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CHARLOTTE'S WEB

Well, it's been a long time, hasn't it, since the previous ANVIL came out? But that's fannish. I mean, HYPHEN 37 recently came out. The inside front cover was devoted to the usual apology for the issue being late... moving house, car wreck, small war, etc., and the first thing Walt (Willis) knew, 22 years had elapsed. This sort of thing really takes the pressure off me!

So what have I been doing while not publishing? A Thanksgiving trip to Arkansas; Christmas at home (everyone was over), Chattacon just past, and a re-reading of the entire Hornblower saga, in order, from Mr. Midshipman Hornblower through Hornblower During The Crisis, C.S. Forester's last, unfinished book. "Crisis" also included a couple of short stories set in Hornblower's retirement. It is interesting to pick up on the influences Forester had on Roddenberry -- did you know that old sailing ships would warp in and out of harbor?

Penny (Frierson), P.L. (Caruthers-Montgomery) and I roomed together at Chattacon. We each went our separate ways and seldom saw each other, but for Saturday morning when I saw the GOH, Ron Goulart, by himself and looking hungry, and asked him to join us for breakfast. After a few awkward moments while we got acquainted, Ron began to tell jokes and stories -- the bitter-sweet kind like how just when his books really begin to sell they are taken off the shelf. About that time the super-friendly waitress came over and asked each of us in turn if everything was all right and if we needed anything. Ron tried to ignore her but she was insistent. He turned ~~of~~ to her: "You just stepped on my anecdote." "What!" she cried, looking at the bottom of her shoe... "Oh, sorry."

Penny went to my panels and I went to hers... the "Living Fanzine" that Dick and Nicki Lynch produced was fun. I don't know how well the sound recording turned out, but the material was great... each contributor, without prior consultation, talked on a different subject: a long-gone slum shack; video in fandom; a tribute to a favorite author; adventures in eating; and my favorite: Neutering Your Pet At Home. The script will be published as an issue of MIMOSA, and copies of the edited tape may be available from the Lynchi, 4207 David Lane, Chattanooga, TN 37416. Recommended.

About this ish: Pat Gibbs promises a best-of-the-year book column to me realsoon--in time for inclusion in this issue, one hopes. Taral sent some great artwork; Brad Foster, who always sends me more cartoons when I am down to the last of his wants to know why it is always the same last one I am down to. When Cindy Riley told us about having her trailer delivered, we just had to have the story for ANVIL. Also, by the time you read this, Cindy and Sonny Jones (Andrea's brother) will be married and living in that self-same trailer! You read it first in ANVIL!!

Bruno Ogorelec ("How I Lost My Future", ANVIL 42) sent a three-part article on Communism, which I am printing with this disclaimer: The publication of this article is not meant to start arguments in the loccol about the relative merits of Communism, Capitalism and Socialism. I solicited this article because I feel we (Americans) hear only other American's views of Communism, and felt it would be edifying to hear about it from One Who Knows. I want feedback, not lashback.

We've a couple of zine reviews courtesy of Andy Gilbreath, as well as reviews of two foreign (English language) magazines. The Mafiaettes collaborate to tell the story of their latest adventure — Where No Woman Has Gone Before! Buck Coulson defends editors (thank you, Buck), and picks his favorites, while Marc Ortlieb rounds out this issue with a bit of fannish lunacy. Enjoy!

And now for a little personal matter... Speaking of Capitalism, as we were a few paragraphs ago... I, personally, try my best to be a Capitalist, but I work hard for a living, and live in modest circumstances. I don't FEEL like a Capitalist.

Now, my employer is a Capitalist. I'm secretary to a family whose members live on the income from their investments. Great-granddaddy made the fortune and it's getting pretty diffused in the fourth generation, but it still makes me look like a poor excuse for a Capitalist. One thing worthy of note, however, is the penchance for public service to be found in wealthy families. There are always the idle rich, of course, just as there are the idle poor, but there are also those who know the importance of their city's (or state's, or country's) well-being and who either overtly (holding public office, for example) or covertly (by anonymous grants) work for the public good.

The head of the family I work for is active in civic works, following in his father's footsteps. Working here has given me the opportunity to see how much the "private sector" contributes, and how varied those contributions are. Sure, I know, charitable donations of money are tax-deductible, but not so the donations of heart and soul. I respect them a lot.

Today is February 10, 1988, and I think this is my last stencil to type. It seems, sometimes, that the Fates conspire to keep me from publishing this ANVIL. This weekend is Continuity, here in Birmingham, and I must be there. Last weekend was spent in helping my daughter and son-in-law move to Georgia. Next weekend, who knows? Inbetween weekends are regular things like work, laundry and changing the cat box. But I promise you, the very next time I have a couple of uninterrupted days to concentrate on fanac, I'll print this and before you know it, you'll be holding it in your hands, wondering what all the fuss was about.

I'm not the only one who has had an eventful new year: Cindy got married, D.L. Burden had an operation (she's doing well), Penny's kids came back on her, and the Browns got a divorce. Dan Calvert moved, his cat came to live with us, Richard Hyde took over D.L.'s Continuity job (Registration), Andrea quit her teaching job, and, on the brighter side, I'm getting an IBM Personal Typing System at work.

For the most part, though, it's been like that old Chinese curse: May you live in Interesting Times. Linda quite agrees with Merlin, and is grateful that all these interesting times are happening to other people.

Look for the next issue of ANVIL... oh, say about, uh... July. Until then,

Stay Happy...

Charlotte

FANZINE REVIEWS

by Andrea Gilbreath

I feel that anyone who actually publishes a zine has done a marvelous work and a wonder, and deserves a pat on the back. Some backs deserve more patting than others and a few merit a full massage. But even editors of trashy, dreadful zines deserve a certain amount of credit for their effort and the only way for them to get better--if they want to--is for them to keep on trying, guided by criticism couched in palatable terms. Tact is not my forte so I'll leave the gentle guidance to more skillful pens (keyboards?) and opt to review zines I really like.

What do I like? I like fun and frivolity, informative articles which are accessible (I've had my fill of intentionally intimidating, pedantic obscurity in education classes), and fannish natter which makes sense to me. My favorite fan article is "BoSh Goes Loco." Does that help?

MIMOSA #3. Dick and Nicki Lynch. 4207 Davis Lane, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37416. Free for the asking, the usual, or \$1.50 to help send it your way. For those of you who live somewhere else, like Mars, and who may not be acquainted with the Lynches, they are long-time fans and were editors of the late lamented Chattanooga clubzine CHAT. The first two issues of MIMOSA were five years apart, but the Lynchi have tightened their production schedule and you can expect #4 to hit the fanzine stands RealSoonNow. Mimosa is my personal favorite of all the fanzines Charlotte carted over for me to wallow around in.

All the articles were delightful. In most zines, you find one real snapper and the rest are okay but not earth-shaking. MIMOSA's articles are belly shaking. Besides their own (good) stuff, the Lynches printed Bob Shaw's Rivercon GOM speech, articles from veteran fanwriters Arthur Hlavaty and Roger Sims, and some wonderful articles they found in their APA. "The Untimely Mrs. Jones" was hilarious! And my ninth grade Spanish classes loved the excerpt from "Nightmares of a Quesadilla Fiend" that I read to them in a moment of grammar-loathing. A few kids actually sat up in their desks and looked toward the front of the room... quite a compliment of Weinstein's humor.

Charlie Williams' fanart is wonderful. He does a great job illustrating Bob Shaw's speech and Ronald Lee's zany cat yarn. My hubby (Wade) did the cover.

MIMOSA is a slice of fandom at its best: polite, but not stuffy; articulate; intelligent; fannishly chatty, but not obscure. Highly recommended.

YHOS #41, the customized fanzine, published for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association and any other interested parties. Art Widner, 231 Courtney Lane, Orinda, CA 94563. Available for the usual.

Those Who Know have told me that YHOS is an old-time fanzine. It certainly has respectably deep roots. The first article in #41, "Homo Futurus" by Chandler Davis, is a reprint from YHOS #5, winter 1942. It is the second of a reprint series ("Fantiquities") that Art is running. "Homo Futurus" is Chandler's speculations on "what superhuman qualities will show up, and when" in the course of natural human evolution. It was an interesting read, but even more interest

ing is the fact that Art button-holed Davis and got him to write "Homo Futurus Revisited." Together they form a serious and thought-provoking set.

The tone of 5 of the 6 articles in YHOS is serious. I was amazed to read the comics reviews, "Batman as Bernhard Goetz: a dissident perspective on Frank Miller's "The Dark Knight" and "Watchmen." I wish Art had included a bio of the reviewers as he did for Chandler Davis. These guys could publish articles in the journal of the Modern Language Association! David Murphy and Ron Engstrom present an in-depth discussion of the sociological and psychological implications of the existence of "The Dark Knight" and the behavior of those who dwell therein. Honestly, it was a fascinating piece of comics reference material. Danny Low takes a different approach to "Watchmen," more structural than thematic and much shorter, but competent and interesting.

With such serious, professional-quality articles in the traces, this issue of YHOS could be a straight-forward, informational vehicle. Never fear, Art handles his team with a mad, fannish fervor which gallops over any lurking prozine leanings. YHOS looks different... In response to Charlotte's query, Art says that he does it on a Canon PC-25 copier. He uses different color cartridges for different pages. What won't they think of next! He writes with ARTistic panache, disdaining to use apostrophes and leaving unnecessary letters--vowels and such--out of words. The lettercol is distinctive in appearance: Art reduces and prints the actual correspondence he receives, be it on picture postcard, business stationary, or notebook paper, be it neatly typed or scrawled in crayon. I like it. You get the more individual flavor from each LOC. It's almost as good as getting the mail yourself. You might think twice about including DNQ information when you write him. I don't know if he cuts it out and re-pastes the letter or prints it and damn the torpedoes...

THE FEAST OF FRIENDS. Pekka Supinen. Ulvilantie 29/5 D 442, SF-00350 Helsinki, Finland. "Feast of Friends" is the second English language "fanzine" published in Finland. The first was published in 1983. Feast seems to have been compiled for distribution at Conspiracy but it is available for trade or a loc. Like all fannish publications from Finland, Feast of Friends looks like a professional publication, but don't be intimidated by appearances, peoples of the world. Even though Harri Haarikko refers to the fact that they have a group "uncommercial science fiction magazines of good quality, which have been brought forth by the enthusiasts," these guys receive public grant monies through their "officially registered science fictional societies." Also, Haarikko bemoans the fact that "the resources allocated to other activities, such as conventions are minuscule balanced by the monies used on publications." If you have seen any of the "fanzines" which come from Finland (and, boy, do they make us look grubby), that knowledge should make you feel better about the zines we'uns put out in the rest of the SF-loving world. This gem of information alone would have justified the investment of my time in FEAST, but there is much more to be gleaned in the 38 interesting pages of this magazine. It features articles on Finnish SF, the history of Finnish fandom, the Finnish SF magazines, SF comics (with excerpts), and two short stories. My favorite article was Juhani Hinkkanen's article which chronicles the development of fandom in Finland. Their adventures and carousing sound awfully familiar... Maybe it's about time we invite some Finns to this side of the Atlantic. It sounds as if they would fit right in.

Oh, yeah, I forgot to mention the artwork and Wade insists I remedy the omission. The art is excellent throughout. Wade loved the cover illo by Anssi

Rauhala. It reminded him somewhat of Tim Kirk's work. To sum up, FEAST OF FRIENDS is a pretty zine and is nicely written -- especially considering that these people are working in a foreign language!

PANORAMA OF CZECH LITERATURE 38. Compiled by Dr. Joseph Nesvadba. Halkova ulice 1, 120 72 Prague 2, Czechoslovakia.

PANORAMA is a professional anthology "published in the Panorama Publishing House by the Union of Czech Writers, the Czech Literary Fund, and the DILIA Theatrical and Literary Agency." It is a beautifully put together paperback, printed on slick paper with black-and-white and four-color illustrations. It consists of commentary, bios, short stories and poetry, all nicely translated into English for us non-Czech readers. Aside from the fact that it contains 216 pages and that 5,000 copies were printed, I can't tell you much about PANORAMA itself. Evidently, most of its readers know how much it costs and how often it is published since that information is not included. I assume it's published annually since "1986" appears at the bottom of the front cover. It must be a general literary anthology since the editors tell us that "this issue" is dedicated to contemporary Czech science fiction. One of our Czech friends assures us that PANORAMA #8 contains a good sampling of Czech SF writers though the stories included (he says) are not necessarily their best works. I enjoyed most of the selections, though some were too depressing for my taste. My favorites were "That Invincible Human Spirit, or the Golden Ships" by Jaroslav Vels and "Wife by Questionnaire" by Zdenek Volny, not so much for the plots (which were good) as for the tone of the pieces. Most of the other stories had a formal feel while these two seemed more relaxed, less stilted.

