



All aboard for Manhattan

Our first issue told of our first encounter with bento, the Japanese box lunch. Since then, we've learned more about it from a very attractive book called *Ekiben*, by J. Kamakura and G. Bosker. (\$17, trade paperback, Chronicle Books.) In Japan, commuters by the thousands buy bento at train stations. Unlike the American fast-food ideal of internationally standardized burgers&fries, railway bento is different in each town. The deliberate aim is to use local ingredients and appropriate packaging to create something unique and characteristic of the location.

Just as Japanese bento varies from place to place, our *Bento* will differ greatly from issue to issue. This one is being produced for Corflu 7 (New York City, May 1990). It is characteristic, not of the con or the city (we haven't been there yet!), but of the current state of our collective unconscious.... which seems to be a good bit gloomier than it was for #1. Believe me, we hope to be feeling funnier soon.

All contents are by Kate Yule and David Levine, except for artwork signed by Steve Berry or Giovannia Fregni. Cover by Kate Yule. Send LoCs to: dlevine@spiritone.com and kyule@spiritone.com.

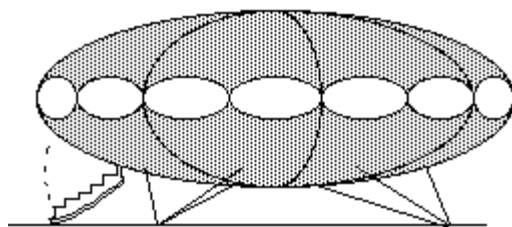
See you in the Netherlands!

The "Apple Maggot Quarantine Song" in Issue #1 can be found in the Washington State Centennial Songbook, edited by Linda Allen.

The Wreckage of the Future

When I was young, I visited the Playboy Club Resort in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin with my parents. On display there was

the prototype of a most marvelous manufactured home: a house in the shape of a flying saucer. It was round in plan and elliptical in cross-section, completely ringed with elliptical windows. It stood on six pipestem legs, seeming to float above the ground. The entrance was an electrically-powered hatchway that lowered with a wonderful hum to open and raised with a satisfying clunk to close, locking the outside world out completely.



Most of the inside space was taken up with a round living room, featuring one of those conical fireplaces so popular in the 60's. White fun fur covered the floor, flowed up over the built-in sofa, and curved all the way up the wall and across the ceiling to meet itself on the other side. All the furniture was built-in, all the surfaces were covered with fun fur in unnatural colors, all the appliances were the most futuristic. (Remember those flat white stovetops? It had one.) It was the very ideal of the 1960s House of the Future.

The whole house was made of blue fiberglass, molded in segments to be assembled on site. In the glossy brochure, there was a photograph of a helicopter delivering one to a remote mountain top. To this young science fiction fan, the whole idea was just impossibly seductive.

In retrospect, it's not very surprising that the idea didn't pan out. The house was written up in a few magazines (including *Playboy*), but I guess they never sold many, or indeed any, because I never heard of it again.

Until the year the Shorewood High School Drama Club went to a high school drama convention somewhere near the Illinois border. We were all staying in a Regal Eight Inn (two dollars a night more amenities than a Motel 6) in a reasonable facsimile of the middle of nowhere. I and a few of the others wandered away from the hotel the second evening to see what there was to see in the vicinity. And there, in a large and otherwise vacant field, was The House of the Future.

The future had not been kind to the house. It had been painted white, but the paint was in pretty bad shape and you could see the scratched blue fiberglass peeking through. The hatch hung open on one hinge, its hum and clunk silenced by lack of power. I overcame my normal reluctance to trespass and clambered inside with the rest.

There was no question it was the exact same house I'd seen before. There was the same fun fur in the same unnatural colors, the same built-in furniture, the same everything. The fireplace had vanished sometime in the intervening years... along with the hope, the pride, and the sense of wonder. The carpet was pretty badly trampled and the windows were scratched and pitted. Worst of all, though, was that the House of the Future was *dated*. It had been so aggressively futuristic that it was beginning to look "oh, so Sixties" just halfway through the Seventies.

I'm not sure what the house was doing there in the middle of a field in some podunk town. It appeared to have been used as a real estate office, or possibly a construction shack, before being abandoned. I sat in the house for a while, speculating about the peculiar things that must have happened to it (and its optimistic developers) to bring it to this spot and this condition.

