

MUSINGS AND MEWLINGS

WAY BACK IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS when I, but not fandom, was much younger, I had this fairly simple view of fandom -- it was something you did until you stopped having fun. Then you stopped doing it. Sort of like dating, or sex.

Somewhere in the midst of our initiation into fandom, Lou Stathis and I started a fanzine called XRYMPH. It lasted two issues until smoking dope and hanging out at the college radio station became more fun. So we stopped doing it.

Shortly after this, I got the urge to do a small personalzine which, perversely, I decided to call NUMBER 2. Because it was a personalzine I was able to smoke dope and hang out at the radio station and still publish it. I did that for a few issues until I found that making movies was more fun. So I stopped.

Somewhere in there I joined a few apas and began publishing a small apazine called BIG MAC. Between September of 1972 and October of 1975 I managed to produce 95 issues of it before it became less fun. Since it was still a little bit of fun I cranked out fifteen more issues between then and March 1982, when it became No Fun At All. So I stopped (or, to be more precise, the enterprise slowly ground to a halt).

What was it that changed a Fun Thing into a Drag-And-A-Half? A combination of things, actually. My having less free time, as I struggled to make a career in film editing was probably the most decisive factor. Less contact with fandom was another one. The less I knew of the fans and fandom that surrounded me, the less comfortable I felt within the circle.

And then, there was something else rather peculiar. A sort of Big Name Fan factor. As I spent more and more

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time in fandom, I found that several of the people who I had enjoyed playing around with in it had risen to the ranks of Big Time Fans and were taking it all too seriously. I couldn't get into it on that level, so I got out.

There was a lot more to it, of course. Getting married to a non-fan. Getting divorced from that non-fan. Getting married again to another non-fan (hmmm, I seem to have this pattern, eh?). Beginning to read more and more outside of s.f., and less and less within the field. It all set me apart from the group that I had always felt so much in common with. And it just built and built and built.

But, "Once A Fan ..." and all that. There are some faneds who will keep on mailing their fanzines to you even after you die. Then, there are those who will keep sending you their zine until you stop paying the going subscription rates (forget Sticky Quarters folks). So, occasionally I kept in touch. And managed to keep a little bit of the feeling inside.

And now, it seems to have blossomed a bit. I'm getting more fanzines and writing a few more locs. When I'm not off working some horrible hours on a film or television show (yes, I did succeed in making a career for myself in film editing, and even managed to write a textbook about it along the way -- called THE FILM EDITING ROOM HANDBOOK), I do receive and loc some fanzines. And, occasionally get the pangs to Publish Again. [In fact, when I called up Lou Stathis and said "How do I say this without sounding stupid, but I'm going to publish a fanzine again." he answered, "It's impossible to say that and not sound stupid."]

A major impediment to publishing again in the last year or two (besides working too much) has been the hefty amount of feuding which has

been going on in fanzines in regards to the TAFF situation. Every time that I'd get a fanzine I would end up spending a hell of a lot more time reading about the brouhaha than I thought it deserved. Suddenly I got the "Not tonight honey" syndrome, as Dave Locke put it in GAL 2. My interest in publishing wilted (bad metaphors courtesy of Juvenile Humor, Inc.).

But, thankfully, all of that bad air seems to have been blown out to sea, leaving the air much less polluted -- or at least clean enough for me to start thinking of publishing again. Just a little. Just for a select few people. Just for some folks who won't mind that it'll take me a few issues (and God knows how many months) to get used to it again. Just for you.

And, as for the name of this fanzine, when I got right down it, the name that seemed most comfortable for me, was not NUMBER 2, my old personal-zine, nor even a new name altogether. No, I realized that the most fun I had had while publishing was when I was doing BIG MAC. Just talking to a few of my friends (and a few eavesdroppers too). So, welcome to BIG MAC 111. I hope there's something in it for you to enjoy.