Even though poetry usually suffers more in translation than prose, the poems included were impressive, nicely cerebral with little emotional jolts interspersed. The choice of artwork puzzled me, though. Most of the paintings included are more surrealistic than SF oriented. Even odder is that there are 22 artistic, B&W nature photos -- bare trees, blasted stumps and stuff like that. Worse yet, many of the 22 photos take up 1 1/2 or 2 pages! I'm familiar with the inclusion of such photos in the artsy-fartsy literary reviews put out by universities and such, but they seem awfully out of place in a science fiction anthology. Even if you could justify a couple of them, 22 seems a bit much. All in all, the bios and photos of the authors, and the historical commentary are the most interesting aspects of this anthology.

This is a dreadfully general, rather cursory review, but PANORAMA #8 merits a look if you can get hold of one. Good Luck.

1987-THE YEAR IN REVIEW

by Patrick Gibbs

It was not a particularly good year for science fiction novels. The number of high quality works was smaller and they came later in the year. Although I cannot claim to have read even a small fraction of the hundreds of SF novels published in 1987, I do try to stay current with the new fiction and I see most of the new bestselling books. So, with great boldness, I give you an over-view of the SF novels of the year with the idea that you can use this to catch some of the good ones that slipped by you, avoid a few of the bombs and possibly, upon reading some of these books, nominate five deserving novels for the Hugo Award.

My two favorite (so far) from 1987 are by two perennial Hugo nominees, David Brin and Greg Bear. The Uplift War by David Brin (Phantasia/Bantam) is the long awaited sequel to the 1984 Hugo winner Startide Rising. Brin has fashioned a universe several centuries from now when mankind has raised the intelligence of chimpanzees and dolphins to human levels through genetic engineering. In Startide we had the saga of the first Terran starship "manned" by neo-dolphins. The Uplift War takes place shortly after the earlier novel, but involves a Terran colony on the planet Garth composed equally of humans and neo-chimpanzees. The Gubru, a hostile race of avian creatures, invades Garth and, through sophisticated biological warfare, captures all of the humans. What follows is unconventional warfare and galactic politics, waged by the neo-chimpanzees, one free human and the ambassador of a friendly alien race. The alien culture of the Gubru is fascinating, the action grabs the reader's intentions, and the questions raised regarding genetic engineering are provocative. With regard to the continuing plotline from Startide Rising, we now see a hint of the strategy necessary for a Terran "victory" over the alien races allied against it. There is more promise in this series than any trilogy started in recent years.

Greg Bear's The Forge of God (Tor) starts with the first landing on Earth by an alien race and ends with the most optimistic unhappy ending I have seen. Bear creates a mind-riveting state of suspense as initial contact with the aliens creates ambiguity as to the nature of their intentions. Are they here to benefit Earth's inhabitants or to destroy it? This is one of the best alien contact stories ever done totally from the Terran point of view. I highly recommend it for your reading pleasure and as one of the best novels of the year.

I have started several books that may end up at the top of the list. Intervention by Julian May (Houghton Mifflin) is the far future "sequel" to the Pliocene Exile saga. It recounts the final evolution of psychogenetic powers on Earth and the initial contact with the Galactic Milieu of alien races with such powers. The characters are so finely realized and complex that one becomes totally involved in the plotline, and these are not easy people to like. It is a big book and the payoff for the reader is proportional. The Legacy of Heorot by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle (Simon & Schuster) transports the story of the destruction of the monster in Beowulf to a small Terran colony on a virgin planet. Once you get past the larger than life heroes, which may be consistent only with the epic nature of the story, this is an entertaining and stimulating speculation on man's encounter with an alien hostile biology. Great Sky River by Gregory Benford (Bantam) came out this past December and is likely to be overlooked because of its late arrival. It continues the saga started in Across the Sea of Suns and In the Ocean of Night.

Humanity has explored the galaxy only to encounter an advanced and very hostile machine civilization, intelligent "computers" determined to wipe out organic intelligent beings as so much vermin. At the galactic core the few surviving humans find a giant black hole and the home of the destructive machines. This is SF reaching out to extrapolate on the latest in cosmology and to tell an archetypical story of survival. I only regret that I have not had time to read it.

Only the less ambitious goals of Enigma Endgame by James P. Hogan (Bantam) and Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency by Douglas Adams (Simon & Schuster) prevent them from being at the top of the list of the best of 1987. Endgame is the best combination thriller and SF novel to appear in many years. In the not so distant future the USSR has a space station in orbit at L-5 and may threaten the destruction of all Western military defenses. The espionage mission to verify the offensive character of the space station is only the springboard for an intriguing novel. Dirk Gently is a combination of ghost story, romance, time travel and murder novel. It only succeeds at being an amusing entertainment.

Robert A. Heinlein's To Sail Beyond the Sunset (Putnam) is not science fiction in the usual sense of the term. It is the fictional memoirs of the mother of Lazurus Long, Heinlein's favorite character. Chronologically it is the sequel of The Cat Who Walks Through Walls. It is not worth the money to find out what happened at the end of the earlier novel. The book is Heinlein's thoughts on sex and other important topics and it is a blot on his career.

When Gravity Fails by George Alec Effinger (Arbor House) may be the sleeper of the year. I am ashamed to say that I have not yet read it. From the dust jacket notes and the reviews I can tell that it has elements of a thriller and an exotic setting: decadent Arab ghetto. You have no excuse now that it is available in paperback.

Lincoln's Dreams by Connie Willis (Bantam) is an excellent first novel by an experienced short fiction writer. However, I doubt that it should be called science fiction. It is a fascinating fantasy about a young woman who is linked in her dreams with Robert E. Lee and his nightmares as he leads the Confederate Army in its losing cause. I highly recommend it.

The best fantasy novels deserve separate consideration and I have run out of space. Caveat: I have only been able to look over these books. They are all in my pile of books to read. Swordspoint by Ellen Kushner (Arbor House) is another world similar to Britain's Restoration period and is something of a fantasy manners comedy. John Crowley has a well established reputation and AEgypt (Bantam) has received good notices. R. A. McAvoy has returned to Ireland with The Grey Horse (Bantam). I have always enjoyed her fantasy novels and am looking forward to this one. Guardians of the West by David Eddings (Del Rey) has a built in following from his earlier series. I have heard good things about the author and so I am hoping for more than the the stock Sword and Sorcery.

The Falling Woman by Pat Murphy (Tor) is high on the preliminary Nebula balloting. I got news for you: it's not SF. It is not even fantasy. There are a few elements that might be fantasy but they can be just as easily explained in psychological terms. Let the reader beware with this one. It may be an excellent book, but it doesn't belong in our genre.

And there you have it: a brash summing up of a year's worth of novels. If I could have the year over again, I would only wish that the good ones had been evenly distributed throughout 1987. But that would be too easy.

MAFIAETTES RAID SEX SHOPPES - FILM AT 11...

((Editor's note: I started to change the names to protect the guilty, but decided that we all know who we are and what we did, and 90% of the readership wouldn't know a Fafiaette if one came up and bit them on the knee, so what the heck? Tonight's episode includes Linda Riley, P.L. Caruthers-Montgomery, Lydia Gilpatrick, D.L. Burden, Andrea (Andy) Gilbreath, Charlotte Proctor and Penny Frierson.))

It started innocently enough. The Mafiaettes and assorted male members of B'ham fandom were having a party at Charlotte's house in honor of Jim and Lydia Gilpatrick's visit. During a lull in the conversation, P.L. spoke up:

"How do I get to be a real Mafiaette? I'm tired of being an Honorary Mafiaette. I want to be a real Mafiaette and get written up in the pages of ANVIL."

"Well, P.L.," Charlotte replied, "...you have to DO something... preferably with other Mafiaettes. It's usually spontaneous," she added.

"I know! I know!" D.L. and Linda exclaimed spontaneously. "Let's go on a Field Trip! Andy suggested it and said it would be educational and we think we should so it... as soon as Andy gets here."

"And what about Lydia?" Charlotte wanted to know. "We could initiate Lydia at the same time. Do you want to go with us, Lydia?"

Lydia wasn't too sure about the whole thing, having just recently married into fandom, and here were Jim's avowed friends inviting her to go on an adventure with them. The Mafiaettes weren't too sure about Lydia, either. She was so young... she seemed so, well... inexperienced... they didn't want to shock her. But Lydia is nothing if not game. "Sure, I'll go," she replied.

Aside from Lydia: When the subject of the Mafiaettes' field trip came up I thought, "O.K." In the back of my mind I was wondering... hmmm... should I let on to the way I really am? I bet everyone thinks I'm this sweet, little innocent thing... little do they know. Even though I'm from a small town, it was known as "Sin City." There are several porno shops, X-rated drive-ins... so I am not totally unfamiliar with these things. This "field trip" reminds me of the time my girlfriend and I were driving around in my Monte Carlo, looking for something to do. She suggested we buy something called "Rush", a legal substance that supposedly produces a five-minute "high", causing laughter. The local headshop was closed, so we decided to try a porno shop. We drove there and parked in the back. It was dark out. I got cold feet and refused to go in. My girlfriend, who was made of sterner stuff, went in alone. I was a nervous wreck waiting for her, afraid someone would see me. I locked the car doors. Finally, she came out and said that they didn't have "Rush" so she looked at all the other stuff. She was the only female in the store, with men watching peep-shows and staring at her. In my panic to get away, I drove over a concrete divider that caught on the bottom of the car. For one awful moment, I was afraid we would have to be towed, and the world would know where I had been. But this will be different... there'll be a bunch of us...

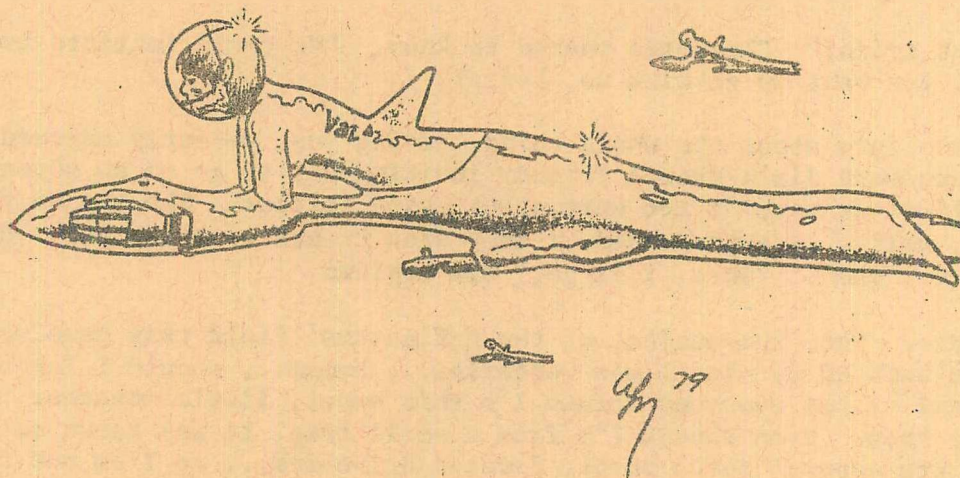
"Sure, I'll go," said Lydia.

So we made our plans: First, find Andy... next, leave our ID at home.... Penny will drive (Penny was not consulted). Andy arrived, and we were off.

Andrea's story: Penny's Caddy was almost big enough for all of us to squeeze in. The men stayed behind to keep the home fires burning while we fanned our own flames. Over the months of planning, the dirty book store field trip concept had taken on a life of its own and we were carried will-nilly along in the mad rush of of enfant terrible. As we stashed our purses and pushed each other out to the car, I had a vague glimmering of the feeling a person must have as s/he charges along in the midst of a lynch mob. I wondered where it all had begun, how I got involved and how we would feel ... after.

Penny parked right in front of one of the two sleazy stores on the block. The block also boasts a dirty movie house, a country music honky-tonk and a mental health clinic (no, I'm not kidding. In fact, I was relieved to see it in case the wonders awaiting me inside were too much for my feeble intellect).