At the time, my primary emotion was amazement that the house and I should meet up again in such a place after all these years. It's only in the intervening years that I've felt the peculiar emotion I've come to recognize as *nostalgia for the future*. It's a melancholy emotion, composed of equal parts fond memories and shattered dreams. I felt it when I visited Cape Canaveral in the early 80's, when the most exciting parts of the tour all had to do with the Apollo program and other projects that were finished years ago (entire buildings there were stenciled with the words ABANDON IN PLACE). Tomorrowland at Disneyland also brings out this feeling; where are the atomic spaceships and personal hovercars we were promised? And there was the time Kate and I went to Vancouver, B.C. in 1989. In 1986 Vancouver was the site of a World's Fair, all technology and glitz. The developers had promised that high-rise condos and marinas

would sprout from the Expo's ashes, but in 1989 the site was a complete wasteland, a jumble of lawsuits and broken promises.

Before the drama club left the Regal Eight Inn, I went back to visit the house one last time. This was a mistake: some of the rowdier students from the convention had found it. The hatch was now torn completely loose and was lying on the ground under the entranceway. Large hunks of the fun fur had been torn away from the walls, and someone had scrawled obscene messages in some viscous black fluid all over the inside. I felt as if I were visiting the grave of an infant; there was that same sense of lost promise.

Our visions of the future must, inevitably, fade away to be replaced by the real future, more amazing and more terrifying than we ever could have imagined... and with new visions of *its* future. But we should remember the old futures, some of them silly, some of them grandiose; they are part of our heritage. And, since so many of today's dreamers grew up on yesterday's tomorrows, even the lost dreams may one day become realities. —DDL

Musings of a young fogey

I'm going to be one hell of an old fogey when I grow up. I'm well on my way already, and not yet 30.... I mean, do you *believe* what youngsters are wearing on the streets these days? If I were their parents I wouldn't let them out of the house! The idea, going out in public looking like that! (mutter, mutter, harumph...)

Saw someone the other day, obviously going to work, nice coat, nice briefcase, nice hairdo, lavender sweatpants. And I thought to myself, *I don't care what anyone says, fleece material like that is for gym class, not street wear.* As I did, an oft-remembered little scene replayed itself in my mind. I was in high school, getting ready to go out somewhere with a friend. Her father, who was more of an age to be our grandfathers' generation, looked at our jeans and complained that we were dressed up just right to go muck out the back forty. To his mind, denim was dungarees, and dungarees were work clothing, and *nothing* anyone did was ever going to change that.

Will we, as old farts still wearing t-shirts and jeans in the year 2020, look as dorky to our kids as those old men who got stuck in the polyester era look to us today?

And *will we care?* Or will we keep right on wearing our denim, because we *know* it's perfectly normal clothing the way Gayle's grandfather *knew* it was low-class and the way I for one *know* that spandex tights aren't really clothes at all.... I suspect that that's just the way it will be.

Oy. —KY

An Appreciation of Daniel Pinkwater

Daniel Manus Pinkwater, also known as D. Manus Pinkwater, Honest Dan'l Pinkwater, Daniel M. Pinkwater, and other aliases, writes kids' books. *Weird* kids' books. You'd like them. Books with titles like *The Snarkout Boys and the Avocado of Death*; *Yobgogle*, *Mystery Monster of Lake Champlain*; *Young Adult Novel*; *The Hoboken Chicken Emergency*; *The Devil in the Drain*; and *Fat Men from Space*. Books with characters named Winston Bongo, Charles the Cat (who is *not* a cat), Flipping Hades Terwilliger, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. My kind of books.

The plots of these books are fairly simple. This is not too surprising, since most of them are very short. Many of them are also packed with pictures. Pinkwater pictures. Did I mention that Daniel Pinkwater does his own illustrations? They are incredibly simple and direct, executed in a fat felt-tip or something equally unsubtle, yet conveying the essence of whatever it is he's trying to convey, be it an Alaskan Malamute or a flight of hamburger-shaped flying saucers.