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CHALLENGING THE CHALLENGER

MY BROTHER HENRY AND I SHARED A ROOM when we were growing up. Not a bad sized room, as far as they go. Big enough for both of us to have a bed (no bunk beds for our upwardly mobile family) and a dresser as well as a desk and a night table for the two of us to share. Henry had the more difficult bed -- tucked nearly flush up against the far wall, bordered on one side by a metal radiator that hissed in the wintertime and was merely an obstruction during the summer, and by a tiny little aisle

between his bed and mine on the other side. I, at least, had my bed close enough to the door so that I could sneak into the hall bathroom late at night to read on the toilet.

As a professional kid (as Jean Shepherd used to say) we naturally had the normal number of private things that we did. By private, of course, I am using the euphemism for "secret from our parents". There was the nightly ritual of tuning my little transistor radio to a favorite station, putting it under my pillow (safely out of even a mother's hearing range) and falling asleep to whatever music happened to be playing that night. I went through more nine volt batteries than anyone other than Eveready might care to admit.

Then there were the periodic excursions down the hall into my younger sister's room where Henry and I would try to scare her half to death, pretending we were monsters. We would throw a sheet or two over our heads and amble, zombie-like, into her room, moaning in low tones "I am the monster with the transistor radio battery." To prove it, we would hold out one of those nine volt Evereadies in front of us. Because we were intelligent (and somewhat impoverished) kids we used the batteries from my transistor that had expired in the service of Jean Shepherd, The Beatles, and The Singing Nun.

These are fairly typical stories. Almost anyone who grew up in a family with more than one child has similar, if not identical, stories, I am sure.

But, the arrangement of our room provided us with one very special (and very Sixties) kid secret. Just outside of that window next to Henry's bed was the roof of the entranceway to the back of our house. For years it just sat out there, the occasional repository for shoes or other articles of clothing that we were hiding from each other, or items

of a more sensitive nature that we would rather our parents not find out about. Fairly uninteresting stuff. Until the Space Walks.

Somewhere during the midst of the Gemini space program, Henry and I developed the space walk bug. I had always been fascinated with the space program, following almost every flight, manned and unmanned. I had a collection of NASA supplied posters and wall maps. Henry and I had both been captivated by the concept of flying ever since our Cousin Bob had flown us in his little four-seater Cessna from Rockford, Illinois to Chicago and back. He had let each of us steer the plane while in flight and it was a magical experience. So flying and space were in our blood. It seemed a natural next step, when we saw photos of real human beings floating in space, to try to capture some of that high ourselves (this was before the era of recreational drugs for eighth graders).

The spacewalks leapt full-blown from our fantasies; I can't remember any gestation period where we discussed the merits of them. There was only Before Spacewalks and ... The Event. One morning, it couldn't have been much later than two or three a.m. (or earlier, depending upon how you look at it), we opened the window next to Henry's bed, looped a rope around my waist, and set off on the first of our many space walks. Clad only in my pale blue pajamas I stuck first one foot, and then the other, out the window, until both of them were firmly planted on the roof of the sloped entranceway. I slid my butt off of the windowsill and then v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y (since we knew that people in zero gravity moved very deliberately) began walking around on the roof.

This may seem ridiculous to you, but the feeling that I had that first night was quite magical. I was charting new territory, boldly going where no kid had gone before. Henry,

being the younger of the two of us, had to wait until I was done basking in my moment until he got his chance to spacewalk (the "Buzz Aldrin" syndrome); so for a moment I felt completely alone, totally self-absorbed, absolutely within myself. The still night air was lit up by a nearly full moon; there was no sound from the streets. For a moment I truly was in space, I really was weightless. At least I felt that way. I became an astronaut, even with my 20/200 vision. From that day forward, through the government-hatred of the Sixties and Seventies, NASA could not have had a prouder proponent. I considered the space agency to be the one sacrosanct Federal agency around; it became my personal government division.