We went in. I can't remember who led the pack but I know somebody was behind, pushing. My first impression was surprise at the sparsity of the place. No Macy's or Riches was this. There were no mannikins modeling the lingerie, no statues, not even nude ones, or ferns or scarfs tastefully draped around stuff. This was not a women's store. I felt like Alice in Phallus Land.



Aside from P.L.: The first place we entered was surprisingly clean, spacious and well-lit, despite some construction work in one corner of the large, rectangular room. The one or two customers and a like number of staff present seemed to be stunned into silence by the giggling gaggle of fems. No salesperson materialized to ask if we needed assistance. We were left to roam at will among a veritable supermarket of sex toys, all nicely plastic-packaged and priced like so many blow dryers, curling irons, or such-like brightly-colored consumer products. The long right wall was ranked with orderly rows of peg-boarded merchandise, filled with a variety of multi-colored... er, 'appliances'. Some were large, some small. Some were battery operated, some had cranks. Some were plain, some were ribbed and bumpy.

The back wall was racked with magazines. Very odd magazines, most of them. You men reading this may know what I mean; you women -- you need to band together and investigate for yourselves. You'll laugh -- a lot, believe me! Who said that sex wasn't funny? The photos and drawings on the various video-cassette packages, racked on the long left wall of the rectangle, were as amusing as the covers of the sealed magazines.

As well as 'crotchless' lingerie and 'candy pants', the central gondolas bore numerous ranks of paperbacked books, which upon cursory sampling proved to be filled with unlikely anatomical juxtapositions, as well as a multitude of rather vulgar terms for the human sexual apparatus more commonly termed the 'penis' and the 'vagina'. (The average Jacqueline Susan best-seller bears much tamer variations-on-the-theme abundantly and repeatedly represented in these books.)

The other store was more like what we had been told to expect of such places. Furtive male customers edged past us into the peep-show enclosure while others looked at us askance as we invaded the cramped, over-heated aisles. The black counterman was seen to smile. Perhaps he had experience of curious female packs. Here various appliances were displayed in several ceiling-high glass cases, bare of any concealing plastic packaging. The assorted sizes and colors of thrusting, tapered cylinders were almost science-fictional in their congregated masses.

D.L. amplified: The atmosphere of the store(s) was a lot like the shops on the Strip in Tuscaloosa in '73 and '74. No decor, just utilitarian shelves and/or racks to hold the merchandise.

Andy was right -- it was educational. The variety of photo books was astonishing. Whoever heard of pregnant lesbians? I never knew "appliances" came in colors -- passionate purple, shocking pink, lime green, sky blue and... natural.

Andy continues: The shelving was plain, ugly wood without any sparkley stuff or little stenciled hearts. There was no romance. (Well, I associate romance with sex.) There was so much potential and none of it was realized. Now if I had a store like that... Oh well, after I recovered from the shock of the Spartan decor and started examining the merchandise, I realized that "spartan" was a good word for the toys, too. They were functional (I guess) but not visually appealing. The gadget rack was fascinating though. I didn't think hair on--uhh, things-- would be appealing to men. But the "Pocket Pussy" was certainly fringed with scraggly brown, ersatz pubic hair. Rather appalling! My personal favorite among the, um, insertion devices was the Squirmy Rooter. (I wonder if I'm supposed to put a trademark sign after these names?) It was a manually operated toy which appealed to the left-over-sixties-back-to-earth-child in me. No battery operated wonder the Squirmy Rooter. No, it boasted a simple hand crank which was supposed to make it do amazing things beyond the capabilities of flesh-and-blood man.

Linda and I had been sucked in (metaphorically speaking) by the toy rack while the other girls were pursuing more literate interests. They encouraged us to come away from our finds and share the delights of the mind offered in the back of the store.

Aside from Charlotte: The literary section seemed to be divided into special interests. There was S&M -- "Of Human Bondage"; there was the homosexual bent -- "Our Hearts Were Young and Gay"; there was bestiality -- "Of Mice and Men." The most disgusting section featured pregnant lesbians. How did they get that way, we wondered? ((Note: we were all relieved that child porno was not displayed. Do you suppose there is stuff so bad that it is kept under the counter, even in a porno shop?))

I picked up a book that seemed to be mostly text. "You don't have to look far to find the good parts," Lydia volunteered. How does SHE know?

Andy was overwhelmed by the vision of the huge, red vacuum cleaner (with a hundred foot cord) leering at her from a glass case. She had to be led from the store.

Getting ready to leave, we gathered in front of the Inn-Between Lounge. "We need to buy something," we said. "Yes," we went on, "we need to prove to the fellas we were here." "What shall we buy?" we wondered. ~~Nothing came of it.~~

Taking a deep breath and drawing herself to her full height, the only person with a purse among us (in a word: Penny) said: "What do you mean 'WE'?"

"well, all right, what is Penny going to buy?"

"I think Penny should get the ben-wa balls. It's the only thing she could buy that I wouldn't be embarrassed to handle, or show to the fellas." Not everyone knew what ben-wa balls were, and were told to read SHOGUN; it's all explained there. The red-headed Mafiaettes were delegated to make the purchase.

Back on the streets, we gave Penny her change and her purchase. She said she hoped we realized that this was not the sort of thing that could be shared. P.L. said that they could be sterilized, but Penny affected not to hear. So Penny became the keeper of the symbol of our journey into sexual fantasy-land.

Andy concludes: While the purchase was being made, the rest of us waited outside. Strangely, our virtue didn't seem to beam out into the sordid night because several wobbly types with missing teeth and diverse aromas ogled us and began wandering in circles around our little group. D.L., in possession of herself as usual, suggested we lock ourselves in the car until the deal was consummated within.

The most shocking part of the whole affair, to my mind, is Penny's adamant refusal to share the ben-wa balls. That high-tech look is so attractive! They are the loveliest gold-colored metal. Reminds me of C-3PO. Maybe next trip (and surely there will be one), we can take our van. Then I'll be the one with the purse!

THE OLD IRONMASTER EDITORIALIZES

by Buck Coulson

"Editors, by and large, are opinionated, prejudiced, and arbitrary. They have had precious little ... experience ... and all are given to tampering with your copy and garbling your meaning. They are little Caesars who exult in their position, take every advantage of it and rub the staff man's nose in the dirt. For 50 years my life has been made exceedingly unpleasant by the machinations of these two-bit sadists."

Sound familiar? Would you guess that the author might perhaps be Harlan Ellison or any of a number of science fiction authors who have expressed similar opinions in the past? Actually, the author of the above quote was Col. Charles Askins, commenting in the August AMERICAN RIFLEMAN on his long career as a firearms writer. It would seem that writers and editors get along equally well in all fields.

Of course, the reader can only judge by the finished product. Science fiction readers are a little better off, as they can quite often read authors' comments on the way their work was mangled, but very seldom do they get to read the original work in order to make a comparison between the ideas of writers and editors. (And in the very few comparisons I've been able to make, my verdict has gone to the editor at least as often as it has to the writer; probably more often.)

Even by looking at the finished product, it's hard to judge an editor's ability. For a long time, the "Big 3" in science fiction editors were John W. Campbell, Jr., of ASTOUNDING/ANALOG, Anthony Boucher of F&SF, and Horace L. Gold of GALAXY. But Campbell and Gold were the two highest-paying editors in the field; since most authors will try a higher-paying market first, they should have been seeing more good stories than anyone else. They had to recognize quality, and encourage new authors who showed promise, but the money definitely helped.

In England, E. J. "Ted" Carnell was producing an above-average magazine, NEW WORLDS, and the best fantasy magazine of its day, SCIENCE-FANTASY, on payments that were lower than a good many second-rate US magazines. Robert A. W. Lowndes, in the US, put out better magazines on a shoestring than some of the competition did with much higher payments. I've often wondered what he might have done with a real budget. Lowndes is the editor I'd most like to see as GoH at a major convention; partly for his ability and partly because his column in OUTWORLDS is such a fascinating account of the Good Old Days. I'd like to see if he could do as well in person.

In my own editorial ratings, I'd be inclined to keep Campbell first; he was, after all, the editor who modernized the field. But Carnell and Lowndes belong up there with Gold and Boucher; maybe even a shade ahead of them. And Lester del Rey did extremely well with the four short-lived magazines he edited. Damon Knight never got to edit a magazine for enough issues to tell much, but his WORLDS BEYOND, in 1950, published some excellent material before it folded after three issues.

The problem with book editors is that they tend to be anonymous, and also move around a lot, from publisher to publisher. Their names aren't on the books they edit, as those of magazine editors get on every issue they publish, and it's much harder to keep track of them. Also, the magazines had regular subscribers; book publishers don't. (Yes, Doubleday has contracts to supply books to a good many libraries, but I'm writing about the average reader, not institutions.) I certainly couldn't name the 1987 publications of Baen Books, for example, even though I own most of them, and it would take considerable effort to look them up and decide what I think of the editing. Books are filed by author, not publisher, while magazines are filed by title and I can just go to the shelves and pull out a year's worth. Consequently, magazine editors can be judged by overall performance, while book editors are judged by only their most popular titles, and by the amount written about them in fandom. (Can you tell me, without looking it up, who edits Putnam?)

There have been some attempts to attract subscribers to particular publishers by means of "book clubs" for a particular publisher, but they're too new to tell how well they'll do. Doubleday's Science Fiction Book Club is a success, but it doesn't restrict its selections to Doubleday books.

Also, with the trend to conglomerates, book editors move around within their own group. For example, Marion Bradley's MISTS OF AVALON was first published by Knopf, but the editing was done by the Del Reys. Without a lot of inside information there's no way to tell who did the actual editing work on most books.

With the decline of the magazines, the "Best Editor" Hugo is perhaps more of a popularity contest than any of the other awards. Certainly, Terry Carr was one of the better editors in the field. Equally certainly, he got more publicity, both by being a popular fan and getting his name on a lot of the books he edited, than almost anyone else. Everyone seems to agree that he was good; nobody outside the publishing industry and not everyone inside it knows how good. Do book editors in general get a fair shot at the award? Hell, no; look at a list of the nominees and the winners over the past 10 years, when the influence of magazines on the field has gone down steadily.

Well, that's what I get for first-drafting a column; I had no idea when I started that I would even comment on the Hugos; I had the quote from Askins and notes on the difficulties in rating someone like Lowndes against Gold, and stream of consciousness took it from there; my initial notes didn't even mention book editors. A couple of more quotes, with minimal comment:

"I like my people singly, and not in packages, and it's a matter of complete indifference to me what anyone thinks of me." (from AMBUSH, by Luke Short) Right on!

"Honour's all very well, but life matters." (from FLASHMAN'S LADY) I may dig out a few other maxims of Flashman, the intelligent coward, for future columns.



THE LONG, LONG TRAILER

by Cindy Riley, as told to Charlotte

The time comes, sooner or later, to everyone. The time to leave home. To get out! Out! Out! My roots are deep, however, and tangled, and I didn't want to leave Cook Springs. My mum took pity on me and said I could have an acre or two of the family homestead, and I took her up on it before she could change her mind. I chose a favorite spot of mine... a hill behind the stables, with a view of the lake, and topped with pine trees. I had a road cut, and chert put down (my own private drive), and a trailer pad built about half-way up the hill. I call it "Hawkes Ledge".

I started trailer-hunting... for a 14 x 65, say. But my ideas grew. I'd need more space than that... I'd need a master bedroom, guest room and junk room. The third bedroom in 14 wides is your typical closet with delusions of grandeur. I looked at 16 wides, and finally bought a 16 x 76, unfurnished, with fireplace -- over 1200 square feet of space, and over 80 feet long with hitch.

I had given some thought to the installation of my new home: it would be difficult to get a trailer up the road. It was tight, maybe 130 feet long and about 30 feet wide at the widest point, and joined at right angles to the 'real' road. There was only one way up and one way down. It would be so tight I thought it would be a good idea to have the septic tank put in first so that the backhoe would have room to manoeuvre. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

I told the trailer salesman that it would be going into a tight place. No problem. They seemed totally unconcerned. O.K., I can be unconcerned, too. After all, I wasn't responsible for it until after it was delivered and set up. I just bought the thing. It was their problem getting it up the hill.

