

# The 100-Mile Circus

## (Mailing Comments by Joyce)

These mailing comments are for FAPA by Joyce Worley Katz, 330 South Decatur, #152, Las Vegas, NV 89107. Thanks to Arnie for doing the repro. It's November 1997. Even Vegas is showing signs of Autumn. Temperatures sometimes hit the 80s during the day, but it's jacket weather (40s) at night. The tomatoe plants are still green, but there'll be no more this year. On the other hand, my pepper crop is thriving; I've picked one and there's one more on the vine. Ah, Sweet Harvest.

### **Sansevieria (Dale Speirs)**

I'm eager to learn if your stamp collector is indeed our Claude Degler. I don't know. Yet it wouldn't surprise me. Fans seem to have an affinity for stamps; perhaps because postage figures so large in our universe. And, a person so fannishly inclined, such a joiner, reluctant to return to science fiction circles, might well fall into the philatelic groups.

Stamps have always had a great appeal to me. I have a collection of commemoratives from 25-35 years ago. I used to be quite avid in always obtaining a plate block. Later I subscribed to a collection from Franklin Mind; first-day covers handsomely mounted on a page with historical notes and full-color illustrations. I still admire the looks of the binders I filled with these expensive collectibles, but I know their value is unlikely to reach what I paid for them.

I have gradually given up collecting stamps, except when something especially pretty passes my way. As my eyes declined, so did my ability to enjoy the stamps. Now I wait, hopeful that one of my neices or nephews will develop an interest so I can pass on the set.

I'm certain I'm not alone in wishing for the chance to meet and talk to Degler, to learn his view of his own history. What fascinating tales he would tell; the fact that his view of the truth would be colored by his own personality makes them all that more interesting.

### **Derogatory Reference (Arthur Hlavaty)**

I can't let your Macintosh rant pass

without comment. Our views differ; I love the Mac, even with its idiosyncracies. (And who would dare say DOS and Windows machines don't have them too.) Clicking on "eject disk" is a completely different command than ejecting the disk by dragging it to the trash. When you click the command, it leaves that disk's signature still active in the computer. This often leads to problems when the computer later insists on access to the disk is believes to be the active one.

If you don't like the font, why don't you try something different. There certainly are enough available.

But I will admit to a certain amount of font-deafness (like tone-deafness, but for type faces.) For example, I really like Geneva, although it's much scorned in fandom.



### Quipu (Vicki Rosenzweig)

What an interesting description of your tattoo experience. And, I salute your choice of a cardinal. I too have fond associations with the cardinal; some of my early memories are of watching the pretty birds against the snow.

I understand, too, the almost spiritual connection of the cardinal to your home, but I do hold out an alternative to you: If you tire again of New York, yet feel your cardinal needs an inviting locale, move to Missouri. The cardinal is the state bird, so you would seem quite patriotic.

I have never felt any interest in obtaining a tattoo. And, in fact, I have an equal disinterest in piercings. I once did have my ears pierced; it hurt like being hit in the head with a baseball bat, then became infected, and always did give me problems. I eventually let the holes close.

I once met a lady whose sensibility I admired: she had \*one\* pierced ear. After they did the first, she said "Hell no" and wouldn't let them do the other. I didn't have enough guts to do that, but wished I did.

Why, do you suppose, do the blood banks refuse to let the freshly tattooed donate?

### The Galacto Celtic (Franz Miklis)

I laughed out loud at "The Dangers of Being Topless". I wish you had told more... did the topless blonde have a sense of humor about it all? Did Helga get lunch? Was this viewed as assault, or just nature? And did the blonde put on her top, or did she open a restaurant for tykes?

### Between A Rock... (John Foyster)

I have never used dictation software. What you printed, as your first sample, reminds me of the first time we scanned a mimeographed page of *The Incomplete Burbee*. The scanner interpreted all the little hairs in the twilltone as characters. In the long run, it made producing the masters slower than if we'd typed from scratch.

One of my coworkers is using dictation software from Dragon that impresses me. He showed off some text before proof-reading; it was not bad.

Of course, the biggest problem is learning to think efficiently enough to make dictation practical. I'm afraid it would make a change in how I work; force me to organize and outline (at least mentally.) That is at odds with my current somewhat haphazard way of producing copy. (Personally, I always fill a page completely full of random letters until it's solid black, then erase to produce acceptable text.)

### Ben's Beat (Ben Indick)

Your description of the *Queen Mary* was poignant. You captured the beauty of the restored liner, and contrasted it with the ugliness of her WWII utility, the cramped war rooms, the suffering wounded.

And you capped it with a stirring reminder: "Fifty years was indeed only a moment in this fabric of time and life, like a great coil, reaching back into itself."

It started my own mind looking fifty years back, to the great coal-burning locomotives that came smoking into town, car-



rying the last soldiers back. My whole family dressed in our Sunday clothes, and went down to the station to welcome home Uncle Buck, the last of our kin to return after the war. Two-ton chunks of ice sat on trams on the station, throwing off steam and water. I chipped off a piece, and water fell on my best blue dress. Mother started to scold me for my carelessness, when the 6:14 pulled in, blowing steam and smoke, and that saved me from her anger. Then the soldiers starting getting off the train, some on crutches, and I saw wives greeting husbands, mothers hugging sons. I was a child, yet I knew that moment -- the smell of the steam, the feel of the cold ice water on my dress, the roar of the engine -- would always stay alive in my mind.