So, I took it as a personal insult, an almost physical stabbing in the back, when I read the other day of the enormous cost overruns and Pentagon-style mismanagement in NASA. More than the disgust that I always feel when I read of yet another Big Government Boner, I felt personally betrayed. How could MY space agency rob me of my dreams? Astronauts -- supermen and superwomen -- had uprooted their lives, some had died, to go to the Moon, to turn the science fictional dream of space exploration into a reality. Those people had enabled me to take my reading about Miss Pickerill going to Mars, and Lucky Starr travelling around the Solar System, and to transmute those books into the absolute, tangible reality of my walking in space on my back entranceway, connected to my old life by a mere piece of rope, draped carelessly around an iron radiator. It wasn't a vicarious experience at all. In the mind and body of the teenage boy that I was, it was an actual spacewalk, a very real leaving from my mundane reality.

And NASA had somehow made it possible. They hadn't made the rope for my tether, nor the radiator for my

exit portal, but they had made it possible for me to see that what I knew of as fiction, science fiction, could become a definable reality. NASA launched me as surely as it had launched every one of those first six Mercury astronauts, and as surely as it had catapulted Armstrong, Aldrin and Young into history.

You want the bottom line? The basic, bare-assed truth was that I loved my dreams and, as a result, I trusted them. I trusted those ... beaurocrats with my dreams and for many years I felt that I had entrusted them safely, as if NASA was sort of a giant, kindly grandmother to whom I could tell my innermost secrets without fear of feeling silly.

And, just now, I find out that NASA has been flipping me the bird for 10 these many years. It's worse than finding out that Santa Claus isn't real because, as a kid, I always suspected that Santa wasn't real. What I didn't know was that, although NASA was very real, its perfect persona was as imaginary as Santa's white beard. Somehow, greed and inefficiency weren't supposed to exist in this agency; only an unvarnished exploratory spirit and total dedication.

Unrealistic? Perhaps. But maybe you believe in the Easter Bunny. Or in the Reagan administration's power to save America. Or in the Expos' ability to win it again. You pick your beliefs and I'll pick mine. I feel comfortable with that. Until then, all I have are these new revelations to deal with. Santa's white beard is turning grayer by the day.

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A DIRT OF FABLE

TIM MARION HAS A VERY NICE FANZINE collection, very nice indeed. The other day Tim dragged me out of my self-induced gaffiation long enough to

get me over to his and Jeff Kleinbard's abode where he plied me with bagels and lox and the opportunity to glance through shelf after shelf of moldering fanzines.

Now I know that there are probably many fans who have collections as large or larger than Tim. Even I have four Transfiles full of them here in my apartment, and another three or four cartons' full in the bowels of my parents' basement (please God, don't ever let them move to a house without a basement!!!). I am sure that Moshe Feder has a fanzine collection that would make my eyes water with envy and my stomach churn with hunger. I know that it took the offer of food and grog to get enough fans to his place to organize it last year.

But we are straying from my topic and I must not do that if I am to bring this fanzine in at one ounce or less (in the cause of mailing cheapness). What was the topic again? Oh yes, Tim's fanzine collection.

Well, Tim has his fanzines organized so thoroughly that I figured he must spend as much time organizing them as reading them. I know that I have the same problem. Sure enough, after spending a half an hour or so being overwhelmed by the old Sixties and Seventies fanzines he directed me to a carton in his bedroom which contained fanzines that he hadn't read yet and divided into categories: Fanzines I'd Like To Read Soon, Fanzines I'd Like To Loc, Fanzines To Be Read Someday, and Fanzines To Be Filed Even If I Never Get Around To Reading Them. In one of those divisions I found a copy of WEALTH OF FABLE, which as all of you must know is Harry Warner Jr.'s history of Fifties fandom. Somehow, I managed to convince Tim to lend it to me since neither letter nor check has convinced Joe Siclari to part with a copy for me. I got home and immediately began reading it. I found the

book, well, sort of underwhelming.