Where was I? Oh, yes, the plots. A typical Pinkwater story is told in the first person and takes place during the hero's summer vacation. The hero is a typical, fairly boring middle-class kid who goes to a school with a name like Benedict Arnold Junior High in a middle-sized town called something like Bolognaville. His parents have left him all alone for

some reason, but he's doing quite well, thank you. He has a few fairly odd friends, and they introduce him to some even odder people, and then one day something REALLY odd happens, which leads to a sequence of strange events. Ultimately the hero manages to save the world, or at least Bolognaville.

On the face of it, that's a fairly standard plot for a young adult novel. But in your typical young adult novel the hero is brave, loyal, upstanding, and spunky, and winds up uncovering the bank robbers' plan just in time, earning the accolades of the mayor and the whole town. Pinkwater's heroes are just ordinary kids, not the most popular, probably a little overweight, not at all brave, and by no means spunky. There are no bank robbers in Pinkwater books; the antagonists (not "villains," they're too placid) are extraterrestrials, ghosts, or unscrupulous Malamute breeders. The hero overcomes them through intellect or chance, and if he tried to recount his adventures nobody would believe them. But he is quietly content nonetheless.

As you can probably tell by my mention of the extraterrestrials, a lot of Pinkwater's stuff could be classed as SF or fantasy. That, plus the fact that his protagonists are what you might call "inadequately socialized," makes Pinkwater very popular with fans. Lots of SF fans are Pinkwater freaks. There are often Pinkwater panels or readings at cons. You won't see Pinkwater himself at a con, though... he's too shy. One con even made him Guest of Honor, but he backed out at the last minute and just gave a phone interview.

In the last few years, Daniel Pinkwater has had a semi-regular segment on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." Many of these little essays have been collected in the book *Fish Whistle*, the only Pinkwater book that's marketed for adult readers. Mostly he tells stories of his own life, growing up in Chicago and going to school in Brooklyn, in the same simple, outrageous style as his fiction. Having heard these essays, I'm amazed how much of Pinkwater's actual life appears almost unchanged in his stories. Many stories (notably *The Magic Moscow*) involve Alaskan Malamutes, which Pinkwater raises and trains as a day job.

If you read a lot of Pinkwater books, you'll see a lot of these common threads. For example, the plot of *Fat Men from Space* appears as the plot of a movie the hero sees on late-night TV in *Lizard Music*. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the famous composer and superhero, appears in several books, and food is a constant presence. Usually junk food: gooey donuts, giant ice cream sundaes, hamburgers dripping with grease, all the stuff you love and shouldn't.

Pinkwater books are a little like junk food themselves. There really isn't anything to them: no message for the ages, no deathless prose, no subtle interplay of light and shadow. They're expensive for what you get, too; a typical Pinkwater book costs as much as a standard paperback, or more, and can be read in ten minutes. And they can be hard to find. Hard-core Pinkwater junkies are often found hanging around children's book stores, haunting the various sections where Pinkwater might be shelved, and frightening the other customers. But Pinkwater books are fun. They're weird. They're fannish. Try one, you might like it! —DDL

—Yeah, what he said. I just want to add that if Daniel Pinkwater ever wants to branch out, I know just the thing. He should record James Thurber stories for books-on-tape. After listening to his "column" on NPR for a couple of years now, to read a Pinkwater story is to have it read aloud to me. His voice is an internal soundtrack for the printed page. Last summer I picked up *The Thurber Carnival* and was very surprised to hear Pinkwater reading it to me too! After a while I saw why. Thurber's vignettes about eccentric relatives and even more eccentric dogs he has known are a lot like Pinkwater's anecdotes. They'd make a good team. —KY

More musings of a young fogey

Science fiction fans can be impatient with the world for not progressing as fast as it ought. Why are picture phones on global backorder? Why aren't we on the moon! On Mars! "If this is 1990, how come the cars still have wheels?" as Bill Higgins puts it.

I seem to have the opposite problem. The world advances when I'm not looking.... I keep going blithely out to buy some simple object for daily living, only to be told I must try an antique store.

Darning eggs. I don't believe the clerks who say "People don't darn anymore", for I, of course, am people and I darn. Whoever does must all be using old Leggs containers, though. (Or hanging onto Grandma's old darning egg, which would explain why they're scarce even in the antique shops.)

Hatpins. That one wasn't too much of a surprise, though damned if I know how other people keep their spring hats from blowing away....