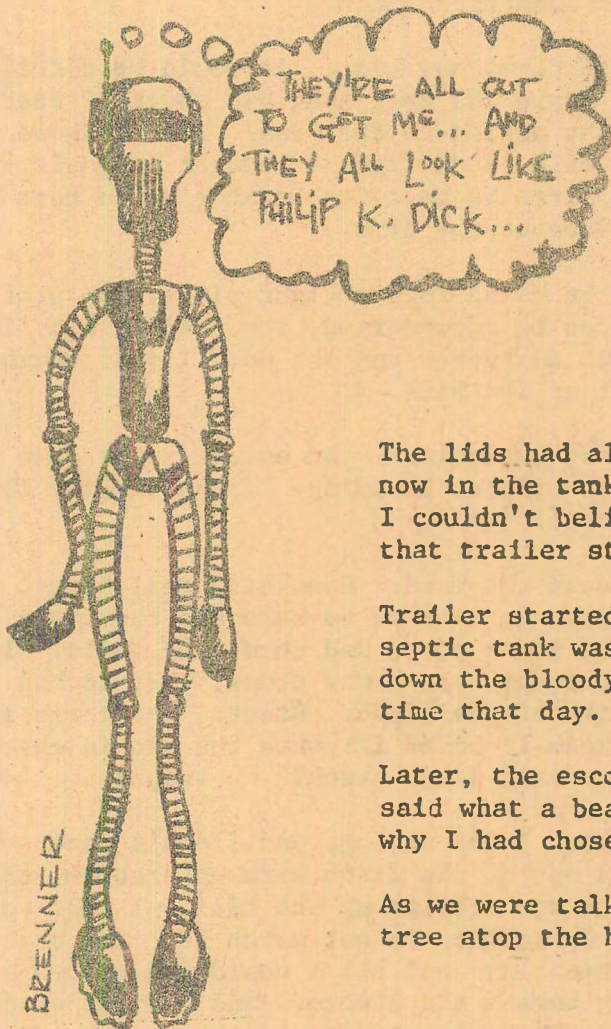
It was delivered on December 7th. Auspicious beginnings. An escort truck came down the road, ran up the hill and back down without stopping. I can imagine the driver's thoughts at that hill: "Ho-ly Shit!!! "

Then we could hear something heavy coming down the road. Something real heavy. And there it was, all 80 some odd feet of it. It started to make the turn into the new road and then stopped. I sat on the front porch and chewed my nails. It wasn't long before it became obvious that the damn truck was stuck, that it had gotten off the chert drive into the soft dirt of the ditch. Great. There was an 80 foot trailer stuck across the road. I knew it boded ill when the man in charge came walking toward the house: "You want to call a tow truck?" *sigh*

By the time the truck arrived, I was nervous. I was pacing, and I don't pace. The tow truck winched the trailer and its truck out of the ditch with no problem, then traveled up the hill, probably to help winch the trailer up the hill. I went to the back of the house to watch phase two. Or rather, to not watch it. The stable blocked my view of the trailer's final destination and all I could see was my trailer, my beautiful trailer, disappearing behind the stable. And then it stopped. There could not have been a foot of space between the stable and the trailer. I could not bear to watch. (I've heard of this happening to other people, but this is the first time it had ever happened to me. I literally could not bear to watch.)

I engaged, instead, in displacement activity. I went in to get a wine cooler. I pulled dead plants and raked leaves. There were creaking noises as the trailer inched a bit further forward. I raked more leaves. Someone put blocks and pieces of plywood under the wheels. (At least the back yard was beginning to look better.) It creaked a bit more. It got closer to the stable. (I didn't care about the stable, but I could just see ten feet being taken off my trailer.) I went inside to get another wine cooler.

"It's going to look real good up there," my brother said as he came out of the ~~kitchen~~ kitchen. What? I dashed to the window. It was up! It was up! I couldn't believe it -- until this moment I had quite frankly doubted the outcome. But there it was! With a big grin on my face, no doubt, I headed up the hill to see it. The lady who drove the escort truck called to me: "They need you to tell them where you want it."



At the trailer pad, the man in charge of the crew came over.

"There it is," he said.....

"The wrecker fell in your septic tank."

WHAT!?! Moments later I was looking at a hole in the ground that had been my virgin septic tank. Shit.

"It wasn't marked," the man said.

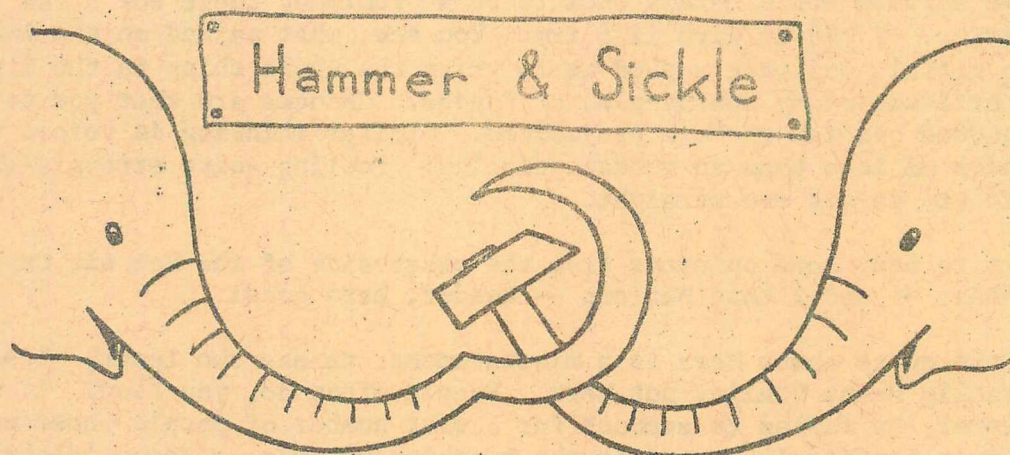
"The front end of the wrecker went over O.K., but the back fell in."

The lids had all broken save one; the dirt on top was now in the tank; the outlet pipe was properly crushed. I couldn't believe this. He went on: "...but when that trailer started slipping..."

Trailer started slipping? Maybe a wrecker in the septic tank was all that kept the trailer from slipping down the bloody hill. I sighed -- not for the first time that day. These things happen.

Later, the escort-truck lady and I were talking; she said what a beautiful spot it was. I agreed--that was why I had chosen it.

As we were talking, I saw a hawk circle and land on a tree atop the hill. An Omen. Maybe it will be O.K.



Red Ruminations

by Bruno Ogorelec

PART ONE: Blind Men and the Elephant

It all started a long time ago (long in mundane terms, that is, for what's a year among fans?). 'Twas Christmas of '86 and not a soul was stirring. I was safely settled in an easy chair, a glass of brandy in one hand and a fresh copy of Time magazine in the other, looking forward to some predictable reading. The Christmas issue is always the occasion for an "Images of the Year" pictorial and the chance for editors to indulge in sermonizing. That time Time did its bit on the crumbling values and general decay under the title "A Letter to the Year 2086". Wow, I thought to myself, 2086! Gosh, they actually think of the future!

And, you know, it wasn't a bad essay, not at all. A reasonable effort at balancing the year's accounts. Hmmm... well, yes, but for one thing. In an otherwise fine article I found the notion that

"Marx has been discredited in public as the prophet of a future that works only at the expense of human self-regard. (He)... helped to persuade several generations that fate either was not in their hands or existed only in the form of a collective."

Tsk, tsk. Not that I was overly surprised, mind you. I'm used to the casual treatment of Marxism, Socialism and the like in the American press. Still, the unreasonable prejudice (well, prejudice can hardly be reasonable, can it?) seldom fails to amaze me. Especially coming from an old and trusted friend like Time. Perhaps a letter to the Editor...

Hey, wait a second there. Talking of editors -- didn't I promise an article on Communism to Charlotte Proctor in a fit of imprudence some mumble mumble months ago? Why, this give me as good an opening as any! Maybe... maybe a blast of wordage will finally erupt from my long-dormant 1959 Torpedo Dynacord! (In retrospect, no. Of course not. What followed the flash of inspiration so vividly illustrated above were months and months of painful cobbling together of unwieldy sentences; an oozing rather than a blast. Ah, well...)

At first glance Marxism would hardly seem to be a promising topic for a fan writer. No matter. I had to give it a try. You see, what pained me the most about the Time article and what pushed me to write the whole thing in the first place was the attitude of my own people, of fandom. Chances are that you do not consider the quoted opinion of Marx prejudiced. Similar thinking is voiced often enough, in fandom no less than in mundane circles. Feeling quite strongly about it I decided to try to set you straight.

Well then, care to hear some opinions from the other side of the Hot Air Curtain? If you do, my Dear -- and I hope Patient -- Reader, here goes:

First of all, the quote about Marx is a misstatement, to say the least. I suspect the author actually meant Stalin, not Marx. People often do, you know. If he did mean Marx, however, he failed to account for a vast number of people whose political opinions are quite firmly rooted in the teaching of that selfsame 'discredited' sage. No, I'm not thinking of the people who live in the so-called Communist countries. I had in mind one out of two people in such bastions of Marxism as Great Britain, Australia, Sweden, West Germany... You aren't surprised, are you? You shouldn't be. About a half of total adult population of those countries belongs to a political party calling itself "Socialist" or "Social Democrat" or "Labor" or some such. An additional smaller number of people are affiliated with a party that may describe itself as "Communist". What quite a few people fail to realize is that both the former and the latter have Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels for ideological fathers (a fact some parties prefer not to advertise nowadays). France's Francois Mitterand is thus no less a Marxist than Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev -- or Israel's Shimon Peres for that matter. Yes, of course there's a difference between them, but it is not in their nominal acceptance of the Marxist ideals. The difference is in the respective roads their parties have chosen towards the common goal. The "Communist" road is revolution, while the "Socialists" chose social evolution instead.

To risk repeating the familiar, the common Marxist goal that both the Communists and the Socialists aspire to is the creation of a society of free people in which every member would have an equal access to the society's riches and an equal obligation to contribute to those riches to the extent of his/her abilities. It is a noble goal and certainly not discredited. So there.

Where Time magazine was much further off the mark, however, was the allegation about the "future that works only at the expense of human self-regard" and "fate" that "existed only in the form of a collective". Again the slur was aimed at the wrong target, that is to say at Karl Marx instead of Joe Stalin and his disciples. Why, human self-regard is the very thing that Marx's thought is about! He envisioned the future man primarily as a free and self-determined individual, not alienated from his social environment by the relentless pressure to be a good provider and an obedient subject and servant. His thoughts on individual liberty (especially as set forth in his early works) are such that even Robert Heinlein -- much to his chagrin -- would have to accept them with little adverse comment. If you agree with the Time assessment please read your Marx again, this time more carefully. You must have missed a book or two. Yes, I know that he was a plodding writer but if you wish to have an informed opinion on Marxism (and, moreover, to voice that opinion in public) there is no recourse but to wade through the interminable volumes, cull the significant statements from the verbiage and correlate them.

Are you convinced now? No?

I thought so. You are probably unwilling to give me the benefit of doubt, even. With all the arguments I can furnish, you would probably still have a feeling that Time was somehow on the right track with its negative opinion, wouldn't you? Well, that is a tough nut to crack; such opinions are the result of a century's worth of negative thought sediment; they've become ingrained in most minds. By now it is a question of how far can we get with a rational exchange of arguments when the topic we are discussing makes people irrational. How objective are we, or can be, in judging the complex and emotionally laden subjects?

The problems start with the very perception of the topic. There is a general failure of people to distinguish between the Marxist idea and the confounding and bewildering reality. It is akin to the difference between a recipe and an actual dish. As soon as an elegant idea of a social system is made into governmental doctrine it acquires a life of its own. It gets out of hand of its makers and changes, becomes bloated with compromise and riddled with exceptions, finally to become a complex and often repellent muddle. Its formerly clearcut lineage is often just barely discernible. Would the Founding Fathers easily recognize the USA of today as the fruit of their mental labors? Even the American legislators are not sure about it, apparently. Would Marx and Engels easily recognize the USSR of today as their ideological offspring? I very much doubt it. You'll have to agree, however, that Marx is hardly to blame for that. If you taste a dish and find it wanting, do not blame the recipe or its author; *cherchez la chef*, as it were.

In this vein of thought, one of the notable Yugoslav Marxist thinkers recently said that the main source of the disillusionment with Marxism lies not in any failure of Marx's thought, but rather in its crude implementation -- in the long-standing bureaucratic practices of the Communist parties in power. Such parties declare themselves Marxist despite being largely at odds with the fundamental and humanist aspects of Marxism. The justified disappointment with them has thus come to include Marxism in general, which is a great pity, really. It alienates Marx's ideas from the new generations, from the people who could perhaps make a fresh, untainted attempt at giving them new life.