Well, that's not quite fair. I found the sheer research and comprehensiveness in WEALTH positively overwhelming. What just didn't sink in for me, that had been there quite thoroughly in ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, this book's predecessor, was the idea of why fandom was. Not just the day-to-day chronicling of what each Worldcon was like or who the top fans were of each year. But the Why of it. The answer to "why did everyone stay in it for so damn long?" Even the covers of the two books seemed to tell different stories. WEALTH's cover shows a youngish fan neatly organizing some sheets of paper after they've been run through the mimeograph machine on his chest of drawers. He is surrounded by shelves full of books, a floating television, and an equally bizarrely suspended set of luggage, as well as a tower of beer cans reaching towards the Moon. The cover to ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, while not as finely rendered as Ross Chamberlain's, shows an older man, hunched over a typewriter surrounded by stacks of paper rising high above him. A mailbox in the foreground (imprinted with Warner's own address) is positively overflowing with fanzines. The man appears to be in a cave -- dark and forbidding. The only illumination comes from a thin shaft of light which emanates mysteriously from somewhere in the ceiling.

The difference between the covers is striking. Chamberlain's is the more crafted, but it is much colder. In both covers, the lead figure is facing away from us but there is no mystery with the young man on WEALTH's cover. He is an industrious little fan as eager to travel to cons as to watch sf on television or to build a Bheer Can Tower To The Moon. The older man on YESTERDAY's cover, however, is madly intent on his fanning. He is all-consumed, totally driven. The printed word is his ally, but if he didn't have that he'd

find another one. The figure on this cover seems mad -- a fanatic. The figure on WEALTH's cover seems almost professional about his fandom.

And, perhaps, this is what is at the crux of my disappointment with Warner's second fan history. A lot happened in fandom in the Fifties, but it just sort of ... well ... happens. It is no more or less tumultuous than the period covered in the first book, it's just that the spirit seems to have failed during the Fifties. Perhaps this is because Warner's own beginnings in fandom were in the first book and, as we all know, there is no better time in fandom than when we first started in it. But perhaps there is something more insidious going on here. Perhaps, and this is something Warner himself alludes to in his discussion of the decade's Worldcons, as fandom began to get more professional much of the pizzazz just up and left it.

Warner discusses the growth of fandom and its inevitable effect on the small intimacy that pervaded fandom during the thirties and forties. He discusses (and downplays in emotionalism) the WSFS, one of fandom's first attempts at professionalizing the Worldcons. It is a telling point, for fandom here went beyond the sercon versus fannish arguments which have always been with us (and show no sign of going away) into being sercon about fannishness. Now, if that ain't a hoot!

Warner comments on fandom's constant rejection of rules and regulations (until they exist; then fandom begins to fight changes in those rules and regulations). This is more than just a conservative streak he is talking about here. This is a need to be informal. And, sadly, we read between the lines in A WEALTH OF FABLE that fandom began to fight that need and, eventually, inevitably, lose it. One can argue, successfully I am sure, that sheer numbers made infor-

mality unworkable. True, I've often noticed that the ideal size for any informal group is about six. Pack more than that number of people into a room and you're going to get at least one person who will struggle to be the leader. Eventually that leader will need to have a larger group of people to lead (there's not enough egoboo otherwise). That will lead to incorporating more people with leadership needs into the group. Eventually, the first leader will find a need for some kind of rules to keep the situation (read "members") in control. This will lead to infighting and more rules, as the good will and unwritten rules that guided the group until then break down.

Once fandom grew out of the letterhacking and fanzine stages, into a fandom where more and more contact was made in person with more and more people, it was inevitable that more rules would have to be enacted. Either because Harry felt that way when he wrote A WEALTH OF FABLE or because there was no other way to chronicle the fandom of the fifties, this fan history suffers from the lack of vibrancy that permeated the first volume. Nowhere in this book's 233 mimeographed pages can one find the off-hand deliciousness of a set of sentences like these, from the first volume (in talking about delays in putting out a 1947 SAPS mailing): "At that fall's Philcon, violent pressure was put to bear on him [the delinquent apa editor]. With Alpaugh doing most of the work, he got the bundle out pretty soon after that, then had a good excuse for giving up the duties: he was asked to do so, and besides, his father got a job with Haile Selassie and took him to Ethiopia." ALL OUR YESTERDAYS is the only fannish book that I know of that has an entry for "Selassie, Haile" in its index.

