was convinced that fanzine fandom was – is – a terrific place to hang my hat. From comics to fanzines, the Mikes carried me through my whole career in fandom. So far.



*Mike, neighbor Cindy, and Linda with "The Male Menopause" (my car)*

# LYNN HICKMAN

1926-1996

*I must be gone, there is a grave  
Where daffodil and lily wave,  
And I would please the hapless faun  
Buried under the sleepy ground  
With mirthful songs before the dawn.  
His shouting days with mirth were crowned  
And still I dream he treads the lawn,  
walking ghostly in the dew  
pierced by our glad singing through.*



I don't know who wrote that poem. I read it in **Our Friends from Frolix 8**, one of the more moving works of Philip K. Dick. Changed slightly -- to "our glad singing" --

it's appropriate for a positive, friendly, decent member of the fanzine community. I used it last to memorialize Dave Ryan several years ago. I run it now for Lynn Hickman, our friend and fellow fanzine fan, whom we lost in late October.

Lynn was familiar to fanzine fandom for his own zines, of course; as Plato Jones he was a wellknown cartoonist in decades past and as a collector, knew few equals. Close to home, he couldn't have been a more important friend to Southern fandom. As a young man, when this region really was the backwater many still imagine it is, he brought the love of s.f. to the South. He once hosted a three-man convention in North Carolina. He founded the Little Monsters of America, and became that most important of mentors to fans like future writer (and GHLIII teacher) Fred Chappell: the first adult to listen to what they had to say.

I met Lynn at a 1981 convention called Satyricon, in Knoxville. I was Fan Guest of Honor and the big event of the con was the collation of the 100th mailing of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, of which I was then OE. Many of SFPA's past and present members showed up for the con, and Lynn's appearance was one of the delights of that extremely special moment. When he walked into the room -- slim little guy in a green First Fandom jacket -- I recognized him at once. Don't ask me how: I'd never so much as heard him described. Even though the rest of SFPA was younger, he fit right in, and I'm proud to say, became as consistent an attendee of DeepSouthCons as any of us.

Lynn loved Southern camaraderie and was admired in return. In fact, at the '83 DSC, he was a Rebel Award winner, and I only wish he'd been there to personally receive the trophy Vern Clark awarded and I presented. Damn it, we should have made Lynn a Fan GoH, at either a DSC or a worldcon, but perhaps he was more comfortable heaping on the glory than having it heaped on him: in 1988, Lynn wrote the lead article about his lifelong buddy Roger Sims, the Nolacon II Fan GoH, for the worldcon souvenir book. Their friendship sang from its pages. (Roger it was who informed Curt Phillips of Lynn's death; Curt passed the awful news along.)

There was more to Lynn, very simple stuff but probably the most important qualities of all. He was a *very nice man*, incapable of bitterness or ugliness in print, and always good company in person. Nary a man could say a word against him. That's not a bad epitaph, nor a bad example. Let's let every fanzine we do be a salute to his memory. Let's do it like Lynn.

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