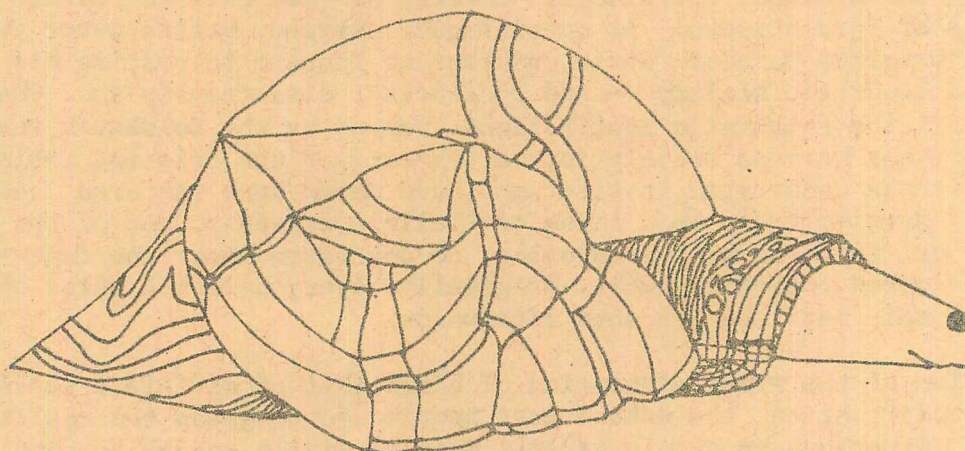
In all truth it could be said that an attempt to put Marx's authentic thought into practice has yet to be made. All moves in the direction of a Socialist revolution have so far been "revisionist" insofar as they followed rather loose interpretations of Marx's ideas. At one infamous extreme, Stalin never even tried to knit the libertarian Marxist fabric, preferring instead to realize his own concept of a bureaucratic society -- and succeeding; disastrously so. One by one he dismantled all the democratic institutions created by the Bolshevik revolution and turned the first Marxist society into a travesty of the original noble ideal. Sadly, most of those democratic institutions have never been restored, and when people think of Marxism today they think of Stalin's travesty, not of the forgotten ideal. Or, in words much less noble, no one cares about the fact that *coq-au-vin* was cooked reasonably well, originally; everyone still talks about the second cook who spit into the pot soon afterwards.

A similar problem of the wrong addressing of blame (but of different genesis) arises from simplification, the method most people use to grasp the reality. They reduce complex situations to simple general models, simple enough to handle without a headache, and thereafter most of them treat the models as if they were the

reality. People put labels on things to avoid defining them anew every time they need them. In itself this is a practical method, but very soon after labelling most people will start confusing the labels with the things themselves.

You'd expect people -- thus hobbled in their ability to perceive reality -- to beware of labels, "self-evident truths", "axioms" and similar mental ware, particularly when trying to make sense out of complex social constructions. They seldom do, however. The labels stick, no matter what the actual content. In our particular case the "Marxist" label can signify a whole spectrum of things, often wildly different from each other. To an American it probably evokes Stalin's heavy moustache, blood in Kampuchean rivers, dissidents, drab lives, long lines at the grocery stores, liberties stifled and trampled upon. To a teenager in Moscow it merely provokes a yawn as he thinks of a dull school lecture on the Theory and Practice of Marxism and Leninism. To a Frelimo guerrilla fighter in the jungles of Mozambique the same label probably used to mean freedom, independence, justice for all and a chance to be proud to be black.

It is thus possible for the Time magazine article to be completely wrong on Marx and yet retain a vague ring of truth. Remember the old parable of the blind men and the elephant? The man who grabbed the tail thought it was a hanging rope; to the one who got hold of the trunk, the animal was clearly a python, while the third guy, touching one of the legs, thought it a column of a temple. Obviously it is difficult to see our particular elephant for what it really is. Every observer has his own bias distorting his perception and every commentator has his own vested interest distorting his reporting. However, I can assure you that just being aware of the difficulty is already a big step in the right direction. If nothing else it give you a chance to weed out the noise and nonsense from what the media serve you in their reportage and allows you to pry out the small kernel of fact hidden well within. But more of that in the next installment.



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Eugene b

ROCK OF PAGES

by Marc Ortlieb

There was a stunned silence in the bar.

Had you walked in two minutes earlier, you would have heard the sort of hubbub that you'd expect in an Australian convention bar - Justin Ackroyd describing, in graphic detail, what he, Jack Herman and Carey Handfield had really done with the Vegemite and how Lucy Huntzinger had managed to keep her name out of the official convention reports; Sean McMullen explaining to all and sundry how he'd sold his third story to F&FS; Damien Broderick and Jenny Blackford arguing the finer points of post-semiotic deconstructionist femino-marxist criticism and how it applied to the works of John Norman; and Kim Huett and Steven Boucher trying to work out why all those boring old farts kept coming to conventions when all they ever did was tell the same stories that they'd told at the last convention.

Had you walked in three hours earlier, all you would have heard would have been the barman explaining to his new assistant that these funny sci-fi fans were weird but harmless and that, when they ordered a glass of Venusian Slug Snot, what they really wanted was a creme de menthe with lemonade and a lime flavoured snake on the bottom of the glass.

Had you walked in thirty thousand years earlier, you would have heard the howl of a marsupial lion as it pounced onto one of the larger and more toothed ancestors of the modern platypus. But that is neither here nor there and subject to one's interpretation of the fossil record in any case.

What is important is that, fifteen seconds before the stunned silence, you would have witnessed Carruthers walk up to the bar and say, "I'll have a small glass of Swan Light."

Now Carruthers has never had anything against beer and has indeed been known to drink Coopers Ale, Guinness and the occasional bottle of Dos Equis. Indeed, he claims that he keeps Fosters on tap at home. He swears that it leaves all other shampoos for dead and that the use of it as such attracts all sorts of people at parties. However, for him to order a Light, and a Swan Light at that, was so out of character that the other denizens of the bar started checking him for distinguishing birth marks, or checking their life insurance policies to find out if they'd been claimed.

It was Michelle who broke the silence. "Very funny, Carruthers. Now, tell us what you'd really like and I'll buy you one. What'll it be? Blog? A Chromatic Dragon? A double Crottled Greep? Perhaps a Spayed Gerbil?"

"Thank you for the offer my dear, but truth to tell, I've sworn off spirits for life."

I checked around the bar detecting nothing but looks of tired indifference. The assembled drinkers knew only too well Carruthers' little comment hooks and no one was game to give him the opening he was after. I was half-way through my sigh of relief when I heard the new bar assistant say "Really, sir. And why would that be?" I made a mental note to speak to the hotel management about their hiring policy at the next opportunity, but realizing that the damage had been done, I settled down to listen to the tale into which Carruthers had been inevitably launched.

What brought me to my senses was not the guide, but the geological structure to which he was referring. The guide explained that none of the park rangers or speleologists had ever managed to come up with a satisfactory nickname for the formation under consideration. Relishing the chance to demonstrate my wit by providing the guide with another pun with which to torment generations of harmless tourists, I pushed my way to the front in order to examine the rocky hump in question. I fancy that my composure kept the astonishment out of my voice when I muttered, 'It's a Roneo 500 duplicator!'

Fortunately, no one was paying any attention to me as the guide b~~o~~ne on to tell the tale of a crazed school teacher who'd died in the caves. It appeared that he'd snuck in there late one night, determined to find the fossil clue that would prove that Queensland politicians were a degenerate form of a parasitic worm that once infested the bowels of Diprotodons. He'd got lost in the limestone maze and his body had never been recovered. The guide was of the opinion that he'd fallen into one of the underground streams and had been washed to some remote part of the cave system where some future explorer would find his fossilized bones.

We finally reached the fossil bed and were shown a lot of old bones that the guide assured us could be assembled into something meaningful. I had my doubts, but then I've never been particularly good at jigsaws. What I did appreciate was the brief spiel that the guide gave about the surrounding countryside. It gave me a better idea of soil types and thus which wineries would be worth my while.

The tourist snake retraced its path back to the stifling heat of the kiosk and I got back into my car, ready to face the last leg of my trip to Penola and the Coonawarra Vineyards. Barely three kilometres from the caves, my engine spluttered and died. I checked my maps and discovered that the closest telephone was back at the kiosk.

I've had more pleasant experiences than the hot dry walk back to the Maracoorte Caves. The area is renowned for being cool and damp. That it may be, in winter, but I can assure you that, in summer, it gets exceptionally hot and unpleasant. That description applies to car drivers in the area as well. I was passed by several, none of whom so much as slowed down to offer me a lift. By the time I got back to the kiosk, I was exhausted. The local garage did little for my temper. They were happy to collect my car but, they said, with Holden parts so scarce -- all the farmers in the area owned Porches or Mercs -- I'd probably have to wait at least two days for the repairs. Fortunately the Caves Motel had a spare room and I settled in there, with a bottle of Mr. Beam's finest and a copy of the Wine Snob's Gazette. Having quaffed about half the bottle, I fell into an uneasy sleep.

It must have been two in the morning that I awoke, the hairs on the back of my neck prickling and the room temperature down at least ten degrees on what could have been expected for a hot summer's night in Maracoorte. I could see clearly in the moonlight that washed the room. There was nothing out of place but, in the corner of my eye, there was a flickering movement that disappeared every time I turned to focus on it. It was drawing me on, in the direction of the bathroom.

I stumbled out of bed and followed the apparition to the mirror above the bathroom sink. There I saw, not my haggard reflection, but a scene of unbelievable savagery. Only the desks, blackboard and uniforms allowed me to identify it as a classroom. But this was no ordinary classroom. It was suffused with a throbbing red light and what the beings in uniform were doing to the poor souls in academic robes and mortar boards begged description. Suffice to say I saw uses that I'm sure the manufacturers of large scale blackboard geometrical aids had never imagined for their products. In front of the room, one of the little devils had taken a teacher's finger and was grinding it in the pencil sharpener. The unfortunate fellow looked to me and then was allowed to walk over to the blackboard where he used the red spurting stump of his finger to trace a message in a virtually illegible scrawl. Fortunately, having been educated in a school where the teachers used that terrible red chalk when they'd run out of white, I was able to decipher it.

"Carruthers," it read. "It's me, Nigel Adams. You must help me."

The message was erased by a uniformed imp, though I had difficulty with my stomach when I realized what his eraser was.

"How?" I asked.

"You must go to the caves. You'll have seen the 500."

"Yes."

"You can't believe how long I've waited for someone who would understand. You must go and turn the handle."

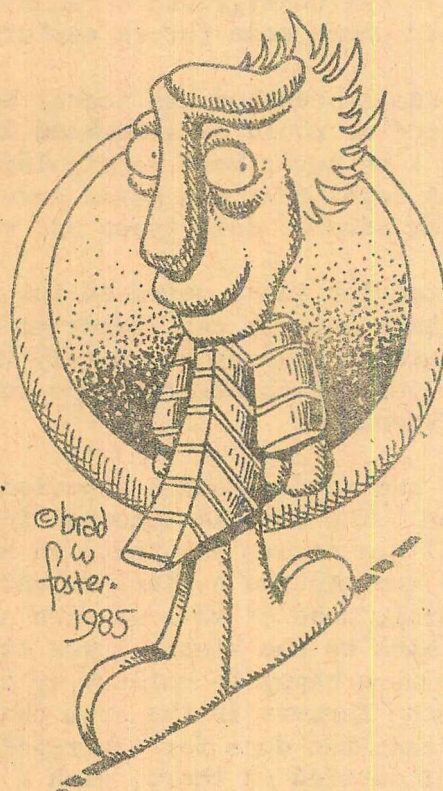
"But why?"

"Never mind why. Do it as a favour to an old fan. Please. If you don't, I'll never leave this purgatory."

A minor demon impaled Adams' buttocks with a pin and paperclip dart, propelled by the largest rubber band I'd ever seen.

"Send the results to FAPA - sixty ninth anniversary. They'll understand."

The scene went blank. I shook my head and pinched myself, in the hope of finding that this had all been a bad dream born of my Beam excess. I made my way back to bed, wishing the event into oblivion. I was brought up sharply as I sat. Reaching behind me I picked the bloodied tip of a blackboard compass from my buttocks. I got dressed.



There are few things as dead as a tourist kiosk at three in the morning. Apart from me, the only things moving were the possums rummaging through the rubbish bins for food. They had already discarded in disgust the scraps from half a dozen MacDonald's hamburgers. Along the way, I have picked up various useful skills - Harry Warner Jr. said that the sum of human knowledge is to be found in fanzines. I learnt how to pick locks while reading an old New York fanzine - the one with a regular feature on how to model convincing UFOs from car hubcaps. It wasn't long before I was winding through the subterranean tunnels.