Whether it is the development of fandom or of Harry Warner, Jr. something is missing from this latest

work -- a sense of lightness. It is a mystery that makes me hunger for Harry's next history -- if he does it.

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LOCO LOCCOL

WILLIAM DING

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It's hard to believe that you are going to go back and publish another fanzine after all these years! When are you

going to learn guy? But the most amazing thing is that you have the audacity to herald your re-emergence into fanzine publishing by publishing a review of a major fan publication. And, to add insult to maiming, you make broad generalizations about fandom in general while doing it. When will you learn asshole? With a few more ridiculous statements like those in the article above you may find yourself back in the fandom that drove you out of fandom to those not-so-many years ago.

And, by the way, keep up the good work. Good luck. God Bless.

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IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN DEPRESSED ENOUGH

While Man is growing,
Life is in Decrease;
And Cradles rock us
Nearer to the Tomb.
Our Birth is nothing
But our Death begun;
As Tapers waste, that
Instant they take Fire.

-- "Night Thoughts", Young (1777)

MUCH OF THIS ISSUE OF BIG MAC has seemed to focus on reminiscing, whether it's been thinking back over my childhood's or fandom's history. I had wanted to close out the issue on more of a high note. But events seem to conspire against me, as does my procrastination.

Had I finished this issue at the begin-

ning of May, when I'd wanted to, these pages would have already been gently winging their way to you when I got the phone call about my friend's Bill's death. But I stalled at completing BIG MAC 111, preferring to see some movies, read a few books and look for more work.

One of those books that I read was HIROSHIMA JOE, by Martin Booth, from which I took the Young quote above. If you stick around long enough you will find out two things. One -- why I disagree with it; and two -- why it looms so important to me right now. Another of the books that formed my reading (and fanzine-procrastinating) material was A.A. Attanasio's 1985 novel IN OTHER WORLDS (Bantam, \$2.95). The book is an absolutely dreadful, leadenly-written, tale of a man who is rocketed into a future version of Eden, only to be sent back to Earth by a wise old alien to Fight The Good Fight, and make the distant future safe for the Universe and a bunch of those wise old aliens. Attanasio peppers his novel with cutseysims. The future Eden is called Werld. Fifth dimensional passageways between locations in Werld are called lynks. One group of inhabitants of Werld are called the Foke. One of the chapters is titled "Alfred Omega".

You get the idea.

Along the way, Carl Schirmer (our partner in space/time travel) is equipped with enough gadgets to make even James Bond squeal with delight. The eager and too-observant reader might wonder how Carl manages to buy things when he is sent back to Earth. Attanasio provides us with the answer -- a white plastic card is given to him and, lo and behold, it works like an ordinary bank card. Carl can get any amount of money out of any bank machine he wants. And just for good luck, the white card can be attuned to anyone's thoughts, so if Carl shows it to someone who is expecting a Visa card -- lo and behold, it looks like a Visa card. And just in case the shop owner only accepts Ameri-

can Express -- lo and behold, the card transmutes the owner's thoughts so that he sees that wonderful green or gold card. I tell you, it's better than having Karl Malden around. And for good measure, the white card also acts like an alien alarm, beeping whenever the evil zotl (the Bad Guys, except they don't wear black hats; they show up as giant beetles instead) come down to Earth and eat up the unknowing Earthlings. Now, this is a card that any human being would love to have, not to mention an idea-barren science fiction writer.

But I am digressing, here. I start talking about death and end up discussing farce. Let me explain further.