A rectangular kitchen table. This one had us flabberghasted. They don't *make* the blessed things any more! Look at a Sears catalog if you don't believe me, and I won't blame you if you don't. While I wasn't looking, someone lopped the corners off every kitchen table in the country and turned them into oval dinette sets. The rectangular kitchen table is solely a relic of estate sales and the antique shops that buy them there. I mean, we knew that hoping for a marbled formica one with round chrome legs was pushing it, but this was ridiculous.

"Future shock," David tells me, "is what happens to people who have not been paying attention." I guess so. Next thing you know you'll be telling me TV sets don't have channel knobs.

—Um, Kate?

—I don't want to hear it. —*KY*

Help, Jane! Stop this Crazy Thing!

You've met George Jetson. You've met his family, too: his boy Elroy; daughter Judy; Jane, his wife. You've met him... you might even think you know him.

You're wrong.

You probably think that George Jetson is a typical middle-class 25th-century guy, with a typical middle-class house and a typical middle-class job. You probably think that George commutes to work each day (in his antigravity car) and comes home at night (to his all-electric, all-automated home) like millions of other middle-class schmos.

You didn't think about the energy that would be required to support two hundred million antigravity cars and two hundred million automated homes. You didn't realize that there's no way this planet could support an entire nation with George Jetson's lifestyle after five hundred years of living the way we've been living (and we're showing no signs of stopping). You didn't think about how *lucky* George was.

You didn't realize that George Jetson is not a typical middle-class slob, oh no. George Jetson is a member of the ultra-elite; the one percent, or maybe one-half of one percent, of the population of 25th-century Earth that can afford antigravity cars and automated homes... and, for that matter, shoes. Or nutritious, pure food. Or perhaps even clean air.

Did you ever wonder why George Jetson lives and works in buildings that look like the top part of the Space Needle, hundreds of feet in the air? Did you ever wonder why we never saw the Jetsons at ground level? It's because ground level is a wasteland... a toxic dump that George and all his class would consider unlivable. They abandoned the surface long ago... only the incredible cost of living in space keeps them on the planet at all. (The ultra-*ultra*-rich that even George and Jane envy eat real meat and walk on real grass. They live in heavily-defended L-5 cylinders.)

Hanna-Barbera never showed us the rest of the Jetsons' world, of course, but we can imagine what it must be like. Five centuries of continuous exploitation have left almost nothing of the natural resources. Anything that could be mined, extracted, or cut has been; more and more advanced technologies have allowed humankind to squeeze out the very dregs of the planet's minerals, edibles, and consumables. Only a continuous flow of raw materials from space keeps this civilization alive at all. The atmosphere is a foggy soup of toxic chemicals with a much higher proportion of carbon dioxide than today's; this makes the temperature unbearably high.

Which is not to say that the surface is unpopulated; far from it. It's crowded with billions of underfed, sickly people.

People with lungs full of lead and bones full of mercury and strontium. People with an average lifespan of about 30 and an infant mortality rate of over 50%. People whose daily diet is pond scum and to whom a cockroach is a rare protein feast... if they're strong or wily enough to actually kill one.

How can they live in these teeming numbers in such hostile conditions? People are adaptable. If human beings can survive the Arctic and the Kalihari with nothing more sophisticated than bone tools, who knows what they can survive with 25th-century technology? And they will have just enough of that expensive technology to keep them alive: the elite need a huge force of cheap labor to do the really dirty work. (Robots are expensive; people can be manufactured by unskilled labor.)

This scenario may seem far-fetched. It isn't. It's certainly pessimistic, but it's a logical extrapolation from the state of the world in the 1960's (when the Jetsons TV show was designed) through the existing data points of the 1970's and 80's forward to the 25th century. Already, we have a small percentage of the world's population living with technologies and standards of living that are almost unimaginable to the majority, and the difference between the rich and the poor is growing at an accelerating rate.

I want to think that this trend can be stopped without personal sacrifice, but I don't think it can. I don't relish the thought of giving up my private car, my personal computer, my slice of the big gooey American pie. Maybe I won't be able to. But I know I should.