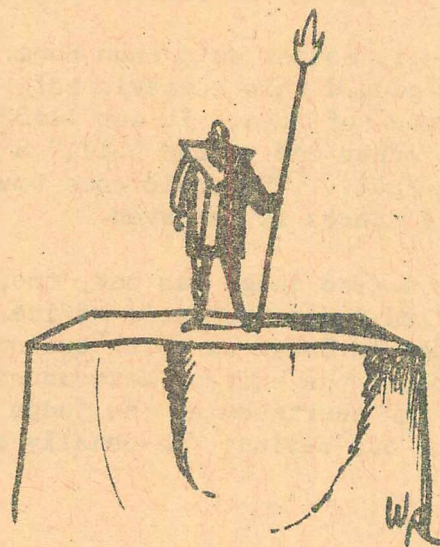
The Roneo-shaped formation stood, bathed in an ethereal light. I still didn't believe that I could do as I'd been asked. I stepped over the low wooden barrier that separated me from the structure. The detail was incredible. I could even see the outline of a serial number engraved in the damp stone. I gingerly reached for the handle. It seemed stiff but, as I slipped into my zine duplicating mode, it somehow seemed to move. There was a grinding sound and a solid clunk as a sheet of rock fell from the device. I picked it up and marvelled. The rock was perfectly shaped - a centimetre thick, 27.7 centimetres long and 21.7 centimetres wide. Embedded in it was something I couldn't quite make out but, knowing that the first of the run is usually unclear, I cranked the handle again. Another sheet of rock, identical to the first, except that this time I could clearly see the bone embedded in it - the third vertebra of a coelurosaur if I wasn't mistaken. I'd seen a complete skeleton in Marilyn Pride's gallery. I cranked again and a page sporting a brachiopod slid out.

During the night, I cranked out sixty eight sheets of stone, each with a fossil imprint. The sixty ninth sheet wasn't a fossil at all. It was heavier and had, in blood-red scrawl, "FOR POSTAGE". My hand slipped on the damp surface and the sheet fell and broke, revealing thirty large silver nuggets embedded in the stone. I took the slabs, in piles of ten, back to my motel room and marveled.

There's nothing much to add. I posted the slabs off to FAPA and they duly appeared in the sixty ninth anniversary mailing, credited to Nigel who, by then, could truly claim to be one of the old fossils from FAPA. The mailing comments were interesting, too, especially when one of the English members of FAPA showed a copy to Fred Hoyle. It was the one with the archaeopteryx skeleton and Fred got rather excited about the fact that, around the leg, was a metal band with "Property of Noah and Sons" engraved on it in Hebrew.

I trust that the entire affair earned Nigel enough Brownie Points to see him promoted to the Ministry. But anyway, that's why I'm off spirits. They have this terrible habit of returning on mt."

Carruthers produced a deep belch and turned to the barman. "I'll have another," he said.



RILEY-JONES NUPTIALS

February 3, 1988

Birmingham, Alabama

The marriage of Cindy T. Riley and Robert (Sonny) Jones was solemnized today in a quiet double-ring ceremony at the Jefferson County Courthouse, Judge Marvin Cherner officiating.

The bride was attended by her sister Linda Riley, and the best man was Greg Jones. Following the ceremony, the bridal party adjourned to Red Lobster for a wedding dinner.

Sonny and Cindy insisted they were going to the courthouse by themselves, but their friends would have none of it, or as they said, "We'll believe it when we see it." The wedding day dawned. We all knew the day, but not the hour. I don't even think they knew the hour. Andrea told us later they had come by her house that morning. "They sat on the couch... they didn't talk... they wouldn't have anything to eat or drink. They just sat there. I think they were nervous." They didn't know where Greg was.

Meanwhile, at the courthouse, Marie (Harrell) and Linda were waiting. "It was boring," Linda said. "I thought about making a scene. I mean, here we were at the Marriage License window for an hour. I'm sure they thought I had been jilted. I seriously thought about crying and carrying on...."

Sonny and Cindy arrived, with Greg in tow, in time to forestall such entertainment. They were dressed in their casual best. The bride wore cowboy boots.

Charlotte appeared as Cindy filled out the forms. "Why do they want to know where my mother was born?" Cindy wondered. "What has that to do with anything?" They took the completed forms to the window, paid for the license, and were directed to the fifth floor "to find a judge."

This is easier said than done. Charlotte felt a certain sense of deja vu, as she had played this scenario before. "Come on," she said, leading the way to the judges' offices. It was 11:30. Guess who was out to lunch? "Try the judge at the other end of the hall," a secretary suggested. Our little party trailed down the hall... "We could come back tomorrow," Sonny offered. This remark drew the cold stares it deserved.

The second judge was out, too, but the secretary let us use the phone. Charlotte called Judge Cherner's office. He was in court, his clerk said. All Right! (A judge in Court is worth two out to lunch.) We galloped to the sixth floor and blocked the exits. Nervousness had turned to silliness as we took turns peeking in the courtroom at the judge on the bench -- we had him cornered! His clerk went out saying: "He usually recesses by 12:30."

And sure enough, he did. We met him at his chamber door. He looked tired... he looked hungry... he looked more than a little taken aback by the mob that greeted him. "We'd like to get married... if you have the time... please, sir, Your Honor, sir..." He looked at us. "Just a minute," he sighed.

After a pit stop, the judge returned. He disappeared into the file room for a while, then came into the outer office and began crawling around on his hands and knees. We looked at one another. We looked back at the judge. He took great piles of file folders and papers off shelves, riffled through them and put them back. It finally dawned on us that he was looking for the folder with the ceremony in it. Should we tell him that his clerk knew we were coming, and probably put it on top so it would be easy to find? Naw...

Linda examined a print of "Chinese Justice." Charlotte rearranged the furniture. Cindy took off her leather jacket. Greg checked the rings. Sonny sat down. Marie looked at her watch.

Ceremony finally in hand, Judge Cherner ushered us into his chambers. After some discussion about names: "No, that's my father's name," we finally got down to it.

It was a lovely ceremony, for being done by a judge. I mean, he doesn't have to say anything but "do you take" and "I now pronounce..." He talked of commitment, of fidelity, of good times and adversity... 'til death do you part. No loopholes. (I guess they were still a little nervous... Sonny had to be jump-started: "Repeat after me," the judge said again.) The vows were said, rings were exchanged... "...and by the power vested in me, I now pronounce you Man and Wife."

So Sonny and Cindy were married. We saw it, and we believed.

We are gathered together,
before these witnesses...



THE ANVIL CHORUS

The Chorus begins this time with a quartet... quintet... no, with a sextet of letters in reply to Mike Glycer's rendition of "A Moustache for Mona Lisa." These are just a sampling of those who wrote in to defend, or pan, "Star Trek, the Next Generation." (And we say we aren't Trekkies!)

The next number is "Trans-Atlantic Mail", performed by the Czechs, Slavs and Brits. While these selections may seem dated, their content and style render them timeless.

The closing selection is a medley of letters replying to themes including "Buck's Books" and "Cat Stories". The controversial "Taff Trip Reports", in brass and wind, is the final note.

Dalvan Coger I disagree right down the line with Mike Glycer in his
1433 W. Crestwood Dr. article "A Moustache for Mona Lisa." And my disagreement
Memphis, TN 38119 is not prompted because of any affection for Star Trek,
 since I have watched very few episodes and wouldn't spend
a nickel to see one of the movies.

... Where I find Glycer really in error is his references to the starship and "gun-boat diplomacy." We have no idea what is waiting out there in space, but it is a safe bet that cultures that arise on other planets will follow the same primary rule that cultures have on this planet: To survive be prepared to fight and die for the preservation of your culture. Probably some were not prepared to fight and die but we will never know since they would have died. There are variations on this, if you are a whale or an elephant it helps to be big but being big hasn't kept those species from being endangered. Or like our Bushman of the Kalahari you can retreat to an area so inhospitable that no one else wants it.

The British Royal Navy set the pattern for exploration in the 18th and early 19th century. See the voyage of Captain Cook and the voyage on the Beagle where Darwin was a working teenager. Now there is a plot! A seventeen year old has some strong ideas about certain phenomena that have been reported and so completely impresses headquarters with his brilliance that he is sent out to join the Enterprise, where everyone finds his precociousness a pain in the backside... (What is David Gerrold's address, I might try that one on for size.)

Indeed, if mankind sends vessels into space they should be prepared to defend themselves, or we should be prepared to send a lot of vessels with good men who will not return. I cannot imagine a race developing a strong and viable civilization without a healthy dose of aggressiveness in their makeup. (They might develop a fairly high pacifistic culture, as did the Hopi, but that is not a civilization.) That is just the way the universe probably developed. The only model we have for predicting what we will find out there is our own history. Frightening, isn't it? It does not preclude using a diplomatic approach to new civilizations, indeed, since one can never be sure just how strong and tough a newly encountered civilization will be, it would always be wise to be diplomatic. Nor does anything require that we force ourselves on other cultures as we did with the Japanese in the 1850s.

As to the Gulf of Tonkin and the Pueblo incident, I fail to see that either of those have any relevance to the discussion at hand. The former at least is not "long forgotten". I mention it every term when I teach about the Vietnam War.

Don D'Amassa I read with interest Mike Glycer's comments about the new
323 Dodge Street Star Trek, most of which I agree with, although some strikes
E.Providence, RI 02914 me as of little import. I'd also be willing to give the
show a chance to evolve a bit. Spock and Kirk had to settle
down for a while before they assumed the characteristics we remember them for, so
perhaps there will be some improvement as time goes on, although I really don't
expect anything great. The special effects are better, but not spectacularly so.
Mike doesn't indicate that he feels the rapprochement with the Klingons within a
single human lifespan is implausible, but I certainly found it rather unbelievable,
particularly in the absence of any explanation. I do rather like the design of the
new Enterprise. So far, Data seems the only interesting character; I positively
dislike the security officer. She seems determined to grit her teeth through every
episode. I haven't spoken to anyone actually active in Trek fandom, but would be
curious to know what the reaction has been there. Oh, and did anyone else notice
a rather marked physical resemblance between Ryker and Kirk? ((Yes.))

Jeanne M. Mealy Most people are disappointed by the show thus far -- yet I'm
4157 Lyndale Avenue S. not sure where to put the blame. Is Roddenberry really
Minneapolis, MN 55409 trapped in the 60s mentality, as one friend suggested,
despite his 'progressive' stance? How else to explain the
rehash of plot after plot? Maybe they're trying to retain fans of the old series
with familiar elements, and will gradually build up to more and more daring concepts.
I fear they'll lose their audience and ratings long before that happens! Is any-
one listening to fans' criticisms?

Merlin Odom, Lot 120 I like the new Star Trek, overall. ... Spock seems to have
Cloverleaf MHP been divided into three parts -- Worf, the reserved, cool
Adamsville, AL 35005 Klingon (nice touch--I wonder if humans serve on Klingon
vessels), Deanna the mysterious, telepathic half-Betazoid,
and Data the walking machine-intelligence who yearns to understand humans and be
more like them. ... I just wish someone would tell me who's running Engineering.

Lloyd Penney I'm not disappointed (in the new ST) but I do understand why
412-22 Riverwood Pky. it doesn't quite live up to expectations. People who worked
Toronto, Ontario together on the original series are now working together
Canada M8Y 4E1 again probably for the first time in years (I refer to the
production staff.) It's difficult to make the audience
feel the same way after these many years... different audience, different expecta-
tions and levels of sophistication on the audience's part, different actors in
different roles and characters, higher standards of production, etc. The build-up
on this show had been so extreme since Paramount decided that a new series wouldn't
hurt revenues from the movies, we probably couldn't help but be disappointed. The
pilot was a poor introduction to the new crew; while we gradually met the characters
in the old series, all the new characters were thrust at us in the new series pilot.
So much action came at us, we were a little confused and felt that things should
have been done a little slower... the introductions were a little too abrupt. For
many Trekkers I know, the actual attraction isn't a particular character, or the
Enterprise, but the background of the Federation, a social paradise that may or may
not be utopian.

The new series will suit them to a T right now ... they will see the Federation is still around 80 years after the original series, and we get a partial answer to a question we've asked...what happened after that? What happened after the original five-year mission? We don't get all our answers, but we get a tantalizing look into the future of the future. Certainly we don't have our original characters, but they were new to us at one time, too.