There is one concept in the book which, though not exactly new, was intriguing. Carl Schirmer is sucked from present day Earth to that future Eden by being shrunk into pure energy -- light. This light was then, to quote the novel, "shot straight through the hole of the ring, arced along a klein-bottle warp ... before plummeting back toward the core."

Mumbo jumbo, you might say. And you'd be right. But what I found fascinating was how easily this travelling light show was confused by Carl's stupid friends on Earth as death. As Carl's wacky friend Zeke finally discovers, Carl did not die; he was merely converted into energy and sent to a different reality. The fact that this alternate reality bears a close resemblance to Carl's idea of Eden is a fortuitous one for Carl and for the writer, but it is immaterial. The point is this -- death, in Carl's case, was only a moving on.

Now, the idea that death is not an end but a new beginning is nothing new. Centuries of religious zealots have been telling us the same thing. I get accosted twice a day on the New York City streets by wild-eyed looking people who will tell me all about the next life for less than the cover price of a

Bantam Spectra book. But I couldn't help but reflect on Carl Schirmer, transmutation, and Young's idea of burning Tapers, as I sat last week in a pew at the Riverside Memorial Chapel and looked at the coffin containing Bill's body.

Bill was a not-so-close buddy of mine who had worked on THE EQUALIZER last season. An intensely bright, super-energetic, and wonderfully cynical young man of about 28, Bill was a presence. Not so much a physical presence, though when he spent any time in your room he spread out over most available surfaces; but more of an emotional and active presence. He didn't fade into the woodwork -- the room sort of faded into him. You know the type.

And, then, one night I got a phone call from Michael, who was working with him on his new job. "Bill is dead", Michael said quietly before stopping. We chatted for a few minutes, each trying to say something that would equal the gravity of the situation. We were both incapable of rising to the moment.

Now, there are people who are at their best in moments of crisis. There are men and women who seem to know just what to say in hospitals or funeral homes. I am not one of these types. I don't make an ass out of myself, but I rarely get the sense that anything that I am saying is doing any good. Perhaps that is inevitable; there may be nothing that can console or sound "proper" in these circumstances. But, sitting in one of the pews at the Riverside Memorial Chapel I saw a flock of friends and relatives streaming in and out of the family room, all looking very grave and very concerned and very helpful.

As for me, I could only stare and stare at the coffin. It was inconceivable to me that Bill could be inside that box. It seemed an unnatural sort of pose for him to be in -- lying down, probably with his hands folded calmly on his

chest, a huge bunch of flowers suspended a foot or so above him on the lid of his coffin. Wouldn't he be terribly cramped inside that tiny little coffin?

I tried to put Bill inside of that box and failed. What would he be dressed in? A suit, no doubt. (Who wears suits nowadays anyway? And then I remembered a joke that Bill and I had once exchanged when I had brought a suit into work with me so I could change for a party after work. He had a suit too, he said. For weddings and funerals.) What would his face look like? His hands? His feet? I tried hard to visualize him. But no, it wasn't possible. Bill could not be in that coffin. The Bill who was sealed inside all that shiny wood, lying on some immaculately clean silk coffin bed, wearing a nicely pressed suit and a calm, serene smile, was not the Bill that I or, I'm sure, anyone in that chapel knew.

I thought back to a piece that Lou Stathis had written ten years before in Apathy about the funeral of his old roommate. "Off in an alcove," Lou wrote, "in the corner of the room, away from where everyone was sitting was an oblong wooden box practically obscured by a curtain. I was to take it on faith that the body that used to house the soul of Barry Smotroff was in it... At the cemetery the coffin was in place and covered over with a green covering before we even reached the grave site. There the rabbi delivered a short prayer... we were instructed to form a double line through which the family would return to the limousine. It was over. I mean, nowhere was Barry involved in all this. This was supposedly done for his benefit, but not once did I get that feeling. It just felt as if I was at an event and he wasn't. Yeah, it was unreal."