Perhaps the best thing to do is to teach the lessons through television, the same medium that helped us get into this mess. I have in mind a script in which the Jetsons' aircar springs a whatzit and they go spiralling down into the greenish clouds below. I figure only Elroy will be mean and resourceful enough to survive past the first 24 hours on the surface, and he'll spend the rest of his short, violent life as part of one of the rapacious gangs that terrorize the wasted landscape. I plan to call it "The Jetsons Go To Hell." I wonder if the company that does The Simpsons would be interested in it? —
DDL

Bitte, Allemanden Sie links

Square dancing is a lot like a foreign language.

"Oh, you mean understanding the caller? All those funny words like allemand left and do-si-do?"

Well, no, actually I didn't mean the calls at all. Although I think my language training helps when it comes to making out what's being said over the loudspeaker in a big hall with music going and dozens of people stomping and whooping it up. There's a certain way of listening, where you unfocus your ears one notch (like unfocusing your eyes to see Lincoln instead of blocks of gray) and let some other segment of the brain than usual do a little pre-processing of the sound, I think. I learned it in Germany, where talking to friends in a bar or watching a cop show on TV presents problems of comprehension that no classroom prepares you for.

I first learned to square dance in Germany, actually, and I did have a small edge over the rest of the class. Square dancing is done in English all over the world. In "singing calls" the commands for the dancers are interspersed among bits and snippets of the original lyrics of the song, and I at least didn't have to work to recognize whether "Saturday night and I ain't got nobody" was a move we'd learned the week before.

But I was really thinking of the dancing itself. We start off with the above-mentioned allemand left and do-si-do. This is the equivalent of that week spent on "Hello," "How are you," and "My name is" at the beginning of any language class I've ever had. You may even sort of remember these moves from grade school PE class, the way everybody knows how to say "bonjour" and "uno, dos, tres".

Gradually, more vocabulary is added. We can dance the equivalent of entire sentences, even paragraphs. But during the break, the "angels" who are helping out square up for some dancing, and two things become very obvious. One: the paragraphs we have learned to dance are about as complicated as "See Jane. See Jane circle left. Swing, Jane, swing."

Watching the angels, we can't even tell where one "word" ends and the next begins. It's a stream of motion. Two: we are learning a dialect spoken only in the classroom. The angels' do-si-do looks as much like ours as "Hello, how are you today?" resembles "Hey, howzitgoin?"; as much as high-school French resembles Parisian argot.

I took a beginner's square dance class this winter, after nearly a decade since my short experience in Germany. As the winter wore on I noticed more and more similarities to language class. The teacher who is fluent but can't teach... the book that explains the grammar in terms of charts and rules and definitions but says nothing about the grocery stores or the politics.

Class ended last week. Our accent is horrible. We know nothing about the culture.... We have learned the book language, the technicalities of Basic and Mainstream square dancing moves. Time and experience, we hope, will turn that into the living language. —KY

Next issue: "Bid Stickers and Gizmos, OR, Square Dancing is Just Another Fandom."

Tomorrow is the First Day of the Rest of Your Life

Fiction by David D. Levine

I was walking into the grocery store one day when I felt a light tap on my shoulder. I turned around, and what should I see but ... myself. A slightly older version of me, to be sure, but definitely me. But that wasn't the strangest thing. Behind him ... er, me ... was another me, a little older than the first, who was tapping the first me on the shoulder. Behind him was another me, who seemed to be about to cosh the second one on the head with a blunt instrument. Behind him was another one, trying to pull a sack over the head of the third one. There was a whole line of me, stretching all the way to the corner and around it. Each one was a little older than the one before him, and using a slightly more outlandish and futuristic weapon in an attempt to prevent the one before him from doing whatever it was he was trying to do. Not one of them was moving a muscle.

In fact, nothing was moving at all. There was a bird suspended in mid-air just down the block. Nothing was moving anywhere in sight except for myself ... and an old man who had just rounded the corner and was heading my way. The old man was me, of course.

He was moving slowly; he seemed to be about 75. His clothes were unremarkable except that he had a gizmo on his belt the size and shape of a walkie-talkie. It had to be his time machine. "Well," he said as he puffed to a stop in front of me, "I seem to have succeeded."