There may be a moustache on the Mona Lisa, but if you look carefully, the Mona Lisa is still underneath.

John Purcell
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Richfield, MN 55423

It will be interesting to note viewer's reactions to the new Star Trek series. I have already coined a new moniker:

Star Blech: The New Abomination. So far the rehash of the old stories and ideas is making me sick, and the acting is atrocious. I have seen 2x4s that can act better! My hope is that Captain Picard is retired and the James Kirk clone, Commander Ryker, assumes the helm. That would be a major improvement. The best thing to do, though, is to cancel the show now and save us viewers the embarrassment of Star Trek's ugly demise. Best to do what local station KITN-TV is doing here in Mpls -- show the new series on weekends and the original series on weeknights. In my mind there is no legitimate comparison: the old show is far superior than the new dreck dribbling out of the tube.

Oh, yeah; Glyer's article was great fun to read. His enthusiasm in destroying the new series is very apparent. I loved it.

Bruno Ogorelec
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41020 Zagreb
Yugoslavia

Shame on you, Buck Coulson! Austrian language, indeed! Do the Mexicans speak Mexican? For the record, Serbian and Croatian are two variants of the same language (Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian). The other two majority languages in Yugoslavia are Slovenian and Macedonian. Montenegrins speak Serbo-Croatian, as do Bosnians. The "official" minority languages (the ones in which primary and secondary education is available at schools, newspapers and books are published, radio and TV programs broadcast, etc.) are Italian, Hungarian, Albanian, Turkish, Czech, Slovak, Russian (not the same as Russian!) and Rumanian. Unofficially, at least two different Romany languages are spoken among the members of the Gypsy ethnic groups, and Greek is widespread as the second language in Southern Macedonia. Quite a Babel, don't you think? Add to this the fact that Serbo-Croatian is spoken in at least six distinct dialects and you begin to get the picture. One should also point out that all of the above takes place among only 22 million people in a country smaller than Texas.

I sent 25 Yugoslavs to Conspiracy, but could not attend myself. Hope to make it to Nolacon, with perhaps a dozen fellow-travelers. Should be fun! See you there...



Lada Peska and members-I read your letter of 1st August with very great pleasure.
of SFK Slany It aroused big response among other members of our club.
Na dolikach 503 Our club has contacts with about 25 SF clubs in Czechoslo-
Slany 274 01 vakia. BSFC is the first foreign club that we have contacted.
Czechoslovakia Czech fandom is relatively young, and so contacts with
foreign clubs are rare. We have mainly contact with some
clubs in Poland and the U.S.S.R.

Our fanzin achieved success in July! Part of our reportage from programme "Ufouni
ve Slanem II" was reprinted in the magazine "Zapisnik". This magazines has a cir-
culation of 210,000, and devotes some pages to SF. SLAN (our fanzin) was the first
and only fanzin the article of which was printed in (a) profi magazine.

I like very much the article by Patrick J. Gibbs "Best of the Year-1986" about the
most interesting new SF in the USA. Contemporary American SF comes to our country
rather seldom and late. About 40 SF books a year are published in Czechoslovakia.
Two to three books by English and American writers are published. Lately, for
example, P.K. Dick - "A Scanner Darkly" (Temny obraz), and Walter Tevis - "Mocking-
bird" (Zpev drozda).

I have never seen another American fanzine besides ANVIL. Czech fanzines are
different from ANVIL in composition and contents. There are more places for stories
(by our amateur authors or translators). One reason is that no SF magazine is
published in Czechoslovakia at this time. Where can one read SF then? the Polish
"Fantastyka" is the only SF magazine published in East Europe. Thanks (or owing)
to this, many Czechoslovak fans have learned to read Polish!

Zdenek Rampas In ANVIL 40 I was attracted (of course) by the reception of my article
Libocke 281/3 (Genesis of Czech. Fandom - A#39). That Harry Warner's comparison of
Praha 6 Czech fandom and the U.S.'s fandom of the thirties seems to be most
162 00 Czech. incentive to further thinking. G. Laskowski inquired for Czech books
translated in the U.S. I myself have no knowledge of this matter.

Perhaps some works of Karel Capek or Jan Weiss' "The House With (a) Thousand Floors".
Contemporary authors? Two books of Josef Nesvadba appeared in English translations:

1) The Lost Face; Best science fiction from Czechoslovakia

Taplinger Publishing Company, New York 1971

2) In the footsteps of atomizable snowman; Story of science and fantasy

New English Library, London 1970 (1978)

(both translated by Iris Unwin)

((I'm not sure what kind of snowman that is, but that's what Zdenek said. -- cp))

I can give more information about Anglo-American authors in Czechoslovakia:

Four or more books issued here: Clark, Asimov, Wells, Bradbury, Vonnegut, ERB.

Three books: M. Crichton

Two books: B. Aldiss, J. Windham

One book: F. Pohl, C. Kornblouth, Zelazny, Heinlein, W. Tevis, J. Brunner, Poul
Anderson, C. Simak.

There appeared also about eight volumes in Czech or Slovak showing roughly the
authors of the "Golden Age". Our knowledge ends somewhere before "The New Wave".
For instance, we know of only one story by Bob Shaw.

Linda Pickersgill Just to let you know that you were missed at Conspiracy, if not by
7A Lawrence Road me and other fans familiar with your famous late-night-talk-and-
South Ealing, party abilities, then at least by one mildly tipsy Yugoslav.
London W5 4XJ Krsto provided one of the best lines of the con on your behalf.

I bumped into him on the night of the masquerade--he was wearing some strange orange spectacles a la' mask-- "Linda," he says, stopping me full, "I am desperately seeking Charlotte." "I don't think she's here," I said. "She is registered," he replied, "and I am desperately seeking Charlotte." I left him to his futile search. He obviously stopped several others with the same request. So, Madonna, eat your heart out -- we're all desperately seeking Charlotte!

Walter Willis I liked your Not-A-Con report. It was interesting in itself, but
32 Warren Road all the more so because of its referenced to Bob Shaw. I always
Donaghadee, N.I. get a funny (but nice) feeling reading about Bob in these exotic
BT21OPD places. I keep thinking, look: that's our Bob! It's a bit like
seeing a relative on the tv news.

I was interested in your and Craig Ledbetter's comments on Bob's Slow Glass stories, because I remember so well the night he told James White and me about the idea. We talked about it most of the evening, throwing out plot ideas. Of course Bob didn't use any of ours -- as Garth Spenser points out, when Bob takes the ball he runs his own way -- and I expect that's why we remember them. They're unfinished business, from our point of view. One of my plots tied in with an idea I'd had for years, of a new kind of detective story. It was inspired by a character in Nigel Balchin's Small Back Room, whose job and hobby was to find correlations between apparently unrelated phenomena. (For example he had found that Army recruits above average height made better marksmen, and speculated whether the more rarified atmosphere or reduced gravity in which they operated might have some infinitesimal effect.) The slow glass plot was that a character like this in an automobile insurance company makes the original discovery of slow glass by finding that certain groups of cars have more side and rear damage than others. He discovers they all use the same make of rearview mirror...)

Harry Bond The Gilbreath article was interesting in that it showed how cul-
6 Elizabeth Avenue tures differ, even cultures which like yours and ours are supposed-
Bagshot, Surrey ly quite similar. While some of the ideas Americans (mostly
GU19 5NX U.K. Texans) seem to have about us are miles wide, the current idea,
I think, is that the British are ever so phlegmatic and wouldn't
bat an eyelid if someone dropped their trousers (sorry, pants) and went wee wees in
the middle of Piccadilly Circus. We aren't quite that stuff-upper-lipped but I
believe we are rather more liberated than you repressed lot over the pond on that
point at least.

You do have exquisite taste, having Bob Shaw at your cons. That talk of his sounds like a Serious Scientific one, which to any fan experienced in them speaks volumes. Did any faned actually secure rights to publication of said talk? If so, I wanna see it! ((Dick & Nicki Lynch, 4207 Davis Lane, Chattanooga, TN 37416 USA))

Skel
25 Bowland Close
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United Kingdom

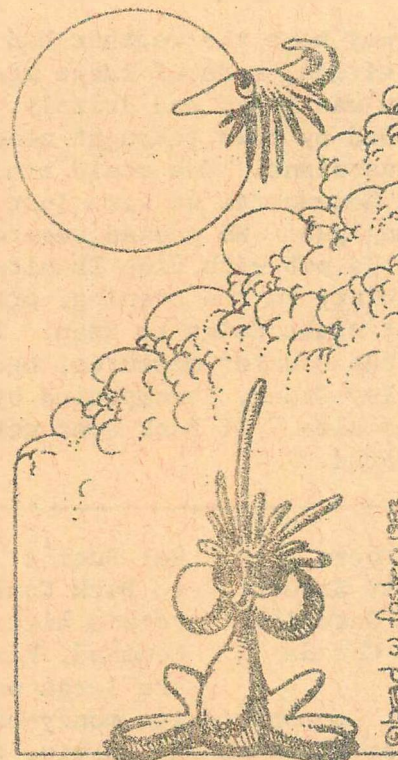
"In those days" wrote Buck
Coulson, "it was unheard of
for a fan's mother to have
anything to do with any-
thing as disreputable as
science fiction." Well,

yes, I guess that may have been so. What were those days again? March 1953? Yes, I can't deny it from experience because in March 1953 I was still some months off six and had yet to discover SF, never mind fandom. It all happened about 3½ years later, and I'd just turned nine. I remember it well because that was the only birthday I've ever spent in hospital. I was in there for about eight weeks, the entire Summer Holidays, losing an eye. Oh, losing the eye took no time at all. What took so long was their natural reluctance to take the irrevocable step of removing it, and their incompetence at taking so long to find out why it wasn't responding to treatment. Anyway, when I came out of the hospital I had several weeks of recuperation before I was adjudged fit to return to school. I had spent eight weeks in hospital and I was bored out of my skull.

There was nobody for me to play with, all my friends being back at school. I was driving my mother mad. In desperation she gave me a book to read. It was an old hardback, a complete edition of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Gods of Mars (which NEL subsequently republished as at least a trilogy). That book wiped me out.

At one point I put it down and dared read no further. It was simply too suspenseful for my nine-year-old self to take. John Carter was down in the dark and dismal catacombs with these enormous, terrible spiders. I could not read on, it was too scary. I begged my mother to tell me how it turned out but, no fool she, she wouldn't. I couldn't read on, because it was too scary. I couldn't not read on, because I had to know. Impasse. It took a couple of hours for logic to return. Even at the age of nine I knew that it simply wasn't done to kill the hero. Not in the fifties it wasn't. So I eventually read on, and was hooked on SF from that day onward. My mother, calmly and deliberately, turned me on to SF. Far from having nothing to do with the stuff, she got me my first fix. It was a revelation. I can't remember much about the second SF novel I read, but it involved men on Mars, and Martian insects laying their eggs inside living, paralysed human hosts, and I associate it with Ted Tubb, but already the memories were beginning to blur as I slid down the slippery slope of addiction.

Despite living in this country all these years I'd never seen a stone circle until this summer, when I saw two. We were being visited by Jon and Joni Stopa and Jon thinks that a day spent without visiting the site of an ancient stone circle is a day wasted. The first day we visited the Nine Sisters near Birchover. This was a small circle of standing stones, small stones, in a sylvan glade in a small wood by a blasted heath. The sun was shining and it was a sort of friendly little circle.



On the way home the weather had broken and we took in Arbow Low. This was a much larger circle, made of large grey stones all laid now flat on the ground. The weather now was misty and drizzly, lowering. The monument is on farm land and was surrounded by cows (thought none grazed within the circle) which seemed like threatening guardians. One could almost feel a curse laid upon us. Perhaps one was. As we sped homewards we were just in the mood for a nice meal and pint in a warm and welcoming pub. We passed several, but I held out for the Highwayman at Rainow, a superb old pub with fine Thwaites beer, and I navigated us unerringly to it. It was seven-thirty in the evening, prime-time, and it was closed — no hint of when, if ever, it might deign to open. The Arbor Low cows cast a potent spell. Fortunately, I know the counter measures, because we ended up having a fine nosh at the Windmill in Whitley Green, accompanied by pints of Boddingtons, Theakstons, and Timothy Taylor's ales. If Buck ever gets up this way and needs a native guide, consider me volunteered.