Absolutely, I thought to myself, thinking back on Lou's words. Where, I thought to myself, in the midst of all of those flowers and prayers (which in

Bill's case were quite well delivered -- by his twin sister, his two sisters, and a close friend), was Bill? A joke occurred to me. Years ago, Joseph Papp was on the Dick Cavett show, plugging one of his Shakespeare-in-Central-Park plays. Like some of his Shakespeares, this one had been very modernized. Cavett, sounding terribly erudite, turned to Papp and asked "But Joe, Joe. In all of this modernization, where is Shakespeare? Just where is Shakespeare???" Papp looked at Cavett and, in very serious tones, answered "Dick. Shakespeare is dead."

So, where was Bill in all of this? Did he collapse in on himself in a burst of Attanasio-like energy? Was Bill living in a World of foke and Alfred Omegas? Or, as I thought more likely, was he now trying to figure out just what in hell he was doing trussed up in a suit and tie? Where was all of the energy that Bill had had in real life?

Life, I thought to myself, is so long and then it's used up. I don't mean that in a fatalistic way. I don't believe that the world conspires against us, or that we are fated to die on a certain day at a certain time. No, life is not a candle of predetermined length, which burns either fast or slow but is gone when the wax runs out. The Taper, to quasi-quote Young, does not have a pre-determined length to waste. No, looking at the lifeless coffin and thinking of the life of the man who was sealed up within it, I could only think of life as a style of living, a sort of type of energy.

Several years ago, my Aunt Dotty died after a "struggle" with cancer. Her energy throughout her entire life was low, nearer to an ember than a real flame. She died of a throat cancer that she had ignored for over a year, ascribing her symptoms to a mere "sore throat". She didn't think enough of her own life to look out for herself. And her energy burned weak. Bill lived as if he didn't want to look out for

himself, though this was not true. And his energy was vibrant.

Today, both are under the ground in boxes as assuredly as fire is hot and snow is cold. As they lived, they died. And that makes the cheat in A.A. Attanasio's book all the more horrifying. Carl Schirmer was slow, turned into himself, stupid and a very non-energetic hero. At his "death" his energy was turned into an energy which was totally alien to him. Carl Schirmer got a second chance, he was able to grow into his new existence through the help of a lot of s.f. gimmickry and convoluted writing.

In this way Attanasio's book falls into the category of wish-fulfillment. And, sitting in a funeral parlor, the last thing that I really could understand was that. Finally, it wasn't just the leadenly written prose which irked me it was simply that Carl Schirmer was getting away too damn easily.

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NAMING NAMES

When I first started out in fandom (in fact, when I first started out in life) I wasn't named Hollyn. I was named Hochberg; that was my father's name, it became my mother's name. In short, it was the name I was handed at birth and the one which everyone expected I'd have until I died. It didn't quite

work out that way.

Sometime in the middle of college I met a woman who I would one day marry. This was also the woman who I would one day divorce, but that is not of immediate interest to this story. When we got married we decided that rather than her taking my name, or rather than us both keeping our names, and rather than hyphenating our names together (we didn't like the idea of people introducing themselves at parties several generations down the line -- "Hiya, my name is Philip Waddinabbie-Smith-Jones-Applerot-Williams. What's yours?"), we would combine our names to make a totally new one. That symbolically fit in with our concept of a joining of the two families and it seemed like a nice solution to the name problem altogether. Her name was "Kaplan". So we took the "Ho" from my name and the "lan" from Hers and came up with "Holan." Unfortunately, no one could pronounce it correctly, so we seasonally adjusted the spelling to Hollyn. Unfortunately, we separated nine months later, thereby making mock of symbolism altogether. So it goes.

Anyway, we are now the only two Hollyns in the Manhattan phone book. In fact, it's a favorite hobby of mine to dig into the phone book in any city that I go to so that I can see if there are any other Hollyns anywhere. There aren't.

-- reprinted from EGOBOODLE 6

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