"OK," I said, "I've read enough time-travel stories to know *what's* going on here. But *why?*"

"It's really quite simple. Waiting for you in the cereal aisle is the girl of your dreams. You're going to fall instantly in love and be married within the month. You'll have a very happy and fulfilling life for the next seven years, then she'll die slowly and horribly of lymphatic cancer. You'll be left a mental and emotional wreck with a mountain of medical bills."

"Boy, what a mess. Sounds like I'd rather not get into it in the first place."

"That's what you ... or, rather, I ... were thinking when time travel was discovered about five years later. You, or rather he," the old man said, gesturing to the first "me" in line, "decided to go back in time and distract yourself long enough to prevent the meeting."

"Sounds simple enough."

"It seemed that way, but it turns out that your ... our ... life without her was thoroughly boring and tedious. After returning to the future, I, or rather he," this time the old man pointed to the second "me," "decided to go back and

prevent you from distracting yourself."

"Wait. Why is he here ... I mean, now?" I said. "Wouldn't it have been simpler to stop himself in the future from going back to the past?"

"Well, no. I stopped myself from stopping myself in the future, so I had to go back further and try to stop myself here. Now."

"Let me guess ... later I changed my mind again?"

"You know me ... us ... too well. Yes, over the course of the next several years I changed my mind several times and tried to change the past back. I literally fought with myself ... is a life of joy and pain preferable to a life of boredom? There are battles going on all up and down the time stream ... alliances and double-crosses ... factions and schisms. Quite a mess."

"All the people involved being me." I was appalled. "And all trying to stop me from going into this grocery store."

"Or trying to stop those who are trying to stop you. But," he said, patting his time-machine walkie-talkie, "with the latest technology and some careful strategy I've managed to lock all the rest out of this moment."

"This must have taken up a lot of time."

"Practically all of it ... I'm afraid it's become rather an obsession with us ... me. We all got together on our millionth birthday to try to thrash things out, but all we managed to accomplish was to polarize into two distinct factions, the Pros and the Antis."

"And which one are you?"

"I'm a Pro. With the wisdom of age I've come to the conclusion that a life without joy, without pain, is a life practically un-lived. So go in. Go in and meet the girl of your dreams."

I looked at the old man and saw in his face the years of scheming and sorrow. I looked at the line of me, frozen in various ridiculous postures, and thought of the lifetime wasted.

So I hit him over the head and went to the Renaissance.

Looking back at Bento #1

Marilyn Levine

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

9/2/89

Your "zine" was absolutely wonderful! I laughed so hard at your cereal tale I couldn't breathe—it was true, & funny, & well written. And I was tough on sugar, I remember. That was also the era of granola, I remember, but you had to make it at home and I wasn't about to spend that much time on something your father called "twigs and branches".

Giovanna Fregni

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

9/89

What a nice little 'zine, I hope to see future issues of it. I've never seen The Piswyck Papers before but the serial pubbing sounds like a great idea—guaranteed income & readership...

I liked your breakfast cereal dissertation. I remember when Quisp resurfaced back in the 70's but I guess it just couldn't compete. I never ate the stuff, but I loved it anyway because the commercials were animated by Jay Ward studios. (Shades of Gidney & Cloyd...) I think the only difference between Quisp & Quake was the shape of the cereals. Here in Wisconsin Kaboom is still around. A friend commented the other day that it smells just like one-a-day vitamins. We've got Sugar Bear here, too. (I guess his name's been changed to Golden Bear or something equally innocuous.) He still beats the tar out of various cartoon characters who have the audacity to want to taste his cereal (I've never understood that reasoning). We've served Lucky Charms & Froot Loops as party munchies for cons. Works out nicely.

Good point about Sugar Bear. How about the happy little pigs with aprons and chefs hats on signs for barbecue joints? Pretty warped if you think about it.

I knew Jon Singer too. I have no idea of when I first met him. If what you say is true, I like his system for meeting people. Sort of like, you're already friends before you've met.

To call it a system makes it sound awfully calculating. I don't know that it's deliberate. It's just what we saw happen.

Thanks for the compliments and a great LOC. It was the very first one we got (after David's mother's). All the more surprising because, um, neither of us remembers seeing you at the Worldcon. Did we give you Bento or did someone pass it on? They say that short-term memory is the first thing to go...

Hope Leibowitz

Willowdale, Ontario

9/12/89

I'm so glad you gave me a copy of Bento at Soom Thai in Boston! It is an adorable fanzine. It is just the kind of thing I'd like to publish if I ever got around to publishing a fanzine.