Murray Moore
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Midland Ontario
L4R 3E2 Canada

Re: Buck's "Historical Books" column in A43: I would recommend to Buck Coulson, if he is not familiar with them, the three volume history of the British Empire by James Morris: Heaven's Command, Pax Britannica, and Farewell the Trumpets. My copies are large paperback Penguin editions. A local bookseller had Heaven's Command in its money-back-if-you-don't-like-it section. James Morris might be better known as Jan Morris, travel writer. As the note about the author of the above states, "During the writing of the Pax Britannica trilogy James Morris completed a change of sexual roles, and now lives and writes as Jan Morris."

Buck doesn't mention George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman series but not from ignorance, I'm sure. Fraser's placing at various hot spots around the world in the 1800s of the bully character from Tom Brown's School days, is wonderful history cum fiction. I'm sure Buck knows of The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara, especially since he wrote SF as well. Shaara's novel about the Battle of Gettysburg won a Pulitzer in 1975. My Ballentine paperback edition author's note even acknowledges that Shaara's "early short stories were published in Galaxy Magazine in 1952."

At the end of his review of 1986 books, Patrick Gibbs writes: "Remember: all things come to he who waits." The context is that most of the books he discussed were only available in hardcover. Amen to that. Why pay for hardcovers when you can buy paperbacks that you don't read? Not reading paperbacks is much cheaper.

Kevin McCaw
20 Dodd Street
Hamilton Hill 6163
Australia

I can only agree with Harry Warner Jr. that we seem to lose fans new to the fanzine publication regimen due to excessive initial criticism. After a year's attempt at editing a fanzine, the mounting criticism prompted my decision to quit writing until I had at least a degree in English. Indeed, the discussion of "why we are losing new fanzine fan" was running even back then. Fanzine publication has become a maze of masochism for the budding new fan, tied down by problems of cost, inexperience and the weight of all that has gone before; the questions "why bother anyway?" and "who will read it?" are constantly in mind. Add to this the insecurity of a first fanzine editorship and you have a perfect wedge for criticism to drive that fan out of publication.

((Kevin says he lives in a semi-rural area -- the tractor going past the front door each morning is his alarm clock. Perhaps that explains the following paragraph which is his answer to cat stories. -- cp))

My wife Shelley has two pet ferrets called Kodo and Podo (after the ones in Beast Master.) She often takes them to pet shows and to the Royal (agricultural) Show to promote better understanding of ferrets in the general public. Unlike the U.S., there are no laws prohibiting ferrets in any state; so they are allowed as pets, or to hunt rabbits. Being domestic ferrets, ours are pets -- not working ferrets. Shelley is Social Secretary of the Western Australian Ferret and Ferreting Society so she is pretty actively involved in ferret promotion. Contrary to media representation, ferrets are not vicious but rather as tame as most dogs. They are only savage if they have been treated savagely -- starved, or beaten. Ferrets come from cool climates and hence cannot survive in the wild in Australia. In summer they have to be guarded against heat stroke and kept in the shade.

Merlin Odom, Lot 120 ...what Buck Coulson had to say reminded me of my own mother. Cloverleaf MHP When I first joined BSFC/fandom she tried to get me not to Adamsville, AL 35005 because didn't I know they were nothing but a bunch of perverts and Satan-worshippers who liked to get hold of young boys and do terrible things to them? Funny, but she said the same thing when I took up aikido.

The Rivercon piece reminded me of the late Robert Offutt, who had invited Jack Vance for B'hamacon II. Robert was a truly good, gnetle soul; I think he would have liked BoSh.

"Cars that go Boom in the Night" -- the best fiction usually cannot compare with reality. Charlotte, if I didn't know you so well I'd swear you were making it all up. Unlike yours truly, weird things happen to you, as well as to those around you. Odd things happen to people I know, but I remain untouched by skewed fate, having to remain content to observe the carnage around me, being simultaneously jealous and grateful that it's them and not me.

Gene Wolfe I'm hoping that you and ANVIL can get me out of a lot of quandry. P.O. Box 69 While we were in England for Conspiracy, my wife and I stayed at a Barrington little hotel in Bath called Somerset House. We were given the Charlotte IL 60011 room, and it was full of pink pigs. There were at least a dozen pictures and statuettes of pink pigs, a switch-plate decorated with a pink pig, pink pig-foot hooks to hang your coat on, and so on. Naturally I thought that the people who owned the place loved CHARLOTTE'S WEB and the pigs were Wilbur. Imagine my amazement and dismay when, just as we were preparing to leave, I discovered a plaque saying that the room had been named for Princess Charlotte, daughter of George IV. Can you, or perhaps some of your British readers, tell me what pink pigs have to do with Princess Charlotte?

Lawrence Watt-Evans ... in regard to the Audi 5000, the latest I've heard is
5 Solitaire Court that both Brian Earl Brown and I were wrong. The problem
Gaithersburg, MD 20878 appears to be in a linkage after all, but nothing so esoteric as tangling the transmission with the accelerator;
it's that the accelerator cable can snag on the brake, so that when the brake is stepped on hard, the accelerator goes down at the same time, and because the accelerator has faster response than the brake (which is bad design, if you ask me), the car jumps ahead suddenly, before the brakes can work. In some cases, the anti-lock system on the brake can then keep the brakes from coming on at all. So I guess all those drivers aren't as stupid as I thought--but Mr. Brown still had the mechanism wrong.

((L W-E wrote a long letter setting Garth Spencer straight about his opinion -- printed in ANVIL 45 -- about SFWA, and sent a copy to Garth. No room to print it here, but following is Garth's re-thought position. -- cp))

Garth Spencer I was misled about SFWA. Lawrence Watt-Evans has been at pains
3467 Quebec St. to show me that SFWA members are not a unit, and John Little in
Vancouver, B.C. B.C. omitted to do and say a lot of things that would have
V5V 3J9 Canada established his credibility as a market. Incomplete information
led me to believe SFWA members had some thing in their heads
about Canadian publications. From our correspondence it emerges that any SF publication has a whole checklist of steps to take, a new publication also has to establish its bona fides, and a new Canadian SF publication has extra hurdles as well (mostly extra costs). Other periodicals outside the States have similar problems, to judge from the market news. Look at Interzone. Look at aphelion... well, uh, it was there in Australia a few months ago... I guess that proves me point, huh?

I have the idea, still, there is a Flying-Dutchman sort of curse on Canadian SF periodicals starting up...but at least now I don't have to believe prejudice is involved.

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Harry Warner, Jr. I'm afraid I wasn't able to snicker at your merry tale of
423 Summit Avenue your son's auto's self-immolation. Just two days ago I had
Hagerstown MD 21740 a bad time with my own car when it suddenly decided it didn't
want to go into reverse gear any more, while parked behind
another vehicle at a shopping mall. Back in 1950, when I acquired my first car,
its automatic transmission was a comparative novelty in Hagerstown, and everyone
told me I'd be sorry I didn't have manual gearshift when this weird new gadgetry
broke down. They were right, although it took 37 years to reach justification.

I can believe in that adult cat that is scared of a kitten. A couple of years ago,
residents in the 200 block of Summit Avenue had a ferocious-looking, extra-large
German shepherd. It was quite nerve-wracking when I would walk down Summit Avenue
and see this monster racing up the sidewalk toward me, emitting awful noises. But
it never even slowed down as it dashed past me because behind it were coming two
or three tiny puppies, yipping shrilly as they chased it away from their territory.

A lot of "fanzines" listed in Factsheet Five don't merit that designation by my
standards. I think a fanzine is something directly or indirectly resulting from a
fandom of some sort, created by fans of science fiction or mystery fiction or
baseball players or movie stars or whatever. I don't see how amateur publications
that try to persuade readers to go back to nature or political pamphlets or in-
structions on how to evade paying taxes can be called fanzines.

Milt Stevens Andrea Gilbreath's article reminded me of the beer drinking
7234 Capps Avenue contest that LASFS engaged in at the 1975 Westercon. The
Reseda, CA 91335 contest resulted from a challenge from Sassafrass, a Sacra-
mento SF club of sorts. They originally had in mind a drink
until you puke type contest. I thought that was a dumb idea, so I changed it to
the rules of a tea-drinking contest: the last person to have to take a piss would
be the winner for their team.

The contest was organized into two teams of five members each. When the LASFS team
saw the Sacramento Champion, a man known as "Diablotto, The Mad Thing," they knew
they were in trouble. Pituitary giants just aren't that common in fandom. As it
turned out, the LASFS team did better than expected. The last woman on the LASFS
team ended up facing Diablotto. While she had considerable capacity, she wasn't a
regular beer drinker. So after downing eight beers, she was about ready to fall
out of her chair. At that point, the LASFS trainer called it quits.

Brad W. Foster Re: ANVIL 45: AMAZING cover by West, best I've ever seen on
4109 Pleasant Run ANVIL, or most other fanzines and quite a few prozines as
Irving, TX 75038 well! A wonderful idea, beautifully realized. Wonderful!

Been spending most of my time lately on the MECHTHINGS comic book series. First
issue came out about a month ago in specialty comic/sf shops. ((August '87)) Very
low first issue orders, so going to be an uphill battle to build up an audience.
If you get a chance to see a copy (ie, if your local shop is one of the few that
actually ordered any), let me know whatcha think of it! (First issue even contains
a rare photo of the author, looking every inch the cliché artist!)

Buck Coulson You and Dave Locke should get together sometime and trade car
2677 W - 500 N stories. His were mostly in YANDRO a long time back, but I doubt
Hartford City if any of them can surpass the flaming Pinto. Juanita and I had
IN 47348 a Pinto once, but nothing serious ever happened to it, just lots of
 niggling little repairs until we traded it in on our present car
(getting as much in trade-in as we'd paid for it; they did have trade-in value). I
thought some about having a bumper sticker made, saying "Touch me and I explode",
but I never did.

Whether or not an obligation to publish a trip report is stated in the TAFF rules,
it was clearly understood by all of the early TAFF delegates, and was generally
referred to in the fannish discussions prior to the establishment of TAFF. Of
course, as Nielson Hayden says, it can't be enforced. Actually, almost nothing
about TAFF can be enforced. If some administrator disappeared with the funds, what
would happen besides a lot of verbiage in fanzines? Damn little; the individual
might be ostracized, but who'd take him to court? He couldn't even be run out of
fandom, since fandom isn't an organized body. (TAFF is semi-organized, but not to
the point of legal action.) Legal action might be theoretically possible, but pur-
suing it would be too much trouble for fans.

Brian Earl Brown Patrick Nielsen Hayden's letter aggravates me on several points
11675 Beaconsfield though overall I don't - and can't - disagree with what he says.
Detroit, MI 48224 True, the TAFF ballot doesn't stipulate a trip report as a con-
 dition for running. Nor does the DUFF ballot, I think. But
Patrick's comment seems aimed at turning on a narrow legal point that hardiy seems
in the spirit of fannishness, nor in the tradition of TAFF. His letter seems aimed
at defending a TAFF administrator's right not to write a trip report while
reassuring us that he and Teresa are working on theirs.

..... TAFF delegates don't owe us -- meaning general fandom, the people who voted
for them and paid their way -- anything, including a trip report. I certainly don't
recall anything written down that says one trip equals one trip report. But
written contracts are not the only contracts between people recognized by law...
(I'm not a lawyer, but I watch People's Court a lot). By both precedent and expec-
tations I 'm sure it could be argued very convincingly that a trip report is an
un-written, but real, obligation of a TAFF delegate.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Richard Gilliam with his new, new address: Box 25676, Tampa
FL 33622; Alan Sandercock who wants to subscribe; Art Hlavaty who has a PO box now:
Box 52028, Durham, NC 27717; Kris Kuipers of 1821 Norman Bridge, Montgomery, AL
36104, who is an actor, and who wants contact with fans; Marie Green who sent money;
Colin & Joan Lagenveld who sent a Christmas card; Gary Farber who wishes we would
review some of the books he sent; Jim Gilpatrick wrote to thank us for the party;
Wayne Brenner, who sent art (thanks); Kathleen Gallagher who is an aspiring fan
writer; Craig Ledbetter who gets some "wild" fanmail from Italy; a post card from
Art Widner; a letter with article from Marc Ortlieb; Don Lee, 2200 Kim #C, Spring-
dale AR 72764, is a self-confessed neofan and letterhack and will somebody please
write to him?...; Tony Alsobrook-Renner; Ben Schilling; Phil Tortorici; and P.L.
Caruthers-Montgomery who wants me to run the SFC mailing address for those of you
who want to send \$3 and join, and learn all there is to know about Southern Fandom.