It recently has started worrying me that someday I may be the last person alive who remembers what that day was like.

I was very impressed by *Ayn Rand*, and read her books with something like fury, as I tried to put my finger on what was bothering me. Now, 30 years after I first read *Atlas Shrugged*, I am more comfortable in my certainty that her philosophy of enlightened self interest was faulty, ill-advised, and perhaps even morally wrong. I'd be curious to know what your wife thinks of it.

### **Snickersnee (Bob Silverberg)**

I agree with your statement, "On the whole, I'd rather stay home." I very much dislike being away from my own place, and no longer travel for pleasure. I attribute this aversion to my young adulthood, when I traveled a great deal and home was the most recent place I'd stashed my suitcase. The upheaval of that period (during which I three times gave up all comforts and "freed myself" from the fetters of possessions) has made me conservative now. When I am away, I worry about my cat; I long for my cushion; I crave my familiars.

It would take a hard heart indeed to see the ruins of post-war Germany and not feel sympathy. But it's easy to divide the sense of sympathy for the suffering, from

the knowledge that WWII was necessary; Nazi Germany had to be stopped.

As you say, sympathy for the devil.

But, does not even the devil deserve the sympathy of the divine? Do the angels pray for the salvation of Lucifer?

### **Artifact (Catherine Mintz)**

Your remarks about *Dune* prompt me to say that I liked the movie, although it clearly short-changed the book. In this case, I thought it was an improvement to get rid of so much of the mysticism that made *Dune* a religious experience for some of its fans. Paring away the froth to leave the action worked for me, in this case.

I'm just this week receiving the first reports from friends who've seen *Starship Trooper*, and there's a strange similarity to the *Dune* experience. "A good movie...better if you've never read the book," is about the way they're rating it.

As you aptly point out, reading *Kipling* in this day is much like watching *Dune* without reading the book. Some of what he wrote loses levels of meaning today, because of changes in language, changes in popular culture, changes in philosophy

Your project (hand-making a book) is interesting. Sounds like you have concocted a way to accomplish what you want by yourself. But, if you give up on hand-binding, there are still book binderies listed in the yellow pages in most cities. It's pricey, but available.

### **Horizons (Harry Warner Jr.)**

Yes, *Virtual Zen* is from fandom's Ray Nelson. Arnie and I have been trying to spot a copy, but it hasn't shown up in any of our normal haunts. Ray mentioned it to us about a year and a half ago, when it was first published. But he's been pretty quiet in fandom for the last few years; I suppose that's why word about the book never spread too widely. I didn't know, though, that it was a novel; I was under the impression that it was a quasi-religious self-help essay. Perhaps I've merely been looking on

the wrong shelves.

Wasn't *Dracula* first a stage play? Still, I agree in essence with what you say: the book was not too celebrated until it made its way to film, and an interest in vampires were not a common part of our societies before Bela Lugosi made them into romantic figures. (That is NOT to say that there hadn't been vampire movies before his film, of course.)

When I was younger, I was enraptured with vampires as romantic figures. I guess I just outgrew being so morbid. And, as vampires increased in popularity, as they have in the last 25-30 years, I became increasingly disenchanted with their gory dispositions. If you strip away the aura of supernatural clap-trap, vampires are really pretty disgusting. Plus, I'd lay odd they have bad breath, and poor complexions, too, from lack of vitamin C.

I dislike skylights. I don't like them in houses, because they're so hard to keep clean; nothing detracts from the beauty of a skylight like a big ugly glob of bird droppings. But, even more than in houses, I hate them in cars, where the flashing shadow and light gives me motion sickness, makes me woozy, and eventually makes me fall asleep. (I also had trouble driving through tunnels that have slotted roofs; the pattern of sun and shade have a bad effect on me.)

#### **Sweet Jane (Gordon Eklund)**

Arnie and I also spend a great deal of time watching movies. We didn't succumb

to the attractions of laser disc, but DVD is coming... What I have seen is magnificent, pictures clear as they are in a theatre. Compared to television and VCR...well, there is no comparison; movies on DVD are in a whole different technological league. I have not seen a side-by-side comparison with laser disc, and will be interested in what you have to say about it.

#### **Wizards From Space (Tom Sadler)**

Welcome! It's nice to have you here!

I smiled all the way through your description of your first con and meeting your first pro. We've all done that ten-foot-tall dance, at one time or another, from the thrill of talking to someone.

My first pro was **Ted White** at a convention in St. Louis in 1966. He had just written *Phoenix Prime* and I was pretty impressed. But, he loomed even larger as a fan, and that was the focus of our conversations.

It was in 1967, at NyCon 3, that I met my first non-fan science fiction writer. *John Brunner* came into a room party, and talked quite congenially with everyone there, much to my total delight and utter awe. (Later some cynic told me he was "running" for a Hugo, trying to destroy my glow at having met him. It didn't work; the glow persisted.)

Although I no longer count meeting the authors as high on my list of want-todos, I certainly was thrilled by it at first. I think every sf fan should have that thrill, even if later they lose interest in them.