The "Personal History of Breakfast Cereals" was great. I too never had chocolate cereals when I was a kid, although I don't remember whether there was an actual rule against it. I still have never tried one, although I love chocolate. Maybe that's why! Can you imagine getting a bad case of the munchies, and all there is to eat in the house is a box of Cocoa Puffs!? Yuck! I too loved frosted flakes & Captain Crunch, and couldn't figure out how the latter stayed so crunchy in milk. Now I don't eat cereal for breakfast much, I don't even usually have milk in the house, just cream for coffee. Milk is too heavy to buy, especially in those 4-liter bags they have in Canada (3 separate bags actually, totalling 4 liters.) I hope I'm getting enough calcium.

I don't drink milk now because my body decided it wasn't going to digest it any more thank you very much (pfui!) so I use Lactaid and take calcium tablets daily. When I find myself haunting cheese counters I know I've been taking too little calcium.

Of course I know Jon Singer, I'm from New York! [*is that a non-sequitur, or is it just me?*] Finding the perfect group to have dinner with at cons is always a high priority for me, and I felt very lucky every night at Worldcon.

There are several places in Toronto where I've been able to get freshly ground peanut butter. I had some for breakfast today on bread, with sliced banana on top. Peanuts are my least favorite nut, but I love peanut butter.

Very funny story about fried bananas, & also about defrosting fridge. Hope you'll send me any fannish publications you may produce—I'm trying to increase my fanac.

Laurie Mann

Northboro, Mass.

2/20/90

I got Bento in a unique way. My husband, Jim, is the Noreascon III secretary. He winds up getting all the zines traded to NIII, and most of them were dull. I found your zine under a pile of papers on our desk, stapled to an NIII sales receipt marked "Trade for Fanfare." I feel like the woman who found a baby under a cabbage leaf!

The size of Bento wasn't a problem, but the muddy printing/xerography was a little hard on the eyes.

[This one should be better for that thanks to David's new HP DeskWriter. Its printing is quite crisp (but runs if it gets wet).]

Kaboom, talk about a blast from the past. That was my youngest brother's favorite cereal. I still prefer Cheerios and Wheaties. Guess I've always been a mundane when it came to cereal. My daughter and I have a chronic debate over "junk food cereals." She'll now only eat things like "Honey Nut Cheerios". She's encouraged in this attitude by her father, who also sticks to cereals that are about 30% sugar. Blech.

Of course, I sometimes indulge in the traditional fannish breakfast of chocolate chip cookies and beer, but that's normally just at a con or a camping trip.

Venison Hunan-style? Hmm, interesting. Can you buy this anywhere near this year's Westercon hotel? We're making our first foray to a West Coast Con this summer. I've never been to Portland, and am really looking forward to it.

[Maybe...the restaurant we ate at, which was very close to the hotel, is now closed. But chef Chen still has one in downtown Portland, which can be a short enough drive. I'll check the menu. For those willing to leave the con in search of the right food, we will be recommending Chen's China Clipper on the west side of town, which features page after page of magnificent seafood. Ah, the Shanghai Style Sweet and Pungent Crispy Whole Fish... David just volunteered to do the Westercon Restaurant Guide, by the way...]

Sarah Prince

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Having Bento for Saturday breakfast in January... finished the almond paste for breakfast last week. Time for dietary reform! Unfortunately, it's back to work at the snakepit of Macs this morning... when can I stay home to play with my Amiga?

We also heard from...

... lotsa nifty people who sent tradazines. Gosh wow thanks!—KY

Here's what they had to say about

Bento #1

"One of the best minizines I've ever seen"

—Mark Manning (*Westwind* #145/146)

"absolutely wonderful! I laughed so hard ... I couldn't breathe"

—David's mother

"a baby under a cabbage leaf"

—Laurie Mann

"David and... Kate... have created... a... masterpiece"

—Siskel & Ebert

"adorable... just the kind of thing I'd like to publish"

—Hope Leibowitz

Why You Got This Zine

- We ran into you at Corflu
- You appear within
- You sent a LoC or tradezine
- We'd like you to send a LoC or tradezine
- Editorial whim
- Other: _____